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1 INTRODUCTION

The Development Plan sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the County for the next six years whilst also aligning with longer term national and regional objectives up to 2040. The Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029 (hereafter referred to as "*The Plan*") builds on the sound foundations laid in the County Development Plan 2015-2023 for the spatial development of the county. The Plan demonstrates how the vision for the future development of the county is consistent with current national and regional strategies as set out in the National Planning Framework and in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region.

The Plan seeks to ensure the sustainable physical and social development of the county, ensuring the conservation and protection of the built and natural environment. The Plan comprises of a written statement and associated maps detailing development objectives and standards, informing where land is to be developed thereby directing public infrastructure and services, and ensuring that employment and services are aligned appropriately to create a cohesive society where people want to live. In this regard the Plan seeks to incorporate national and regional development strategic objectives into local level objectives.

This Plan seeks to develop a thriving rural community, protect our environment and celebrate our rich and varied heritage. The Plan seeks to ensure that wildlife species and habitats are conserved, features of heritage interest protected, watercourses and ground water safeguarded from pollution and the beauty of the landscape maintained. The Plan seeks to grow sustainable tourism, diversify rural enterprise and encourage remote working hubs throughout the county, all facilitated by the rollout of broadband infrastructure. The Plan seeks to capitalise on the changes the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated by attracting those wishing to work from home with our rural lifestyle, unspoilt landscape, and many outdoor recreation facilities. The Plan also seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and capitalise on projects that allow us to become a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy.

1.1 Plan Making Process

The preparation of this Plan has been informed by a series of consultations in accordance with statutory requirements prescribed in the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended, as well as several workshops held with Elected Members throughout the preparation process. Key features of the consultations undertaken included public displays, information evenings and engagements with stakeholders and infrastructure and service providers which have informed each key stage of the plan making process from pre-draft stage to draft plan stage to proposed material alterations to the draft plan stage. Each of the statutory public consultations associated with each stage have been documented by a Chief Executive's Report which has summarised the issues raised in the submissions and observations received and outlined the respective responses and recommendations of the Chief Executive to same. This includes submissions made by the Office of the Planning Regulator, the Northern and Western Regional Authority, prescribed bodies, stakeholders and the general public. Each of these reports were key considerations for the Elected Members in making of this Plan.

The preparation of the Plan was severely disrupted by the various restrictions arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly during the early stages of its preparation. In response to the disruption caused by the restrictions on the planning system and the preparation of Development Plans generally, the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2021 was enacted in July 2021. This provided a mechanism for Planning Authorities to avail of an extension to their Development Plan review process and, simultaneously, an extension to the duration of their existing Development Plan

for a period not exceeding one year. In this regard, the Elected Members of Leitrim County Council resolved to extend the duration of the review of the Leitrim County Development Plan 2015-2021 (as varied) up to the 31st of March 2023 at a meeting of the Council on the 7th of July 2022.

Notwithstanding the delays to the preparation of the Plan, the Elected Members resolved to make the Plan at a Special Meeting of Leitrim County Council on the 7th of February 2023. Table 1.1 sets out the key stages and timelines associated with the preparation of the Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029.

Table 1.1: Key Stages in the Preparation of the Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029

Stage	Date
Pre-Draft Stage – Notice of Intention to review existing Plan and Prepare new Plan and commencement of associated public consultation	17th June 2020
Publication of Draft Plan and commencement of public consultation on its content	11th February 2022
Publication of Proposed Material Alterations to Draft Plan and commencement of public consultation on its content	26th October 2022
Adoption of Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029	7th February 2023
Adopted Development Plan comes into effect	21st March 2023

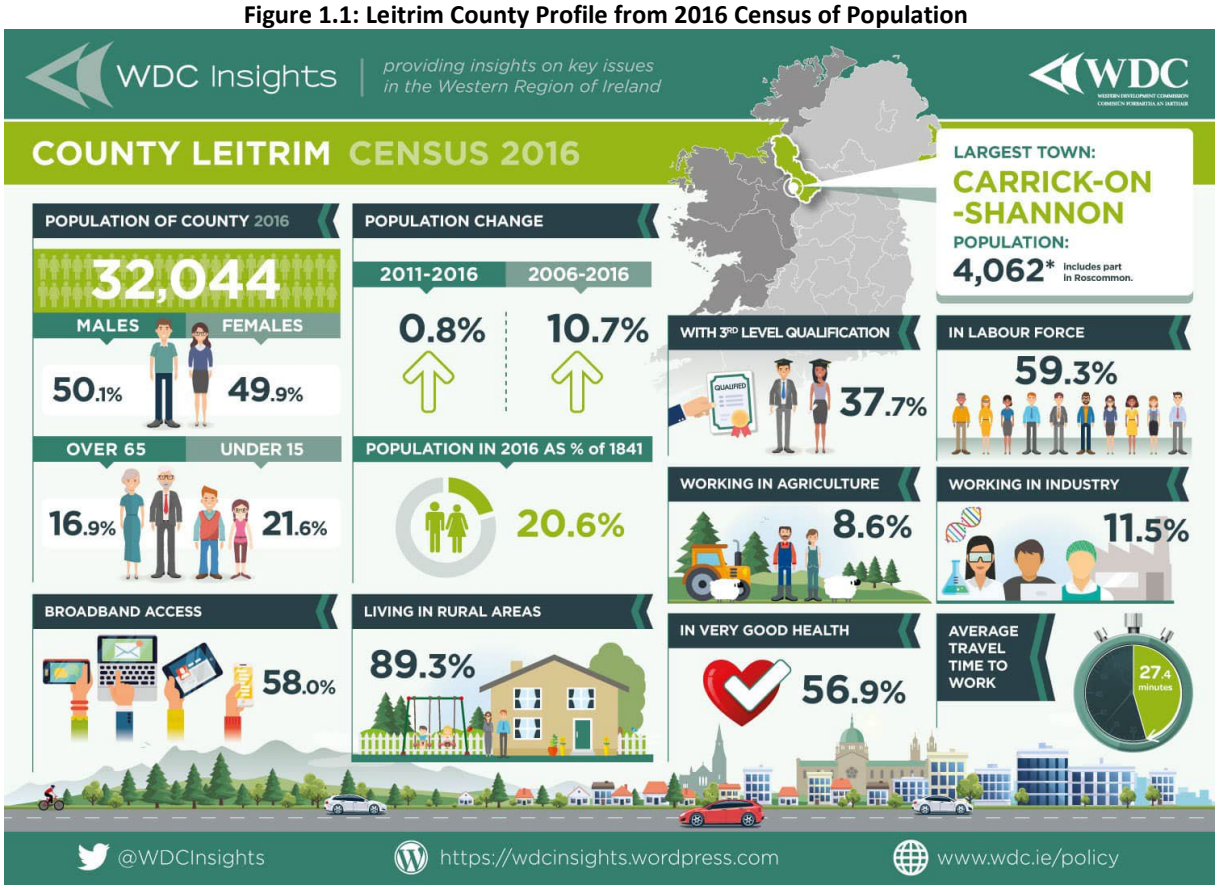
1.2 Profile of the County

Co. Leitrim is located in the northwest of Ireland, bounded by counties Cavan and Longford to the east, Roscommon to the south, Sligo to the west and Donegal and Fermanagh to the north. The Plan covers the administrative area of Co. Leitrim which encompasses an area measuring approximately 1,590 square kilometres. The county is traversed by three main arterial routes – the N4, the N16 and the R280 with the N15 running close to the short stretch of coastline south of Bundoran. The railway linking Dublin with Sligo runs along the southwest boundary of the county serving Dromod and Carrick-on-Shannon. Co. Leitrim has the lowest population of any county in Ireland. The population was recorded at 32,044 people in 2016, which is the highest it has been since 1961. This Plan will allow the population to grow by up to 3,000 people over the life of this Plan which will require a significant level of in migration.

Within the county, 89.3% of the population reside in rural area and outside of defined urban areas (i.e. towns with population in excess of 1,500). Carrick-on-Shannon is the largest town in the county and is the only defined urban centre in the county having recorded a population of 4,066 in the 2016 Census of Population (including the village of Cortober, Co. Roscommon). Carrick-on-Shannon is the predominant driver of employment with a very significant employment base. It is strategically positioned on the N4 Dublin to Sligo National Primary Road and on the Dublin to Sligo rail line.

Ballinamore and Manorhamilton are classified as Self Sustaining Growth Towns and comprise well developed serviced settlements with significant employment supporting services and community facilities. In particular, Manorhamilton has a significant job to labour force ratio. These are both important towns at a sub-regional level and have capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining.

Figure 1.1: Leitrim County Profile from 2016 Census of Population



Source: Western Development Commission

Co. Leitrim also possesses a network of attractive towns and villages, with varied landscapes and a high-quality natural environment. The county has a rich and varied natural and built heritage which contributes to the county's character, identity and sense of place. Resources in the county must be carefully managed to develop our society, economy and people in a sustainable manner. The profile of the county is outlined in Figure 1 on the previous page.

The county comprises of the municipal districts of Ballinamore, Carrick-on-Shannon and Manorhamilton. For descriptive and geographical purposes, Co. Leitrim can be divided into a northern and southern half, generally separated by Lough Allen. The northern half of the county is characterised by mountains, expansive lakes and deep glacial valleys which forms a spectacularly scenic landscape. The southern half of the county is characterised by a drumlin belt interspersed with small lakes and rolling hillocks. The resultant soil type in the southern half of the county is primarily the product of retreating glacial masses.

The River Shannon with its associated lake systems forms the county's southwestern boundary with Co. Roscommon whilst Donegal Bay demarcates the northern extremity of the county along its 4.6 kilometre long coastline. The predominant soil types within the county generally comprise peats and gleys from glacial drift derived from a mix of limestone, sandstone, shale and other rocks. The predominant groupings of gleys and peats together make up 75% of the total county land mass.

1.3 Statutory Context

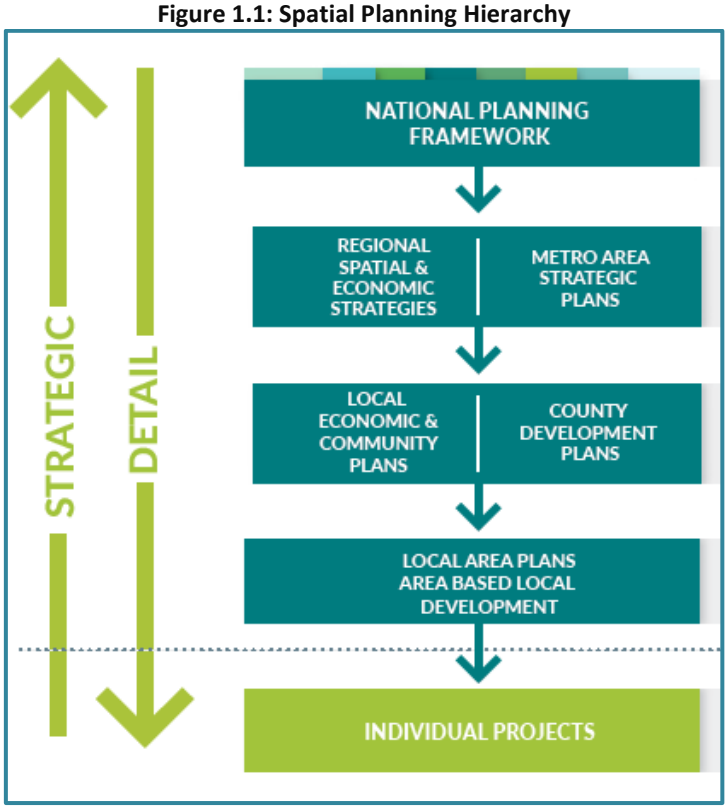
Under the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended, each Planning Authority is obliged to prepare a Development Plan for its functional area every six years, the review of which should

commence four years after its adoption. This Plan replaces the Leitrim County Development Plan 2015-2023.

A Development Plan is required to be consistent with international, national, regional and local policy documents, guidelines and strategies. Project Ireland 2040, which includes the National Planning Framework (NPF) and National Development Plan (NDP), sets out the Government's policy on spatial planning and infrastructure investment over the period to 2040. The NPF influences all spatial plans from national to local levels. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) sets out the mechanism for delivering the NPF at a regional level. The County Development Plan provides an overall strategy for development of the county within the parameters of the national and regional planning frameworks. As detail is developed down through the hierarchy, further opportunity for focused assessment is required to inform decision making at a level of granularity which cannot be undertaken at the national scale. This is shown graphically in Figure 1.2 overleaf.

A Development Plan must also have regard to the Development Plans of adjoining Local Authorities and must consider any significant likely effects the implementation of the Plan may have on the area of any adjoining Local Authority. Accordingly, the objectives of this Plan have been prepared having regard to the plans of the adjoining Local Authorities of counties Donegal, Sligo, Roscommon, Longford and Cavan, and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.

Figure 1.1: Spatial Planning Hierarchy



Source: National Planning Framework

Development plans must comply with the requirements of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended. Section 10(2) of the Planning and Development Acts 2000, as amended, requires Development Plans to include mandatory development objectives relating to a range of issues which include the zoning of lands for particular purposes, provision of infrastructure, conservation and protection of the environment and built heritage, management of features and preservation of the landscape, the development and renewal of areas in need of regeneration, provision of traveller

accommodation, education facilities, recreational amenities, transportation strategies and the preservation of public rights of way.

The Development Plan must include a '*Core Strategy*' which shows that the development objectives in the plan are consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives set out in the NPF and the RSES.

The written statement shall include a separate report which shows that the development objectives in the Development Plan are consistent, as far as practicable, with the conservation and protection of the environment. The Environmental Report (included as part of the Development Plan) forms part of the Development Plan process.

With regard to climate change, Section 10(2)(n) of the Act requires that a Development Plan include objectives for the promotion of sustainable settlement and transport strategies in urban and rural areas, including the promotion of measures to reduce energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt to climate change, having regard to, in particular, the location, layout and design of new development.

1.3.1 UN Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015 the UN General Assembly detailed 17 Sustainable Development Goals as a blueprint to achieve better and more sustainable development for all. This Plan seeks to incorporate these overarching themes in the formulation and implementation of policies and objectives.

Figure 1.3: **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**

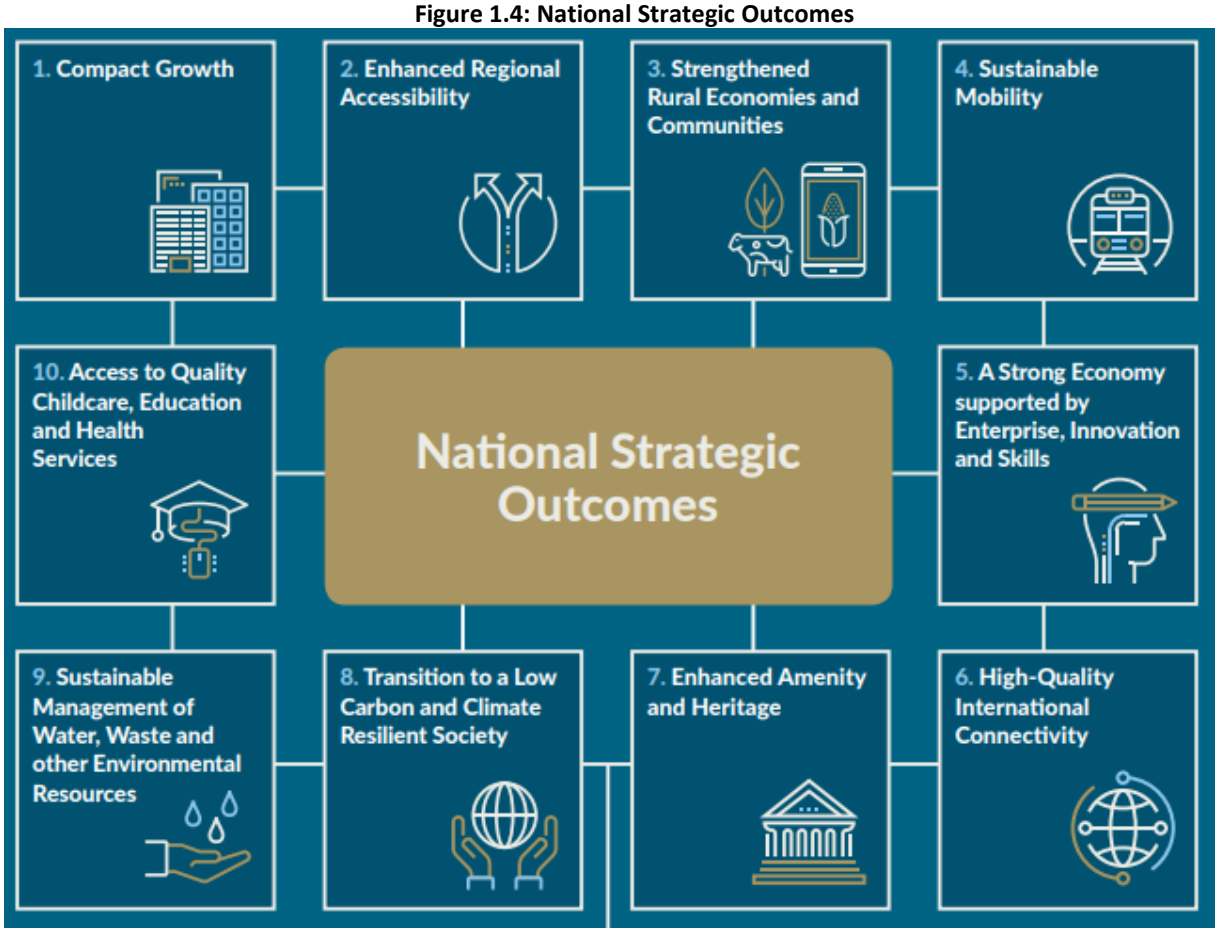


Source: The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations

1.3.2 Project Ireland 2040

Project Ireland 2040 is the Government's long-term overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all its people. This approach changes how investment is made in public infrastructure in Ireland, moving away from the approach of the past, which saw public investment spread too thinly and investment decisions that didn't align with a well-thought-out and defined strategy. Alongside the development of physical infrastructure, Project Ireland 2040 supports business and communities across all of Ireland in realising their potential and is composed of two key policy instruments, the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan (NDP). The NPF sets the vision and strategy for the development of our country to 2040 whilst the NDP provides enabling investment to implement the strategy. By 2040, it is projected that there will be roughly an extra one million people living in Ireland. This population growth will require hundreds of thousands of new jobs, new homes, and heightened cultural and social amenities, enhanced regional connectivity and improved environmental sustainability.

Figure 1.4: National Strategic Outcomes



Source: National Planning Framework

Project Ireland 2040 is underpinned by a shared set of 10 no. goals or National Strategic Outcomes established in the NPF for every community across the country. The National Strategic Outcomes are contained in Figure 1.4 overleaf. It is an approach that integrates ambition for improvement across the different areas of our lives, bringing the various government departments, agencies, State owned enterprises and local authorities together behind a shared set of strategic objectives for rural, regional and urban development.

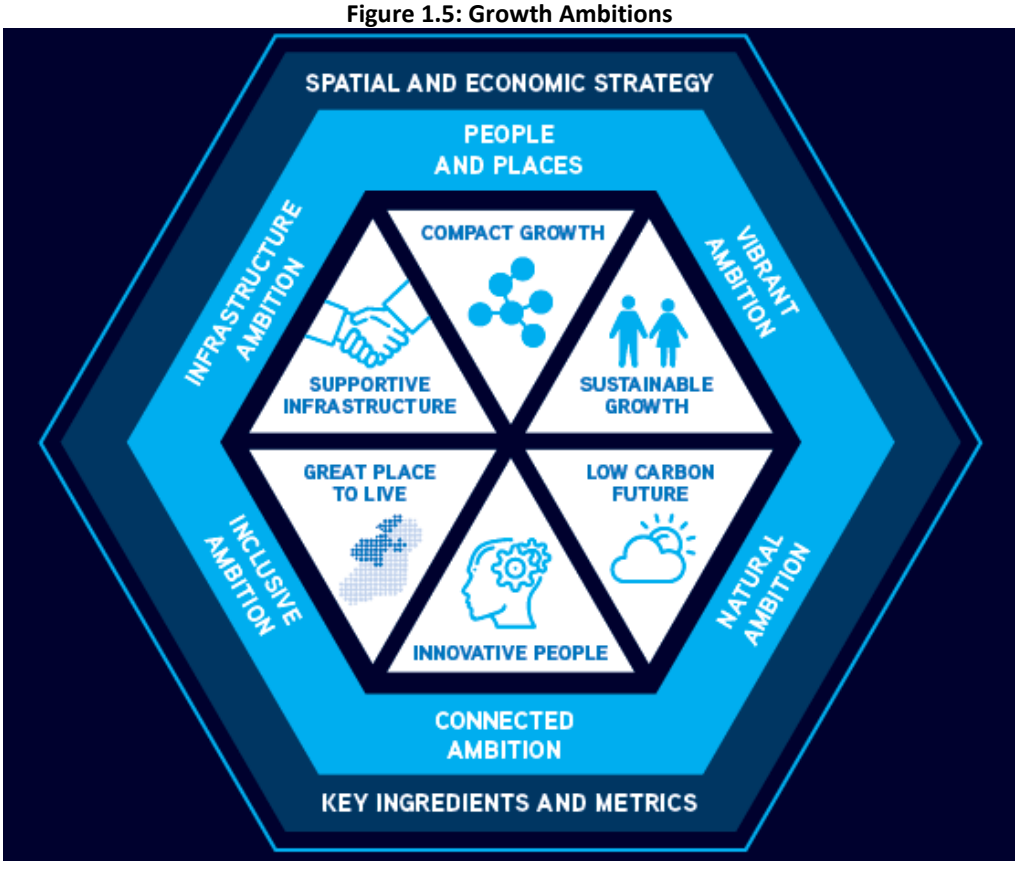
Regional and local plans must align with these National Strategic Outcomes which are underpinned by 75 no. National Policy Objectives. The preparation of this Plan has been informed by these National

Strategic Outcomes and Policy Objectives. Emphasis is placed on enhanced regional accessibility, the compact sustainable growth of urban areas, strengthened rural economies and communities, and enhanced amenities and heritage. The NPF places specific emphasis on the regeneration and rejuvenation of towns with investment in regeneration, public realm improvements and the appropriate adaptation and re-use of built heritage. There is also a focus on placemaking and upon securing improvements to quality of life. The NPF recognises that the regeneration and rejuvenation of towns and villages of all types and scale can play a role in making stronger urban places and contributing to compact growth. The NPF supports the use of performance-based standards for infill/brownfield developments. The NPF also places great emphasis on addressing the issues associated with climate change.

1.3.3 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)

The RSES for the Northern and Western Region (2020-2032) is a strategic plan to support the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 (NPF and NDP) and the economic policies and objectives of the Government, by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the region. Development plans for counties within the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) area must align with this RSES. The RSES seeks to realise an ambition for our region that is Vibrant, Connected, Natural, Smart and a Great Place to Live, consolidated by a strong settlement strategy focusing on '*People*' and '*Places*'. The intention is that it becomes a living framework, which will be supported as required by detailed action plans, investment proposals and delivery partnerships. It brings a new '*place based'* approach that involves tapping into the economic potential that remains unused, so that all parts of regions, be they cities, towns or their rural hinterlands, can contribute to national development. Investment in the creation of '*place*' is key to delivering the key elements that inform business location choices.

Figure 1.5: Growth Ambitions



Source: Northern and Western Regional Spatial Economic Strategy

The RSES Settlement Strategy identifies the role of Key Towns such as Carrick-on-Shannon which should provide a regionally strategic employment development of significant scale and also provide functions and services to an entire sub region, in this instance south Leitrim/east Roscommon. Carrick-on-Shannon is targeted to have a 30% population uplift with development focused on compact growth and prioritising the development of opportunity sites close to the town centre. This growth should be supported with employment growth and increased service provision. The RSES sets out the future priorities for Carrick-on-Shannon including the need to prepare a joint Local Area Plan with Roscommon County Council.

The Development Plan is required to include measures to prioritise a programme for serviced sites to be provided in selected settlements (RPO 3.7) which is now included in the Programme for Government. In terms of rural housing, the RSES seeks to deliver at least 20% of all new housing in rural areas on brownfield sites (RPO 3.3). This needs to be considered in a wider reflection of the rural nature of settlement patterns across the county and a balance between the needs of all places, including towns and villages and rural areas.

The RSES requires that the supply and location of jobs and homes must be aligned. This includes providing homes that are affordable and accessible to house the labour force, and the provision of land and premises that meet the needs of current and future businesses, including for smart design and orientation meeting present and future energy efficiency demands. To comply with such requirement, the Plan should identify a roadmap for this, and zone lands in a range of locations, whilst simultaneously striving to achieve the targets of compact growth.

The NWRA believes that strong economic growth, which creates permanent, sustainable jobs, is best achieved by building a competitive and productive economy. The RSES advocates focusing policies on scale, investing in connectivity and in our people whilst aggressively pursuing a low carbon approach to enhance our differentiation. Under this Growth Ambition, the RSES gives recognition to the importance of place-based networks such as the Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy Project. The importance of Research and Innovation and policies which encourage and support the development of local entrepreneurial ecosystems through local clustering and smart specialisation are highlighted. The agri-food sector is vital to the region and the stimulation of gastronomy as part of our cultural heritage is something that offers local opportunities and is encouraged.

The RSES acknowledges the importance of the link between accessibility and mobility having a direct effect on economic competitiveness and the attractiveness of the region for living/visiting. The provision of prudently managed transport and digital infrastructure is key to delivering on the regional vision. Integrating land use and transport planning is key in this regard along with focusing on the facilitation of the digital economy. The incorporation of Local Transport Plans for key settlements which includes Carrick-on-Shannon would enable an examination of potential growth from sustainable modes of transport, focusing on modal shift. The priorities for road and rail investment projects are set out in the RSES which includes the provision of the bypassing of Carrick-on-Shannon. The RSES also recognises the need to upgrade incrementally the N16 which forms part of the Dundalk to Sligo route which will impact on north Leitrim.

The RSES emphasises the provision and maintenance of economic infrastructure, such as energy, water, and wastewater, are key to delivering compact growth and a connected, vibrant, inclusive, resilient and smart region.

The ambition for growth in the NWRA area needs to be balanced with cognisance of our natural resources, landscape and heritage. The importance of greenways as sustainable and smart transportation links in rural areas achieving such a balance are included in the RSES. In addition, they

will further enable the appropriate development of local businesses and start-ups in the vicinity of greenways. The SLNCR is referenced as a key route within the region in this regard.

With regard to Quality of Life, the region aspires to be one of the '*most liveable places in Europe*' with a commitment to sustainable and inclusive growth. To encourage job creation, the RSES requires a specific focus upon the enablement of access to education, health, employment, recreation and opportunity for all. The co-ordination and delivery of infrastructure, housing and employment land in the right places at the right time is a key outcome, with homes that are affordable.

1.4 Climate Action

Climate change impacts are currently experienced worldwide. Coastal areas in western parts of Europe, such as Ireland, can expect more heavy rain, higher risk of flooding from rivers and higher risk of storms in winter. The national Climate Action Plan (2019) sets out a course of action to address the impacts of climate change on Ireland's environment, society, economic and natural resources. The Climate Action Plan identifies the scale of the challenge and examines impacts on a range of key sectors including electricity, transport, built environment, industry and agriculture and charts a course towards ambitious emission reduction targets. Leitrim County Council has adopted and is implementing a Climate Adaptation Strategy for the county. Climate change is an integral theme of the Plan and transcends all chapters throughout.

1.5 Planning Guidelines

The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, issues statutory guidelines to Planning Authorities under Section 28 of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended. Planning Authorities must have regard to them in carrying out their functions, including in the preparation of their County Development Plan. The Planning Guidelines cover a wide range of issues including architectural heritage, childcare facilities, landscape, residential density and design, environmental assessment and development management. Where planning guidance documents contain Specific Planning Policy Requirements (SPPR), such as in the Apartment Guidelines (2018) and Building Height Guidelines (2018) and also in the Interim Guidelines on Statutory Plans, Renewable Energy and Climate Change (2017), Local Authorities are required to be consistent with these documents in their Development Plans.

1.6 Environmental Reports

The Plan has also been informed by the preparation of three Environmental Assessments, in tandem with the plan making process. In accordance with European and National legislation, the Planning Authority has carried out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and an Appropriate Assessment (AA) under the SEA Directive and Habitats Directive respectively. These assessments are undertaken in order to ensure that the potential impacts of the objectives contained in the Plan on the environment can be evaluated. This process informs the content of the plan and ensures that development responds appropriately to the sensitivities and requirements of the wider natural environment. A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has also been undertaken for the plan area. This provides a broad assessment of flood risk within the county and will inform strategic land use planning decisions in this Plan. It is considered that the development objectives in the Plan are consistent, in as far as practicable, with the conservation and protection of the environment arising from these iterative assessments.

1.6.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

This Plan was subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), as required under the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, as amended. SEA is the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme before the decision is made to adopt the plan or programme. The findings of the SEA process are included in the SEA Environmental Report that accompanies the Development Plan. The outcomes of the SEA process have been fully incorporated into the preparation and making of this Plan. The Environmental Report has been published as a separate document.

1.6.1.1 Appropriate Assessment (AA)

This Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Appropriate Assessment requirements under EU Habitats Directive (43/92/EEC) and Section 177 of the Act. The Planning Authority is required to ensure that any plan or programme and any projects that arise therefrom, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, are subject to '*Appropriate Assessment*' to ensure there are no effects on the integrity of any European site(s) and that the requirements of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the EU Habitats Directive are fully satisfied. Where a plan/project is likely to have an effect on the integrity of a European site, or there is uncertainty with regard to effects, it shall be subject to a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment. The plan/project will proceed only after it has been ascertained that it will not affect the integrity of the site or where, in the absence of alternative solutions, the plan/project is deemed imperative for reasons of overriding public interest - all in accordance with the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the EU Habitats Directive. The findings of the Appropriate Assessment carried out for this Plan are attached in the accompanying Natura Impact Report.

1.6.2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) is an assessment of flood risk and includes mapped boundaries for indicative flood risk zones, taking into account factors such as local knowledge, site walkovers and flood risk indicators. SFRA is required under '*The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities*' (Department of Environment and Office of Public Works, 2009) and the associated Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government Circular PL2/2014. All SFRA recommendations have been integrated into the Plan. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has been published as a separate document.

1.7 Format of the County Development Plan

The Plan consists of 4 volumes. The Plan also consists of number of accompanying strategies, contained in separate document form.

Volume I consists of the **Written Statement** which sets out the strategic direction for the development of Co. Leitrim during the six year period of the Plan and beyond. The Written Statement contains the Core Strategy and details a series of objectives across a wide range of policy areas. Each chapter of the Written Statement focuses on an individual policy area. However, no individual chapter is considered in isolation as there are significant interlinkages and indeed overlap between individual policy areas within the Written Statement. The most relevant and important of these cross cutting themes is that of climate change. This will become evident as each chapter is considered and there is a consistency in the thrust of the policy framework presented as a result. Other important themes which transcend individual chapters include the creation of compact towns and villages, of sustainable communities, of placemaking and tackling decline in smaller towns and villages, of regeneration and of protecting our natural environment and wider heritage.

Volume I of the Written Statement is set out as follows:

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 CORE STRATEGY

Chapter 3 HOUSING

Chapter 4 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INCLUDING RETAIL

Chapter 5 TOURISM

Chapter 6 URBAN SETTLEMENTS

Chapter 7 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Chapter 8 TRANSPORT

Chapter 9 INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY

Chapter 10 RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Chapter 11 HERITAGE & BIODIVERSITY

Chapter 12 CLIMATE ACTION AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

Chapter 13 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

Appendix I of the Plan contains a Statement prepared in accordance with Section 28 (1A) of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended demonstrating how the Planning Authority in preparing the Development Plan has implemented the policies and objectives set out in Ministerial Guidelines issued under Section 28 of the Act.

Volume II contains the individual **Settlement Plans** for our towns and villages. In the existing County Development Plan 2015-2023, the overall strategy for individual towns and individuals consisted only of a land use zoning objectives map without the context being provided or other individual development objectives presented. Detailed Settlement Plans have been prepared for the Tier 2A Self-Sustaining Growth Towns of Ballinamore and Manorhamilton and for the Tier 2B Support Towns of Dromahair, Drumshanbo, Kinlough and Mohill. Separate Objectives Maps for each of these towns have been prepared along with maps identifying the respective Land Use Zoning Objectives.

Volume II also contains concise Settlement Plans for the Key Villages and Villages along with individual Land Use Zoning Objectives Maps for each.

Volume III comprises the **Book of Maps** for both Volume I (Written Statement) and for Volume II (Settlement Plans).

Volume IV contains the proposed **Record of Protected Structures** and contains 274 no. structures.

There are a range of supporting documents and strategies which have been prepared and these form Appendices to the Plan. They are listed in the order of their respective chapters:

I. Section 28 Guidelines Statement of Consistency
II. Economic Profile of the County (based on 2016 Census of Population)
III. Strategic Economic Development Objectives and the Development Plan - Leitrim Local Economic Community Plan
IV. Retail Strategy – Health Check
V. Housing Strategy for Co. Leitrim including Housing Needs Demand Assessment. This is turn was informed by a Housing Modelling/Housing Needs Demand Assessment.
VI. Landscape Capacity Study for Commercial Forestry (March 2022)
VII. County Leitrim Landscape Character Assessment
VIII. County Leitrim Landscape Designations
IX. County Leitrim Views and Prospects
X. Renewable Energy Strategy which was informed by a Landscape and Visual Capacity Assessment for Wind Farms and Wind Turbines
XI. Northern & Western Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy – Regional Policy Objectives considered when preparing Chapter 13 – Climate Action and Renewable Energy
XII. County Geological Sites of Interest

The Plan has also been subject to 3 environmental assessments as outlined in Section 1.6. These comprise:

1. Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
2. Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report
3. Natura Impact Report (Appropriate Assessment)

These reports also form part of the Plan.

1.8 Implementation and Monitoring

1.8.1 Implementation

Leitrim County Council is fully committed to securing and monitoring the implementation of the key aims and objectives of this Plan. The Development Plan is the key strategy to structure the development of Co. Leitrim over the six-year statutory time period of the plan. It seeks to address the physical, economic, social and environmental needs of the community, in terms of supporting structured new development, enhancing valued assets and amenities and protecting the environment. The Council will continue to occupy a leadership role to progress and secure the Plan policies and objectives to achieve the sustainable development of the county. The implementation of the Development Plan is a key strategic focus for Leitrim County Council and requires a concerted range of actions by the entire organisation in order to be successfully implemented. The Local Authority will need to utilise its wide range of statutory powers and responsibilities to achieve the objectives of the Development Plan. The successful implementation of a significant number of the policies and objectives of this Plan will necessitate on-going collaboration and support from across a range of agencies and stakeholders. The implementation of this Plan will depend also on the economic climate, political support and the availability of funding from various sources including by the Council itself.

The Planning Department of the Council is the main section responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Plan. However, it is important to note that this Plan co-ordinates the work and objectives of other key departments within Leitrim County Council, such as Economic Development, Local Economic Office, Tourism, Community, Roads, Environment and Emergency Services. In some

cases, responsibility for the implementation of certain objectives may be external, such as by Irish Water, Waterways Ireland and Transport Infrastructure Ireland. In addition to those interdependencies, the achievement of certain objectives is also influenced by factors that are outside the control of the Council, including international and national economic circumstances, government funding and private sector investment confidence in the economy. This is most evident in the area of building affordable houses. In fulfilling the development management function of assessing individual planning application, this will be central to the implementation of the Plan objectives with regard to management of land and uses.

Ensuring resources and establishing systems to effectively perform this monitoring and analysis function is therefore a key responsibility of the Planning Authority. A new approach to plan implementation and monitoring is required from that previously in place for the 2015-2023 County Development Plan. An effective development plan process will involve a positive cycle of policy development with measurable indicators formulated, implementation activities led by the Local Authority, monitoring, reporting and policy analysis.

1.8.2 Monitoring

The objectives detailed in this County Development Plan have been developed where possible to be specific, achievable and measurable. In fulfilling the development management function of assessing individual planning application, this will be central to the implementation of the Plan objectives with regard to management of land and uses. Much of the data required for effective monitoring and evaluation will be readily available within Leitrim County Council, including established linkages between planning application databases and GIS. Utilisation of established mechanisms of this nature will facilitate on-going data capture and a spatial expression of results. This will be used in the preparation of a monitoring and evaluation report on the implementation of the Plan. In other instances, it will require the setting up and management of data capturing by other departments including the Housing and Environment Departments.

In order to assess the success with which the Plan is being implemented, the Planning Authority commits to establishing a frequent, reliable and ongoing monitoring system for our Plan as a permanent function.

This will comprise:

a) Core Strategy Monitoring; and
b) Plan Objectives Monitoring (including SEA Monitoring)

Core Strategy Monitoring (Annual)
The Plan has a primary role in land use and spatial development policy and in particular regarding the provision of new housing development. The monitoring role must provide a focus on development patterns occurring under the settlement strategy of the development plan and the tracking of the nature of new development that is occurring.

The Planning Authority will report on these planning and development trends and analyse these trends spatially, with accompanying mapping, to illustrate the development trends being experienced at settlement level and to assess the consistency of such trends with the agreed housing and population targets as set out in the Core Strategy of the development plan. The data required for successful monitoring will be a mixture of information readily available in Leitrim County Council (e.g. from the development management function) and from externally/independently provided sources (e.g. CSO).

This 'Core Strategy Monitoring' shall occur annually and include the indicators contained in the recently published Development Plan Guidelines as applicable.

Plan Objectives Monitoring
Under the provisions of Section 15(2) of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended, the Council has a statutory obligation to secure the implementation of the objectives of the Plan and to prepare a progress report on achieving the objectives not more than 2 years after the making of this Plan.

The objectives to be included in the 2-year progress report must include indicators that are that aligned with reporting for other related national policies (e.g. climate change, water quality, etc) or for the purposes of monitoring the SEA. The monitoring of the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the Plan is a statutory requirement of the SEA Directive and the planning authority shall refer to the EPA's guidance document '*Guidance on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Statements and Monitoring*' and any future review.

Additionally, under Section 22A(2) of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended, each Local Authority within the Regional Assembly is required, every 2 years, to prepare and submit a report to the Assembly setting out progress made in supporting objectives, relevant to that authority, contained in the RSES.

1.9 Interpretation

In interpreting this document, in all cases should any conflict arise between the written word and accompanying maps, the written word shall take precedence.

2 CORE STRATEGY

2.1 Introduction

The Core Strategy provides a medium to longer term strategy for the spatial development of Co. Leitrim. It demonstrates how the Plan, and in particular the Housing Strategy, is consistent with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for our region and with the Specific Planning Policy Requirements specified in Section 28 Guidelines issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. This consistency relates to issues such as the role of settlements, the number of houses proposed in each settlement and in rural areas adhering to the targets provided in the higher level national and regional plans or more recently by the Minister of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, how the amount of land zoned for houses has been determined and is adequate to cater for this growth, demonstrate how future development supports public transport/existing services, etc. These are then expressed in the land use zoning objectives for each settlement contained in Volume III (Book of Maps). There is also a requirement for the Core Strategy to provide estimates for additional retail development which is likely to be required based on the stated population targets and having regard to the Section 28 Retail Planning Guidelines.

The Core Strategy must provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate such compliance which requires a series of tables to be produced; this is referred to as '*evidence based planning*'. The Core Strategy is diagrammatically represented in the Core Strategy Map overleaf (see Figure 2.1) and Map No. 1 in Volume III.

2.2 Vision and Strategic Aims

This Plan provides a positive vision for Co. Leitrim which will enable the county to continue to make a significant contribution to national economic recovery by promoting sustainable development.

The vision for Leitrim proposed for the County Development Plan 2023-2029 is:

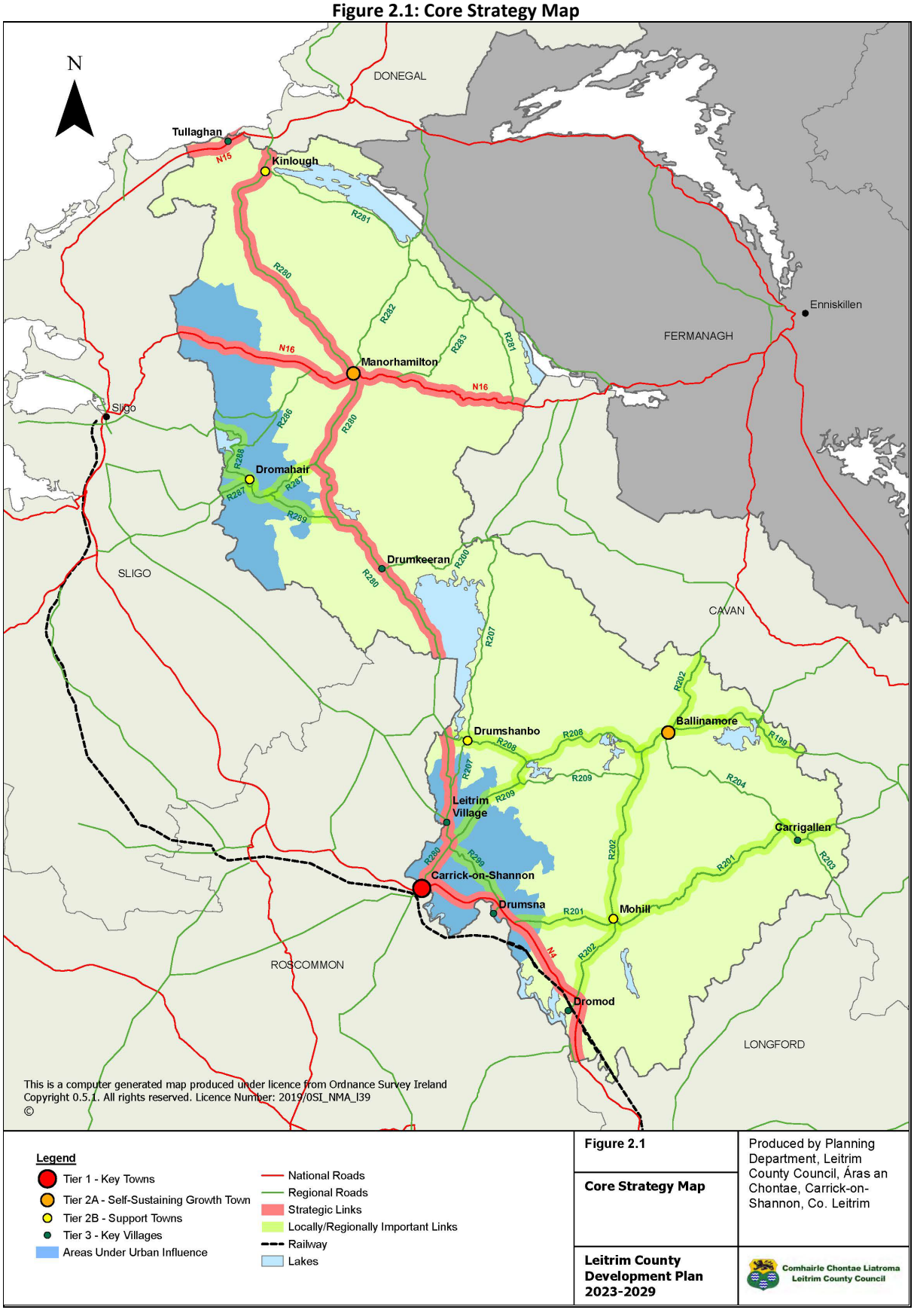
> "*Co. Leitrim to be a vibrant, creative, economically strong, socially inclusive, progressive and distinctive county, providing a quality experience for all who live in, work in, invest in and visit our county, fostering the development and wellbeing of our communities, offering excellent opportunities for employment across a diverse range of sectors, embracing the challenges which climate change presents in a responsible and practical manner while protecting, conserving and enhancing the best of the natural and built environment".*

In order to achieve this Vision, the Plan contains a number of strategic aims which are set out in this section. These aims are then expanded upon in the individual chapters which follow:

1. To guide the future development of Co. Leitrim in line with the principles and objectives provided in the NPF and in the RSES for our region including the population projections set out therein;

2. To promote and facilitate the development of the county in accordance with the provisions of the Core Strategy, including directing appropriate levels of residential development in line with the Settlement hierarchy;

Figure 2.1: Core Strategy Map



3. To ensure that towns and villages grow at a sustainable and appropriate level whilst pursuing a compact growth policy and seeking to better integrate transport and land use planning at a level practicable to Co. Leitrim;

4. To develop Carrick-on-Shannon (Key Town) as a settlement of regional scale for accelerated population growth through the delivery of significant compact growth and developing identified derelict and under utilised sites, with an initial focus within the town core. Carrick-on-Shannon is also identified as a key driver of economic development in the county;

5. To deliver at least 30% of all new homes that are targeted in Carrick-on-Shannon, Ballinamore and Manorhamilton within the existing built-up footprints on infill and/or brownfield sites with a reduced target of 20% for the remaining lower tier settlements in the Settlement Hierarchy;

6. To pursue balanced growth elsewhere within the county at an appropriate scale based upon the varied growth potential of different places to include individual houses in rural areas. The Core Strategy targets housing and employment growth in settlements that have the capacity to absorb such growth in a sustainable manner with the commensurate provision of the required supporting social infrastructure and community facilities;

7. To support a rural housing policy for the open countryside which will seek to balance the need to sustain rural communities with the need to protect Leitrim's natural heritage, environment and landscape qualities. The rural housing policy will differentiate between the pressure for one off housing in the areas surrounding large towns (Carrick-on-Shannon and the impact of Sligo extending into Co. Leitrim) where an economic and social tie to an area must be established from the remainder of the countryside;

8. To support the appropriate and sustainable development of rural areas by encouraging growth and arresting decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades and by managing the growth of areas that are under strong urban influence to avoid over-development, while sustaining vibrant rural communities.

9. To promote Carrick-on-Shannon as the main retail centre in the county with the provision of retail in other centres commensurate with their roles;

10. To support the vitality and viability of existing town and village centres and facilitate a competitive and healthy environment for the retailing sector by ensuring that future growth in retail floorspace responds to the identified retail hierarchy, the sequential approach, and the needs of the projected population of the settlement areas;

11. To create the appropriate conditions necessary to foster a healthy and vibrant retail environment in the county;

12. Include objectives to support proposals for regeneration, rejuvenation of vacant and derelict sites, town and village centre renewal and public realm enhancement;

13. To support, in principle, development that addresses climate change in terms of adaptation and mitigation measures including increasing flood resilience, the promotion of sustainable transport options and the development of renewable energy technologies where possible to achieve a successful transition to a low carbon economy.

Underpinning the strategic aims above in relation to population growth, housing requirements and the future spatial development of our county are the following complementary strategic objective which are integral in delivering the vision for the county during the period 2023-2029:

1. To build on the regional-level linkages between Co. Leitrim and other parts of the Northern and Western Region (with particular emphasis on the Sligo Regional Growth Centre) and adjoining regions such as the Eastern and Midlands Region and Fermanagh & Omagh District Council in Northern Ireland and by supporting the implementation of regional spatial and economic strategies, collaborating on support for critical enabling infrastructure, such as inter-regional road linkages, and co-operating on areas of mutual planning interest;
2. To target Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Irish Indigenous industries to appropriate zoned locations and build on the economic strengths and tourism opportunities of Co. Leitrim in a balanced and sustainable manner focusing on the considerable opportunities within our county;
3. To facilitate the provision of and improvements to community, social and recreational infrastructure and ensure universal access for all to such facilities throughout the county for all its residents;
4. To facilitate job creation within the county to ensure that the county grows in a sustainable manner;
5. To provide for sustainable transport infrastructure and connectivity including walking and cycling infrastructure and initiatives, and optimise the return of investment on infrastructure while preserving the natural and built heritage;
6. To achieve a sustainable, integrated and low carbon transport system for the county and to protect, improve and extend water services and other enabling infrastructure in line with national, regional and local population and economic growth for the county;
7. To protect, conserve and enhance the built, natural and cultural environment through promoting awareness, utilising relevant heritage legislation and promoting good quality urban and rural design;
8. To support the development of key infrastructure such as telecommunications, electricity and sources of renewable energy to enable and facilitate economic development.
9. To ensure co-ordination between land use zoning and infrastructure availability through the implementation of the '*Tiered Approach to Land Use Zoning*' as required under the NPF.

2.3 Population Change

Co. Leitrim has the lowest population of any county in Ireland. The population was recorded at 32,044 people in 2016. This represented a modest increase of 246 people from the 2011 recorded figure of 31,798 people. The population of the county is now at its highest since 1961.

The RSES provides that the population of Co. Leitrim could increase to 35,000 – 35,500 people by 2026 and up to 37,000 by 2031 (based on the Implementation Roadmap for the National Planning Framework in July 2018). This would require the attraction of significant in-migration to the county as this growth cannot be realised by natural increase alone (difference between births and deaths). The *Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning* (Section 28 Guidelines issued in December 2020) reaffirms that the population projection for each county set out in the Implementation Roadmap for the National Planning Framework (July 2018) "*continue to be the*

population parameters for local authority development planning processes". The Development Plan must therefore make provision to provide for population growth of up to 3,000 people.[1]

Table 2.1: **Co. Leitrim NPF Population Target**

	2016	2021	2026	2031
NPF	32,000	33,500-33,750	35,000-35,500	36,000-37,000

Source: NPF Implementation Roadmap

At least 30% of this population growth must be delivered in Carrick-on-Shannon which is designated as a Key Town in our Region within the RSES. No guidance is provided in the RSES regarding the role of the adjoining village of Cortober. For the purposes of this Development Plan, references to Carrick-on-Shannon relate to the extent of the settlement which is contained in Co. Leitrim only. The allocation of population to the adjoining village of Cortober is a matter for Roscommon County Council noting that an allocation of 64 no. additional housing units and a population of 172 no. people are indicated for Cortober in the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028. A Joint Local Area Plan will be prepared for the combined urban centre of Carrick-on-Shannon/Cortober as required pursuant to the RSES.

2.4 Settlement Hierarchy

Co. Leitrim's settlement hierarchy is set out below:

Table 2.2: Co. Leitrim Settlement Hierarchy

Level	Role	Centre (2016 Population where available)
Tier 1 **Key Town**	Large economically active towns with a strong employment base and good transport links and capacity for continued sustainable growth acting as catalysts for the wider sub region. Key Towns are identified in the RSES.	Carrick-on-Shannon (4,062)[2]
Tier 2A **Self-Sustaining Growth Towns**	Towns with moderate levels of population that provide important employment and services for their surrounding areas. These self-sustaining towns are served by good transport	Manorhamilton (1,466) & Ballinamore (914)

[1] Section 4.1 of the Core Strategy outlines an agreed provision of up to 1,208 additional households over the course of the Development Plan period. At an average household size of 2.55 persons, this would equate to an additional population of 3,080 population over the plan period 2022-2028 which is in keeping with the population targets for the county as outlined in the NPF Implementation Roadmap document. However, the Housing Strategy projects the average household size to fall further to 2.46 by the end of the Development Plan period. The Housing Strategy provides for up to 13,934 households occupied in Leitrim by the end of the Plan period. This would provide accommodation for a population range of 34,278 – 35,532 with a range of average household size of between 2.46 (projected) and 2.55 (2016 Census recorded level).

[2] Whilst the recorded population for Carrick-on-Shannon was 4,062 no. persons, this referred to the combined urban centre of Carrick-on-Shannon and the adjoining village of Cortober, Co. Roscommon. The C.S.O. have indicated that 3,422 no. persons were recorded in Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim with the remaining 640 no. persons recorded in Cortober, Co. Roscommon.

Level	Role	Centre (2016 Population where available)
	links and play an important role in supporting the social, economic and cultural life within rural communities. These centres have capacity for continued growth commensurate to their role.	
Tier 2B Support Towns	Towns with local service and some specialised employment and tourism functions, which play an important role in supporting the social, economic and cultural life within their rural communities.	Dromahair (808), Drumshanbo (902), Mohill (855) & Kinlough (1,032)
Tier 3 Key Villages	Large villages with local service functions, specialised employment in some centres and which play an important role in supporting the social, economic and cultural life within rural communities.	Carrigallen (387), Dromod (555), Drumkeeran (220), Drumsna (240), Leitrim (594) and Tullaghan (253)
Tier 4 Villages	Villages have a more limited range of commercial and community services and facilities. These centres have limited capacity to accommodate and sustain a greater proportion of residential growth.	Ballinaglera, Cloone, Dowra, Drumcong, Fenagh, Glenfarne (see Note below), Jamestown, Keshcarrigan (155), Kilclare, Killarga, Kiltyclogher, Lurganboy, Newtowngore, Roosky (564)[3] & Rossinver.
Tier 5 Graigs	Settlements that have some community and social services not necessarily in a defined centre and are not serviced by public sewerage. These settlements have a limited capacity to facilitate a degree of residential demand.	Askill, Gurteen, Largydonnell, Leckaun/Newtownmanor, Mullies, Aghacashel, Bellanagare/Carrowcrin, Derrintawy/Newbridge, Kilavoggy, Kilnagross, Tarmon, Tawneylea, Aghavas 1 & 2, Aughawillan, Aughnasheelan, Corrawaleen, Drumeela, Drumlea, Garvagh, Aghamore, Bornacoola, Effrinagh, Eslinbridge and Gortlettragh

Note:
Glenfarne consists of 3 areas each of which have development envelopes and which are not contiguous to each other. The previous County Development Plan 2015-2023 referred to Glenfarne A, B & C. This is dispensed with in the Plan. The 3 areas which collectively are referred to as Glenfarne

[3] Whilst the recorded population for Roosky was 564 no. persons, this referred to the combined urban centre partially contained in Co. Leitrim with the substantive part in Co. Roscommon. The C.S.O. have indicated that of the combined total, 144 no. persons were recorded in Co. Leitrim with 350 no. persons were recorded in Co. Roscommon.

consist of Brockagh Lower, Sranagross and West Barrs respectively. Brockagh Lower and Sranagross are both located along the N16 national primary road in close proximity to each other whilst West Barrs is approximately 5km to the north west and contains St. Michael's National School which serves the wider area. In all references hereafter unless specifically qualified, references to Glenfarne refers to the collective area.

As part of the policy of promoting consolidation and compact growth, future growth will be concentrated in the higher tier settlements in the hierarchy. The County town of Carrick-on-Shannon is identified in the RSES as a Key Town and has capacity to accommodate significant residential and economic development at appropriate locations.

The RSES does not provide guidance as to how the Settlement Hierarchy of Co. Leitrim should be defined or the means of classifying lower order settlements below that of designated Key Towns.

The Tier 2B towns of Mohill, Dromahair and Drumshanbo support the Key Town of Carrick-on-Shannon and the Self-Sustaining Growth Towns of Manorhamilton and Ballinamore within their respective Municipal Districts. Kinlough is also included in this tier based on its population of 1,032 people (population more than trebled from the 2002 population level of 335 no. persons and thereby recorded as being the third most populous settlement in the county in 2016). It is accepted that there is a difference in the range of services and functions supported in Drumshanbo and Mohill in comparison to both Kinlough and Dromahair, both of which have become somewhat dormitory in nature owing to the influence of Bundoran and Sligo Town respectively. This is a significant challenge to overcome.

From the previous County Development Plan 2015-2023, Drumsna is moved from Tier 4 – Village to Tier 3 – Key Village because of population growth. The threshold for designation as a Key Village was having a recorded population of 220 population or more at the 2016 Census of Population. It is noted that Carrigallen and Drumkeeran both have second level schools serving their rural hinterlands. It is considered that this important educational service should be reflected in the household allocation to each centre in order to promote sustainable modes of transport to education.

A Graig (Irish word derived from the equivalent of the hamlet) is an established rural node consisting of a community facility and a cluster or grouping of houses. The location of the various graigs are identified in Map No. 2 in Volume III (Book of Maps). The land use strategy for these centres is set out in Section 3.17.2 of Chapter 3 of this Plan.

2.5 Housing Supply Targets

As outlined in the preceding section, the population projections for each county for the target years of 2026 and 2031 are established in the *Implementation Roadmap for the National Planning Framework* (July 2018). The County Development Plan must plan for the identified population growth within these parameters and use them as the basis for strategic decision making in the Development Plan process, including the Core Strategy. To assist Planning Authorities, Section 28 Guidelines, *Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning*, were published in December 2020 and have translated the projected population targets for each county into projected housing demand over the Development Plan period to ensure a standardised approach across the country. These projections are based on the ESRI publication - '*Demographics and Structural Housing Demand at a County Level*' also published in December 2020. Table 28 for Co. Leitrim is replicated in Table 2.3 overleaf.

The Housing Supply Target Guidelines indicate that the identified NPF 50:50 City scenario is the recommended housing demand scenario to be used by Planning Authorities in their planning functions. The housing targets for the NPF 50:50 City scenario is detailed in Appendix I of the Guidelines. It indicates that a target of an additional 1,677 new households between 2017 and 2031 in Co. Leitrim with a calculated housing demand of 1,483 additional households between 2020 and 2031.

The housing target must be aligned for the period of the Development Plan i.e. between Q1 2023 to Q1 2029. The initial modelling of the housing supply target anticipated a Development Plan period between Q3 2022 to Q2 2028. Section 1.1 of this Plan has already documented the severe disruption caused by the various restrictions arising from the Covid-19 pandemic response to the preparation of the Plan. Leitrim County Council availed of an extension to the Plan review process and, simultaneously, an extension to the duration of the 2015-2023 Development Plan[4] for a period not exceeding one year. The resultant delays to the review of the Plan have had obviously implications for preparatory work that was conducted prior to the extension of this review process, with the housing supply target modelling for the Plan period a notable example in this regard.

Notwithstanding, it was considered appropriate to proceed with the initially forecasted housing supply targets for the county for this Plan, with the intention of reviewing the housing supply targets as part of the general duty of the Planning Authority contained within Section 15 of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended. This duty obligates the Local Authority to secure the objectives of the Plan and report on the progress achieved in achieving these objectives. The rationale for this approach takes cognisance of the over reliance of the initial housing supply targets on the 2016 Census of Population data, and the clear waning of the currency and statistical robustness of such source data to accurately reflect housing supply requirements for the county 13 years after such data was recorded (i.e. by 2029). In reviewing the housing supply target two years after the making of this Plan, the Planning Authority can avail of more recent demographic and housing data provided by the 2022 Census of Population in more accurately modelling its housing supply for the remainder of the Plan period up to Q1 2029. The Planning Authority has also been notified that the housing supply targets provided by the Department in December 2020 will be reviewed following the publication of the final 2022 Census results. The approach is intended to be reflected in updates to the Core Strategy and Housing Strategy of this Plan in 2025.

As a result, while the housing supply targets which follow in this Chapter, and the Housing Strategy contained in Appendix V of this Plan, refer to housing supply from 2022 to 2028, these remain relevant pending the aforementioned review of housing supply targets.

The initial period forecast in the housing supply target modelling (i.e. Q3 2022 to Q2 2028), indicated a housing demand for the period up to the end of 2028 of 1,116 no. households[5] or 744 no. households over the duration of the Plan.

[4] The previous Development Plan covered the period 2015-2021 but following the extension approval process was referred to thereafter as "*The County Development Plan 2015-2023*".

[5] Calculated by multiplying the average annual demand of 124 no. units per annum by 9 years (2020 – 2028).

Table 2.3: Leitrim County Council Housing Demand 2020-2031

Leitrim County Council		Annual Average	Total Households
A	ESRI NPF scenario projected new household demand 2017 to 2031	111	1,667
B	Actual new housing supply 2017 – 2019	61	184
C	Homeless households and estimated unmet demand as at Census 2016	N/A	0
D	**Housing Demand 2020 – 2031** = Total (A-B+C)/12	**124**	**1,483**

Source: Table 28, Appendix 1, *Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning* (Section 28 Guidelines issued in December 2020)

However, the Guidelines also indicate that there is a potential adjustment encompassing the portion of the plan period to the end of 2026 to facilitate convergence to NPF strategy (where justified). Such an adjustment has been undertaken in respect of the projected housing supply target for the county over the plan period. The '*convergence*' scenario adjustment on which the housing supply target calculation for the initial 2022-2028 Development Plan period is based, is derived from the midpoint of the ESRI NPF projection and baseline scenarios, resulting in 95% of the projected Roadmap figure. The basis for this calculation is given in Table 2.4 and has been agreed with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

The Housing Strategy, contained in Appendix V, examines projected housing requirements across various tenures and types for the plan period in accordance with Part V of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended. The Housing Strategy is informed by a Housing Needs Demand Assessment (HNDA) which provides the evidence base in identifying the housing needs arising in the county over the period of the plan based on future need, suitable mix of unit types to cater for all housing need requirements and tenure mix. The HNDA process, together with the Housing Strategy complements the central function of the Core Strategy in providing the quantitative evidence base to articulate the medium to longer term spatial development strategy of the functional area of the Planning Authority and in so doing, demonstrates that the Development Plan and its objectives are consistent with national and regional development objectives.

Whilst the period of the last Development Plan has seen significant progress made in completing houses within incomplete residential schemes, there has been a considerable delay in the domestic multi-unit house development sector returning to approaching a normal functioning sector. In the past 2 years, disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in activity through the planning permission process for multiple house developments in addition to a significant increase in the number of Local Authority own developments for social housing being brought through the Part 8 consultation process. Such indicators align with the overall national trend of a pent-up demand for additional housing to accommodate a range of household sizes and incomes after years of minimal activity in the housing development market following the economic recession characterised over the years 2008-2014.

Table 2.4: Leitrim Housing Targets Q3 2022 to Q3 2028

		Annual Average	Total Households
A	ESRI NPF scenario projected new household demand 2017 to Q2 2028	104 (1,195/11.5)	1,195[A]
B	Actual Housing Supply 2017 to Q2 2022	50 (274/5.5)	274[B]
C	Homeless households and estimated unmet demand as at Census 2016	0	0[C]
D	Plan Housing Demand Q3 2022 to Q2 2028 (A-B+C)	154 (921/6)	921[D]
E	Potential adjustment 1 to end of 2026 portion of plan period to facilitate convergence to NPF strategy (where justified)	Mid-point between ESRI NPF and Baseline Scenarios to 2026 in lieu of A above	Adjusted Total Demand
E1	ESRI Baseline scenario projected new household demand 2017 to Q4 2026	159 (1,592/10)	1,592
E2	ESRI Baseline scenario projected new household demand to Q2 2028	176	176
E3	Mid-point between A-E2 (ESRI NPF and baseline scenarios) to Q4 2026	131 (1,306/10)	1,306 (1,195 – 176 + 1,592)/2
E4	**Adjusted Total Demand calculation based on E2+E3 in lieu of A above**	**201**	**1,208** (176[E2] + 1,306[E3] - 274[B]) + 0[C]

Notes:

A From ESRI Research

B Estimated future delivery (projected pro-rata CSO data available year to date – i.e. Q4 2020 to Q2 2022 = 54. Future delivery considers the extant permissions for 107 units (October 2020)

C From Census (Overcrowding and Concealed Households) and Homelessness (DHPLG)

D Leitrim CDP Target – NPF Scenario

2.6 Housing Yield from Existing Zoned Lands

To inform the quantum and locations of future land use zonings to accommodate the projected housing supply target over the plan period, an analysis of available lands zoned for Residential or Mixed Use in the Leitrim County Development Plan 2015-2023 was undertaken to ascertain the housing yield from these zoned lands. This analysis is presented overleaf in Table 2.5.

Table 2.1: Yield of available lands zoned for Residential or Mixed Use in Leitrim County Development Plan 2015-2023 (June 2021)

Settlement [A]	A. Primarily Residential (Developed) Available (ha)	B. Primarily Residential (Low Density) Available (ha)	C. Mixed Use (ha)	Yield Column A: 15-30 units/ha	Yield Column B: 5 units/ha	Yield Column C: 20 units/ha	Total Household Yield	D. Residential Reserve/Support	Yield Column D: 25 units/ha
Carrick-on-Shannon [B]	19.82	3.47	1.23	480	17	25	521	45.83	1,146
	Primarily Residential (Developed) Available (ha)	Primarily Residential (Undeveloped) Available (ha)	Mixed Use (ha)	**Yield Column A** 20 units/ha	**Yield Column B** 25 units/ha	**Yield Column C** 15 units/ha			**Yield Column D** - 20 units/ha
Ballinamore	2.36	3.46	2.87	47	87	43	177	15.02	300
Manorhamilton	3.14	5.16	0.92	79	129	14	221	12.39	248
				20 units/ha	20 units/ha	10 units/ha			20 units/ha
Dromahair	0.27	1.7	0	5	34	0	39	15.02	300
Drumshanbo	0	2.96	0.35	0	59	4	63	18.75	375
Mohill	2.76	0.85	8.02	55	17	80	152	21.1	422
Kinlough [C]	0.74	9.03	2.35	15	135	24	174	7.17	143
				15 units/ha	15 units/ha	10 units/ha			15 units/ha
Carrigallen	0.37	0	3.21	6	0	32	38	17.38	261
Dromod	1.45	5.84	1.93	22	88	19	129	5.12	77
Drumkeeran	0.74	0	2.88	11	0	29	40	4.93	74
Drumsna [D]	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
Leitrim	0.61	6.05	0.64	9	91	6	106	5.42	81
Tullaghan [D]	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
Total	32.26	38.52	24.395	728	657	275	**1,660**	168.13	3,428

Notes:

A. **Settlement Hierarchy** (2015-2023 County Development Plan)

Tier 1 - Key Town	Carrick-on-Shannon
Tier 2A – Self-Sustaining Growth Towns	Manorhamilton & Ballinamore
Tier 2B – Support Towns	Dromahair, Drumshanbo, Mohill & Kinlough
Tier 3 – Key Villages	Carrigallen, Dromod, Drumkeeran, Drumsna, Leitrim and Tullaghan

B. **Carrick-on-Shannon**

A detailed consideration was given to the various parcels of lands identified with a Primarily Residential land use zoning objective which remain available for development. Sites were classified as being infill in nature (5.99 hectares at density of 15 units per hectare), edge of centre (8.78 hectares at density of 30 units per hectare) and outer suburban (5.05 hectares at density of 25 units per hectare).

There remains one parcel of land identified with a Primarily Residential (low density) land use zoning objective on the Leitrim Road. There remains a dwelling substantially completed and the foundations/ground slab of another. The configuration of this land bank is not conducive to a substantive scheme in terms of housing yield. The density of 5 units per hectare is considered reasonable having regard to the extent of the site which is partially developed and the prevailing character of this area.

C. **Kinlough**

8.49 hectares of Primarily Residential Undeveloped (available) relates to substantive part of Lough Melvin Forest Park which is a brownfield site. There are 25 houses which are substantially completed which are excluded from this area. The permitted development was for 95 dwellings and a 120 no. bedroom hotel. The density of the residential development was approximately 9.5 units per hectare. The figure for Kinlough is based on 15 units per hectare.

D. **Tullaghan and Drumsna**

Tullaghan and Drumsna along with other Tier 4 centres do not have land use zoning objectives but rather a *'General'* development land use. These were excluded from this exercise. It is noted however that there was an area identified in the land use zoning objectives map for Tullaghan extending to 1.8 hectares identified as Residential Reserve/Support.

2.6.1 Conclusions

The 2015-2023 County Development Plan could potentially yield 1,660 no. units from lands zoned for residential or for mixed use which could include a substantial element of residential use. In addition, there is an overhang of lands previously zoned residential use which were identified as 'Residential Reserve/Support' in the 2015-2023 County Development Plan. These lands extend to 168.13 hectares and could accommodate a yield of 3,428 no units if zoned for residential use in the future.

Based on changes to planning policy, there is no longer provision for headroom[6]. The practice of Residential Reserve/Support is therefore being dispensed with in this Plan as there is already 25% headroom built into the projected population figures to deal with provision of market choice.

[6] The published NPF/NDP national average baseline population projection accounts for a 25% 'headroom' allowance for additional population growth in every County pro-rata, for each Census year and inter Censal period. The transitional projections based on the methodology described above and in Appendix 2, add a further 25%, over and above the population projected to 2026 in the NPF.

2.7 Housing Yield from Proposed Zoned Lands

Table 2.2: Yield of available lands zoned for Residential or Mixed Use in Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029

	Urban Centre	Household Allocation 2022-2028	% Allocation	A. New Residential (ha)	B. New Residential (Low Density/Infill) (ha)	C. Mixed Use (ha)	Yield A	Yield B	Yield C	Total Household Yield
Tier 1							15-30 units/ha	10 units/ha	20 units/ha	
Key Town	Carrick-on-Shannon [A]	362	30	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	362
Tier 2A Self-Sustaining Growth Towns							20 units/ha	10 units/ha	15 units/ha	
	Ballinamore	97	8	2.62	2.67	2.24	52	27	34	113
	Manorhamilton	97	8	3.46	6.14	0	69	61	0	130
Tier 2B Support Towns							15 units/ha	10 units/ha	15 units/ha	
	Dromahair [B]	48	4	2.71	0.3	0	41	3	0	44
	Drumshanbo	48	4	2.81	2.65	0	42	9	0	51
	Mohill [C]	48	4	0	1.07	4.49	0	11	67	78
	Kinlough	48	4	12.82	1.15	0.3	63	12	5	80
Tier 3 Key Villages	Carrigallen [D]	36	3	2.33	0.15	0.2	35	3	3	61
	Dromod	24	2	3.56	0	0	53	0	0	53
	Drumkeeran	36	3	2.05	0.49	0.8	31	5	12	48
	Drumsna [E]	24	2	1.05	0.08	0	16	2	0	18
	Leitrim	24	2	2.05	0.44	0	31	4	0	35
	Tullaghan [F]	24	2	0	3	1.035	0	12	16	28
	Sub Total			25.18	18.14	9.065	433	167	642	**1,101**
Tier 4 Villages	15 No.	86	7							85
Tier 5 Graigs	25 No.	61	5							60
Other	Rural Houses [G]	145	12							144
	Total	**1,208**	**100**							**1,390**

Table 2.6 on the previous page provides the potential housing yield from the lands identified with a residential or mixed use land use zoning objective in the Plan.

Notes:

A. The Carrick-on-Shannon/Cortober Local Area Plan will identify the quantum of lands required to provide for 362 no. households or 30% of the final approved housing projections for the county.

B. The marginal under provision in Dromahair can comfortably be provided in redevelopment proposals of brownfield/under utilised sites in the town centre similar to the development of 4 no. social housing units to the rear of the approved new library which redeveloped the vacant and dilapidated former Breffni Hotel site.

C. The delivery of the required number of households in Mohill is dependent on the development primarily of backland sites, one of which includes a significant element of redundant former industrial buildings. The site north of Main Street has no obvious access and is essentially land locked. The creation of an access will require site assembly and the agreement of the demolition of an existing structure or parts of an existing structure. On that basis, the quantum of lands identified exceeds that required but is justified on the need for active land management on the part of the Local Authority to lead in the delivery of the release of these lands, the need for a Framework Plan to be prepared for each area and the likely timeframe involved which may extend beyond the life of the Development Plan. It is considered that the lands east of Hyde Street have the least impediments and will be the first option pursued by the Local Authority.

D. At the Special Meeting of Leitrim County Council to adopt the Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029, the Elected Members resolved to approve the inclusion of objective CN 9 in the Carrigallen Settlement Plan, as contained within Volume II of the Plan, which facilitates the development of *Social & Community* zoned lands to the south of the existing Scoil Mhuire Naofa National School for up to 20 no. residential units in the event that the potential relocation of Carrigallen Vocational School to these subject lands is not required and subject to certain criteria being met.:

   For completeness, Table 2.6 accounts for this potential housing yield of 20 no. residential units for the Carrigallen settlement.

E. The achievement of the household levels assigned to Drumsna will be dependent on infill/backland opportunities being realised. In addition, the village has considerable architectural and historic significance. It is considered that with the absence of a national school in the village and the need to drive children to national schools in Annaduff or Carrick-on-Shannon, that the development of this Key Village needs to be carefully considered and managed.

F. The lands identified in Tullaghan for new housing relate to the completion of Aigean Croith which can be considered a brownfield site. This was permitted as a housing development of 15 no. units, 3 of which were completed and occupied. The yield of development which is expected to be realised from the lands identified is therefore less than the yield for other Key Villages contained in Table 2.6 but considered appropriate for the scale and character of the village.

G. The figure of 145 no. rural dwellings excludes an additional 20% which will be redeveloped on brownfield sites and constitute replacement houses. These are not considered to constitute additional houses.

2.8 Rural Housing

Leitrim County Council recognises the long tradition of people living in rural areas and promotes sustainable rural settlements as a key component of delivering balanced regional development. The Leitrim County Development Plan 2015-2023 identified three area types in the county in terms of their capacity to accommodate further rural housing – low, medium and high capacity areas.

The Plan sets out the policy against which all applications for one off housing in the countryside are assessed. The NPF recognises that careful planning is required to manage demand for housing in the countryside and acknowledges that it will continue to be necessary to demonstrate a functional economic or social requirement for housing need in areas under urban influence i.e. the commuter catchment of large towns such as Carrick-on-Shannon and Sligo. The Rural Housing policy therefore differentiates between the pressure for one off housing in the areas surrounding large towns (Carrick-on-Shannon and the impact of Sligo extending into Co. Leitrim) where an economic and social tie to an area must be established from the remainder of the countryside.

The facilitation of rural housing also poses a significant challenge in rural Leitrim owing to the poor percolation characteristics associated with soil conditions across most of the county. These soil characteristics make it extremely difficult for applicants from rural areas to satisfy the requirements of the EPA Code of Practice for individual wastewater treatment systems in order to build individual houses in the countryside. The result is a decline in rural population which is having a profound effect on the retention of services and in sporting organisations being able to field teams. The retention of sustainable rural communities will be a priority of the County Development Plan.

It is also a requirement of the RSES that 20% of all individual dwellings in rural areas consist of brownfield redevelopment. This requirement is in addition to the requirement relating to small towns and villages which is outlined in the Strategic Aims of this Core Strategy. This will become an increasing challenge as such opportunities diminish over time. This objective is contained in the Housing Strategy.

2.9 Compact Growth

An efficient use of land is essential for sustainable development. The NPF acknowledges that the physical format of urban development is one of our greatest national development challenges and identified compact growth as one of the National Strategic Outcomes. This requires delivering a greater proportion of residential development and other development within existing built-up areas of towns and villages and moving away from reliance on greenfield development to meet our future development needs. Creating more compact development has been traditionally more difficult to achieve than a continuous process of pushing development onto greenfield locations.

It is now a requirement that 30% of all new homes will be delivered within the existing built up footprint of '*urban*' settlements. This will require making better use of under utilised land including infill and brownfield sites. RPO 3.2 (c) relates to the built-up footprint of those urban settlements as defined by the CSO and which have a population of at least 1,500 people. The CSO defines a settlement of fewer than 1,500 people as '*rural*'.' It is considered that the provisions of RPO 3.2 (c) only apply to Carrick-on-Shannon and possibly Manorhamilton which would now be considered to exceed this population threshold. As Ballinamore is within the same tier in the Settlement Hierarchy as

Manorhamilton, this requirement will also apply to Ballinamore (CS OBJ 5 refers). It is noted however that on the basis of the defined settlement boundary produced by the C.S.O. that the majority of the sites identified for residential development within the Tier 2B 'Support Towns' and Tier 3 'Key Villages' are infill sites contained within the defined settlement boundary.

The Objectives Maps include the CSO defined individual urban settlement boundary and the Planning Authority has identified most of the lands proposed for residential development within these boundaries. The application of this boundary will define those residentially zoned lands of settlements which will contribute to the cumulative delivery of 30% of all new homes within the built-up footprint of existing settlements in Tier 1 and 2A and 20% of all new homes within the built-up footprint of existing settlements in Tier 2B and 3 respectively.

2.10 Retail Development

A Retail Strategy for the county has been prepared as part of this Plan. The preparation of the Strategy has been informed by the *Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DECLG, 2012)*. The aim of this Strategy is to sustain and improve the retail competitiveness of the county, address expenditure leakage, and ensure an equitable and sustainable distribution of retail floorspace across the county

Co. Leitrim is not identified in the *Retail Planning Guidelines* as requiring the undertaking of a Joint or Multi-Authority Retail Strategy (Section 3.5 refers). Section 3.7 of the Guidelines indicates that there is no specific requirement to estimate detailed floorspace requirements for additional retail development for plans outside the areas covered by Joint or Multi-Authority Retail Strategies. Instead, a general statement of additional retail development requirements, reflecting the local evidence of market interest and the need to provide good opportunities for retail provision to serve the main population centres in the county, is considered sufficient to formulate appropriate policies and criteria for dealing with new development proposals. This Plan has been prepared on this basis with a number of retail development policies contained herein which take cognisance of the Retail Strategy.

The policy position in relation to retailing activity is set out in Chapter 4 (Economic Development).

2.11 Core Strategy Policies and Objectives

Leitrim County Council will ensure that the future spatial development of Leitrim is underpinned by means of a plan led approach and in accordance with national and regional policy, in facilitating residential and employment generating development at locations of sufficient environmental carrying capacity. This in turn will support investment in public infrastructure and services, and which is sensitive to the physical character of the built and natural environment of Co. Leitrim. This approach is enshrined in the following Core Strategy Objectives as follows:

Overarching Core Strategy Objectives	
CS OBJ 1	To ensure that the future spatial development of Co. Leitrim is in accordance with the National Planning Framework 2040 including the population targets set out under the Implementation Roadmap, and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region 2020-2032.
CS OBJ 2	To implement all land use planning objectives in a manner which takes account of and is consistent with the Core Strategy to accelerate a transition to a greener, low carbon

	and climate resilient county with a focus on reduced travel demand through the promotion of sustainable settlement patterns to the maximum extent practicable in a rural county such as Co. Leitrim.
CS OBJ 3	To ensure that adequate zoned lands are available to satisfy the housing requirements of the county in designated settlements over the lifetime of the Plan.
CS OBJ 4	To promote the integration of land use and transportation policies and to prioritise provision for cycling and walking travel modes and the strengthening of public transport with particular emphasis on the bus for inter urban centre travel.
CS OBJ 5	To support the regeneration of underused town centre and brownfield/infill lands along with the delivery of existing zoned and serviced lands to facilitate population growth and achieve sustainable compact growth targets of 30% of all new housing to be built within the existing urban footprint of the targeted settlements of Carrick-on-Shannon, Ballinamore and Manorhamilton.
CS OBJ 6	To support the regeneration of underused town and village centre and brownfield/infill lands along with the delivery of existing zoned and serviced lands to facilitate population growth and achieve sustainable compact growth targets of 20% of all new housing to be built within the existing footprint of the settlements contained in Tier 2B and 3 of the Settlement Hierarchy.
CS OBJ 7	To incorporate measures for the promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas including the promotion of measures to reduce energy demand, reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, and address the necessity of adaptation to climate change, having regard to the location, layout and design of new development.
CS OBJ 8	To support the continued growth and development of the Key Town of Carrick-on-Shannon as an urban place of regional scale attaining a target population of over 5,000 people by the end of the Plan period with a focus on quality of life and as a driver of economic development within the county and wider region.
CS OBJ 9	To prepare a Joint Local Area Plan (LAP) for Carrick-on-Shannon/Cortober in conjunction with Roscommon County Council and informed by a Local Transport Plan prepared in consultation with the National Transport Authority, Transport Infrastructure Ireland and other stakeholders within one year of the adoption of the Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029. The Local Area Plan shall determine the land use zoning objectives for Carrick-on-Shannon and ensure that the quantum of land identified for residential development adheres to that indicated in Table 2.6 of this Core Strategy. The LAP shall ensure sustainable, compact, sequential growth in the combined urban centre by consolidating the existing footprint with a focus on the redevelopment and regeneration of identified infill and brownfield sites.
CS OBJ 10	To support and facilitate the transition of Carrick-on-Shannon towards a decarbonisation zone within the lifetime of this Plan striving to make Carrick-on-Shannon a leader in climate adaptation and mitigation, and accelerate a transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy.

CS OBJ 11	To ensure that Ballinamore and Manorhamilton become self-sustaining economic drivers within their catchments, by consolidating their residential, retail, tourism and service functions and enhancing their distinctive town centre character.
CS OBJ 12	To ensure that the Support Towns of Dromahair, Drumshanbo, Kinlough and Mohill develop in a sustainable and consolidated manner with increased local employment opportunities available to sustain their communities, providing an appropriate range of local services and amenities and ensuring a high quality of life for residents in each centre.
CS OBJ 13	To ensure that the Key Villages accommodate commensurate population and employment growth to accommodate natural increase and maintain existing services, and to ensure that future growth is balanced and sustainable.
CS OBJ 14	Ensure that the range of Villages across the county maintain their existing population levels and services, cater for modest levels of growth appropriate to their scale, size and character.
CS OBJ 15	To promote and support the provision of serviced sites in line with investment opportunities by Irish Water in order to attract people to build their own homes and live in villages and graigs, supporting the retention of services in such centres and as a viable alternative to one off housing in the countryside.
CS OBJ 16	To ensure that individual rural housing is facilitated to sustain rural communities whilst ensuring that Leitrim's natural heritage, environment and landscape qualities are protected.
CS OBJ 17	To promote Carrick-on-Shannon as the main retail centre in the county with the provision of retail in other centres commensurate with their roles.
CS OBJ 18	To support the vitality and viability of existing town and village centres and facilitate a competitive and healthy environment for the retailing sector by ensuring that future growth in retail floorspace responds to the identified retail hierarchy, the sequential approach, and the needs of the projected population of the settlement areas.
CS OBJ 19	To ensure that development is promoted, supported or facilitated through the County Development Plan that provides for climate action including that related to the increased risk of flooding and the promotion of sustainable transport options and renewable energy where possible to achieve a successful transition to a low carbon economy.

3 HOUSING STRATEGY

3.1 Introduction

Building strong, inclusive communities is a key element in achieving sustainable development. The availability and supply of housing to meet the required demand is a critical element in maintaining the competitiveness of the county and its attractiveness as a place to live and invest. Placemaking, compact growth, active land management, and addressing the impact of climate change are some of the key themes of both the NPF and RSES.

The Council's role with regard to housing is to formulate a planning policy in the County Development Plan, to consider planning applications for private housing against this policy framework, to ensure that sufficient lands are zoned to meet the projected housing demand and to provide houses or facilitate the provision of social housing for those requiring assistance to provide homes for themselves. The Council also has the capacity to influence the supply, location and scale of new housing within its functional area.

The Council's core objective in relation to the provision of housing is to ensure that every household has accommodation suitable to their needs, located in a suitable environment, at a price or rent it can afford.

The Settlement Strategy contained in the Core Strategy provides a network of vibrant settlements that are supported by strong rural areas and adheres to realising the National Strategic Outcomes and Regional Policy Objectives for population and settlement growth set out in the NPF and RSES. The Settlement Strategy promotes increased residential density where appropriate as well as supporting the consolidation of town centres and the promotion of placemaking (see Chapter 6 – Urban Settlements).

The previous Leitrim County Development Plan 2015-2023 followed a period of recession in the national property market post 2008. A review of the Housing Strategy and preparation of Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA) as required by the NPF was carried out in consultation with MacCabe Durney Barnes Consultants to reflect the fundamental changes that have taken place in the economy since the last plan was prepared. High levels of market uncertainty and the changing nature of housing demand, including mitigating factors such as income, demographics and credit conditions are key aspects which underline the current housing market. The lack of activity in the multiple housing sector remains a grave concern for the Local Authority in meeting our population and household targets set out in the Core Strategy.

This chapter has also considered the key legislative and policy documents which are set out in the more detailed Housing Strategy which contains the findings of the *Housing Strategy and the Housing Needs Demand Assessment*, as well as current Government policy at the time of their preparation. It should be noted that work on the Housing Needs Demand Assessment which informed the Housing Strategy was completed in May 2021 and predate the publication of the Housing for All Programme and the Affordable Housing Act 2021. The Plan generally contains households projections to cover the life of the Plan as qualified in Section 2.5 Housing Supply Targets in the previous chapter. This will require a further adjustment to the household projections agreed to date with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. This chapter should be read as an Executive Summary of the more detailed Housing Strategy and accompanying Housing Needs Demand Assessment.

3.2 Strategic Aim

The strategic aim of this chapter seeks:

> "*To develop and support vibrant sustainable communities in an attractive living environment where people can live and enjoy a high quality of life, with access to a wide range of community facilities and amenities, while ensuring co-ordinated investment in infrastructure that will support economic competitiveness to provide quality employment outcomes for our citizens".*

The strategic aim will be achieved through the following principles:

- To promote socially balanced and inclusive communities in all housing areas across Co. Leitrim
- To ensure that the housing needs of our communities are met in a manner which satisfies their individual needs and at a location of choice recognising the strong rural tradition of Co. Leitrim and the attractive proposition of our towns and villages
- Facilitating affordable and quality housing developments within existing town and village boundaries promoting compact growth and mixed use developments to the maximum extent practicable
- Developing brownfield sites and vacant sites in urban areas
- Managing ribbon development and one-off housing, while promoting the reuse of the existing rural stock and brownfield development opportunities
- To provide for varying identified needs in the county with respect to housing typology, size and mix
- Ensuring that a range of social, education and community infrastructure is available to provide a good quality of life to our residents
- To monitor the Housing Strategy, allowing for adequate consultation with those who are central to the implementation of the objectives in the strategy

3.3 Co. Leitrim Housing Strategy

The preparation of a Housing Strategy is a mandatory requirement under Part V of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended. Section 94 therein requires a Development Plan to include a strategy for the purposes of ensuring that the proper planning and sustainable development of the area provides for the housing of the existing and future populations of the county. This strategy is known as the '*Housing Strategy*'. The Housing Strategy is provided in Appendix V of this Plan. The purpose of a Housing Strategy is to evaluate the housing needs of the existing and future population in the county.

The Housing Strategy shall:

a) Include an estimate of, and provision for, the existing need and the likely future need for housing in the area covered by the Development Plan. The Planning Authority shall ensure that sufficient and suitable land is zoned in its Development Plan for residential use (or for a mixture of residential and other uses), to meet the requirements of the Housing Strategy and to ensure that a scarcity of such land does not occur at any time during the period of the Development Plan.

b) Take into account the need to ensure that housing is available for persons who have different levels of income, and for those in need of social or affordable housing in the area. A Housing Strategy shall therefore provide that as a general policy a specified percentage, not being more than 20% of the land zoned in the Development Plan for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses, shall be reserved for social and/or affordable housing.

c) Ensure that a mixture of house types and sizes is developed to reasonably match the requirements of the different categories of households, as may be determined by the Planning Authority, including the special requirements of elderly persons and persons with disabilities.

d) Counteract undue segregation in housing between persons of different social backgrounds. The Planning Authority may indicate in respect of any residential area that there is no requirement for social/affordable housing in respect of that area, or that a lower percentage than that specified in the housing strategy may instead be required.

The Co. Leitrim Housing Strategy is closely aligned with the Core Strategy as the future housing need is based on the population and household projections contained in the Core Strategy. The Housing Strategy is also informed by the most recent Social Housing Needs Assessment for Leitrim in addition to National Housing Policy publications including '*The Social Housing Strategy 2020 – Support, Supply, and Reform (2014)', and 'Rebuilding Ireland – Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness (2016)'.*

3.4 Housing Needs Demand Assessment

National Policy Objective 37 of the NPF states that a "*Housing Needs Demand Assessment (HNDA) is to be undertaken for each Local Authority in order to correlate and accurately align future housing requirements*". This assessment will evaluate the number of additional housing units required to meet existing and future demand. The Housing Strategy Modelling and Housing Need Demand Assessment are provided in Appendix V of this Plan.

The Housing Strategy is therefore underpinned by the Housing Needs Demand Assessment (HNDA), which provides an evidence base to inform and guide policies and objectives contained in the Plan. The HNDA considers demographic and socio-economic trends to analyse current levels of demand and supply within Leitrim's housing market (owner occupier, private rental and social housing) and includes projections for future need over the lifetime of the plan based on economic growth, income levels/mortgage capacity and affordability in the housing market. The resultant Housing Strategy seeks to address these needs to ensure that housing is available for persons with different levels of income. It also assesses the mix of house types and sizes and highlights the need to counteract undue segregation in housing between persons of different social backgrounds.

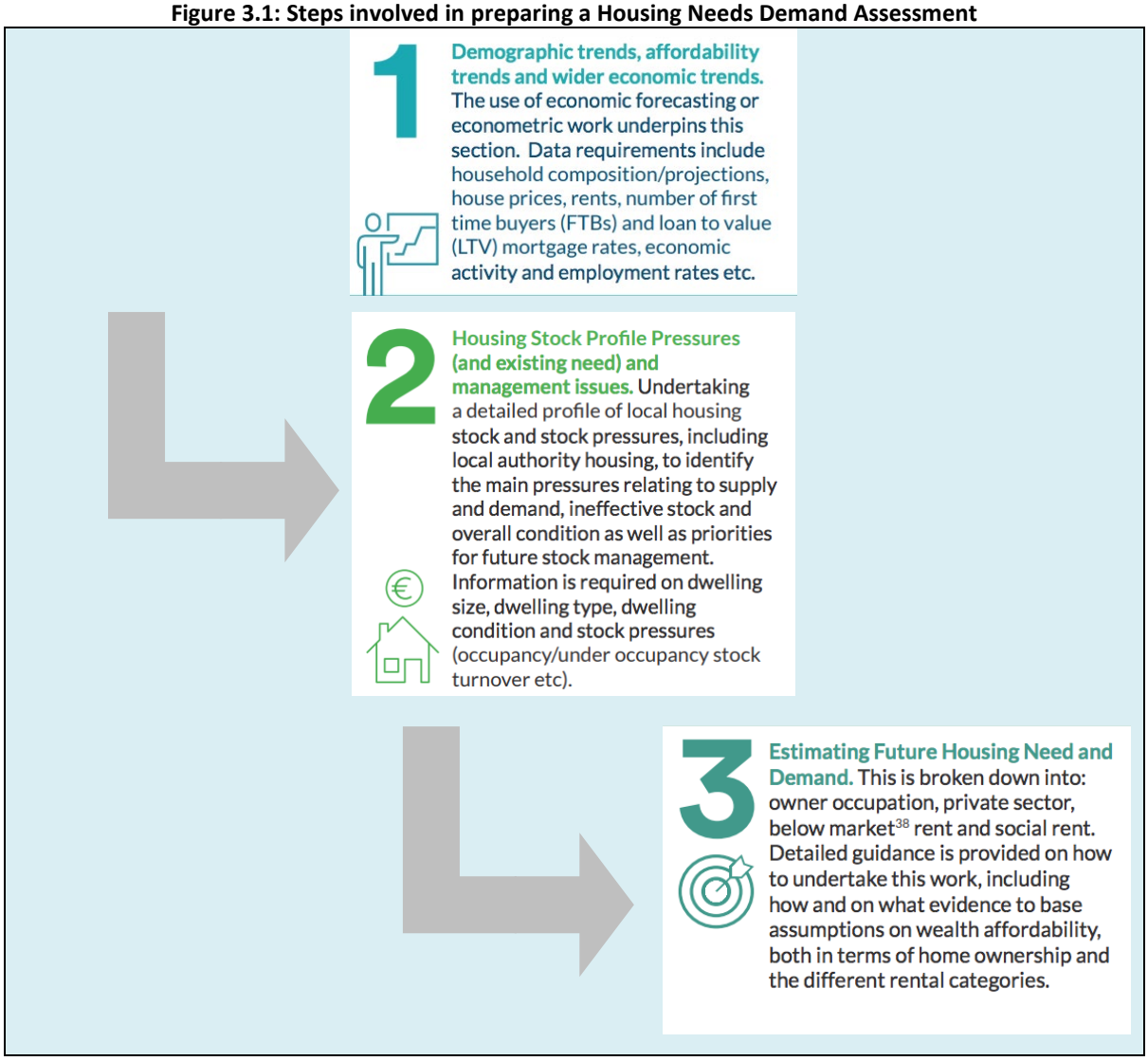
The steps of a HNDA are set out in the NPF and are illustrated overleaf in Figure 3.1.

The principal findings to emerge from the analysis presented in this Housing Strategy, informed by the HNDA are as follows:

- Housing provision for a total of 1,208 no. new households will be required to meet the population targets set for Co. Leitrim over the period of the Development Plan which would provide for a population in excess of 35,000 people
- The average household size is projected to continue to fall to 2.46 by 2028 from a recorded level of 2.55 in 2016
- In 2020, the average price for a dwelling in Co. Leitrim was €119,301, the lowest in the country compared to a national average of €263,892

- Leitrim recorded a standardised rent of €626 at the end of 2020, the lowest in the country, compared to a national average of €1,256 (€904 outside of the Greater Dublin Area)
- An average of 328 no. second hand homes were sold each year between 2015-2020
- The availability of zoned land is not expected to act as a constraint over the course of the Development Plan 2023– 2029
- The projected need for social and affordable housing over the life of the Plan is estimated at 18.8% (227 no. households)
- It is projected that there will be no material change in the proportion of tenure composition over the period of the Plan with 73% being owner occupied, 14% private rental, 8% social rental and 5% other
- There will be a gradual increase in the percentage of 1 and 2 person households being formed with a corresponding decline in the larger 4 and 5+ person households

Figure 3.1: Steps involved in preparing a Housing Needs Demand Assessment



Source: National Planning Framework **HOUSI**

NGTIVES

3.5 Social and Affordable Housing

The modelling undertaken to inform the HNDA assesses the ability of households securing sufficient income to satisfy the Central Bank rules in relation to mortgages. It involves:

- determining the number of additional households in each income decile[7]
- projecting house price bands and the number of units coming forward in those price bands
- establishing the number of households which do not meet the affordability criteria
- expressing this as a percentage of the total additional households forming during the plan period

Interest rates for mortgages are currently averaging 3.0% (Central Bank, 2020). It can be expected that these rates will remain at this level for at least the next two years. The Central Bank analysis suggests that interest rates will remain at this level in the medium term. The Housing Strategy therefore assumes an interest rate of 3.0% for the life of this Plan.

The mortgage repayments were calculated using a loan to value ratio of 0.9 for a 25-year repayment period. A maximum of 35% of household income on mortgage costs is applied in accordance with the annuity formula specified in the Step-by-Step Guide[8].

Table 3.1 outlines the affordable house prices per decile for Co. Leitrim based on estimated household disposable incomes which in turn indicates the ability to satisfy Central Bank lending rules.

Table 3.1: Approximate Affordable House Prices per Decile

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
1st decile	€57,350	€59,128	€60,961	€62,850	€64,799	€66,807	€68,878
2nd decile	€94,163	€97,082	€100,091	€103,194	€106,393	€109,691	€113,092
3rd decile	€134,963	€139,147	€143,460	€147,908	€152,493	€157,220	€162,094
4th decile	€171,994	€177,326	€182,823	€188,490	€194,334	€200,358	€206,569
5th decile	€210,716	€217,248	€223,983	€230,926	€238,085	€245,466	€253,075
6th decile	€251,260	€259,049	€267,080	€275,359	€283,896	€292,696	€301,770
7th decile	€298,152	€307,395	€316,924	real	€336,878	€347,321	€358,088
8th decile	€353,051	€363,996	€375,280	€386,914	€398,908	€411,274	€424,024
9th decile	€428,057	€441,326	€455,008	€469,113	€483,655	€498,649	€514,107
10th decile	€647,344	€667,412	€688,102	€709,433	€731,425	€754,100	€777,477

On the basis of the modelling undertaken, there is projected to be a surplus of units for all price bands. However, this does not consider the inactivity at present in relation to the multiple house construction sector in the county and the fact that it does not appear profitable at present for new private housing developments to commence. The Council await proposed legislative amendments in relation to Affordable Housing generally to reconcile this reality which is beyond the scope of a Development Plan to remedy.

Section 94 of the Act requires the estimation of the social housing requirements to now also include cost rental considerations required in Co. Leitrim over the life of the Plan. The households that do not qualify for a mortgage and who cannot afford private rental accommodation are those in need of social (and affordable) housing. Table 3.2 overleaf summarises the requirement for the period Q3 2022 to Q2 2028.

[7] each of ten equal groups into which a population can be divided according to the distribution of values of a particular variable.
[8] Step-by-Step Guide to Preparation of a Part V Housing Strategy

Table 3.2: Social and Affordable Housing Requirement

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Total Plan H'holds
New Household Formations	30	181	202	209	200	206	210	1,208
Number of Additional Households Qualifying for a Mortgage	24	144	160	166	159	164	167	961
Number of Additional Households not qualifying for Mortgage	8	37	41	43	41	52	43	247
Of which can afford Private Rental	1	3	3	3	3	4	4	20
Of which can't afford Private Rental	7	34	38	40	38	38	39	227
Social Housing Percentage	**22.6**	**18.8**	**18.9**	**19.0**	**18.9**	**18.5**	**18.5**	**18.8**

Source: Co. Leitrim Housing Strategy

The Housing Strategy estimates that there will be a requirement for 227 no. social housing units over the period of the plan amounting to 18.8% of additional households formed. These households do not meet the affordability criteria for a mortgage and cannot afford a privately rented property. The basis for these calculations is provided for in the Housing Strategy. The estimated breakdown of social housing requirement by unit size is as detailed in Table 3.3. It is based upon the current housing waiting list requirements.

Table 3.3: Social Housing Unit Size

Unit Size	% Requirement
1 Bedroom	**123 (54%)**
2 Bedroom	**68 (30%)**
3 Bedroom	**30 (13%)**
4 + Bedroom	**7 (3%)**

Source: Leitrim County Council Housing Department

3.6 Summary of Social Housing Needs Assessment 2020

In 2020, the net housing need on completion of the assessment was 190 no. households qualifying for social housing support compared to 367 no. households qualifying in the previous assessment undertaken in 2016. This represents a decrease in 51.7% over the period and demonstrates the progress made by the Housing Authority over this period.

While there has been a significant decrease in overall number of households requiring housing assistance, more households see their needs met through a variety of options provided by the Local Authority. There has been a much wider use of the Housing Assistance Programme (HAP) scheme with the number of households availing of the HAP scheme recorded at 305 no. households in 2020, an

increase from the 238 no. households having received HAP payments in June 2019.

Over 76% of the households on the list are either composed of a single person or a lone parent. The single person household is the one which has remained consistent with the results from the previous assessment undertaken in 2019. Couples with or without children account for less than one-quarter of the list.

Table 3.4: Household Composition of Applicants on Housing Waiting List 2019-2020

Household Composition	Applicants (2020)	Applicants (2019)
Single Adult	114	117
1 Adult 1 Child	19	16
1 Adult 2 Child +	13	14
2 Adult	17	19
2 Adult + Child	9	16
other	18	7
Total	190	189

Source: Leitrim County Council Housing Department

Further details and a breakdown of need by category is provided in the Housing Strategy.

The mechanisms for delivering social housing include the following:

- Part V of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended
- Direct construction by Local Authorities or in partnership with Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs)
- Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), Social Housing Lease Initiatives and Housing Assistance Payments (HAPs)
- Purchase of new or second-hand residential units
- Casual vacancies

3.7 Tenure and Household Composition

Table 3.5 indicates that owner occupied households is the dominant housing tenure in Co. Leitrim accounting for 73% of private households in 2016[9]. 14% of private households were living in privately rented houses and 8% in social housing.

Further detail of the breakdown of the type of tenure is provided in the Housing Strategy.

[9] Under the 2016 Census, tenure is established with reference to 'permanent private households' while household size and accommodation type is defined with reference to 'private households'.

Table 3.5: Leitrim Housing Tenure in 2016

	Permanent Private Households	% of Households
Owner Occupied	9,046	73%
Rented (Privately)	1,773	14%
Social Housing	1,003	8%
Other	582	5%
Total	**12,404**	**100%**

Source*:* CSO

The NPF also indicates that consideration should be given to housing tenure requirements. The last three intercensal periods have been reviewed. There has been no material change in proportion in each of the tenure categories. As such it is projected that there will be no material change in tenure composition for the period of the Plan, with 73% being owner occupied, 14% private rental, 8% social rental, and 5% other.

Table 3.6 shows the accommodation type in the county. In 2016, over 95% of the county housing stock consisted of houses or bungalows in 2016 and only 4% of the households were living in an apartment or flat.

Table 3.6: Leitrim Private Households by Accommodation Type in 2016

Accommodation Type	Number of Private Households	% of Households
House/Bungalow	11,774	94.6%
Flat/Apartment	489	3.9%
Caravan/Mobile Home	48	0.4%
Not stated	141	1.1%
Total	**12,452**	**100%**

Source: CSO

Household composition has been modelled for the period of the Plan, having regard to the assumptions in relation to reduced household size. Table 3.7 shows that there is a projected gradual increase in the percentage of 1 and 2 person households, with a corresponding decline in larger 4 and 5+ person households.

Table 3.7: Projected Household Composition

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
1 person	30.7%	30.7%	30.8%	30.9%	30.9%	31.0%	31.0%
2 persons	29.1%	29.2%	29.3%	29.5%	29.6%	29.7%	29.8%
3 persons	15.1%	15.1%	15.1%	15.1%	15.1%	15.1%	15.1%
4 persons	13.5%	13.5%	13.4%	13.4%	13.4%	13.3%	13.3%
5+ persons	11.8%	11.6%	11.5%	11.1%	11.0%	11.0%	11.0%

Source*:* Leitrim County Council

3.8 Vacant and Unfinished Housing

Leitrim County Council has made significant progress in managing and coordinating the completion of Unfinished Housing Developments in the county. There are only 9 no. developments that were registered as unfinished in the 2016 Survey remaining on the database with all other developments having been completed or works having re-commenced on site. The Planning Authority estimate that of the housing developments which could be considered viable to complete where there are houses constructed therein which are substantially completed, that there remains a total of 107 no. units to be completed and occupied. There are a further 49 no. units which although substantially complete, it is considered that the viability of bringing such units to the market is low or that there remain legal impediments preventing the sale of the overall developments.

With regard to the remaining unfinished residential developments in the county, the Council will continue to work proactively with residents, developers and all relevant stakeholders to secure satisfactory completion.

Table 3.8: Leitrim Unfinished Estates Survey 2020

Total All Units	Occupied Houses	Vacant Houses	Near Completion	Under Construction	Not Started	Permission Expired
599	192	45	96	204	148	266

Source*:* Leitrim County Council

3.9 Groups With Specific Planning Needs

There are a number of groups in society with specific design and planning needs including: children/young people, people with disabilities, older people, ethnic minorities and the Traveller community. The Council recognises the importance of planning for the needs of these groups. Further details are provided in the Housing Strategy.

3.10 Accommodation for Older People/Age Friendly Housing

Accommodation for older people is a growing concern at both national and local level, with population trends indicating that the over 65 age categories have increased to 19.1% in the State since 2011 (CSO, 2017). This is projected to increase by at least 30% by 2026. During the 2016 Census, 5,409 people were over 65 years old accounting for almost 17% of Co. Leitrim's population.

The growing need to accommodate an ageing population is evidenced by the publication in *Housing Options for our Ageing Population* in February 2019. Older people can be particularly vulnerable when renting, as reduced income upon retirement is not indexed to increasing rental prices. There are various means to provide for their housing needs, which include '*ageing in place*' and nursing home care.

The Social Housing Needs Assessment indicated that the age of the main applicant for 26 no. households in 2020 was aged 60 years or over. Although this number has fluctuated between 2015 and 2020, it has not increased in terms of number of households. Leitrim County Council has also prepared an *Age Friendly Strategy 2017-2020* which sets out actions to be pursued by the Council in relation to the housing needs of older people.

This Plan supports the provision of a mix of house types that provide a choice for older people and encourages private developers to incorporate the principles of universal design into new residential properties. The adaption of existing homes to meet the changing needs of older people is also supported. It is recognised that there are opportunities for infill development in central locations in established urban areas to meet the housing needs of older people. This also promotes compact growth and consolidation. Such development will be encouraged, subject to the appropriate standards being met. One such site has been identified in Ballinamore in recognition of the Regional Planning Objective 7.14[10]. The Local Authority is committed to facilitating older persons living independently for longer and remaining part of their community.

3.11 Accommodation of Members of the Travelling Community

In November 2018, there were 75 no. Traveller family's resident in the county, which breaks down in accommodation types as follows:

- 27 no. families in standard Local Authority housing (including provided and managed by Approved Housing Bodies)
- 18 no. families in Traveller specific accommodation
- 21 no. families in long term accommodation schemes (Social Housing Lease Initiative, RAS, HAP, Rent Supplement)
- 9 no. families in categories as '*other*'

Co. Leitrim has one Traveller Group Housing Scheme/Halting site at Rosebank in Carrick-on- Shannon which has 14 no. accommodation bays.

Leitrim County Council assessed the accommodation requirements of the Traveller Community and prepared the Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP) 2019-2024 based on this assessment. The TAP was adopted in September 2019. The current TAP seeks to provide an additional 25 no. units for members of the Travelling Community. At the end of October 2020, 8 no. units had already been provided. In comparison, the previous TAP which covered the period 2014-2018 had a target of 46 no. units with 54 no. units having been provided.

The programme will be predominately driven by standard social housing provision, either through new units or casual vacancies as they arise during the delivery period, in line with Leitrim County Council's Allocation Scheme.

The expressed accommodation preference of the majority of Traveller housing applicants is for standard Local Authority housing or private rented accommodation. Standard social housing includes housing provided by either the Local Authority or AHBs directly, or through term leasing arrangements. With the exception of a small number of households who wish to be accommodated at the existing Rosebank Traveller Group Housing Scheme in Carrick-on-Shannon, no demand or requirement for additional Traveller-specific accommodation has been expressed or identified.

The TAP was based on the Annual Count of Travellers recorded on Friday 30th November 2018 and a Housing Needs Assessment completed as of Wednesday 30th January 2019.

[10] The Assembly supports the specific designation of lands in Development Plans for nursing homes and sheltered housing, whilst ensuring these facilities are integrated within the communities they serve.

Table 3.9: Projected Needs 2019-2024

Category	No. of Households
Households assessed as having a current housing need	12
New Household Formations	13
Total	25

3.12 Accommodation for People with Disabilities

Disability is defined by four types: sensory disability, mental health disability, physical disability and intellectual disability. The delivery of housing for people with disabilities requires co-ordination between design teams and community support networks in order to ensure specific housing needs are met. The Council provides accommodation for disabled people through various means including the adaption of existing housing stock and the construction of specially designed units, subject to adequate funding and resources being available. In the 2019 Housing Needs Assessment there were 49 no. households assessed as having a basis of need under one of these disability categories.

In 2016, the Council prepared a Strategic Plan for Housing Persons with Disabilities. The Plan seeks to achieve better co-ordination and delivery of housing and related support services for people with disabilities and to strategically plan for the short, medium, and long-term housing needs of this group.

The Strategic Plan outlines a number of actions to be implemented in Co. Leitrim. These include:

- To reuse vacant adapted or disability designed dwellings to fulfil the needs of households on the housing disability list
- Universal design incorporated into new builds
- Tenants of a disability unit which has had specific disability adaptation cannot purchase their accommodation as to guarantee its return to the Local Authority's stock
- Transfer option to a more suitable unit will always be favoured to adaptation works
- Suite of private adaptation grants to facilitate independent living at home for older persons or persons with a disability

3.13 Accommodation for the Homeless

The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 directly addresses the needs of the homeless. The threat of homelessness is increasing with rising property and rental prices nationally but also in Co. Leitrim. Category D of the social housing needs assessment accounts for these households. The 2019 and 2020 Housing Needs Assessment included one household with a basis of need stated as '*homelessness*'. It is important to note that the data may not include all homeless people, as not all homeless people declare themselves as such.

In accordance with Section 40 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, Leitrim County Council forms part of the North West Joint Homelessness Consultative Forum, which adopted the *North West Homelessness Action Plan 2013-2018,* setting out the vision, aims and key performance indicators to achieve specific outcomes in the region. This plan is currently under review by the North West Joint Homelessness Consultative Forum.

3.14 Addendum – 'Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland' and Affordable Housing Act 2021

The Housing Strategy and Housing Chapter 3 contained in the Plan were finalised in mid July 2021 prior to the enactment of the *Affordable Housing Act 2021* on 21st July 2021 and the publication of '*Housing for All – a new Housing Plan for Ireland*' on 2nd September 2021. Part 6 of the Affordable Housing Act 2021 was commenced with effect from 3rd September 2021 and amends Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000. Housing for All will rely on certain elements of legislative amendments introduced in the Affordable Housing Act 2021.

'*Housing for All*' is the Government's plan to increase the supply of housing to an average of 33,000 no. units per year over the next decade. The plan provides for an optimal mix of social, affordable and private housing for sale and rent. These measures are supported by over €4 billion in guaranteed State funding every year, the highest ever level of government investment in building social and affordable housing. The plan also includes measures to support availability of land, workforce, funding and capacity to enable both the public and private sectors to meet the targets.

The plan is based on four pathways, leading to a more sustainable housing system:

1. support home ownership and increase affordability
2. eradicate homelessness, increase social housing delivery and support social inclusion
3. increase new housing supply
4. address vacancy and make efficient use of existing stock

In relation to Development Plans, the policy document states the following:

> ***1.6 Expand the Part V Requirement to 20% to include Affordable Homes***
> *The requirement in Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 to provide 10% of the uplift in value of zoned residential land for social housing, has been increased to a mandatory 20% for social, affordable and cost rental housing requirements, of which at least half must be applied to social housing provision. The link to a specified percentage need in the Housing Strategy reflected in the Development Plan objectives has been removed, so the focus will be on capturing the full share of the planning gain for the State on every applicable site, in every Local Authority area. The 20% will apply to all land transacted after the new legislation comes in to force, or bought before 2015, where planning permission has not been granted.*
>
> *Current planning permissions will be unaffected, and land purchased between 2015 and 2021 will also continue at 10%. Near term supply will not be affected by these changes. However, this will change in 2026 when the 20% will apply to all land regardless of when purchased. Developers, therefore, must act now to bring forward housing or they will face the new higher obligation at that time. This is a balanced and fair way to allow supply to come forward at pace, while also ensuring that the State is getting as much benefit as possible for social and affordable purposes. The Housing Agency will support local authorities to ensure the revised requirements are applied consistently.*

'Housing for All' recognises that it may be necessary for a Local Authority to zone more serviced land in a Development Plan than would equate to precisely meeting the projected housing demand for that settlement, to provide choice in sites locally and to avoid restricting the supply of new housing development through inactivity on a particular landholding. These additional provisions are detailed in updated Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2022). '*Housing for All*' also states

that updated Section 28 guidance will also issue on sustainable urban development, including density and rural housing. To improve residential quality and support the objectives of the NPF, namely promoting compact, sustainable and liveable settlements, the DHLGH will develop Section 28 guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable and Compact Settlement Guidance, which will consolidate existing guidance in this area.

In relation to the ***Affordable Housing Act 2021***, it is considered that the principal amendments are as follows:

Amendment No. 1
The Housing Strategy is required to include an estimate of the amount of

i) housing for the purposes of the provision of social housing support within the meaning of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009
ii) housing for eligible applicants within the meaning of Part 2 of the Affordable Housing Act 2021 (namely an applicant assessed by a Housing Authority as being eligible for an affordable dwelling purchase arrangement), and
iii) cost rental housing,

required in the area of the Development Plan during the period of the Development Plan and the estimate may state the different requirements for different areas within the area of the Development Plan.

Amendment No. 2
A Housing Strategy shall now provide that as a general policy a specified percentage, not being more than 20 % of

i) the land zoned for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses, and
ii) any land which is not zoned for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses, but in respect of which permission for the development of houses is granted,

shall be reserved under this Part for the provision of housing for the purposes of one or more outlined above in amendment no. 1.

This shall not operate to prevent any person (including the Local Authority) from using more than 20% of land in respect of which permission for the development of houses is granted for the provision of housing to which amendment No. 1 applies.

At least half of the 20% contribution from Part V for new housing developments must be applied to social housing provision and up to half may be applied to affordable and cost rental housing.

Amendment No. 3
The exempted development size in relation to Section 97 has been reduced from less than 10 units to less than 5 units (essentially reversing the 2015 amendment).

The Affordable Housing Act 2021 requires that where on the date the above requirements came into operation and a Development Plan includes a Housing Strategy, the Chief Executive shall make an estimate of the amount of housing for eligible applicants within the meaning of Part 2 of the Affordable Housing Act 2021, and for cost rental housing required in the area of the Development Plan during the period of the Development Plan. Such estimate may state the different requirements for

housing for different areas within the area of the Development Plan. Such estimate shall be deemed to be included in the Housing Strategy concerned. It is the view of the Planning Authority that in effect this has been provided for in the work undertaken in the Housing Needs Demand Assessment to inform the Housing Strategy.

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage has issued Social Housing Delivery Targets to each Local Authority. The delivery of new social housing will form an important element of the increased housing delivery generally for the period to 2030. Housing for All includes a target to deliver an average of 9,500 no. new build social homes per annum over the next 5 years with annual targets increasing from 9,000 no. in 2022 to 10,200 no. in 2026. As part of this delivery programme, the Department has prepared social housing targets for each Local Authority. The targets are primarily focused on the delivery of new build housing units with social housing acquisitions and short term leases being relied upon less after the initial years. The social housing targets for Leitrim County Council are set out in Table 3.10 below with figures for 2022 based on social housing pipeline figures notified to the Housing Delivery Co-ordination Office.

Table 3.10: Social Housing Targets for Leitrim County Council 2022-2026

Year	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
Build	30	26	26	28	29	139

Source: Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

This compares favourably to the estimate of Local Housing unit provision in the Housing Strategy. Table 3.11 below is an extract from Table 47 - Anticipated Social Housing Requirement in Leitrim 2022 – 2028. It would be expected that other options such as Cost Rental will bridge the gap between the social housing new build targets and the number of projected additional households not qualifying for a mortgage but cannot afford private rental accommodation.

Table 3.11: Anticipated Social Housing Requirement in Leitrim 2022 – 2028

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Total Plan H'holds
Number of Additional Households not qualifying for Mortgage and can't afford Private Rental	**7**	**34**	**38**	**40**	**38**	**38**	**39**	**227**
Social Housing Percentage	**22.6**	**18.8**	**18.9**	**19.0**	**18.9**	**18.5**	**18.5**	**18.8**

Source: Leitrim County Council Housing Strategy

In accordance with the requirements of '*Housing for All*', Local Authorities were required to publish a Housing Delivery Action Plan by December 2021 which sets out the details of social housing delivery for the next 5 years. This coincides with a significant element of the 2023-2029 Development Plan, up to and including the commencement of the review of the next County Development Plan.

Policies

HOUS POL 1 To reserve 20% of all land zoned solely for residential use, or for a mixture of residential or other uses, and any land which is not zoned for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses, but in respect of which permission for the development of houses is granted to be made available for the provision of social, affordable and cost rental housing referred to in section 94(4)(a) of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended. Such reservation shall be provided in accordance with an Agreement referred to in section 96 of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended and in accordance with Part V Ministerial guidance or any future revised guidance.

HOUS POL 2 To co-operate with Voluntary Housing Associations and other providers of social housing within Co. Leitrim to secure the delivery of new housing of appropriate design and at appropriate locations over the lifetime of this Plan.

HOUS POL 3 To adopt a flexible and supportive approach towards alternative uses of vacant residential units/buildings, subject to appropriate scale, design and compatibility with existing and proposed surrounding uses.

HOUS POL 4 To support the implementation of the North-West Regional Homeless Action Plan.

HOUS POL 5 To promote the principles of Universal Design for housing development to provide age friendly standards.

HOUS POL 6 To facilitate the provision of independent and /or assisted living accommodation, including the adaptation of existing properties, for persons with disabilities and persons with learning difficulties, including purpose built accommodation in convenient, easily accessible and permeable locations.

HOUS POL 7 To support the implementation of the Policy Statement *'Housing Options for Our Ageing Population'*.

HOUS POL 8 To support the provision of purpose built accommodation for older people that would allow for independent and semi-independent living in locations that are proximate, convenient and accessible to town and village centres, services and amenities.

HOUS POL 9 To encourage nursing homes and sheltered housing accommodation to be located at appropriate locations where they provide for easy access both for staff and visitors in order to enhance overall quality of life, increase their links with, and accessibility to, local amenities and to adopt a presumption against rural locations.

HOUS POL 10 To promote a mixture of house types, tenures and sizes in residential developments and within communities to reasonably match the requirements of different categories of households in keeping with the Development Management standards.

HOUS POL 11 To promote residential densities appropriate to the development's location and surrounding context, having due regard to Government policy relating to sustainable development, which aims to reduce the demand for travel within existing settlements, and the need to respect and reflect the established character of rural areas.

HOUS POL 12 To encourage and ensure high standards of energy efficiency in existing and new residential developments in line with good architectural practice and promote energy efficiency and conservation in the design and development of new residential units, encouraging improved environmental performance of building stock (measures to reduce carbon emissions, improve resource use efficiency and minimise pollution and waste).

HOUS POL 13 To require residential development proposals to be of high quality and make a positive contribute to the built environment and local streetscape facilitating and encouraging innovation.

HOUS POL 14 To ensure that proposals for apartment developments submitted as applications for planning permission or as Council own proposals (Part 8 developments) adhere to the requirements contained within 'Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments' (DoHLGH, 2020) or as updated during the life of this Plan. All applications for apartments are required to demonstrate at a minimum compliance with these Guidelines and the Specific Planning Policy Requirements contained therein. (Further details are provided in Chapter 13 Development Management Standards – Section 13.10.6 Apartment Developments).

HOUS POL 15 To apply the minimum densities in the future development of greenfield or edge of town locations for housing purposes set out in the Guidelines issued by the Minister under Section 28 of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended, titled "*Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas* (2007)" or any amending or replacement Guidelines. In so doing the Planning Authority shall consider the appropriateness of introducing a greater mix of building heights and typologies in planning for the future development of suburban locations.

Objectives

HOUS OBJ 1 To secure the implementation of the Leitrim Housing Strategy 2023-2029 which make provision for the scale of population growth and housing allocations outlined in the Core Strategy.

HOUS OBJ 2 To secure the delivery of social housing in our county in accordance with the Council's Social Housing Delivery Programme and Government Policy as set out in Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness.

HOUS OBJ 3 To ensure that sufficient lands are identified through land use zoning objectives at appropriate locations and made available to realise the housing projections and residential development needs identified in the Core Strategy, as informed by the Housing Needs Demand Assessment.

HOUS OBJ 4 To promote and engage in active land management and site activation measures addressing any shortfall in housing provision, including the implementation of the Vacant Site Levy on required vacant/under utilised residential and regeneration lands, addressing dereliction and vacancy to ensure the viability of towns and village centres. This includes backland development, thus promoting a more efficient use of zoned land.

HOUS OBJ 5 To support the ongoing monitoring and review of the Housing Needs Demand Assessment, in accordance with the guidance on Housing Needs Demand Assessment methodology issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage over the lifetime of this Plan.

HOUS OBJ 6 To secure the implementation of the Council's Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 and any subsequent programme adopted during the plan period.

HOUS OBJ 7 To increase the stock of social housing within the county in order to meet the social housing needs identified in this Housing Strategy as well as the long-term housing needs of existing households on the Local Authority housing waiting list.

HOUS OBJ 8 To continue to work with all relevant stakeholders to secure the satisfactory completion or resolution of the remaining unfinished housing developments in the county within the life of this Plan.

HOUS OBJ 9 To deliver high quality housing of an appropriate scale, mix, tenure, location and density, aligned with adequate physical and social infrastructure and the household allocations contained in the Core Strategy.

HOUS OBJ 10 To consider the appropriateness of identifying suitable locations such as redevelopment, regeneration and infill development opportunities within Carrick-on-Shannon to support increased building height and density as required pursuant to SPPR 1 of 'Urban Development and Building Heights – *Guidelines for Planning Authorities'* (DoHLGH, 2018). Such consideration shall be through the statutory Local Area Plan process in conjunction with Roscommon County Council. Such locations will be informed by their ability to support increased building height and density and proximity to public transport and without giving rise to unacceptable adverse impacts on the overall character and residential amenity of the settlement.

3.15 Density

Higher densities will be applied to the higher order settlements of Carrick-on-Shannon, to align with its roles as a Key Town, subject to good design and development management standards being met. Higher densities will also be applied to Ballinamore and Manorhamilton, in recognition of their status within the settlement hierarchy as Self-Sustaining Growth Towns. It is important that the density of new development in towns and villages is reflective of the existing character and that growth is linked to infrastructural capacity.

More detailed guidance with regard to density is provided in Chapter 6 - Urban Settlements.

3.16 Housing In Towns and Villages

The sustainable growth of compact settlements is a priority of the NPF and RSES, with particular emphasis on the regeneration and repopulation of the core of built up areas. This approach focuses on maximising the use of infill, vacant and under-utilised sites and of buildings that are suitable and capable of re-use to provide housing, amenities, employment and services. The Plan aims to develop and support the consolidated growth of Leitrim's towns and villages in a sequential manner. This will be achieved by locating a high proportion of housing in the existing built-up footprints of each settlement at appropriate densities, thereby strengthening town and village centres. New housing

allocation will be consistent with the Core Strategy and be proportionate to the size, function and capacity of settlements in accordance with the Settlement Hierarchy.

More detailed guidance in this regard is provided in Chapter 6 – Urban Settlements and also in the Settlement Plans for individual towns and villages which forms Volume II of the Plan.

3.17 Rural Settlement Strategy

3.17.1 Introduction

A network of social and economic services and facilities has evolved to support the rural population including schools, post offices, parish churches, sports clubs and community organisations all of which are adversely affected by population decline. The NPF acknowledges that the open countryside is and will continue to be, a living and lived-in landscape focusing on the requirements of rural economies and rural communities, based on agriculture, forestry, tourism and rural enterprise while at the same time avoiding ribbon and over-spill development from urban areas and protecting environmental qualities. The Council is proactively involved in regenerating rural areas and this Plan seeks to facilitate rural development, including individual rural housing, particularly in areas of population decline and/or where rural services are under threat whilst also protecting the heritage, landscape qualities and environment of rural areas. This Plan will provide the continuing need for housing provision for people to live and work in Co. Leitrim's countryside.

The Council will seek to ensure that rural development takes place in a manner that is compatible with the policy objectives of both the NPF and RSES, whilst ensuring to the maximum extent practicable the protection of environmental, biodiversity and heritage assets, the road network including the provisions of Policy TRAN POL 2, water quality and protected landscapes. This requires that the policy framework protects against over-spill and ribbon development from urban areas, does not facilitate urban generated rural housing and supports the National Strategic Outcomes of compact growth, sustainable mobility, transitioning to a low carbon and climate resilient society and sustainable management of our environmental resources.

3.17.2 Policy Review

3.17.2.1 Sustainable Rural Housing, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2005

The Circular letter PL2/2017, issued by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government in May 2017, advised Local Authorities that the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines are currently being revised to ensure the rural housing policies and objectives contained in Local Authority Development Plans comply with Article 43 of the EU Treaty on the freedom of movement of citizens. At the date of publication, the revised Guidelines have not been issued. The Council will have regard to the current Guidelines and any future guidelines issued in relation to rural housing development.

3.17.2.2 Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework (NPF)

In terms of rural housing, the NPF distinguishes between commuter areas and other rural regions throughout the country. It recognises the *'significant pressures from urban generated pressures in commuter areas and highlights how commuter-generated housing in rural areas accessible to cities and towns, has affected the character and cohesion of some locations. It seeks to manage the growth of areas that are under strong urban influence to avoid over-development, while sustaining vibrant rural communities'.*

The NPF requires a clear distinction to be made between areas under urban influence and elsewhere in providing for the development of rural housing in the countryside (NPO 19 reproduced below). It confirms that the capacity to provide for single rural housing should be retained for those that have a demonstrable economic or social need to live in the area, subject to all other proper planning and sustainable development considerations. It recognises the importance of sustaining rural areas, specifically through NPO 15 which seeks to '*support the sustainable development of rural areas by encouraging growth and arresting decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades and by managing the growth of areas that are under strong urban influence to avoid overdevelopment, while sustaining vibrant rural communities*'.

National Policy Objective 19	
Ensure, in providing for the development of rural housing, that a distinction is made between areas under urban influence, i.e. within the commuter catchment of cities and large towns and centres of employment, and elsewhere:	**In rural areas under urban influence**, facilitate the provision of single housing in the countryside based on the core consideration of demonstrable economic or social need to live in a rural area and siting and design criteria for rural housing in statutory guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements;
	In rural areas elsewhere, facilitate the provision of single housing in the countryside based on siting and design criteria for rural housing in statutory guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements.

3.17.2.3 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020- 2032 (NWRA RSES)

The RSES recognises that '*the management of rural areas is challenging in that some areas have a declining and ageing population whilst others are experiencing urban generated pressure from the demand for houses within the commuter zone of our cities, regional centres and their support towns*'. The Regional Assembly supports Local Authorities in identifying and prioritising a program for the provision of serviced sites within smaller towns and villages within 1 year of the adoption of the RSES (RPO 3.7). The RSES seeks to '*deliver at least 20% of all new housing in rural areas on brownfield sites*' (RPO 3.3). With regard to National Policy Objective 19 from the NPF, the RSES reaffirms this requirement and indicates that the "*management of these pressures is a matter for individual local authorities through the Development Plan process, having regard to the provisions of Ministerial Guidelines and other material considerations*" (pg. 44).

3.17.3 'Graigs' – Development Nodes

Existing settlements that clearly have an established identity, containing a community facility such as a national school, a retail unit, e.g. a Post office or local convenience shop, a church and community centre with some housing in the vicinity are acknowledged in the Settlement Hierarchy contained in the Core Strategy. It is considered appropriate that such settlements or nodes should be reinforced in order to sustain the social capital of the area and provide suitable alternative type locations for individual or small scale residential development than the provision of individual housing in the open countryside. These centres are referred to as '*Graigs*'. See Map No. 2 in Volume III (Book of Maps).

In general terms, the provision of vehicular access points to such residential development should be from local roads where possible as opposed to regional roads where these occur. There will be a presumption in favour of the development of one-off housing within Graigs. The development of small scale housing schemes will be dependent on the provision of suitably designed and strategically located community wastewater treatment units.

Development will be directed so as to consolidate existing development in the first instance and thereafter to provide for the organic growth of the centre as appropriate. Accordingly the development of Graigs should be commensurate and in accordance with the existing size and scale of their existing nodal footprint.

All proposals for development will have to comply with normal planning requirements in terms of site section, site layout, building design, road safety and in particular the treatment and disposal of wastewater.

Table 3.12: Graigs in Co. Leitrim

Carrick-on-Shannon Municipal District	**Ballinamore Municipal District**
1. Aghamore	1. Aghavas
2. Bornacoola (Johnstown Bridge)	2. Aughawillan
3. Efferinagh	3. Aughnasheelan
4. Eslinbridge	4. Drumreilly/Corrawaleen
5. Gortlettragh	5. Drumeela
6. Kilnagross	6. Garvagh
Manorhamilton Municipal District	
1. Aghacashel	7. Largydonnell
2. Askill	8. Leckaun/Newtownmanor
3. Bellanagare/Carrowcrin	9. Mullies
4. Derrintawy/Newbridge	10. Tarmon
5. Gurteen	11. Tawnylea
6. Kilavoggy	

Policies

GRAIG POL 1 To support the sustainable development of Graigs (Tier 5 Settlements) identified in Table 3.12 and map No. 2 on Volume III (Book of Maps).

GRAIG POL 2 To direct development so as to consolidate existing development within the Graigs, ensuring that the sustainable and organic growth of these centres is commensurate and in accordance with the existing size and scale of their existing nodal footprint and that the development of these centres is contingent on the provision of a proper level of infrastructure.

Additional policies pertaining to Graigs are included in **RUR SET POL 1** and **RUR SET POL 13** whilst **RUR SET OBJ 1** seeks the development of serviced sites within settlements including Graigs.

3.17.4 Principles of Rural Housing Policy Framework

This Plan will provide the continuing need for housing provision for people to live and work in Co. Leitrim's countryside.

The majority of Co. Leitrim is defined as rural in that only the town of Carrick-on-Shannon, including the village of Cortober, has a population in excess of 1,500 population[11]. The urban centres contained in the remainder of the county are relatively small centres in comparison to other more urbanised counties. The rural housing policy will reflect upon the existing dispersed character and composition of the county.

In the assessment of rural housing, the county has been categorised into two areas - namely areas of low capacity and other rural areas. The low capacity area covers areas under strong urban pressure from commuting to the town of Carrick-on-Shannon but also from parts of the county generally west of Dromahair towards the Co. Sligo border. These commuter belts often contain prominent ribbon developments on the approach roads to towns and villages and lead to a reduction in the carrying capacity of the public road, impacting traffic safety and inhibiting the orderly expansion of towns by frustrating the in-depth development of backlands and consolidation. The extent of this area is defined by the Electoral Divisions which had greater than 15% of the resident population commuting to Carrick-on-Shannon or Sligo in the 2016 Census of Population. These areas have been mapped from POWSCAR[12] data. Please refer to Map No. 3 in Volume III (Book of Maps). It is not considered that this policy should apply to Manorhamilton or Ballinamore as they are not considered urban settlements of scale in a regional or national context. Ballinamore, in particular, demonstrates extensive existing ribbon development on a number of approach road to the town including the R202/R208 whilst Manorhamilton is an important centre of employment serving quite an extensive rural catchment. It is considered that the control of individual rural housing can be managed through appropriate policy measures seeking to restrict the creation and exacerbation of ribbon development on the approach to Tier 2 and 3 settlements. It is also considered that care is required in the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Areas of High Visual Amenity (AHVA), the extent of which have both being reconsidered during the preparation of this Plan. A specific policy seeking to carefully manage the visual impact of dwellings in this area shall also be provided.

The policy in the Low Capacity Areas is to facilitate housing development for applicants from the local rural community who have a demonstrable economic or social requirement[13] to live in the local rural area[14] in adherence to national and regional policy considerations. Subject to satisfying good practice in relation to site location and access, drainage and design requirements, rural generated housing need should be facilitated as close as possible to its origin to ensure that strong local ties are

[11] The Central Statistics Office (CSO) defines a settlement of more than 1,500 people as 'urban'. This is acknowledged in the National Planning Framework on page 58.

[12] Place of Work, School or College Anonymised Records (POWSCAR) Guidelines. All workers resident in Ireland on Census night were coded to their place of work and all Irish resident students from the age of 5 and upwards were coded to their place of school/college. A detailed file containing the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of these residents along with information on the origin and destination of their journeys has been made available for analysis. POWSCAR can then be presented by mapping which visualises the travel to work and education catchments of the main cities and towns in Ireland.

[13] Housing needed in rural areas within the established rural community by persons from that community or whose occupation is intrinsically linked to/with that particular rural area.

[14] Local area is defined as within approximately a radius of 4km from the site, excluding defined urban areas (which have development envelopes containing land use zoning objectives). Where the site is of a greater distance, but the applicant can demonstrate significant ties with the area for example immediate family or well-established landownership, then these applications will be considered on their merits.

maintained, and that the applicant remains an intrinsic part of the local community. Further guidance in this regard is provided in the policy framework which follows.

For the remainder of the county outside of the identified Low Capacity Areas which includes, inter alia, areas of population decline and areas with a weaker economic and urban structure (based on indices of income, employment and economic growth), rural housing is supported in principle subject to satisfying proper planning considerations. The policy framework seeks to accommodate demand for permanent residential development subject to good planning practice. This policy will facilitate the expansion of the rural population and the maintenance of essential local services.

The Council will endeavour to accommodate all non-rural generated housing within the development limits of our towns and villages subject to appropriate servicing arrangements being in place. This approach has been adopted to strongly support strengthening the viability of our towns and villages and because of the long-term issues that arise from a proliferation of one-off houses, such as:

- creation of demands for the subsequent provision of public infrastructure e.g. footpaths and street lighting, group sewerage schemes, etc.
- over concentration of individual wastewater treatment systems leading to potential ground water and surface water issues
- potential contamination of local water supplies and a reduction in water quality
- higher energy consumption and transportation costs arising from increased car-based commuting
- continued erosion of landscape character and depletion of high-quality landscapes,
- loss or fragmentation of agricultural land, and
- lack of return on investment in small towns, villages and rural nodes/clusters leading to dereliction and vacancy

The inability of the majority of the sub soils in Co. Leitrim to satisfy the soil percolation requirements of the EPA Code of Practice are well documented. This has the effect of suppressing demand of applicants seeking to reside in rural areas. To provide alternative options to individual housing served by individual wastewater treatment systems, rural settlement will be further supported through the provision of serviced sites in selected villages and graigs. The NPF states that "*In order to assist this, local authorities will be supported in undertaking the necessary land acquisition, site preparation and local infrastructure provision to deliver self-build development options in smaller towns/villages*." The provision of serviced sites in these areas will provide a realistic and viable alternative to one-off housing in the open countryside and will contribute to the principle of compact growth and consolidation.

All development in rural areas must adhere to the principles of proper planning and sustainable development. This includes, inter alia, avoiding pollution of surface and ground waters, creation of a traffic hazard and creating adverse visual impact on the landscape in relation to siting and design. Housing in rural areas should follow the design principles set out in Leitrim County Council's *Design Guide*, including the provision of innovative house designs and site layouts that harmonise with the landscape and respect well-established planning principles. In Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Areas of High Visual Amenity, houses shall be designed and located, as far as is practicable, so as to minimise the impact on the landscape.

Rural housing proposals will be assessed according to:

- the likely impact on the environment
- the visual impact on the landscape
- impact on heritage (both natural and man-made)

- traffic safety
- whether the housing demand is urban or rural generated, and
- a minimum site size of 3,000 square metres shall apply

The use of renewable energy sources such as solar energy, geothermal resources, wind, biomass and small-hydro electrical schemes, as integral parts of new developments, extensions and restoration projects (commercial and private) will be encouraged, subject to ensuring the protection of the landscape and environment. All applications for rural development must detail the sustainable '*green*' measures incorporated into the development including measures to offset the carbon impact of the development.

3.17.5 Restoration of Vernacular Dwellings and Replacement Houses in Rural Areas

Over the course of the previous County Development Plan, there was a growing tendency to replace established rural dwellings rather than seeking to upgrade or modernise them. Vernacular dwellings in the countryside reflect local traditional building forms and types and such structures contribute to the distinctive local character and built heritage of the county. Retaining, restoring and reusing such vernacular dwellings exemplifies sustainable development. The Council encourages the restoration of such vernacular dwellings and other structures of note in the countryside, as opposed to their demolition and replacement. For this reason, there will be a presumption against the demolition of vernacular dwellings and structures where restoration or adaptation is considered by the Planning Authority to represent a feasible option.

Where it is proposed to demolish and replace an existing house which is considered to be a structure of distinctive local character or a good example of vernacular architecture, a detailed and compelling justification for such a proposal shall be required to accompany a planning application. The refurbishment of derelict or abandoned buildings in the countryside is particularly favoured as being a sustainable response to revitalising rural areas. Proposals for restoration will generally be required to comply with the required standards for wastewater disposal and access.

A replacement house shall only be considered by the Planning Authority where the replacement house is generally contained within the curtilage of the previous house it is seeking to replace. In this regard, '*curtilage*' comprises of the footprint of the dwelling which the proposed replacement house seeks to replace as well as any immediate areas ancillary to the function of the original house including gardens, paths, driveways, yards, garages or sheds. Curtilage does not, however, extend to areas not ancillary to the function of the subject house, for example agricultural sheds or yards used for farming purposes.

The Council shall assess applications for refurbishment and/or replacement of existing housing stock in rural areas, having regard to the criteria for residential development contained in Chapter 13, Development Management Standards.

In the assessment of whether a house which it is proposed to replace is habitable or not, the Council will rely on the definition contained in Section 2 (Interpretation) of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended.

A "*Habitable House*" means a house which:

a) is used as a dwelling,

b) is not in use but when last used was used, disregarding any unauthorised use, as a dwelling and is not derelict, or,
c) was provided for use as a dwelling but has not been occupied.

3.17.6 House Extensions in Rural Areas

The need for people to extend and renovate their dwellings is both recognised and acknowledged. Extensions will be considered favourably where they do not have a negative impact on adjoining properties or on the character of the surrounding rural area. The design of extensions in rural areas shall have regard to the design, finish and character of the existing building and comply with the 'Leitrim Rural Design Guide', or any such replacement document. Where it is proposed to extend the existing dwelling, the extension should generally respect the existing scale, character and external finishes of the original structure.

The Council shall assess applications for extending existing houses in rural areas, having regard to the criteria contained in the Development Management Chapter, Section 13.10.10 refers.

Policies

RUR SET POL 1 To regenerate small towns, rural villages and graigs by providing serviced sites for individual rural dwellings as a viable alternative to one-off housing in the open countryside.

RUR SET POL 2 To manage the growth of areas that are under strong urban influence and identified as **Low Capacity Areas** (See Map No. 3 in Volume III - Book of Maps) to avoid their over development whilst accommodating demand from individuals for permanent residential development in Other Rural Areas, subject to normal planning considerations and having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements.

RUR SET POL 3 To accommodate demand from existing members of the rural community for permanent residential development in **Low Capacity Areas** who have strong economic and social needs to the area and who are an intrinsic part of the rural community in which planning permission is being sought, subject to normal planning considerations and who satisfy the following criteria:

1. Persons with a demonstrable social need to live in a particular local rural area - Persons who have lived a substantial period of their lives in the local rural area[15] (minimum 18 months) in which the house is proposed.
2. Persons with a demonstrable economic need to live in the particular local rural area – Persons employed full-time in rural-based activity such as farming, horticulture, forestry, bloodstock or other rural-based activity in the area in which they wish to build or whose employment is intrinsically linked to the rural area in which they wish to build, such as teachers in rural schools or other

[15] Local area is defined as within approximately a radius of 4km from the site, excluding defined urban areas (which relate only to the Carrick-on-Shannon development envelope containing land use zoning objectives). Where the site is of a greater distance, but the applicant can demonstrate significant ties with the area for example immediate family or well-established landownership, then these applications will be considered on their merits. This recognises applicants who are either a son or daughter of a landowner in which the house is proposed in which the landholding (as opposed to a site) is owned (or in the family name) for at least 10 years.

persons who by the nature of their work have a functional need to reside permanently in the rural area close to their place of work, provided that they have never owned a house in a rural area.

All applicants for one-off rural housing will need to demonstrate compliance with the qualifying criteria of one of the above two categories unless otherwise specified as being located within an area where this Rural Housing Policy does not apply.

Applicants relying on the economic need criteria involving part-time occupations in farming or natural resources-related activities, will be required to submit sufficient evidence to demonstrate same, for example (but not limited to) a herd number or hours of activity as a farmer. It should be noted that in such instances, any part-time occupation in farming or natural resources-related activities shall be the predominant occupation to any non-farming or non-natural resources-related incomes.

RUR SET POL 4 To attach an occupancy condition to planning permissions in respect of individual rural housing in Low Capacity Areas pursuant to Section 47 of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended restricting the use of the dwelling to the applicant or members of their immediate family, as a place of permanent residence. The period of occupancy will be limited to a period of 7 years from the date of first occupation.

RUR SET POL 5 In areas where significant levels of rural housing development have taken place on the edges of urban areas within the county and where the Council considers such areas are becoming over developed, the Council at its discretion may seek agreement under Section 47 of the Planning Act (sterilisation agreement restricting further development from the landholding for an agreed period) if it considers it necessary to regulate development in the area.

RUR SET POL 6 To ensure that residential development in rural areas conforms to the principles detailed in the *Design Guide for the Siting and Design of Single Houses within the Leitrim Countryside* published by Leitrim County Council and any replacement Design Guide produced during the life of this Development Plan.

RUR SET POL 7 To have regard to the *Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities, April 2005*, and any replacement guidance which require that new houses in rural areas be sited and designed to integrate with their physical surroundings and be generally compatible with:

a) The protection of water quality in the arrangements made for onsite wastewater disposal facilities
b) The provision of a safe means of access in relation to road and public safety, and
c) The conservation of sensitive areas such as natural habitats, protected landscapes, the environs of protected structures and other aspects of our heritage.

RUR SET POL 8 To encourage all individual rural house developments to incorporate climate change measures and be constructed to high energy efficiency standards that fully

avail of renewable technologies, maximise solar gain, and utilise modern materials and design practices.

RUR SET POL 9 To restrict new accesses to serve individual residential developments onto National Roads and the R280, with access onto the R280 only considered in exceptional circumstances where alternative access cannot be achieved.

RUR SET POL 10 To encourage the sensitive restoration of vernacular structures as an alternative to the construction of a one-off dwelling elsewhere subject to the following:

- The vernacular dwelling must be capable of being suitably restored to habitable accommodation in keeping with its original character without the necessity to demolish or significantly alter it.
- The distinctive character and original historic fabric of the structure is retained using appropriate traditional construction methods and materials.
- The development shall be subject to normal design requirements.

The applicant/occupant will not be required to comply with the criteria set out in policy RUR SET POL 3.

RUR SET POL 11 To facilitate the replacement of a habitable dwelling other than a vernacular dwelling in the countryside subject to the following:

a) The structure must have been last used as a dwelling and the internal and external walls and roof must be intact.
b) A report from a suitably qualified competent person shall be submitted to verify that the house is habitable and that its replacement is the most sustainable option.
c) The proposed replacement house shall generally be within the same curtilage of the existing house and the design of the replacement house shall be of a high standard whose scale and character is appropriate to the site, to existing development in the vicinity of the site and to the rural area generally.
d) A condition requiring the demolition of the existing house will normally be included in any grant of permission.

RUR SET POL 12 To facilitate, where it can be demonstrated by an applicant that a dwelling is no longer suitable for habitation (i.e. structure is in a ruinous or dangerous condition), its replacement with a new dwelling as an alternative to the construction of a new single dwelling elsewhere in the countryside. The development proposal, in terms of siting, scale, layout and design, shall be sympathetic to the character of the original structure and the site. Documentary evidence in the form of a structural survey and photographs shall be submitted in support of the application. All other normal siting and design requirements will be applied, and the applicant/occupant will not be required to comply with rural housing policy criteria.

RUR SET POL 13 To reflect the extent of the established settlement within Graigs and promote a sequential approach to development to ensure compact growth and avoid ribbon development consistent with the guidance in Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2005).

Objectives

RUR SET OBJ 1 To support the development of serviced sites within the existing footprint of rural settlements (small towns, rural villages and graigs) to provide for rural living and ensure vitality of rural communities.

RUR SET OBJ 2 To encourage growth in rural areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades.

RUR SET OBJ 3 To encourage the appropriate re-use and adaptation of the existing rural residential building stock in preference to new build where practicable.

RUR SET OBJ 4 To support the ongoing monitoring of new rural housing to ensure 20% of new rural development occurs on brownfield sites including partially previously developed sites (i.e. in towns/villages under 1,500 population and rural areas/countryside).

RUR SET OBJ 5 To preserve and protect the open character of transitional lands outside of settlements in order to prevent linear sprawl near towns, villages and settlements and to maintain a clear demarcation and distinction between urban areas and the countryside.

RUR SET OBJ 6 To monitor the provision of single rural houses over the Plan period, having regard to the rural housing development target of 20% of all new housing in rural areas to be accommodated on brownfield sites, and to ascertain if further rural housing policy responses are required during the plan period.

RUR SET OBJ 7 The Planning Authority shall provide a detailed report within one year of this County Development Plan coming into effect identifying all potential sites within villages and possibly graigs that are considered suitable to accommodate low density housing proposals. Where there is an issue in relation to the provision of piped wastewater treatment in villages (Glenfarne, Kilclare and Rossinver) and in graigs, the Council will pursue the resolution of such constraints in conjunction with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and Irish Water, and seek to explore appropriate funding measures for same.

RUR SET OBJ 8 To pursue active land management measures by Leitrim County Council in the delivery of serviced sites to ensure that where a demonstrated demand exists and where attempts have failed by perspective applicants to acquire such sites. The pursuit of such active land management measures is subject to the availability of the necessary funding and resources being available and the confirmation of the availability of necessary piped water services or acceptable means of treating wastewater in an environmentally acceptable manner. The realisation of this objective may require a prioritisation being agreed of certain centres progressing ahead of others.

4 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Introduction

Leitrim County Council produced our Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) in 2015 for the period to 2021. To inform the preparation of the economic element of the LECP, the Council separately commissioned PMCA Economic Consultants to present an economic profile for the county and to identify the economic and enterprise sectors which the Council should pursue. The strategy contained in the LECP remains the economic strategy in place for Leitrim County Council at the time of preparing the Plan. The LECP incorporates priorities and actions on economic development to be pursued by the Local Authority, particularly by the Economic Development Department including Tourism and by the Local Enterprise Office.

The aim of the Economic Strategy pursued through the Development Plan seeks:

1. To facilitate the economic development of Leitrim by putting in place the conditions whereby a viable and favourable environment for business and enterprise can flourish whilst delivering sustainable jobs, employment opportunity and an enriched standard of living for our residents.

2. To promote and assist in Leitrim's economic development and encourage increased resilience in the county's enterprise, underpinned by talent and innovation, thereby ensuring that Leitrim is best placed to excel in the long-term delivery of sustainable jobs and an enhanced standard of living.

A Development Plan is primarily focused on spatial planning. The role of the Development Plan is therefore to facilitate the delivery of both the economic and community elements of the LECP in a manner consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the county. The co-ordinated approach to economic development presented in this Development Plan is a plan-led, sustainable approach in assisting the future economic growth of the county.

It is a requirement that the LECP is consistent with the Core Strategy and the objectives of the Development Plan and with the relevant RSES. The Core Strategy and objectives contained in this Plan will therefore inform the preparation of the new LECP.[16]

4.2 National and Regional Planning Policy

The NPF and RSES recognise that enterprise, innovation and skills are crucial for a strong economy. The availability of a highly educated workforce, digital connectivity, accessibility to national and international markets, research and development capacity are all key determinants informing business location and fostering a sustainable economy. The NPF highlights the potential of the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) to create an economic corridor along the western seaboard to achieve balanced regional development, while the RSES seeks to make the AEC a reality. The NPF and the RSES also recognise the important economic role of urban settlements at a county/regional level and rural settlements at a more local level, whilst identifying the need to strengthen rural economies and communities by broadening the employment base of rural areas, improving connectivity and addressing infrastructural deficits such as broadband.

[16] Should the new LECP be prepared and finalized before the adoption of this Development Plan, this section shall be updated accordingly.

The economic vision of the RSES is to facilitate inclusive and sustainable growth. The NWRA believes that strong economic growth, which creates permanent, sustainable jobs, is best achieved by building a competitive and productive economy. The strategy seeks to build on the identified strengths of the region and to sustain a strong economy that supports sustainable job creation. It promotes the diversification of indigenous economic activity and seeks to increase the proportion of activity in knowledge-intensive, high-value businesses to ensure the region is more resilient to global economy shocks and has greater longevity. The RSES identifies key priorities for Carrick-on-Shannon that will unlock their latent potential and enable their sustainable growth as an attractive key economic driver. These priorities are embedded within this Development Plan.

The RSES advocates focusing policies on scale, investing in connectivity and in our people whilst aggressively pursuing a low carbon approach to enhance our differentiation. Under this Growth Ambition, the RSES gives recognition to the importance of place-based networks such as the Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy Project which include Co. Leitrim. The importance of Research and Innovation and policies which encourage and support the development of local entrepreneurial ecosystems through local clustering and smart specialisation are also highlighted.

4.3 Economic Profile

Leitrim is endowed with a rich and diverse landscape, heritage and culture. It is predominantly a rural county with a low population density and a relatively high dependency rate, meaning that the proportion of its population of non-working age (young and old) is comparatively high. The county has a narrow base of economic activities but a relatively high proportion of jobs within knowledge sectors and a high proportion of entrepreneurial activity. Migration to nearby centres for work and study has also been a feature, and the county has seen appreciably large inward migration for work in foreign direct investment activities (during the pre-crisis period[17]), much of this pattern of employment was associated with the former MBNA facility in Carrick-on-Shannon, now hosting Avant Card in the rebranded Carrick Business Campus.

Since the publication of '*Putting People First*', Leitrim County Council has taken a very proactive approach to leading economic development in the county. As outlined in the Introduction, Leitrim County Council prepared an LECP to cover the period 2015-2023. Following the publication of the 2016 Census of Population results including POWSCAR[18] data (which remains the most up to date Census for the purposes of this Plan), the economic profile of the county was reviewed in December 2017.

The following headlines emerge from an analysis of the 2016 Census of Population POWSCAR data for Co. Leitrim:

- **461** reduction in number of persons employed in Co. Leitrim 2011-2016
- **565** decline in the number of persons at work in the information and communication, financial, real estate, professional, administration and support service activities sector between 2011-2016
- **340** decline in the number employed in the county's principal town, Carrick-on-Shannon
- **0.24** jobs to population ratio in 2016, down from 0.25 in 2011 (0.41 State 2016)
- **44%** outbound commuter rate in 2016, up from 40% in 2011
- **301** outbound commuters to the Dublin Region in 2016

[17] Refers to the economic crisis between 2008 – 2011 with the economy returning to growth in 2012.
[18] Place of Work, School or College - Census of Anonymized Records (POWSCAR)

The analysis highlights the scale of the challenge to provide more jobs for the resident population. The 2016 Census figures indicated a fall in the number of jobs available in Co. Leitrim. The number of persons employed in Leitrim fell by 461 no. between 2011 – 2016 (5.73%) during which the population experienced a low level of growth (0.67%). The extent of residents commuting out of the county for employment is increasing whilst the number of people from outside the county who work here is falling reflecting the decrease in the number of jobs available in the county. The challenge from an employment perspective is to reverse these unsustainable commuter trends. The analysis also shows the continued relative strength of indigenous employers. Challenges such as the potential impact on Foreign Direct Investment resulting from international uncertainty surrounding the fall out over 'Brexit' and any long lasting effects from COVID-19 will also need to be addressed. It would be expected that there has been a significant reduction in the number of persons commuting out of the county for employment during the past year with the strong desire amongst employees to continue to do so[19].

The largest employer in Co. Leitrim in a single location is Vista Med in Carrick-on-Shannon who have expanded their operations over the past 5 years. The Carrick Business Campus can also be seen as a regional asset with significant further employment potential and features prominently in the Economic Strategy as a resource that can be promoted to achieve large-scale high value employment for the county and within the wider region. The outbound commuter rate reflects the importance of the wider region to the local economy of Co. Leitrim and the general principle that what is good economically for the county's neighbours is also good for Co. Leitrim, and *vice-versa*.

Carrick-on-Shannon has been identified as a Key Town within the RSES and as such it is the principal settlement regarding economic development and the provision of employment opportunities. Manorhamilton and Ballinamore play a key role in terms of providing strong employment opportunities in the north and east of the county. Leitrim also has an array of attractive smaller towns and villages that are well-served by public and community based services and facilities.

NOTE:
A detailed analysis of the **Economic Profile of the County** based on the 2016 Census and POWSCAR analysis is available in **Appendix I**. This covers the following topics :

Overview of Labour Market	Principal Economic Status
Commuting Patterns	Jobs to Population Ratio
Third Level/Higher Education Attainment	Socio Economic Groups of Persons at Work
Employment in Selected Towns in 2011-2016	Agency Supported Employment

4.4 Key Principles

The Development Plan contains several key principles which are important in facilitating the economic growth of the County. These include:

- Linking the economic and spatial dimensions of the Plan by aligning economic growth with the Settlement Hierarchy focusing on key employment locations as drivers for growth and recognising the critical role of rural places in the economic development of the county.

[19] https://westerndevelopment.ie/2020/05/13/remote-working-in-ireland-during-covid-19-initial-findings-from-wdc-nuig-survey/

- Providing a sufficient quantum of appropriately zoned and serviced lands to facilitate enterprise opportunities and employment creation in our key towns.
- Ensuring that existing and planned infrastructure (including water services, transportation and telecommunications) is in place to serve the identified zoned lands.
- Identification of key industry and business sectors supported by policy objectives to accommodate their anticipated needs, where appropriate to include recognition of the rural nature of Co. Leitrim.
- Ensuring positive placemaking through the development of a network of attractive and sustainable towns, villages and rural areas throughout the county for people to live, work and recreate within.
- Adopting a proactive and supporting culture within the Local Authority to support enterprise creation and employment provision in all of our actions.

4.5 Economic Vision for Co. Leitrim

The stated Economic Vision for Co. Leitrim is for:

> *"A vibrant economy making a significant contribution to the well-being, skills and aspirations of those working and living in Co. Leitrim, and the wider North West region, through the provision of sustainable employment and business opportunity in the traditional and emerging knowledge-orientated sectors".*

By realising this Vision, the number of jobs in key targeted sectors including agriculture and food, manufacturing, financial and ICT, business and professional services, creative and arts, renewable energy supply and green economy, retail town centre and services, and tourism, accommodation, hospitality and outdoor/adventure sports and recreation will increase and thereby both maximise knowledge-orientated economy activity and broaden the economic base of the county.

It is a cross cutting theme of this Plan to enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of Co. Leitrim in order to make it one of north west region's prime locations for indigenous and foreign economic and employment generating investment. To fulfil this Economic Vision, the Local Authority will continue to promote the county as a cost-competitive and well-connected investment location in the north west. This vision will guide ongoing external engagement processes between the Local Authority and the IDA, Enterprise Ireland and other agencies who contribute to employment growth and sustainable economic development in the county and its wider region.

In relation to addressing the loss of jobs in the county generally between 2011-2016, it is considered that the growth in jobs may be positively assisted post COVID-19 with increasing numbers working from home, persons opting to work remotely or from local hubs where available. The County Development Plan and LECP should seek to reduce the extent of out commuting (44%) which may also be assisted by current trends towards remote working.

The Economic Vision for Co. Leitrim will be achieved by focused, high level and sector-specific actions. These actions will be coordinated by Leitrim County Council, working in tandem with partner stakeholders locally and regionally, and with periodic monitoring and appraisal as to their effectiveness. Key structures in this regard under the auspices of the Council are the Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) for Economic Development and the High Level Advisory Group on Economic Development (HLAG).

This pattern of geographical concentration of activity is likely to continue with Tier 1 and Tier 2A towns (Carrick-on-Shannon, Manorhamilton and Ballinamore) likely to be the principal locations for Foreign Direct Investment. Small business growth is envisaged to occur throughout the county in various sectors, including agri-food, tourism and in activities such as the creative arts and digital content sector, where Co. Leitrim has a strong tradition.

Strategic Policies

ED SP 1 To provide and promote a strategic economic development strategy that identifies a hierarchy of employment centres related to the overall development strategy of the county which will encourage a more balanced and sustainable pattern of employment across the county.

ED SP 2 To encourage economic and employment development by encouraging mixed use settlement forms in which employment and residency are in close proximity to each other whereby the overall demand for transport is reduced.

ED SP 3 To improve the jobs ratio level in Co. Leitrim and address commuting patterns by building up the local economy to a more sustainable level through:

i. fostering employment creation and maximising job potential and designated growth centres.
ii. seeking to advance the preparation of a new economic strategy for Leitrim in the LECP which would be specifically tailored to concentrate certain types of industries/sectors into certain designated economic growth areas/centres.
iii. assisting IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland and other state agencies in the development and growth of companies based in Co. Leitrim and high potential start-up companies with an export led business in international markets.

ED SP 4 To promote rural economic development, recognising the need to advance the long term sustainable social and environmental development of rural areas and encouraging economic diversification and facilitating growth of rural based enterprises.

ED SP 5 To implement the Leitrim County Retail Strategy 2023 – 2029 as provided in Section 4.11 of this chapter.

ED SP 6 To support the transition towards a low carbon economy including the support of the provision of '*Green Infrastructure*'.

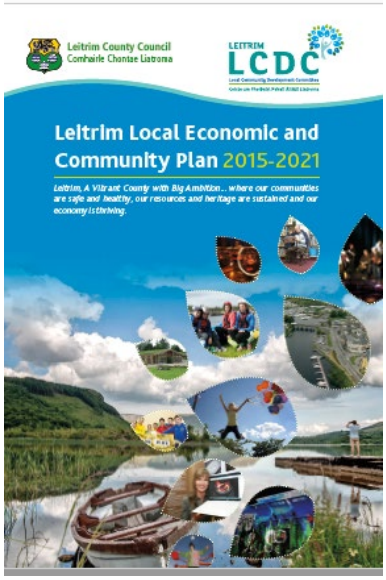
4.6 Local Economic and Community Plan

Leitrim Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) is a six-year plan (2015-2021) containing the measures necessary to promote and support community and economic development in our county. The vision of our LECP is "*Leitrim, A Vibrant County with Big Ambition where our communities are safe and healthy, our resources and heritage are sustained, and our economy is thriving*". The LECP then outlines a roadmap consisting of themes, objectives, targets and actions to realise this vision.

The LECP sets out economic and community objectives that will promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of the county. The LECP addresses a wider range of community issues, including developing infrastructure to address social exclusion, poverty

and disadvantage, reverse social and economic decline and to realise growth potential and the sustainability of communities.

The LECP is required to complement the County Development Plan which sets the spatial planning framework for the county. The LECP must be consistent with the broad spatial planning, settlement and land use policies of the Development Plan. The LECP states that if a review of the County Development Plan is carried out at any time during the lifetime of the LECP, then the LECP will in turn be reviewed to ensure its ongoing complementarity with the County Development Plan.



The Economic Strategy contained in the LECP contains the following Economic Goals:

- A county maximising opportunities to promote economic development and build on its indigenous spirit of entrepreneurship
- A county that is an attractive, innovative location for growth in and investment from different sectors
- A county where the travel, transport, utilities, communications and ICT infrastructure meet current and future needs
- A county of vibrant town and village centres which are attractive to visit and shop in.
- An exemplar county for addressing and responding to climate change
- A vibrant rural economy driven by value-added agriculture and food
- A county building on the positivity of existing companies to sell itself as a prime business location.
- A county with a vibrant creative sector driven by practitioners, activities and opportunities of the highest calibre.
- A county renowned as an authentic, friendly tourist destination.
- A county with a vibrant - women in business sector- which encourages more women to consider business as a career option.

The achievement of the goals is developed around 6 Economic Themes presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Economic Themes in Leitrim Local Economic and Community Plan 2015-2021

Theme	Which is About…..
E1: Leitrim and its Region	• building a strong regional focus • capitalising on existing links and flows between counties • creating critical masses • collaborative working • addressing common, shared problems
E2: Job Creation and Business Growth	• providing the necessary sites and spaces • developing infrastructure • attracting investment • stimulating local, indigenous success • marketing Co. Leitrim • identifying and meeting training needs

Theme	Which is About…..
	• building on local, indigenous success • focusing on growth sectors and industries • developing Leitrim's evening and night time economy • focusing on '*new economy*' and '*knowledge-based*' industries
E3: Infrastructure	• providing required infrastructure countering rural/dispersed population • focusing on broadband and telecommunications needs • improving connectivity by road and rail from Leitrim to regions • improving north – south road connectivity within Leitrim • liaise with statutory providers such as Irish Water, Bord Gais and ESB to ensure required infrastructure is in place • maximising potential of renewable energy in Leitrim • maximising potential of Shannon Erne Waterway - tourism and leisure
E4: Towns and Villages	• improving town and village centre footfall • addressing dereliction and vacant premises • responding to declining retailing • creating town and village centre variety • improving public realm to stimulate place-related activities
E5: Sectoral Economic Development	• improving '*value-added*' within agri-food • improving marketing, promotion and selling • developing specialist, skilled staff • making best use of the Leitrim Diaspora • rolling forward Leitrim's creative sector • building and marketing the tourism product
E6: Women in Business	• supporting women in business • supporting women to enter business

Source: Leitrim Local Economic and Community Plan 2015-2021

The Economic Themes each contain a number of Strategic Economic Development Objectives (SEDOs) with specific targets identified for each SEDO. A series of actions are then identified to achieve these targets along with the organisation or organisations responsible to deliver these actions and the timeframe in which each action should be delivered.

The SEDOs as follows:

SEDO 1	Leitrim will be a visionary leader in a region which is innovative and competitive, with a high quality environment, first class infrastructure and a quality of life that is among the highest in the world.
SEDO 2	Facilitate and encourage existing and new businesses to sustain and grow their business so that new sustainable jobs are created across a variety of sectors within the county and region, thereby increasing the availability of quality and diverse employment for residents and inbound commuters.
SEDO 3	Support and facilitate the development and maintenance of an infrastructure across Leitrim which will meet current and projected economic, social, community and sustainability needs.
SEDO 4	Strengthen the fabric of our towns and villages by developing strong '*place related*' economic activities and supporting community development initiatives to build on an area's particular strengths.
SEDO 5	Enhance the potential for economic development in individual sectors based on Leitrim's physical, social, environmental and cultural character and quality.
SEDO 5A	Enhance the potential for economic development in the Energy and Green Economy sector so that Leitrim will be an exemplar county for addressing Climate Change.
SEDO 5B	Enhance the potential for economic development in the Agriculture and Food sector by developing a vibrant rural economy driven by value-added agriculture and small food business.
SEDO 5C	Enhance the potential for economic development in the Services, Manufacturing and ICT Sectors by building on the positivity of existing companies to sell Leitrim as a prime business location.
SEDO 5D	Enhance the potential for economic development in the Creative, Arts and Culture Sector by raising awareness of the culturally rich and artistically vibrant offering and services in Leitrim.
SEDO 5E	Enhance the potential for economic development in the Tourism Sector by ensuring a united cohesive approach by the tourism trade and agencies in the county.
SEDO 6	Enhance the role played by Leitrim Business Women in the economic development of the county.

The role of the Development Plan is to ensure that the necessary land use planning policy framework is in place to facilitate the realisation of the LECP Economic SEDOs and the specific actions identified to deliver each. It should be stated that not all of the SEDO's have spatial or infrastructural requirements, so the Development Plan only considers the SEDO's and actions of relevance. Appendix III – Strategic Economic Development Objectives and the Development Plan has considered the required policy response and this exercise informs the policies and objectives contained in this section of the Plan.

4.7 Strategies and Structures to Deliver the Economic Vision

There are strategies in place to assist in the realisation of the Economic Vision and structures within the Local Authority and wider collaborate groupings which the Council forms part of to drive the

delivery of our shared Economic Vision. The following sections outlines some of these strategies and structures.

4.7.1 Atlantic Economic Corridor

The Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) is one region along the western seaboard of Ireland with a shared goal which is to create a unified, connected and powerful Atlantic economy. The AEC is driven by business representatives and communities and supported by national and local government and State agencies. The AEC is supported by the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Western Development Commission.

The initiative seeks to consolidate and align the State capital investment programme with the potential investment of the private sector to strengthen the region's economic contribution and make the Atlantic region a better place in which to live and work.
Co. Leitrim is strategically located along the AEC. The AEC aims to combine the economic hubs, clusters and catchments of the area to attract investment, improve competitiveness, support job creation and contribute to an improved quality of life for the people who live there. The AEC has significant potential for future economic growth of/in Co. Leitrim and the wider region. The advancement of Co. Leitrim's economic growth clusters and delivery of key capital infrastructural projects under Project 2040 will all consolidate the AEC. Under the Economic Hubs Project, 10 no. hubs have been developed in Co. Leitrim and centred on 3 pillars: Infrastructure, Community Network and Marketing and Promotion. The success of the AEC initiative will attract more enterprise and people to the county and the region, progressing balanced regional development, whilst sustaining strong and vibrant communities.

4.7.2 North West Regional Enterprise Plan

The Regional Enterprise Plan has originated from the Action Plan for Jobs published in 2012. The Plan is not an economic development strategy but a suite of pointed objectives. The preparation of the next Regional Enterprise Plan for the north west region comprising of Leitrim, Donegal and Sligo for the period 2021-2024 is underway (at the time of preparing this Plan).



The objectives of the North West Enterprise Plan seek to:

- Increase enterprise and employment in the region.
- Provides '*bottom up*' perspective & regionally created projects.
- Enable more effective translation of national policy into regional impact.
- Collaborative steering committee allows complimentary work and building on existing activities of agencies.

The North West Regional Enterprise Plan 2020 contains the following Strategic Objectives:

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1:
Identify and enhance the visibility of skills available to employersand potential investors in the North-West

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4:
Maximise the potential of the Wild Atlantic Way and tourism forthe region



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2:
Achieve a step-change in the level of entrepreneurship in the North-West



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3:
Harness the potential of the blue economy and the North-West coastline as a source of new employment generation



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5:
Develop a regional network of landing spaces to support co-working



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 6:
Support the digitalisation of SMEs in the North-West

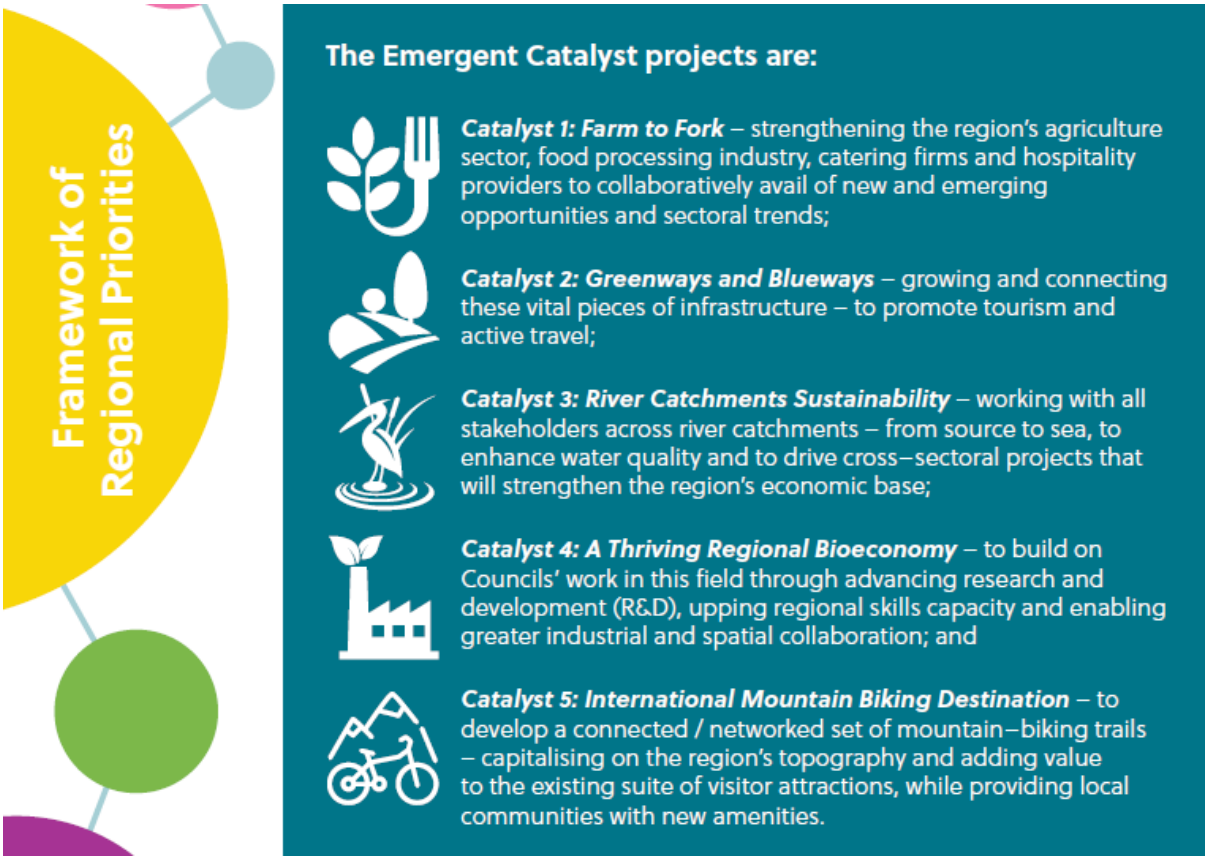
The North- West region has also secured funding of over €5.2 million across four projects under Calls 1 and 2 of the Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF). These include the funding to develop a network of digital and innovation hubs in Co. Leitrim and support for the clustering of food companies in Co. Leitrim. Funding was also secured for the development of the Manorhamilton Innovation and R&D Centre (Quarry and Construction Industry 4.0) and the development of a creative cluster centred on the Leitrim Design House, Carrick-on-Shannon.

4.7.3 Framework of Regional Priorities for the Central Border Region of Ireland/Northern Ireland

This Framework of Regional Priorities for the Central Border Region of Ireland/Northern Ireland, 2021/2027 (FRP) is a strategic initiative for the advancement of our regional economy. This is motivated by, and seeks to give effect to, ICBAN[20]'s Vision of a region with a thriving, resilient, vibrant and diversified economy, that will be strengthened and sustained through a focus on regional priorities.

[20] ICBAN is the Irish Central Border Area Network and comprises Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon; Cavan; Donegal; Fermanagh and Omagh; Leitrim; Mid Ulster; Monaghan; and Sligo.

Figure 4.1: ***The Emergent Catalyst Projects – Framework of Regional Priorities for the Central Border Region of Ireland/Northern Ireland***



The Strategy identifies 5 no. inter-connected and mutually re-enforcing strategic regional priorities:

1. Exploiting new opportunities based on regional strengths and assets (including latent assets), in the bioeconomy, food production and sustainable landscape management;
2. Supporting economic development through providing adequate industrial spaces, nurturing inter–firm collaboration and innovation, and strengthening linkages with education/training providers
3. Enhancing citizens' quality of life, through improved and more innovative modes of service delivery, life–long progression opportunities, enhanced community amenities and independent living environments;
4. Enabling greater connected/remote working, through enhancing infrastructure and developing a network of digital hubs (in town centres), as part of the rejuvenation of towns and villages
5. Developing the region's tourism offering and quality of life infrastructure through connected greenway and blueway networks (including inter-regional) - linked to complementary services and underpinned by increased active travel and improved regional connectivity.

4.7.4 Upper Shannon Erne Future Economies Project

The Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy project (USEFE) is a joint initiative between Bord Na Móna, the ESB and Cavan, Leitrim and Longford Local Authorities and businesses across the region. The initiative enables business and community representatives to proactively influence and assist with the broader economic development of this region.

The key aims of USEFE are to:

- Identify sectoral partnerships and linkages whose development might create wealth opportunities for local economies.
- Develop projects of regional significance which can lead to new business and job creation opportunities.
- Provide opportunities to help attract skilled employees to the region.
- Develop networking opportunities for businesses that can lead to new markets and potential partners.
- Build relationships between public and private enterprises, micro and large enterprises.

Four sectors have been identified: Diaspora, Food, Renewable Energy and Tourism.

A Co. Leitrim Diaspora Strategy has been developed which will highlight objectives and an action plan to engage with the Leitrim Diaspora. This built on the successful expo and seminar in Croke Park aimed at the Diaspora held in 2016. The event attracted jobseekers, investors, entrepreneurs and decision makers. It highlighted the stories of some of the most successful businesses already operating in the region and demonstrated the advantages that the region can offer. This included Vista Med and Cora Systems from Carrick-on-Shannon.

A Renewable Energy Working Group was set up in August 2018 which in turn established a sustainable energy region under the Sustainable Energy Community Network run by SEAI. The aim is to identify regional projects that can help contribute to national targets made possible due to the scale of their group in terms of population and the number of public buildings and businesses across the four counties. By facilitating new sustainable energy projects, USEFE will aim to boost employment in the region.

The USEFE region has developed a number of projects through its Tourism Working Group which comprises of Tourist Officers and other Local Authority officials, agencies and service providers. The most notable project developed under this strategy is the Blueway Project. The project delivered two capital projects, regional & directional signage and a number of capacity building workshops.

4.7.5 Leitrim Local Enterprise Office

The Leitrim Local Enterprise Office (LEO) operates as a core instrument of local enterprise support and development for micro enterprises and SMEs, where the LEO focuses on providing clients with financial supports, mentoring, networking opportunities, business development and entrepreneurial advice, business training and information, and advice on Local Authority supports and/or activities affecting businesses, including rates, procurement and planning.

Leitrim County Council and its LEO work in collaboration with other agencies and stakeholders to actively promote and encourage economic development and enterprise development in the county.

The Council aims to facilitate economic development and employment opportunities by providing or supporting the delivery of infrastructure and implementing urban and rural economic initiatives. It also facilitates economic development by the zoning of appropriate lands in the higher order towns for enterprise and employment and by ensuring that planning policy and objectives are supportive of business and enterprise generally.

Table 4.2: Number of Clients and Jobs supported by Leitrim Enterprise Office 2018-2019

Year	2018	2019
Number of Clients	161	161
Total Jobs	437	458

The development of The Hive in Carrick-on-Shannon has become an important innovation centre in the county. The Economic Strategy seeks to replicate this model at other locations throughout the county in order to facilitate the development of an '*innovation eco-system*' catering for and supporting local entrepreneurs and SMEs in various sectors in recognition of the increasing importance of knowledge-oriented activities. The success of this Vision will be dependent on ensuring the availability of reliable and high-speed broadband, to which the Council is fully committed to achieving.

4.7.6 Economic Development Department

Each Local Authority has established a Local Community Development Committee (LCDC). The aim of the LCDC is to develop, co-ordinate and implement a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development. The main function of the LCDC is to prepare, implement and monitor the community elements of the six-year Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP). It must consider the economic elements of the plan in order to enhance co-ordination with the community elements. It has a general role in seeking to ensure effectiveness, consistency, co-ordination and avoidance of duplication between the various elements of statutory body activities in the community.

The LCDC sits under the remit of the Economic Development Department of the Local Authority. The LCDC is also responsible for monitoring and overseeing the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), LEADER, Healthy Ireland, PEACE and administering grants programmes for small businesses, sector specific, etc.

In terms of developing applications for the various funding streams, key strategic relationships have also been developed within the county which includes the establishment of a number of Town Teams, in Manorhamilton, Carrick-on-Shannon and more recently Mohill and Ballinamore. Staff from the Economic Development Department work with these groups along with others including local development groups, Tidy Towns Committees, etc. to identify key areas of opportunity and then providing support to these groups to prepare and submit quality funding applications. When successful, the Economic Development Department continues to work with such groups to support project implementation, process claims and drawdown funds from the Department of Rural and Community Development.

There are a number of other funding streams administered under the remit of the Economic Development section which includes CLÁR Programme, the Outdoor Rural Recreation Infrastructure Scheme, the Community Enhancement Programme and the Town and Village Renewal Scheme. The URDF and RRDF funding programmes are dealt with in more detail in Chapter 6 – Urban Settlements. All such funding opportunities are maximised to secure as much investment as possible for the towns and villages in Co. Leitrim. All of the resultant investment enhances the infrastructure within the local

areas making them more attractive and enhanced places for people to live in, work in, invest in and to visit.

Key Strategic Projects include:

- The Hive Carrick-on-Shannon-Leitrim's Technology Enterprise Centre
- The Food Hub Drumshanbo
- Arts and Creative Sector
- Slow Tourism
- Blueway
- Development of Taste Leitrim Brand
- Diaspora Strategy
- Development of Digital Strategy
- Sustainable Energy Communities – "The Green County – Carbon Neutral"

Town Team/Locally Led Projects include:

- Purple Flag Award Carrick-on-Shannon
- Community CCTV Scheme Carrick-on-Shannon
- Economic Development Plan Mohill
- Development of Market Yard Carrick-on-Shannon
- Food Experience Drumshanbo
- Town Centre wifi
- Ballinamore Area Strategy
- Manor Summit and Phase 2 REDZ Action Plan
- Carrick-on-Shannon Economic Development Plan 2020 – 2030
- Marketing and Promotion activities delivered in line with the URDF and RRDF funding secured to support town centre development and footfall
- SMART Green Mohill Initiative
- St. Felim's Centre in Ballinamore – Leitrim County Council owned property being led by the Community in terms of remote working facilities, youth facilities, greenway trail head, etc.

Policies

Economic Development Support Role

EC DEV POL 1 To support and promote economic development and employment opportunities identified in the Leitrim Local Economic and Community Plan or any amended or replacement plan, subject to the appropriate environmental assessments.

EC DEV POL 2 To continue to promote the county to attract enterprise and investment through the Economic Development Department and the Local Enterprise Office, with a focus on a number of established and emerging sectors including tourism, manufacturing, renewable energy, ICT, food and agri-food and to maximise the opportunities afforded by remote working.

EC DEV POL 3 To co-operate with local and national development agencies and engage with existing and future employers in order to maximise job opportunities in the county.

EC DEV POL 4 To maximise opportunities to strengthen links with higher level institutions and the Atlantic Technological University (ATU) and investigate opportunities for employment

creation in relation to climate change, biodiversity and developing a carbon neutral economy.

EC DEV POL 5 To support and explore the potential development of a higher-level on-campus or off-campus facilities in the county, potentially in collaboration with the Atlantic Technological University (ATU), and to promote, and facilitate where possible, potential synergies between higher level education institutions such as ATU and enterprise sectors in Leitrim.

Atlantic Economic Corridor

AEC POL 1 To promote, support and facilitate the Atlantic Economic Corridor initiative in a sustainable manner to secure the long-term economic and employment growth for Leitrim.

AEC POL 2 To promote, support and facilitate the appropriate development of Co. Leitrim's towns, villages and rural areas that function as part of the Atlantic Economic Corridor.

AEC POL 3 To work with adjoining counties to secure the Atlantic Economic Corridor, as a model of balanced regional development.

4.8 Role of Urban Centres

The principal towns in the Settlement Hierarchy of the Core Strategy is as follows:

Tier 1 - Key Town	Carrick-on-Shannon
Tier 2A – Self-Sustaining Growth Towns	Manorhamilton & Ballinamore
Tier 2B - Support Towns	Dromahair, Drumshanbo, Mohill & Kinlough

The following sections identify the suggested roles or specialisms which each of the centre in the top tiers of the Settlement Hierarchy should seek to develop and expand upon.

The expected development outcome would require a targeted economic marketing strategy to be prepared and pursued which identifies the sectors which the Council seeks to develop for each urban centre. The success of such a strategy would also seek to provide additional employment opportunities in Ballinamore, Dromahair and Kinlough with a reduced carbon footprint associated with transport to and from work if more employment was provided locally. The reduction in the extent of commuting out of the county is an objective of the Development Plan but also to increase the level of employment within the county as a regional strength.

All of the towns identified as Support Towns are identified to provide indigenous enterprise and business start ups. Please note that the roles and specialisms identified in the narrative which follows for the Tier 2A (Self-Sustaining Growth Towns) and Tier 2B (Support Towns) are captured in the Settlement Statement for each centre which forms Part II of this Written Statement. As a separate Local Area Plan will be developed for Carrick-on-Shannon/Cortober, specific policies and objectives to guide the economic strategy to be pursued are provided for the Key Town of Carrick-on-Shannon.

Policies

Integration of Land Uses

INT LAND USE POL 1 To encourage mixed use settlement forms and sustainable centres, in which land identified for economic development and enterprise/employment are located in close proximity to housing, education and local services/amenities in order to reduce the need to travel.

INT LAND USE POL 2 To promote and facilitate shared working hubs which act as a counterbalance for commuting out of the county for employment by residents.

INT LAND USE POL 3 To encourage and facilitate home-based start up enterprises of appropriate type, size and scale, subject to compliance with the criteria outlined in Chapter 13 - *Development Management Standards* of the Plan, and where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment, including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network, residential amenity or visual amenity.

4.8.1 Carrick-on-Shannon

The role of Carrick-on-Shannon as Key Town is set out in the RSES and is built upon in this Plan. The development strategy which will be pursued will include the provision of significant economic development - to develop and expand the potential of the Carrick Business Campus, to promote high technology manufacturing and research opportunities using VistaMed as an exemplar of best practice, to progress the sustainable development of the serviced strategic landbank to the east of the town including potential for use as a data centre or alternative regionally strategic scaled employment use, healthcare, warehousing, ICT, office based industry and develop the tourism offer of the town centred on the River Shannon/Blueway proposition. Carrick-on-Shannon has also the strongest retail offering in the county which includes a range of middle and higher order comparison shopping. It is also the intention of the Local Authority to develop a '*Destination Centre/Experience*' to strengthen the town centre as a destination of choice and improve retail attractiveness. Carrick-on-Shannon has also a strong public administration function (Leitrim County Council and H.S.E.) and other service industries reflective of its role as county town.

The Council have commissioned and finalised the preparation of "*Carrick-on-Shannon: The Place to be - Economic Development Plan (2020-2030)*" and a 5 Year Action Plan to implement the main recommendations. The vision contained in the Plan is "*Carrick-on-Shannon is the place to be: A regional location for people to live, work, invest and visit because of its connectivity, infrastructure, environment, heritage, quality of life, job opportunities and evening economy*." The 2020-2030 Economic Development Plan has an overarching strategic and positioning theme and five supporting economic development themes:



The joint Local Area Plan for Carrick-on-Shannon/Cortober will examine in greater detail the specific actions contained in the Economic Development Plan and the Action Plan in particular.

Carrick-on-Shannon Key Town - Future Priorities

Policies

CARRICK POL 1 To deliver and offer support to existing businesses in Carrick-on-Shannon to ensure their continued existence and expansion.

CARRICK POL 2 To promote research and development opportunities, building the capacity of the region.

Objectives

CARRICK OBJ 1 To develop and expand the potential of the Carrick Business Campus and seek to attract a people intensive use of the modern existing buildings.

CARRICK OBJ 2 To progress the sustainable development of the serviced strategic employment land that is available to the east of the town.

CARRICK OBJ 3 To continue to develop the tourism offer and the Purple Flag Status of the town that supports a variety of support enterprises in the surrounding countryside.

CARRICK OBJ 4 To deliver on the strategic positioning of Carrick-on-Shannon as part of the development of the Blueway proposition under the Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy project (USEFE).

CARRICK OBJ 5 To pursue the development of a town destination centre in Carrick-on-Shannon to strengthen the town centre as a destination of choice and improve the retail attractiveness of our Key Town.

CARRICK OBJ 6 To pursue the sustainable development of the new regionally significant opportunity site to the east of Carrick-on-Shannon and contiguous to the existing land use zoning envelope for use as a data centre or alternative regionally scaled employment use following the undertaking of a feasibility study. Access would potentially be from a National Primary Road (outside of reduced speed limit zone) and careful consideration of options is required. This will require inclusion of an exceptional circumstance for a new entrance off the N4 to be agreed with the TII in accordance with the Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines.

CARRICK OBJ 7 To enhance the night time economy by facilitating a mix of bars, restaurants and late night cafes to make the town attractive to all users

4.8.2 Manorhamilton

Manorhamilton presently has a strong manufacturing base (Mirror Control International, Merenda and ElastoMetall) and a strong administration function (HSE West offices) both of which need to be protected and developed. The town has a strong creative and visual art sector centred on the Leitrim Sculpture Centre and the Glens Centre. The town also has the potential to develop as a tourism base centred on the existing proposition strongly based on built heritage (Hamilton Castle and the Star Fort) but also the extraordinary natural heritage and setting of the town/scenic area, the arts sector but also due to its positioning on the proposed Sligo Leitrim Northern Counties Rail Line Greenway. The town is located between Sligo and Enniskillen as is opportune to develop as an accommodation base for SLOW[21]/adventure tourism.

4.8.3 Ballinamore

Whilst the principal town in the Ballinamore Municipal District, Ballinamore presently does not have the same level of manufacturing or administration presence as Manorhamilton, the other Self-Sustaining Growth Town. In comparison to Manorhamilton, Ballinamore does not provide the same level of employment for the wider rural catchment. It does however have a well-developed tourism base centred on the Shannon - Erne waterway with public and private marinas on the canal (Ballinamore to Ballyconnell Canal). A demonstration stretch of the proposed Greenway along the former Cavan Leitrim rail line is now in place along with an existing heritage trail. The town is ideally located to cater for the many anglers who visit the area to fish in the numerous lakes around the area and this is a strong focus within the tourism strategy for the county. The County Library and Genealogy Centres are also based in Ballinamore. The town needs to identify a further employment specialism to augment the tourism focus of the town such as high value manufacturing or high technology/bio technology and to strengthen the employment opportunities for the surrounding rural catchment. It would be important that the permitted office development at The Rock Centre be completed to provide local services employment/administration function. Equally, the implementation of the RRDF supported Junction project will develop a Digital Hub/Enterprise Centre within the former railway station complex which will assist in developing the entrepreneurial spirit of the town. A town development strategy is in place which provides a good base upon which to formulate future funding applications.

[21] Slow Adventure is a chance to explore and engage with wild, open and natural places, to journey through breath-taking landscapes at a slower, immersive pace, to create memories through meaningful experiences as you invest time in a place, in its traditions and community and surrender to the natural forces of the environment as you reflect, reconnect and become closer to nature.

4.8.4 Drumshanbo

Drumshanbo has developed a niche industry around the food industry with the development of The Food Hub which is also home to The Shed Distillery where Drumshanbo Gunpowder Gin, Drumshanbo Sausage Tree Vodka and Drumshanbo Whiskey are produced. A new visitor centre opened in September 2020. There is also a strong tourism base developed in Drumshanbo again centred on water (Lough Allen, Acres Lake and the Leitrim Canal) with marinas offering berthing for pleasure cruisers. There are also outdoor adventure centres, an outdoor heated swimming pool and the floating boardwalk as part of the Blueway connecting Drumshanbo to Leitrim Village. There is also a strong cultural heritage sector continuing to develop in Drumshanbo including the renowned Joe Mooney Summer School, An Tóstal Festival, artist workplace, etc.

4.8.5 Mohill

Mohill has a strong built heritage synonymous with its rich past. The town has a notable manufacturing base related to construction activities (Modular Panel Systems and Crowe Sawmills). The town has a large mart and a series of hardware and agricultural co-operative type stores reflective of the rural catchment based on agriculture which it serves. The town does not have a strong tourism base despite the proximity of the Lough Rynn Castle development and the Lough Rynn Rowing Centre. This needs to be developed cognisant of the support role of the town to Carrick-on-Shannon.

4.8.6 Kinlough

Kinlough has grown significantly over the past 15 years primarily as a residential centre with associated local level services arising from the Upper Shannon Rural Renewal Scheme. The population of the town has more than doubled between 2006 and 2016. Kinlough presently has no effective manufacturing or tourism industry. The development of the Community Hub within the Community Centre supported by LEADER funding is a welcome recent addition to support remote working from the town. The Development Plan will seek to identify employment opportunities locally but also seek to develop the tourism potential offered by the stunning Lough Melvin and proximity to the Atlantic coast/Wild Atlantic Way.

4.8.7 Dromahair

Dromahair is an attractive centre, approximately 10 km from Sligo with an attractive urban form. It is located amid some stunning unspoiled natural landscapes with the Bonet River flowing through the town feeding into the nearby Lough Gill. It has significant tourism potential being located on the proposed Sligo Leitrim Northern Counties Rail line greenway with a demonstration stretch already in place, Creevelea Abbey and proximity to Parkes Castle/Lough Gill. However, it is perceived as somewhat off the beaten track as it is not located on the national road network. Its proximity to Sligo would allow the development of niche crafts industries/shops with potential for boutique hotel in the former historic Abbey Manor Hotel. The town has a well educated workforce and scores highly on the affluence indicators – an office based industry using the highly qualified resident population should be pursued. Dromahair is currently engaged in the creation of a development framework to prioritise and guide future projects and development in the town that will aid economic development and support the needs of the growing community.

4.9 Enterprise and Employment

It is Council policy to actively promote and develop enterprise and employment at appropriate locations throughout the county. The Council will support the development of transport, energy,

telecommunications, water and drainage infrastructure to facilitate such development. The enabling social and physical infrastructure required to support and facilitate enterprise and employment are set out in Chapter 7 – Sustainable Communities, Chapter 8 – Transport and Chapter 9 – Infrastructure and Energy respectively.

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

4.10 Services and Manufacturing

The manufacturing and services sector in Co. Leitrim is a key employer and generator of economic development. There are a range of manufacturing and services business in different parts of the county with Manorhamilton having a large manufacturing business engaged in the car components sector, Carrick-on-Shannon has companies engaged in medical device and specialist toolmaking as well as computer software development. The financial services sector, medical device sector, software development and tool making/engineering production sector are key elements which create jobs in the county and efforts to develop this sector further would be strongly encouraged. The businesses in this sector include foreign direct investment and indigenous business and the harnessing of the Leitrim Diaspora in further developing this sector will be critical as well as supporting training initiatives for the specialised nature of staff required in some cases.

Policies

Enterprise and Employment

ENT EMPL POL 1 To direct significant enterprise and employment growth into the Key Town of Carrick-on-Shannon and also into the Self-Sustaining Growth Towns of Ballinamore and Manorhamilton.

ENT EMPL POL 2 To identify and promote a range of locations within the county for different types of enterprise activity including international business, small and medium enterprises (SME) and micro enterprise centres.

ENT EMPL POL 3 To ensure adequate lands are identified, serviced and available in urban centres to allow for commercial businesses, enterprise and employment generating uses and light industrial/industrial uses to develop and expand.

ENT EMPL POL 4 To encourage enterprise and employment development to locate in brownfield sites or unoccupied buildings in town centres or where appropriate in existing industrial parks or other brownfield industrial sites.

ENT EMPL POL 5 To ensure that entrepreneurialism and enterprise is promoted, that smaller, local businesses are fully supported and that the development of co-working spaces/hubs is facilitated.

ENT EMPL POL 6 To clearly indicate what uses are permitted or open for consideration on enterprise and employment zoned land and to ensure that such uses afford adequate flexibility to cater for a wide range of employment uses subject to ensuring residential amenity and environmental protection.

ENT EMPL POL 7 To encourage the development of ready-to-go space to facilitate potential investment.

ENT EMPL POL 8 To support the development of the ICT sector in Co. Leitrim, along with key stakeholders and relevant agencies to ensure that the economic, potential of the sector is secured for the benefit of the local, regional and national economy.

ENT EMPL POL 9 To support and promote the development of a SMART county to benefit the economic growth, quality of life and wellbeing of the people of Co. Leitrim and advance the NWRA '*Smart Region*' Growth Ambition in the RSES.

ENT EMPL POL 10 To support the development of a SMART County to develop and diversify the rural economy, to build on local enterprise and infrastructure assets, to drive innovations around energy, transport, agri-food, tourism, e-services and remote working.

ENT EMPL POL 11 To build upon and strengthen the conditions necessary to facilitate and support start-up businesses, niche market industry, tourism and small and medium enterprises.

ENT EMPL POL 12 To accommodate proposals for new employment and enterprise development that may emerge (subject to proper planning and sustainable development considerations) and for which there are strong locational factors that do not apply to the same extent elsewhere. This would include the development of manufacturing facilities dependent on rural resources in appropriate locations.

ENT EMPL POL 13 To promote the growth of rural enterprises and activities that are resource dependent.

ENT EMPL POL 14 To support opportunities for enterprise development and expansion of innovative companies involved in developing and supporting eco-construction.

ENT EMPL POL 15 To build on the green image of Leitrim and the success of food sector assets which are unique to Co. Leitrim through further expansion to meet growing needs such as the Food Hub and Organic Centre recognising that such development may have specific locational requirements to include being located in rural areas.

Objectives

ENT EMPL OBJ 1 To develop and pursue a targeted Economic Marketing Strategy which identifies the sectors which the Economic Strategy seeks to develop for each urban centre.

ENT EMPL OBJ 2 To put in place an Investment Prioritisation Programme which supports placemaking for enterprise development and employment creation.

ENT EMPL OBJ 3 To identify and market suitable locations and support the provision of co-working facilities, digital hubs/eHubs and eWorking centres throughout the county that function as outreach hubs for out of county employers and that promote flexible working arrangements and strengthen the AEC hub network.

ENT EMPL OBJ 4 To work with Irish Water, having regard to its connections policy, and other infrastructure providers, to support the provision of services and facilities to accommodate the future economic growth of the county and to seek to provide infrastructure capacity for employment generating uses.

4.11 Retail

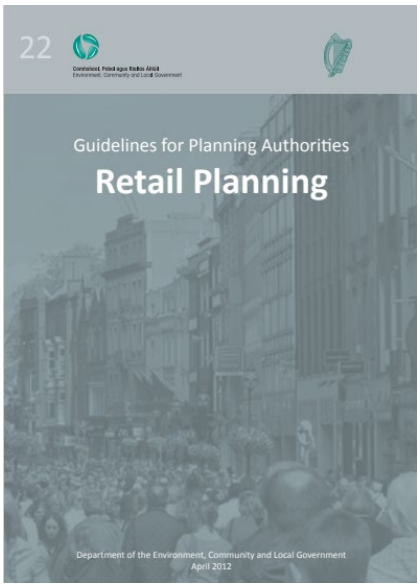
4.11.1 Introduction

The role and importance of retail has traditionally been considered a key driver to the functioning of successful town centres bemoaning the loss of this function to edge of town and out of town locations in the recent past. Our county town of Carrick-on-Shannon is no exception with edge of centre shopping developments having been provided, anchored by large convenience shops with vast areas of free surface car parking areas. Before the onset of COVID-19, the trends in comparison retailing generally were moving towards on-line shopping in an increasing manner and concerns over the long term impact of Brexit on prices. The onset of COVID-19 then required the classification of retailing into essential and non-essential categories with non-essential retailing having to close their physical presence for the first 5 months of 2021. This has required significant adaptation, change and innovation within the retail industry. Many retailers who hadn't considered selling online before 2020 have now availed of either Enterprise Ireland or LEO funding and now have an eCommerce offering up and running. Click and collect, phone orders, orders via app and the importance of social media platforms have all become part of the ongoing evolution of retail. The future of comparison shopping is uncertain with limited convenience shopping of scale remaining in our traditional town centres.

Notwithstanding this level of uncertainty and change, the County Development Plan is required to provide relevant information to show that the retail development objectives contained therein have had regard to the Retail Planning Guidelines issued by the Minister almost a decade ago (2012). The aim of the Guidelines is to ensure that the planning system continues to play a key role in supporting competitiveness in the retail sector for the benefit of the consumer in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development. In addition, the planning system must promote and support the vitality and viability of our town centres thereby contributing to a high standard of urban design and encouraging a greater use of sustainable transport.

The Guidelines have five key policy objectives:

i. Ensuring that retail development is plan-led including the requirement to have clear evidence-based policies and objectives in relation to retailing in Development Plans
ii. Promoting city/town centre vitality through a sequential approach to development with a presumption against large out of town retail centres
iii. Securing competitiveness in the retail sector by actively enabling good quality development proposals to come forward in suitable locations
iv. Facilitating a shift towards increased access to retailing by public transport, cycling and walking in accordance with the Smarter Travel strategy
v. Delivering quality urban design outcomes



The preparation of the Plan has had regard to the requirements of the current Retail Planning Guidelines. Co. Leitrim is not identified in the Guidelines as requiring the undertaking of a Joint or Multi-Authority Retail Strategy (Section 3.5 refers). Section 3.7 of the Guidelines indicates that there is no specific requirement to estimate detailed floorspace requirements for additional retail development for plans outside the areas covered by Joint or Multi-Authority Retail Strategies. Instead, a general statement of additional retail development requirements, reflecting the local evidence of market interest and the need to provide good opportunities for retail provision to serve the main population centres in the county, ought to be sufficient in order to formulate appropriate policies and criteria for dealing with new development proposals. This Plan has been prepared on this basis.

This Retail Strategy provides the following:

- Outlines the elements of the **settlement hierarchy** in line with the RSES and the Core Strategy.
- Outlines the **level and form of retailing activity appropriate** to the various components of the settlement hierarchy in the Core Strategy.
- Defines, by way of a map, the boundaries of the **core shopping areas of town centres** (for Tier 1 and 2 centres).
- Sets out strategic **guidance on the location and scale of retail development** to support the settlement hierarchy, including opportunity sites.
- **Identifies sites** which can accommodate the needs of modern retail formats in a way that maintains the essential character of the shopping area.
- Includes objectives to **support action initiatives in town centres** such as **mobility management measures** that both improve accessibility of retail areas while aiming to develop a pedestrian and cyclist friendly urban environment and vibrant street life and **Public realm interventions** aimed at improving the retailing experience through high quality civic design, provision of attractive street furnishing, lighting and effective street cleaning/business improvement district type initiatives.
- Identifies **relevant development management criteria** for the assessment of retail developments in accordance with these guidelines.

4.11.2 Retail Hierarchy

The *Retail Planning Guidelines* identify five tiers in the retail hierarchy, the fourth tier of which are '*small towns*' with populations between 1,500 and 5,000. Such centres provide convenience shopping, either in small supermarkets or convenience shops and in some cases, also provide comparison shopping e.g. small-scale hardware, retail pharmacies and clothes shops. Our county town of Carrick-on-Shannon falls within this tier on the basis of population (4,066) although the level of retail use provided is well in excess of this in terms of scale of convenience shopping, higher order comparison and speciality shopping, and the sale of bulky goods such as Woodies DIY store. Manorhamilton is also considered to have now exceeded this population threshold as the recorded population was 1,466 population at the 2016 Census of Population. The range of retail offering in both Manorhamilton and also Ballinamore is considered reflective of this category of centre (small town). It is also considered that the towns of Mohill and Drumshanbo would also display some characteristics of this tier with some comparison outlets but also reasonable sized hardware stores and pharmacies located therein. The remainder of the county is generally categorised within the lowest tier of '*local shopping*' providing convenience stores in villages. The retail hierarchy is consistent with the Core Strategy and settlement hierarchy for the county and is outlined overleaf in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Co. Leitrim Retail Hierarchy

Settlement	Description
Tier 1 **Key Town –** **Carrick-On-Shannon**	Carrick-on-Shannon is the focus for all types of retail development in the county. Its role, as a Key Town, can be strengthened through securing further retail development for the town, which will in turn benefit the county area and the wider sub region extending into north Roscommon. Carrick-on-Shannon has the greatest capacity to accommodate a range of retail development types. Significant comparison retail development shall be directed to Carrick-on-Shannon. Further convenience provision shall be carefully considered. The application of the sequential test is fundamental to locating appropriate retail development in the most appropriate locations. Retail development proposals shall demonstrate that the proposal will have a positive impact in consolidating the town centre. In accordance with the RSES, a joint Local Area Plan will be developed with Roscommon County Council to ensure an integrated framework for the future development of the combined urban area to include Cortober.
Tier 2A - **Self-Sustaining Growth Towns – Ballinamore and Manorhamilton**	The Self-Sustaining Growth Towns of Ballinamore and Manorhamilton are self-sustaining in terms of their convenience shopping provision although Manorhamilton would benefit from competition. Both towns have high levels of vacant commercial buildings in their town centres and future retail provision shall be directed to these core areas to ensure the vitality and viability of their town centres. The development or redevelopment of vacant/derelict or underutilised land or buildings is a key priority to encourage the most efficient use of land and to promote the renewal, regeneration and consolidation of both town centres. There will be a presumption against the development of retail warehousing in both towns. New retail developments shall be considered where they meet the needs of the local population (including the rural catchments that they serve), subject to normal

Settlement	Description
	planning considerations including application of the sequential approach and consideration of scale.
Tier 2B - Support Towns **Dromahair, Drumshanbo, Kinlough and Mohill**	The Support Towns have notable levels of vacant retail and commercial units which have an adverse effect on the town's presentation and vitality. There is a notable difference in the level of provision between Mohill and Drumshanbo in comparison to Kinlough and Dromahair respectively. There is sufficient vacancy within all of the towns to facilitate convenience and tourism related comparison goods. No additional retail floorspace (with the exception of extending existing units) is required in these areas and the development of underutilised land or buildings in these towns is a key priority for their regeneration and consolidation.
Tier 3 - Key Villages **Carrigallen, Dromod, Drumkeeran, Leitrim, Drumsna and Tullaghan**	Key Villages shall maintain their role in the provision of retail services to serve their local population catchments. It is considered that Carrigallen provides a range and level of retail that is stronger than the other centres and further proposals to consolidate this function will be considered on its merits.
Tier 4 **Villages and Graigs**	The provision of a local shop or speciality store, within these settlements would be considered appropriate.

The Retail Hierarchy encourages the provision of retail floorspace in the urban centres of the county at a level appropriate to their size and defined function as outlined in the Core Strategy. The Retail Hierarchy seeks to reinforce the higher order retail function of Carrick-on-Shannon as the Key Town, enabling it to effectively reduce retail expenditure which is leaked from the county to other centres whilst promoting balanced retail provision throughout the county of a scale appropriate to the size and function of the other urban centres of scale.

As outlined in the Core Strategy, Carrick-on-Shannon will absorb at least 30% of the overall population and housing growth over the lifetime of the Plan (approximately 360 no. households/900 population). It is therefore anticipated that the majority of future retail planning applications in the county would be expected to be attracted to the county town of Carrick-on-Shannon, whilst there may be some scope in Manorhamilton and Ballinamore. The remaining centres of Dromahair, Drumshanbo, Mohill and Kinlough have potential to attract retail development appropriate to their scale and status. The prospects of growth and expansion of retail provision in the more rural parts of the county will be more limited.

The general policy of the Council is to maintain and enhance the existing retail environment to serve and benefit local communities. The importance of general foodstores, post offices and pharmacies, in addition to hairdressers/barbers, pubs, restaurants and cafés in the Level 2 and Level 3 centres is acknowledged. The Council will encourage the provision of retail and related development within the core area of towns and villages. It also encourages appropriately located shops and services associated with the tourism and agri-tourism sectors.

4.11.3 Core Shopping Areas

Volume II of the Plan provides Settlement Plans for all urban centres within the county, except for Carrick-on-Shannon noting that a joint Local Area Plan will be developed for the combined urban centre of Carrick-on-Shannon and Cortober with Roscommon County Council. The Core Retail Area of

each settlement area has been delineated to identify clearly that part of a town centre that is predominantly retail/commercial in nature as distinct from the wider town which would include a greater range of uses. These maps are provided at the end of this chapter. This ensures that retail uses are consolidated within the core of the town in accordance with the sequential approach to retail development.

4.11.4 Health Check of Urban Centres

The Planning Authority has undertaken a Health Check of each of the settlements contained in Tier 1, Tier 2A and 2B. These are contained in Appendix IV Retail Strategy – Health Check as it is not considered necessary to include in the body of the Written Statement. Further details are also provided in the Settlement Plans for each of these centres in Volume II whilst the content for Carrick-on-Shannon will inform the preparation of the Local Area Plan for Carrick-on-Shannon/Cortober in conjunction with Roscommon County Council. The Health Checks have also informed some of the objectives being pursued within the individual Settlement Plans.

4.12 Regeneration

Section 10(3)(h) of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended requires the inclusion of mandatory objectives in relation to regeneration in a Development Plan. This requires that a Development Plan shall include objectives for the development and renewal of areas, identified having regard to the Core Strategy, 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 and 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.

Within the Objectives Map for Towns, key Opportunity Sites have been identified for regeneration/redevelopment to contribute to the enhancement of the vitality and vibrancy of town and village centres and to provide for future mixed use development including retailing, commercial and residential uses.

Section 4.11.5 of the *Retail Planning Guidelines* relating to 'Retailing in Small Towns and Villages' states the following:

> *The role of small towns and villages in the provision of retail services to their local urban and rural populations should be defined in Development Plans. Where appropriate, the maximum size of store, consistent with maintaining a variety of shops in the centre of these towns and villages and protecting an appropriate level of retail provision in the rural area, should be identified. In general there should be a clear presumption stated in favour of central or edge-of-centre locations for new developments* (p. 38).

As would be expected having regard to the relatively small size of our smaller town and villages, a low level of comparison goods retailers exists throughout the county. Reflective of the economic downturn and a change in consumer preferences, there have been extensive closures of small-scale retailers and other commercial businesses in recent years.

Dereliction of existing urban buildings is a wider national problem, particularly in small towns and national policy will need to be implemented towards regenerating and reinvigorating these properties to encourage reoccupation of such buildings. It is the aim of this strategy to sustain and encourage further development of convenience retail facilities within existing villages and small towns relevant to the customer base. Opening of large-scale retailers would not be sustainable or desirable within these villages, as they would likely erode the existing service base. However, the provision of small independent retailers, professional services and specialist functions is encouraged. The retention of small retailers within small towns and villages will sustain and improve the quality of life for people living in adjoining rural areas. It is important also that efforts are made to improve the *façades* of both vacant and occupied commercial premises in many of the towns and villages surveyed and to facilitate alternative viable uses for vacant properties.

The decline in town and village centres is recognised as a challenge that needs to be addressed where possible within the lifetime of this Plan. There is a high level of commercial vacancy in all settlements. The county has a commercial vacancy rate of 17.2% (Source: GeoDirectory GeoView Q2 2021), the third highest in the country after Co. Sligo (20.0%) and Co. Roscommon (17.3%) remaining unchanged from the corresponding figure of 17.1% the previous year. The role of town centres has been impacted by COVID-19; the economic situation; increased competition from out of town retail parks and large supermarkets; and changing trends and patterns in consumer purchasing such as increased mobility and on-line shopping.

An aim of this Plan is to support, adapt and further develop the role of town and village centres so that residents and visitors stay and visit. The county is also rated fourth amongst all counties for the highest concentration of accommodation and food services (18.6%) as a percentage of overall commercial properties showing the counties dependency on continuing tourism and hospitality. In order to maintain the attractive characteristics of our town and village centres, applications for new development and changes of use within the town and village centres need to ensure proposals would not detract from the amenity, vitality and character of the area. Where the evening economy is promoted, it should avoid being detrimental to the amenity of residents. Safeguards regarding the hours of permitted operation, control of litter and odour may be imposed as conditions to new development. In cases where there is a proliferation of uses which threaten the vibrancy and mixed use character of the town and village centre, they shall be discouraged.

The establishment and retention of a critical mass of population is essential to the formation and longevity of services in our town centres, as a reduced demand for services will inevitably result in a reduced service base. In rural towns and villages where there no commercially viable proposal is obvious or realistic, residential occupation of existing buildings must be incentivised at central Government level. The relevant National Policy Objectives are outlined below:

> **National Policy Objective 16** seeks to target the reversal of rural decline in the core of small towns and villages through sustainable targeted measures that address vacant premises and deliver sustainable reuse and regeneration outcomes.
>
> **National Policy Objective 25** stated that the Department of Rural and Community Development, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and other relevant Departments and Agencies will continue to invest in rural Ireland, including through the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, and will work together to establish a mechanism to co-ordinate structures for funding rural development to align with other national strategies.

National Policy Objective 35 seeks to increase residential density in settlements, through a range of measures including reductions in vacancy, reuse of existing buildings, infill development schemes, area or site-based regeneration and increased building heights.

The Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) is a flagship element of Project Ireland 2040. Under the stewardship of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government the Fund was established in 2018 to support more compact and sustainable development, through the regeneration and rejuvenation of Ireland's five cities and other large towns, in line with the objectives of the National Planning Framework and National Development Plan (NDP). Carrick-on-Shannon qualifies for inclusion in URDF projects and funds the public realm works currently under construction.

The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) is administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development and seeks to support ambitious and strategic projects which have the potential to transform rural economies and communities. The fund focuses on all settlements and rural areas with fewer than 10,000 people which are located outside the five city metropolitan areas. The Government has committed €1 billion over 10 years to the Fund and €315 million is allocated to the Fund for the period 2019-2022. There are a range of projects throughout the county put forward for funding under the RRDF.

The Leitrim Local Economic and Community Plan 2015-2021 seeks to:

- improve town and village centre footfall
- address dereliction and vacant premises
- respond to declining retailing
- create town and village centre variety
- improve public realm to stimulate place-related activities

4.13 Assessment of Retail Development Proposals

The Council encourages retail development which accords with the role and function of the town or village in the settlement hierarchy and is of an appropriate scale and type for the particular area. In line with the Guidelines the preferred location for retail development is within existing town centres. Development proposals not according with the fundamental objective to support the vitality and viability of city and town centre sites must demonstrate compliance with the sequential approach. Leitrim County Council will require that a full assessment of all suitable and viable sites is undertaken. The availability of these sites will be taken into consideration. Considering the extent of vacant floorspace and anticipated additional floorspace required over the lifetime of the plan, it is likely that all application proposals for significant additional retail floorspace, including extension of duration permissions will be required to be accompanied by a Retail Impact Statement, assessing the impact of the proposal on the viability and vitality of the respective town and village centre. Early and comprehensive engagement at the pre-planning application stage is encouraged. The *Guidelines* state that the main planning considerations for retail development include:

1. location (site selection);
2. suitability of use (land use zoning and specific objectives);
3. size and Scale (impact, form and design);
4. accessibility (access and servicing arrangements).

The change of use, upgrading and refurbishment of existing buildings is promoted and encouraged in the first instance.

New retail developments will only be considered where the following criteria are applied:

1. Sequential approach - The Sequential Approach as identified in the *Retail Planning Guidelines 2012* requires that new retail development be located within town centres unless the applicant can demonstrate, and the Planning Authority is satisfied, that there are no sites or potential sites within the town centre thus requiring an edge-of-centre site. Only in exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated that there are no sites or potential sites available, either within the centre or on the edge of centres, should an out-of-centre site be considered.

2. Retail Impact Assessment - A Retail Impact Assessment will be required where a new retail development is considered to be particularly large in scale compared to the existing town centre; or where there is a particular allocation of a specific type and/or quantum of retail floorspace to a particular settlement, and a proposed development absorbs on one site the bulk of that potential retail floorspace. An RIA must examine and demonstrate compliance with the Development Plan and that there would not be a material and unacceptable adverse impact on the vitality and viability of any existing centre.

3. Traffic and Transport Assessment - A Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA) must examine the traffic and transport impacts of a proposed development, incorporating any subsequent measures necessary to ensure roads and junctions and other transport infrastructure in the vicinity of the development are adequate to accommodate the proposed development without causing additional delays to existing and future road based traffic. A TTA is important in demonstrating how to encourage a shift towards sustainable travel modes by those using the retail development in question. The TTA must also address urban design impacts of the proposed public and private transport proposals.

4. Sustainable mobility.

5. Design and place making.

Retail Policies

RET POL 1 To support the regeneration, vitality and viability of existing town and village centres and facilitate a competitive and healthy environment.

RET POL 2 To support the development of Core Retail Areas in Tier 1 and Tier 2 Settlements and apply the sequential test to all new retail development proposals.

RET POL 3 To discourage inappropriate out-of-town shopping facilities that detract from the vitality, viability and/or character of existing town centres.

RET POL 4 To assess all large-scale retail applications against the *Retail Planning: Guidelines for Planning Authorities* and *accompanying Retail Design Manual* or any replacement Guidelines prepared over the life of this Plan.

RET POL 5 To ensure that retail and service units will generally be located within the central area of a town or village.

RET POL 6 To encourage high quality architectural design in retail development

RET POL 7 To ensure that all new retail and commercial development proposals respect the character and scale of the existing streetscape within which they are proposed.

RET POL 8 To encourage the retention and/or reinstatement of traditional shop fronts.

RET POL 9 To encourage the design of shopfront and signs in accordance with the *'Guidelines on Shopfront Design*' (October 2003) by Leitrim County Council or any replacement Guidelines prepared over the life of this Plan.

RET POL 10 To encourage reuse of vacant town centre commercial premises for alternative uses and adapt a flexible approach to reoccupation.

RET POL 11 To encourage and facilitate a mix of retail uses in order to achieve a balance in the range of services provided.

RET OBJ 12 To prevent an over-concentration of a particular type of retail activity in any area.

RET OBJ 13 To encourage the adaptation of over-the-shop premises and other vacant town centre buildings for residential use.

Retail Objectives

RET OBJ 1 To implement the retail hierarchy where the scale and size of retail development is in accordance with the size and the defined function of the settlement.

RET OBJ 2 To promote Carrick-on-Shannon as the main retail centre in the county and to ensure that the retail quantity, quality and range is of a standard that reduces leakage of retail expenditure out of the county and contributes to the strengthening and competitiveness of the retail economy within Carrick-on-Shannon, the county and the region as a whole.

RET OBJ 3 To encourage the continued vitality and viability of town and village centres and support initiatives that enhance the character of towns and villages ensuring they remain attractive investments.

RET OBJ 4 To promote tourism initiatives and activities such as festivals and farmer's markets in town and village centre settings.

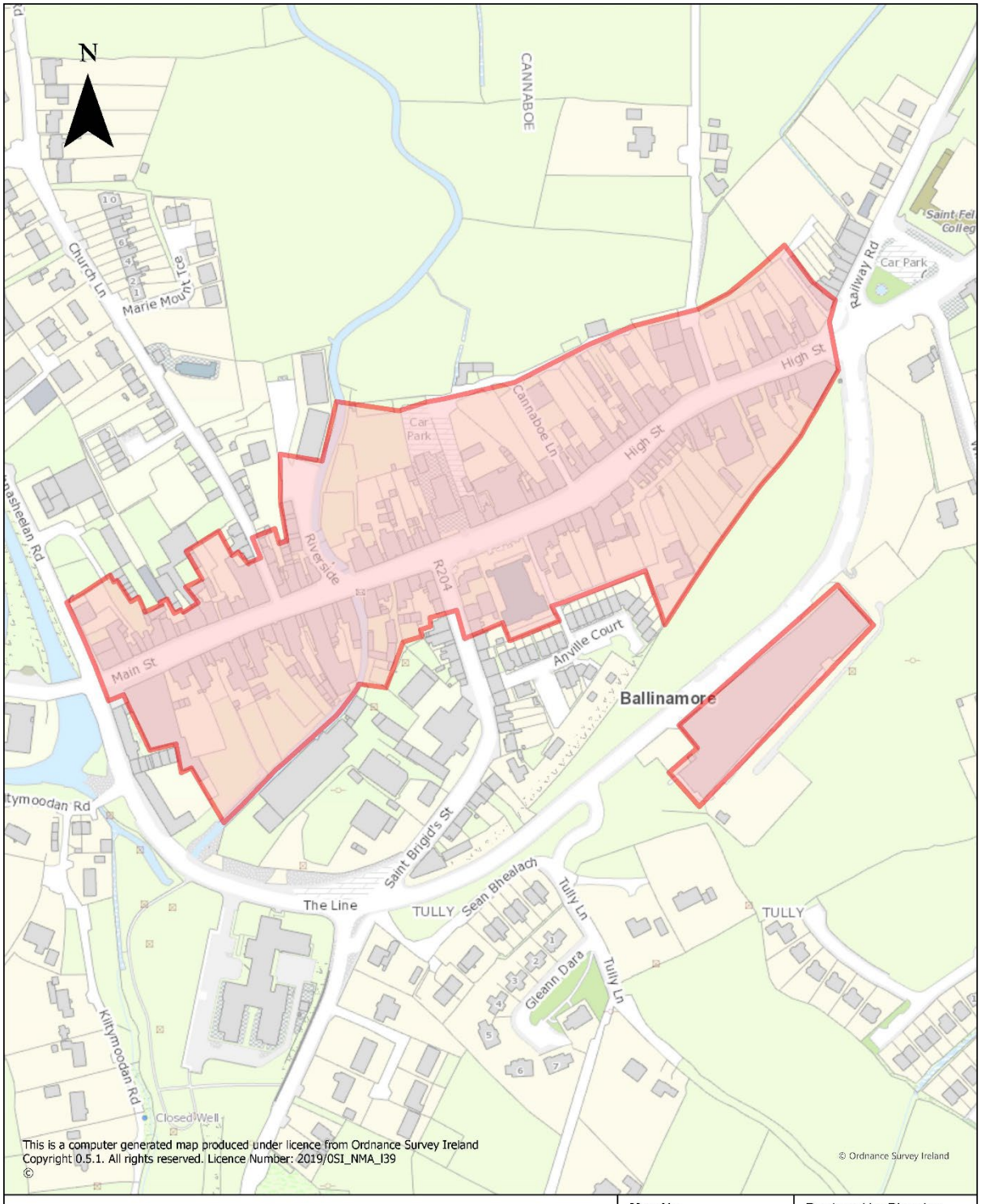
RET OBJ 5 To promote the revitalisation and reuse of vacant and derelict properties.

RET OBJ 6 To encourage and facilitate innovation and diversification of the county's retail profile, including tourism and agri-tourism related ventures and markets.

RET OBJ 7 To develop a Shop Front Scheme to promote development and regeneration in town centres.

RET OBJ 8 To continue to develop the Town Centre Incentive Scheme to encourage new business into Leitrim's town and village centres and to revitalise unused premises.

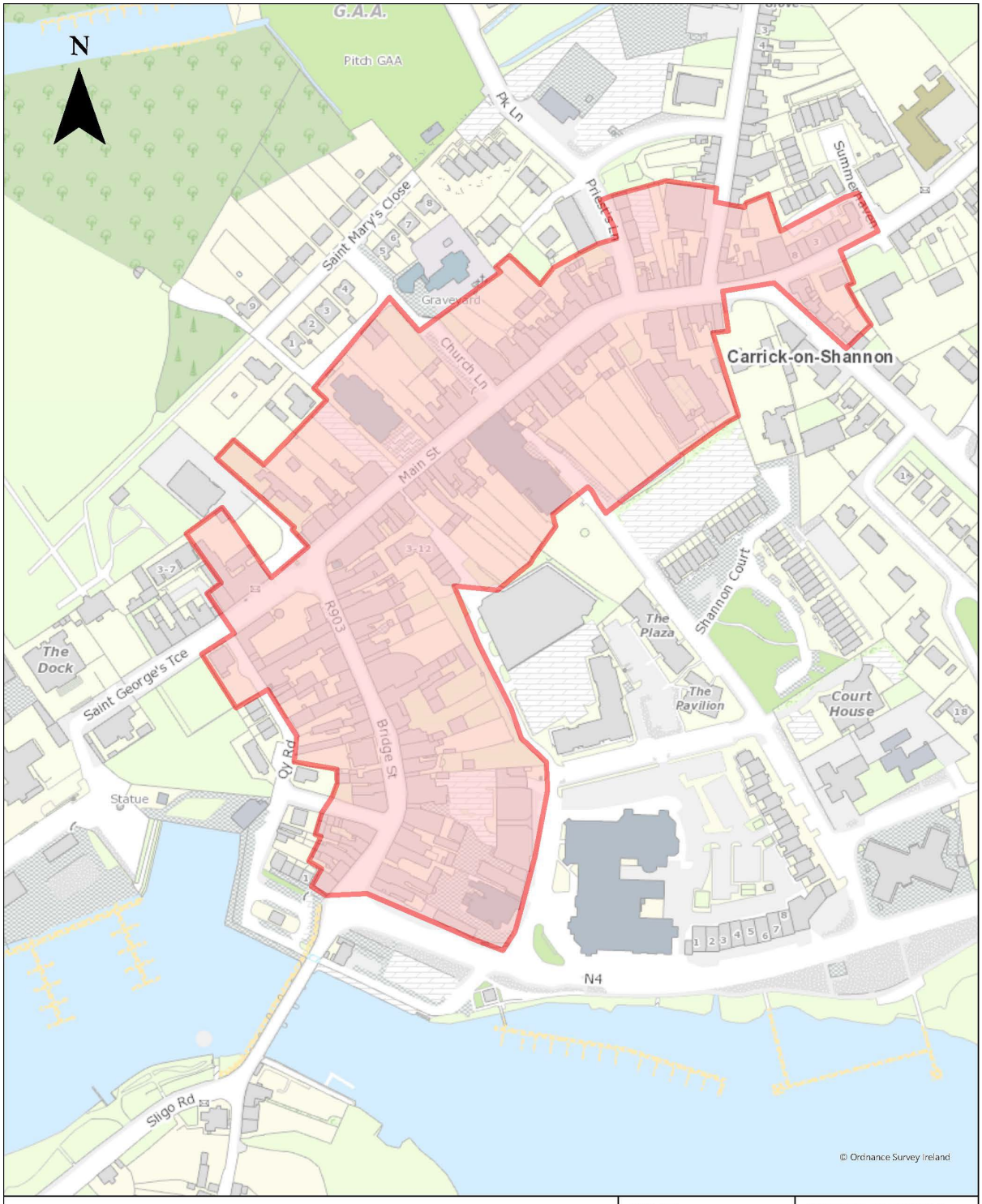
RET OBJ 9 In order to address job creation and retail leakage in the smaller towns in the Settlement Hierarchy, the Plan identifies Opportunity Sites to support economic development and employment creation consistent with national, regional and local policies.



Legend

Commercial Town Centre Area

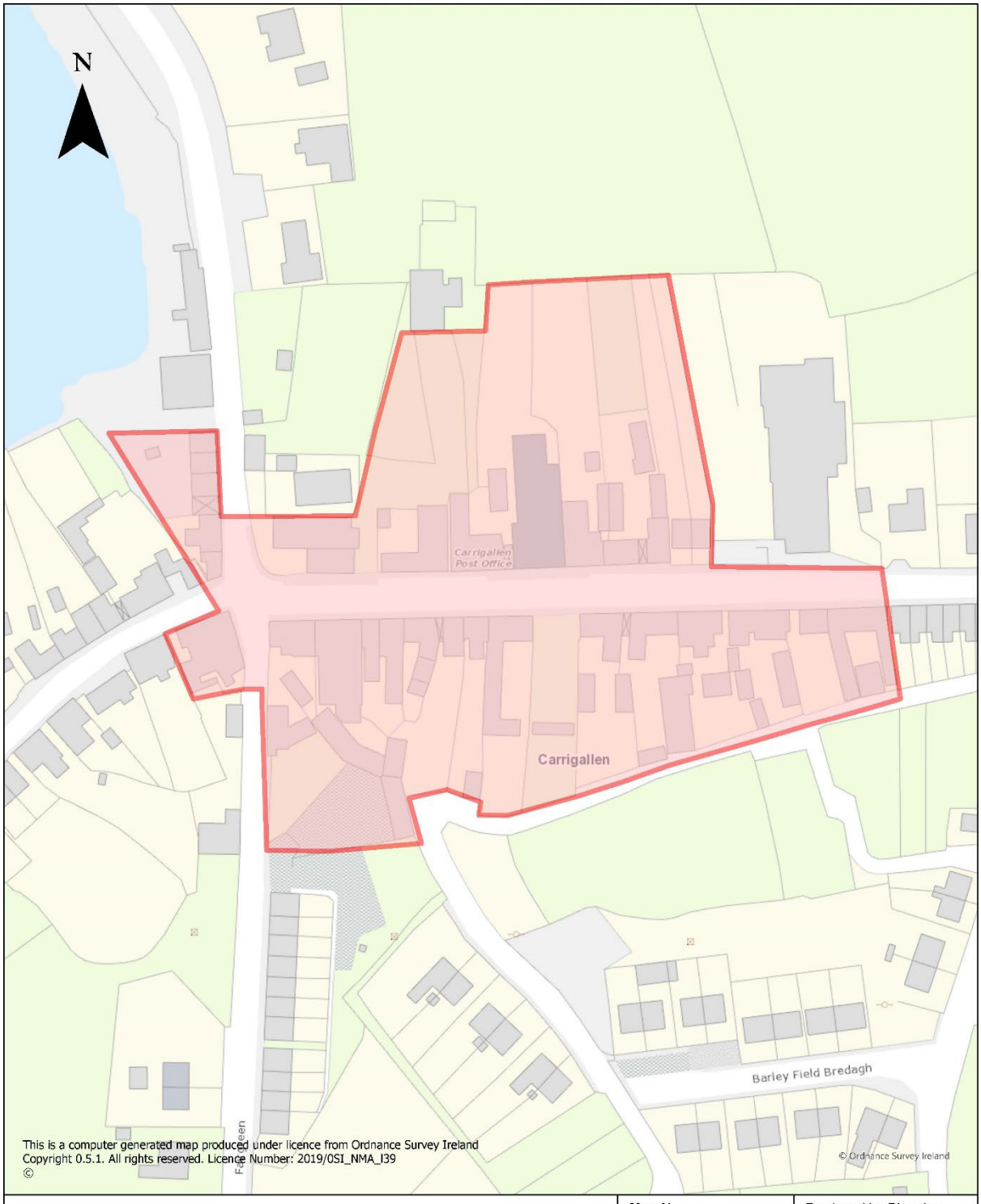
Map No.	Produced by Planning Department, Leitrim County Council, Áras an Chontae, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim
Ballinamore Core Retail Area	
Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029	Comhairle Chontae Liatroma Leitrim County Council



Legend

Commercial Town Centre Area

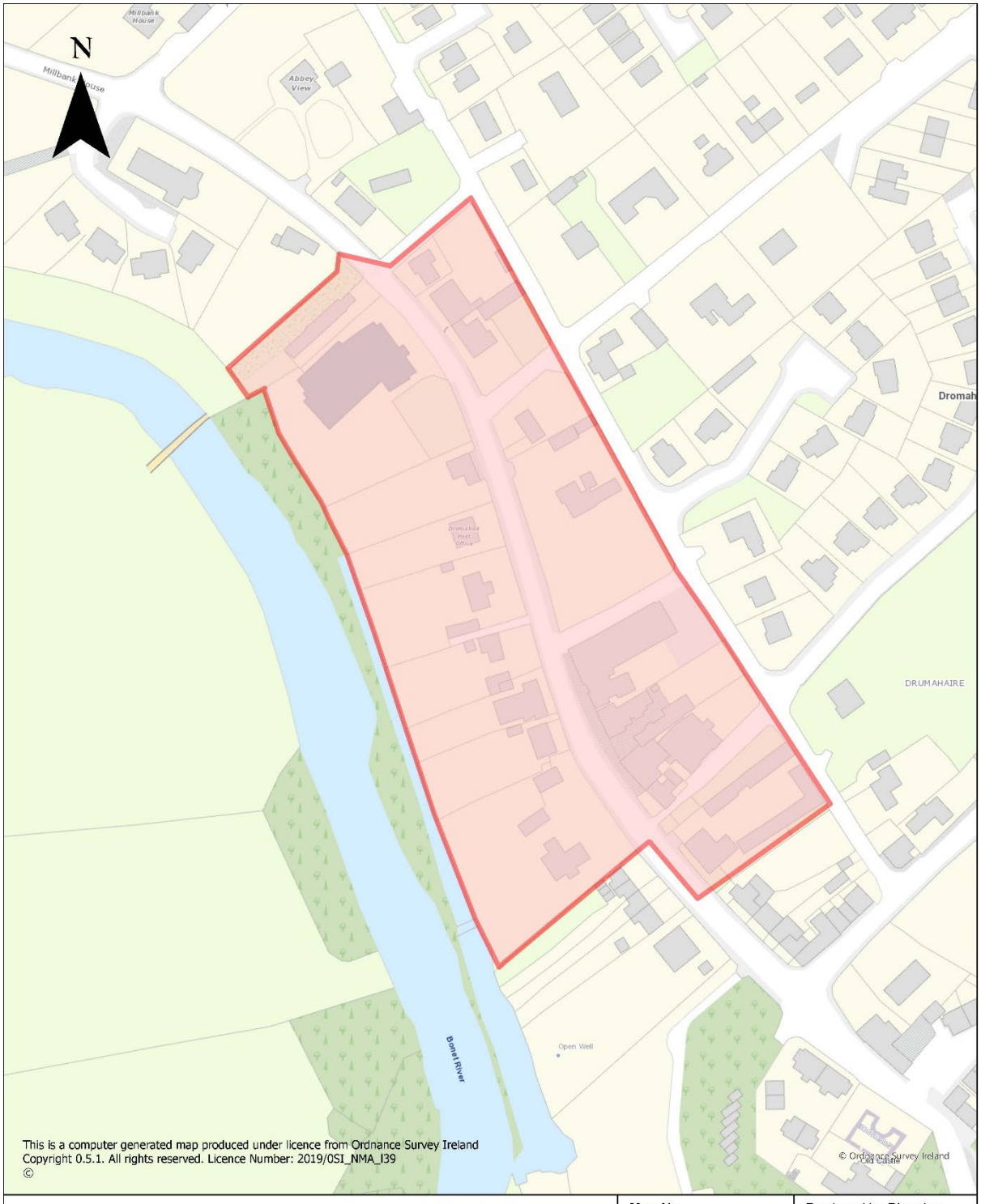
Map No.	Produced by Planning Department, Leitrim County Council, Áras an Chontae, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim
Carrick on Shannon Core Retail Area	
Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029	Comhairle Chontae Liatroma Leitrim County Council



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Commercial Town Centre Area

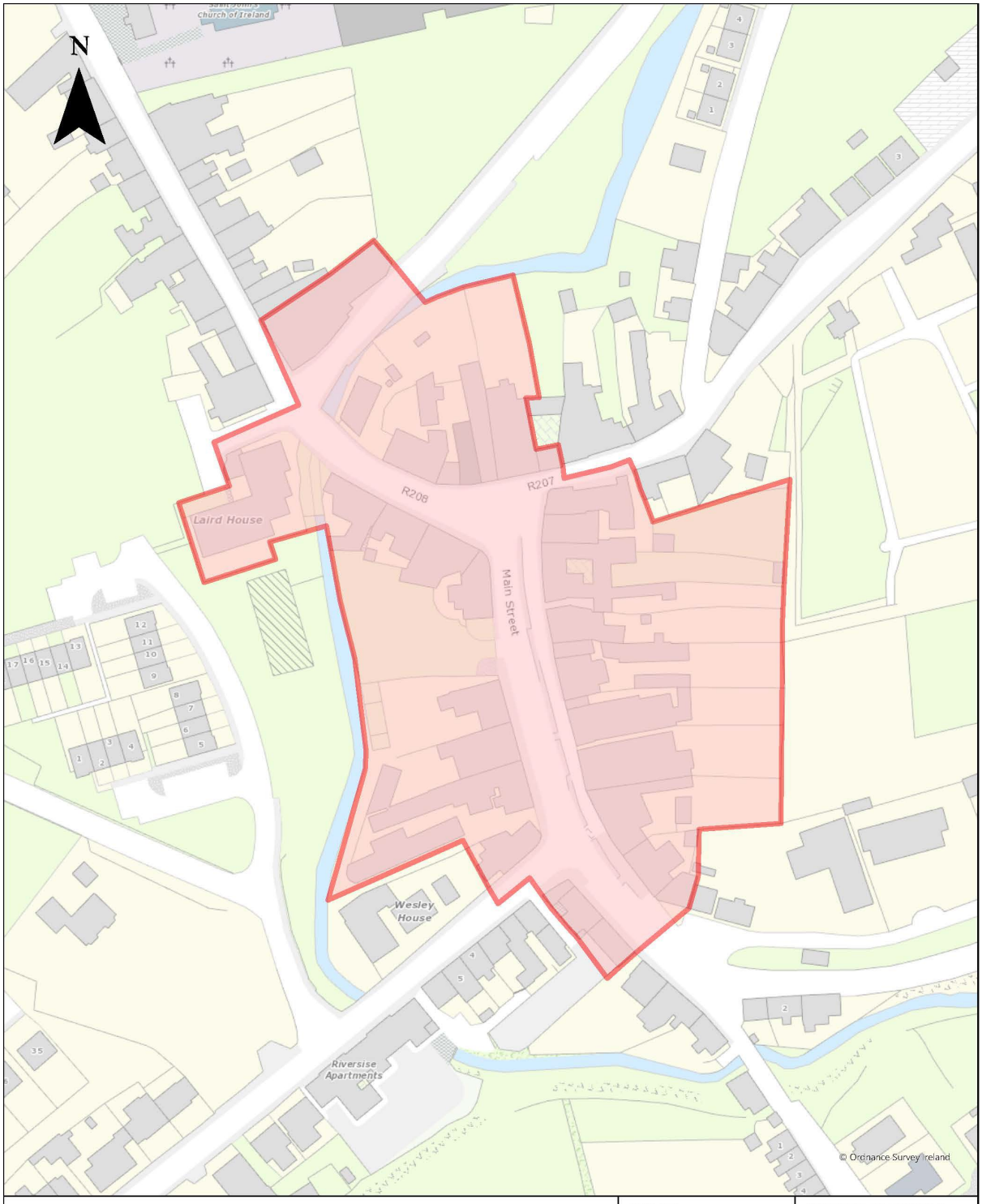
Map No.	Produced by Planning Department, Leitrim County Council, Áras an Chontae, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim
Carrigallen Core Retail Area	
Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029	Comhairle Chontae Liatroma Leitrim County Council



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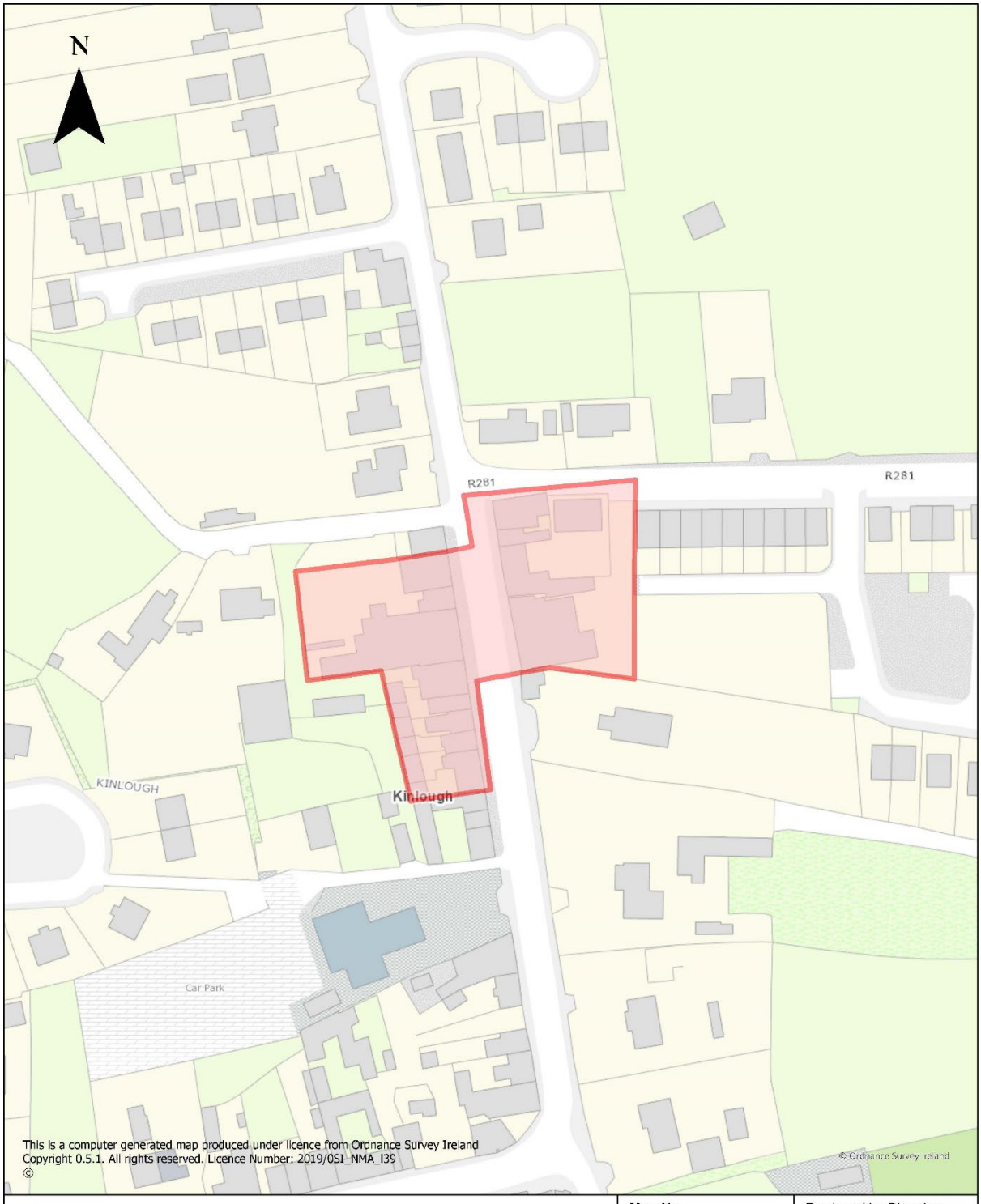
Commercial Town Centre Area

Map No.	Produced by Planning Department, Leitrim County Council, Áras an Chontae, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim
Dromahair Core Retail Area	
Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029	Comhairle Chontae Liatroma Leitrim County Council



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Commercial Town Centre Area

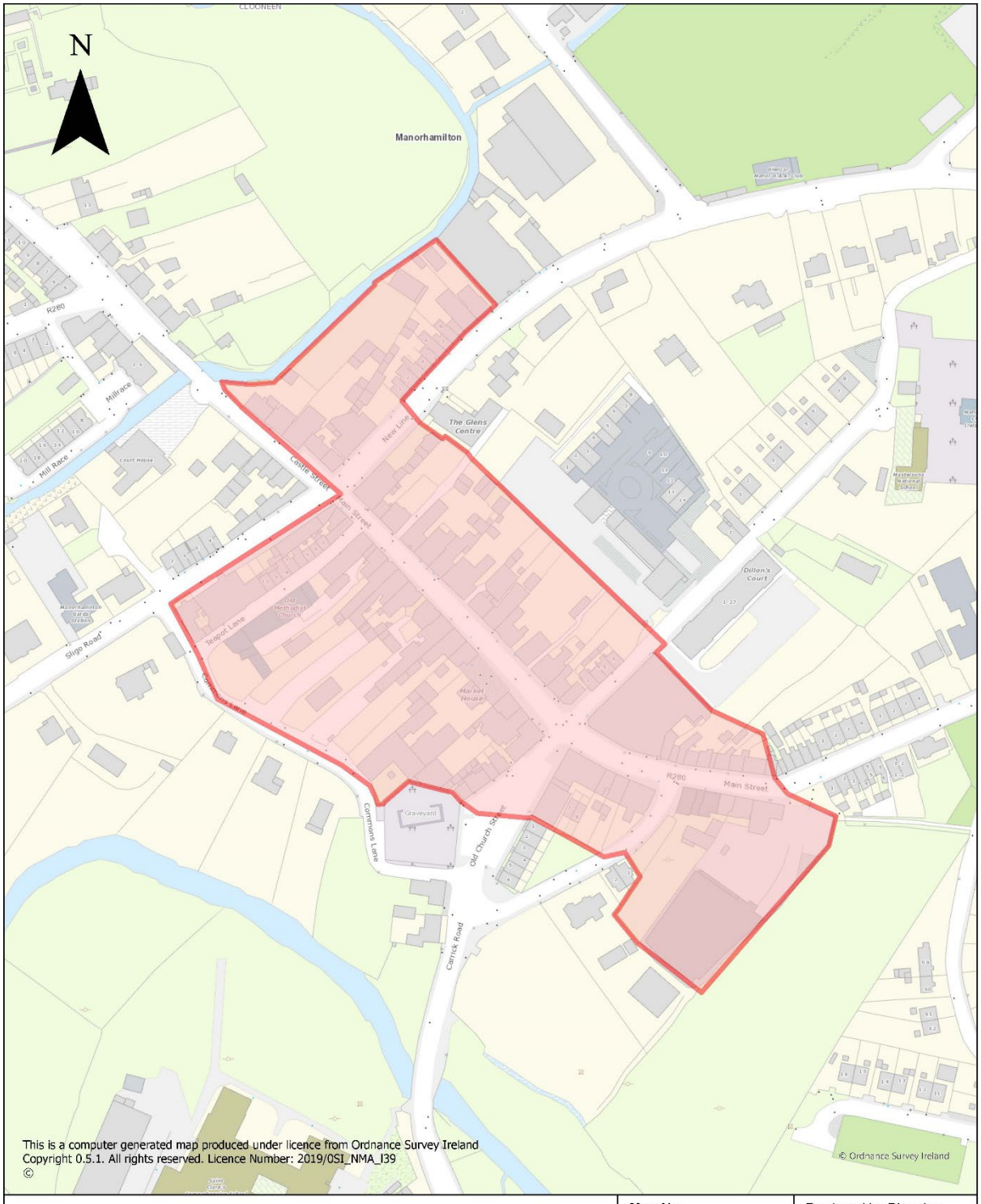
Map No.	Produced by Planning Department, Leitrim County Council, Áras an Chontae, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim
Drumshanbo Core Retail Area	
Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029	Comhairle Chontae Liatroma Leitrim County Council



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Commercial Town Centre Area

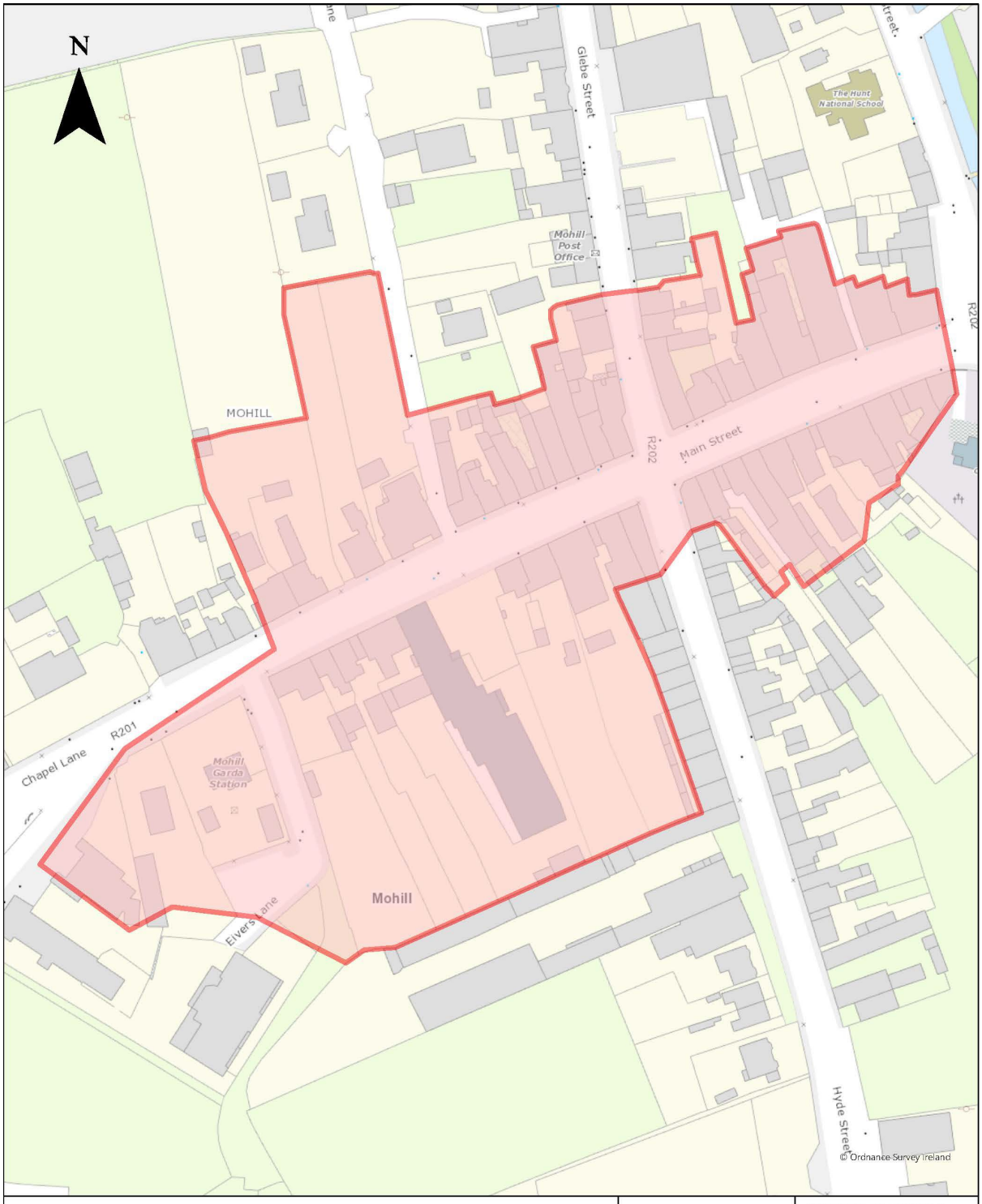
Map No.	Produced by Planning Department, Leitrim County Council, Áras an Chontae, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim
Kinlough Core Retail Area	
Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029	Comhairle Chontae Liatroma Leitrim County Council



Legend

Commercial Town Centre Area

Map No.	Produced by Planning Department, Leitrim County Council, Áras an Chontae, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim
Manorhamilton Core Retail Area	
Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029	Comhairle Chontae Liatroma Leitrim County Council



Legend

Core Retail Area

Mohill Core Retail Area

Produced by Planning Department, Leitrim County Council, Áras an Chontae, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim

Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029

Comhairle Chontae Liatroma
Leitrim County Council

5 TOURISM

5.1 Introduction

Leitrim has an exceptional landscape of unspoilt natural beauty to be explored for sustainable tourism purposes and a range of recreational amenities dotted across the county. The tourism objectives and policies seek to maximise opportunities for growth and realise the economic benefits of tourism for the county in a sustainable manner in line within the national and regional policy framework.

Three airports serve the majority of Leitrim - Ireland West Airport Knock (50 minutes distant), Dublin (2 hours) and Belfast (3 hours). The Shannon-Erne waterway runs from the north east of the county to the south west, with Carrick-on-Shannon the '*navigational capital*' along the waterway. This coupled with the spectacular mountains and valleys of the northwest ensure a remarkable landscape for tourists to explore. Fáilte Ireland's figures indicate that in 2019, Leitrim welcomed 1% of the 9.7 million overseas tourists who came to Ireland, spending 1% of the €5.2bn overseas tourism expenditure in Ireland, with a further 310,000 domestic visitors to Leitrim and Cavan generating an estimated €53m in revenue. However, the COVID-19 pandemic presents a very challenging time for tourism as people have been unwilling or not permitted to travel. The tourism industry has suffered greatly, with significantly reduced revenue generation, redundancies and a loss of confidence in the industry and in travel in general. The Leitrim Tourism Strategy, *"A Growth Strategy for Tourism in Leitrim, 2015-2021*" outlined a target of 296,000 tourists to the county in 2021. This target cannot be realised due to the unforeseen pandemic, but opportunities present themselves and with the vast open space of Co. Leitrim and safety in the outdoors, the focus will be on promoting the strong tourism product around family, food and slow adventure tourism across our county. Initially the focus will be on domestic visitors but returning in the short term, to attracting foreign visitors back to our shores.

Co. Leitrim is renowned for its festival and events and as an angling and boating county and has opportunities abounding for walking and outdoor activities. The county's natural assets (waterways; loughs and lakes; glens, valleys and waterfalls; and mountain ranges) are characterised by an abundance of tourist attractions, cultural and built heritage, village life, water-based benefits, visitor amenities and vitality with a charming sense of identity. Leitrim County Council will continue to raise the profile of Leitrim as a tourist destination and ensure that the county is well represented and marketed regarding structured and themed products. The Council is fully supportive of all future developments that will contribute positively to the tourism potential of the county, while protecting the heritage and environment of the county, to achieve maximum economic and social gain.

In April 2018, Fáilte Ireland unveiled '*Ireland's Hidden Heartlands*', a regional branded experience which encourages consumers to explore the green heartlands of Ireland's natural beauty, where activity and relaxation are centred around rural communities. 'Ireland's Hidden Heartlands' region includes the entire length of the River Shannon referred to in the Shannon Masterplan as well as the main sections of the Beara Breifne Way. The Wild Atlantic Way continues to be a key driver for tourism growth for North Leitrim extending from the coastline inland to include Manorhamilton and Dromahair. It is through cohesive development and marketing of a variety of activities within the county that will ensure longer stay vacations and increased revenue. This Plan supports the development of accessible facilities and information points at tourist destinations to support tourism development throughout the county whilst also ensuring the protection of the environment.

5.2 Policy Context

5.2.1 People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025, Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, 2015

This National Strategy aims "*to facilitate a vibrant, attractive tourism sector that makes a significant contribution to employment across the country; is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable; helps promote a positive image of Ireland overseas, and is a sector within which people want to work*". A series of 3 Year Action Plans will ensure the implementation of the strategy.

5.2.2 Tourism Action Plan 2019-2021, Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, 2018

The current National Tourism Action Plan 2019-2021 places an emphasis on regional growth and season extension and on helping to build the attractiveness of some of the less well-known attractions and regions internationally to create more balanced tourism growth across the country and support less-developed tourism areas.

5.2.3 Tourism Development and Innovation, A Strategy for Investment 2016-2022 Fáilte Ireland, 2016

This Strategy includes a strong focus on building memorable visitor experiences, developing a world-class industry, and creating visitor-friendly infrastructure and communities throughout the country. Much of the capital investment nationally is focused on the four regional experience brands, with an emphasis on increased revenue generation from tourism and alignment with the brands. Leitrim forms part of Irelands Hidden Heartlands and the Wild Atlantic Way. The purpose of the new branding is to encourage more visitors and tourists to explore the region's natural assets such as the River Shannon and its walking trails, boating, fishing, greenways and woodlands.

5.2.4 National Planning Framework 2040

Tourism is part of National Strategic Outcome 7 of the NPF, '*Enhanced Amenities and Heritage*' which requires investment in well-designed public realm, recreational infrastructure and rural amenities including activity-based tourism and trails such as Greenways, Blueways and Peatways, with the development of a strategic national network of these trails highlighted as a priority (NPO 21). In addition, NPO 22 notes the importance of maintaining and protecting the natural landscape and built heritage which are vital to rural tourism. The NPF clearly states that tourism and agriculture are inextricably linked in rural areas, given that agriculture, in many places, creates and maintains the landscape upon which tourism trades. The built, cultural and natural assets which constitute the '*raw material'* of the tourism industry are also essential to the production capability of the agricultural sector. Tourism has the capacity to directly and indirectly sustain communities, create employment and deliver real social benefits for rural Ireland.

5.2.5 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, Northern and Western Regional Assembly, 2020-2032

The RSES identifies the potential of sustainable rural tourism and supports rural tourism initiatives concerned with agri-tourism, rural enterprise and conservation of natural heritage together with sites that are also important for cultural, archaeological or built heritage reasons. Co. Leitrim has the lowest share of tourists in the region, but the RSES lists key priorities for the county to develop the tourism offer and the Purple Flag Status of Carrick-on-Shannon as a destination town and ensure orientation

and tourist information points are facilitated to encourage the slow tourism market to stay in the town. The strategy aims to develop the water based leisure sector and deliver on the Blueway development under the Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy project (USEFE).

5.2.6 Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways, Department of Tourism, Transport and Sport, 2018

This Strategy recognises the high potential of Greenways as economic contributors to rural communities through increased tourism. In order to ensure the maximum benefit in this regard, future greenways funded under this strategy will be required to be '*strategic, scenic, sustainable, offer lots to see and do and substantially segregated from vehicular traffic and offering shared use between pedestrians and cyclists*'.

5.2.7 Realising our Rural Potential, Action Plan for Rural Development

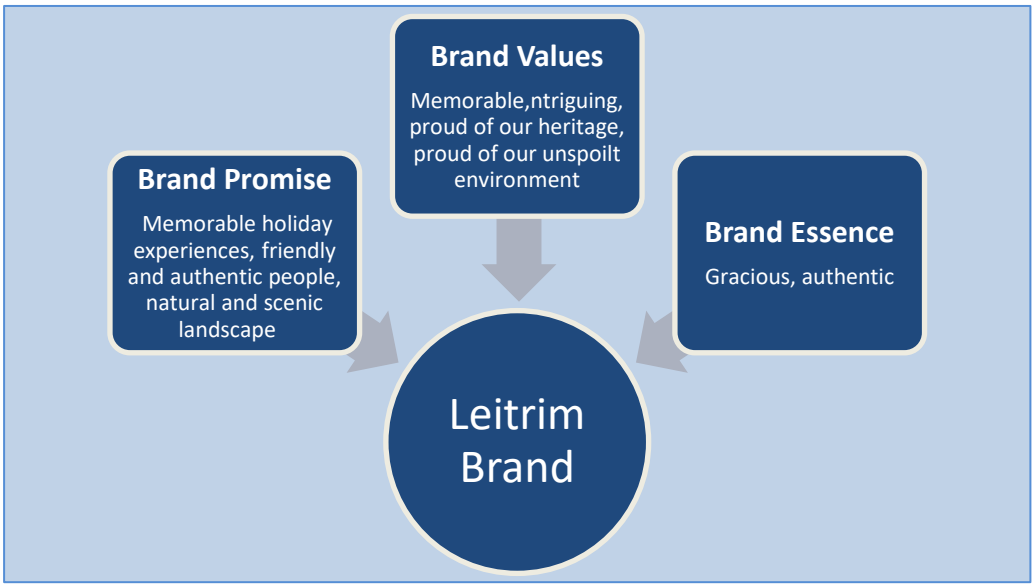
This Plan by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHRRGA) highlights the potential of activity tourism to contribute to economic growth in rural areas.

5.2.8 Our Rural Future, Rural Development Policy 2021-2025

This Plan by the Department of Rural and Community Development focuses on the development of rural Ireland over the next five years. The Plan recognises the importance of tourism to the economy and states that *'tourism is the only employer of note outside of agriculture in many rural areas'.* The Plan seeks to explore new tourism initiatives including on a cross border basis. The Plan seeks to promote sustainable tourism and invest in outdoor recreational tourism.

5.2.9 Leitrim Tourism Strategy, A Growth Strategy for Tourism in Leitrim 2015-2021

The Leitrim Tourism Strategy outlines the components of the Leitrim brand as:



The Strategy has identified that Leitrim's tourism product and the realisation from product experience to revenue acquired, is founded on six strategic pillars, underpinned by open communication and partnership which are outlined overleaf:

Table 5.1: Strategic Pillars of Leitrim Tourism Product

Pillars	Goal	Key Actions
Customer Centricity	Customer at heart of everything. We understand what they want and everyone they meet on the journey (pre-visit to end of holiday) delivers a truly memorable experience.	1. Clear focus on segments that have best fit with Leitrim 2. Link between segment needs and Leitrim experiences 3. Capacity building on importance of understanding segments 4. Ensure that trade and public understand brand values and deliver the promise; 'every customer, every time'. 5. Decision making led by customer insights
Product & Infrastructure	All investment decisions in product/infrastructure capitalise on, but protect, Leitrim's natural & built assets that give Leitrim a lead within competitive set.	1. Identify infrastructure requirements for key selling points 2. Focus investment on sustainability and customer needs 3. Improve signage, interpretation and information 4. Ongoing upkeep 5. Support for trade re accommodation approvals. Explore market intervention to encourage increased supply 6. Support for festivals and events
Experience Development	All areas of Leitrim deliver a unique holiday experience built on product, service and story. Cohesive commitment to experience development creates lasting memories that drive repeat & referral business.	1. Develop experiences around key selling points and products with market leading potential: Lakelands, Blueway, cruising, landscape, Northern Glens, angling, walking, cycling, WAW, eco-tourism, land activities, water activities, culture, festivals, Diaspora 2. Continual, facilitated programme of trade familiarisation and discovery days 3. Capacity building to develop a culture of continuous improvement
Collaboration	Everyone involved in tourism in Leitrim, directly and indirectly, understands its economic importance. This drives real collaboration, communication and sharing.	1. Systematic programme of communication and sharing; Leitrim Tourism, trade, stakeholders, etc. 2. Local PR – Understand Leitrim's tourism story & their role in it 3. Familiarisation for local trade and public 4. Proactive networking and referral between tourism businesses 5. Collaboration with neighbouring counties
Marketing & Sales	Cross-platform marketing communications inspire and influence partners and customers. Leitrim is easy to find in the places where customers search. We make it easy for them to decide and buy.	**International:** 1. Cooperation with FI/TI for PR and overseas trade activity 2. Co-op with airports 3. Digital: web, SEO, social media, web internationalisation 4. In-Ireland TO workshops **Domestic & NI:** 1. PR 2. Digital marketing (as above) & CRM 3. Joint consumer promotions
Governance & Structure	Delivery of the strategy is driven by a shared desire for success. Leitrim County Council in conjunction with	1. Leitrim County Council lead strategy implementation 2. Develop working groups and activation teams 3. Develop coherence & shared knowledge around annual work plans

Pillars	Goal	Key Actions
	key stakeholders and industry representatives lead and implement the strategy.	4. Strong stakeholder relationships; trade, communities, agencies 5. Identify and secure funding based on strategy needs

Source: Leitrim Tourism Strategy, A Growth Strategy for Tourism in Leitrim 2015-2021

5.2.10 Leitrim Recreation Strategy: A Roadmap for the Future Development of Recreation in Co. Leitrim, 2014

The Recreation Strategy sets out a roadmap for the further development of recreation amenities in the county in the interest of both residents and tourism. The key amenities identified were walking trails and loops (e.g., Glenade uplands); the Shannon-Erne Waterway as a Blueway-Greenway; the Lough Allen Basin; water and land based recreation and adventure (e.g., canoeing, kayaking, rowing, walking, cycling, equestrian); angling (game, pike and other coarse angling), and; rail to trail Greenway projects on the former Sligo Leitrim and Northern Counties rail line and the former Cavan Leitrim rail line.

5.2.11 The Shannon, Mighty River of Ireland, A Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon 2020-2030

'*The Shannon, Mighty River of Ireland, A Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon 2020 – 2030*' was prepared by Fáilte Ireland in association with Waterways Ireland and the relevant Local Authorities as part of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands marketing programme. The objective of this plan is to reposition the River Shannon as a key destination in Ireland identifying visitor experiences based on the region's natural and cultural assets. Listed as a priority in the Plan is Key Action DZ1.2 which seeks to '*develop the Carrick-to-Leitrim boardwalk; linking northwards to Acres Lake and Lough Allen'.*

5.2.12 Tourism Masterplan for the Beara Breifne Way

The '*Tourism Masterplan for the Beara Breifne Way*' is based on the vision and aspirations of Fáilte Ireland and the regional destination brands, particularly Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. The primary aim of the Beara Breifne Way is to attract visitors '*off the beaten track*', creating significant economic and social benefits to the rural communities, towns and villages along the route. The existing Beara Breifne Way stretches from Dursey Island in Co Cork to Blacklion in Co Cavan. It runs for over 700km and traverses the counties of Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary, Offaly, Galway, Roscommon, Sligo, Leitrim and Cavan. The Beara Breifne Way is made up of 12 existing National Waymarked Trails or long-distance walking routes, including the Leitrim Way, and sections of trail that link these. The Beara Breifne Way runs through the experience brand region of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and is a signature visitor experience in this destination. The route also traverses the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East destination brands.

Fáilte Ireland has procured consultants to conduct a detailed infrastructural and visitor experience review of the Beara Breifne Way to bring the trail up to best-in-class international standards. The review includes a full trail audit, trail design, development of an interpretation framework, orientation and wayfinding strategies and environmental assessments for the Beara Breifne Way. The project is scheduled for completion Q2 2022 with the findings to be implemented through a collaborative approach with all stakeholders over the lifetime of the Tourism Masterplan (2030).

5.3 General Tourism Development

Leitrim County Council is committed to supporting the growth of tourism in the county by taking full advantage of national and regional initiatives and funding schemes and maximising the potential of our unique natural, heritage, cultural and amenity assets. In reaching this potential, it is essential that a co-ordinated and collaborative approach is taken with relevant agencies, tourism businesses and communities throughout the county. Emphasis will be placed on securing sustainable tourism development whilst also ensuring the protection of environmental assets that tourism is dependent upon. Leitrim County Council will promote the principles of ecotourism namely – environmentally sustainable practices; natural area focus; interpretation and education; contributing to conservation; benefiting local communities; visitor satisfaction; responsible marketing and communication; cultural awareness and respect.

The Council seeks to further develop Slow Adventure Tourism for Co. Leitrim. Our county alongside Co. Derry are the designated areas for Slow Adventure tourism in Ireland under the international trademark. Slow Adventure is defined as a form of tourism which avoids the quick-fix adrenalin-pumping hits of convenient adventure experiences, in favour of slow, immersive journeys, living in and travelling through wild places and natural spaces – experiencing nature in its timeframe, its seasons, its weathers and its variations. These journeys typically include elements of wild food; wildlife; comfort in the outdoors; creating and enhancing peoples understanding; an enhance engagement with place.

Policies

TOUR POL 1 To support the development of new strategic tourism attractions that can create '*experiences*' as motivational '*must do*' signature experiences to draw visitors to the county, in a manner consistent with Leitrim's own brand identity.

TOUR POL 2 To enable, facilitate and encourage the growth of sustainable tourism enterprise developments in rural areas including open farms and eco-tourism initiatives subject to the provision of adequate infrastructure and compliance with normal planning considerations.

TOUR POL 3 To preserve and protect verified public rights of way which give access to seashore, mountain, lakeshore, riverbank, canals or other places of natural beauty or recreational utility.

TOUR POL 4 To develop opportunities for 'Slow Tourism' or 'Regenerative Tourism' clusters to be established within the county.

TOUR POL 5 Appropriate Assessments for lower-tier recreation projects shall demonstrate that potential direct, indirect and cumulative effects including in relation to the following issues, have been adequately mitigated, where they exist:

- Hard infrastructure in riparian zones;
- Increased recreational access;
- Species and populations of conservation concern where relevant; and
- Water quality.

TOUR POL 6 To seek to sustainably manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that

any new projects, such as blueways and greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.

TOUR POL 7 Where relevant, the Council and those receiving consent for development shall seek to sustainably manage any increase in visitor numbers and/or any change in visitor behaviour in order to avoid significant effects to sensitive habitats, including loss of habitat and disturbance. Management measures may include ensuring that new projects and activities are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities. Visitor/Habitat Management Plans will be required for proposed projects as relevant and appropriate.

TOUR POL 8 To consider and mitigate, as appropriate, the potential environmental effects of a likely increase in tourists/tourism-related traffic volumes in particular locations and/or along particular routes in the assessment of development proposals. Such consideration shall include potential impacts on existing infrastructure (including drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) resulting from tourism proposals.

TOUR POL 9 To protect, harness and develop the natural heritage assets of the town including the River Shannon, wetlands and other '*Green Infrastructure*' for tourism and recreational purposes and to promote sustainable mobility.

TOUR POL 10 To facilitate, where appropriate, proposals to improve access for all at existing tourism sites and facilities, and to require all new tourism related developments to ensure the development is accessible to everyone, regardless of their age, or ability.

Objectives

TOUR OBJ 1 To promote and market Leitrim as a tourist destination with the delivery of the '*Growth Strategy for Tourism in Leitrim 2015-2021*' or any subsequent replacement strategy which supports Leitrim as a tourist destination over the period of this Plan.

TOUR OBJ 2 To develop sustainable tourism products and work in conjunction with local groups and communities and other relevant agencies in the development and promotion of sustainable tourism offerings which extend the tourist season and stay-time by providing memorable experiences.

TOUR OBJ 3 To investigate the feasibility and potential of North Leitrim, Sliabh an Iarainn and its hinterland as a National Park/Recreational Area designation in conjunction with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and other relevant stakeholders.

TOUR OBJ 4 To utilise the county's natural and heritage resources to foster the development of tourism as a viable sustainable sector of the economy, in a sustainable manner, which complements the scale, quality and unique features of the county.

TOUR OBJ 5 The Council, within two years of the coming into effect of the County Development Plan, shall commence a process to identify, list and map public rights of way which give access to recreational areas including the coast, upland areas, lakeshores, river-bank areas, heritage sites or other places of natural beauty or recreational utility. When finalised, the Council will seek to preserve and enhance such existing accesses and public rights of way. The resultant list and map will then be inserted into the County Development Plan 2023-2029 by way of variation.

TOUR OBJ 6 To work with all relevant stakeholders to promote and support the implementation of the Shannon Tourism Masterplan, the Tourism Masterplan for the Beara Breifne Way and findings of the technical trail audit for the Beara Breifne Way and promote and support the '*Wild Atlantic Way*' and *'Irelands Hidden Heartlands'*.

TOUR OBJ 7 To explore in conjunction with Waterways Ireland the extension of the navigation channel from Lough Allen to Dowra as part of an overall strategy for the further development of water-based leisure activities on Lough Allen. This will include the improvement of existing infrastructure at both Spencer Harbour and Cleighran More in the short term. The extension of the navigation channel will be subject to the undertaking of the required environmental assessments at planning consent stage.

TOUR OBJ 8 To explore options to enhance the existing access to O'Donnell's Rock (Protected View and Prospect 17) and to create a designated viewing area at this location, subject to the availability of funding and the undertaking of the required environmental assessments as part of the planning consent process. The options to be explored include the potential of establishing a public right of way from the L-62031-2 at Larkfield to O'Donnell's Rock along an existing track at this location. This would connect to the existing Greenway developed from Manorhamilton to Boggaun as part of the proposed SLNCR Greenway.

(**Note**: From O'Donnell's Rock, there are fabulous extensive views of the surrounding hills and valleys as far as Lough Gill, Knocknarea in Sligo and the Atlantic Ocean. Access to O'Donnell's Rock presently consists of a poorly surfaced roadway (which does not seem to be a public road) advertised as an off road bike trail and which route is also quite circuitous for walkers and cyclists approaching from the Manorhamilton direction. The Council wishes to enhance the enjoyment of this protected view and prospect.

TOUR OBJ 9 In the absence of a national programme which would identify and bestow Heritage Town/Village designations, the Council will, during the life of the Plan, undertake an evaluation/assessment exercise which would consider the heritage strengths (built, natural and cultural elements) of individual centres. When complete, this would inform the promotion and marketing of such centres but also ensuring that appropriate centres are nominated for funding programmes which may arise.

TOUR OBJ 10 To support the preparation and implementation of Regional Tourism Plans and when complete, to support the continued collaboration with Fáilte Ireland and tourism stakeholders to ensure successful implementation and delivery of these Tourism Plans.

TOUR OBJ 11 To support the preparation of Destination Experience Development Plans (DEDP) and other tourism masterplans both within the county and also those which crosses from the county into neighbouring counties in collaboration with Fáilte Ireland and other tourism stakeholders.

TOUR OBJ 12 To encourage and support investment in digital technology in the tourism sector, with a particular focus on sectors such as visitor attractions and activities with low digital presence and/or integration.

TOUR OBJ 13 To support the future success and deliverability of The Beara Breifne Way and promote and identify the need for key facilities and services for visitors such as accommodation, signage, parking, and sustainable transport as identified in the *'Tourism Masterplan for the Beara Breifne Way'* prepared by Fáilte Ireland.

5.4 Arts, Culture, Heritage and Festivals

Leitrim has a rich heritage of myths and legends of ancient Ireland. A number of vibrant festivals enable local communities to celebrate their cultural heritage and unique local attributes. Some festivals remain small in scale, reaching only a local audience, but others have the ambition to grow into larger events, capable of attracting larger numbers of visitors and highlighting the festival location as one worth visiting to a wider audience. The Council will seek to support these festivals where possible, to support their growth potential, subject to event licensing and quality standards. The Council provides support for the county's arts and cultural facilities along with assistance to groups organising festivals through its annual grants scheme and other support through its arts, tourism and heritage sections. Theatre spaces range from intimate venues that support both amateur and professional productions, to arts centres, contemporary art exhibitions and music events. Encouraging and supporting new artists is at the core of Leitrim's creative community. Art spaces and exhibition opportunities are made available to emerging talent and Leitrim Design House brings the work of 250 artists and master crafts people to the public eye.

Policies

ARTS POL 1 To support the protection and enhancement of historic buildings, gardens and museums as cultural tourist attractions.

ARTS POL 2 To support and promote existing festivals, heritage and cultural events, in conjunction with the relevant tourism agencies to increase the cultural, heritage and lifestyle profile of the county, and to facilitate the establishment of new events.

Objectives

ARTS OBJ 1 To support the promotion of local culture, arts, food and crafts as unique visitor experiences in the form of events, festivals, food trails, craft fairs, visitor centres and arts venues.

ARTS OBJ 2 To support the development of food networks and trails, particularly those that can showcase the wealth of artisan food producers in the county in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland and other relevant stakeholders.

5.5 Greenways, Cycling and Walking

Leitrim County Council, working with strategic partners at a national, regional and local level, is strongly committed to developing further walking and cycling tracks, recognising the benefits not only for the local community but also for generating tourism activity and the resulting economic impacts. There are several successful walking routes throughout the county such as Slí Liatroma (Leitrim's Way), The North West Trail, the Beara-Breffni Way and the Miner's Way, which facilitate access to the countryside for everyone. The Council is committed to completing the Carrick-on-Shannon to Leitrim Village boardwalk and the Ballinamore Walk to Aghoo Bridge.

The development of Blueways and Greenways presents valuable opportunities for rural communities to attract more visitors. These values lie not only in the recreational opportunities that they offer but also in their potential to stimulate local businesses and regenerate local areas. Leitrim County Council is committed to the development of further Blueways and Greenways during the life of the County Development Plan.

Further detail on Greenways, Blueways and Walking is provided in Chapter 8 – Transport including specific policies and objectives being pursued by the Local Authority.

5.6 Adventure Tourism, Lakes and Waterways

The value of the lakes and waterways in Leitrim from a tourism and amenity perspective is significant having regard to their scenic beauty, serene environment and natural heritage and habitat value. There is potential to expand public amenity in these areas to include car parking, information boards, toilets, viewing points, boardwalks and boat mooring. The Council will seek to facilitate increased visitor access and enjoyment of the lakes and waterways, through encouraging developments which provide visitor services and create stronger connections with towns and villages which can provide those services. These include water sport equipment hire, changing and toilet facilities and guided tours along with general services such as accommodation and restaurants. A new public boardwalk has been completed at Carrick-on-Shannon marina and the Council in conjunction with Waterways Ireland has developed the Shannon Blueway from Acres lake to Lough Allen and the Shannon Erne Blueway from Leitrim Village to Kilclare (Lock 16 Killarcan to Lock 9 Kilclare). The quality of our water resources is of paramount importance to realising the potential of these assets for tourism. Keeldra Lake is Leitrim's only EPA designated bathing water site having achieved '*excellent quality*' status in the last 4 consecutive years. The lake provides for car parking, looped walks and angling facilities.

Leitrim County Council developed the Lough Rinn rowing facility and hosted a Rowing Ireland led regatta in 2016 and 2017. The facility comprises of eight fixed lanes for rowing, two pontoons, sanitary services, car and trailer parking. Cruise-Ireland (Carrick Craft) and the Emerald Star/Le Boat provide commercial cruise hire along the River Shannon and Erne. There are mooring facilities along towns and villages making it a popular way of exploring Leitrim's waterways. Leitrim is also recognised as being one of the outstanding angling destinations in Europe. Angling has been identified as having further growth potential and supports employment in rural parts of the county. Angling is identified in the Leitrim Tourism Strategy as a market in which Leitrim can and should reclaim its market leadership position. In addition to changing customer demands, the character of the product itself, i.e., the fishing waters, is also changing. These changes result in a need for a different approach. To successfully compete in international and domestic angling markets, Leitrim must respond to those changes.

Policies

ADV TOUR POL 1 To develop the water-based leisure sector in the region in a sustainable manner making the best use of existing and planned infrastructure and resources, in a manner that is sensitive to the natural and cultural heritage resources.

ADV TOUR POL 2 To support the development of angling centres and associated infrastructure/products in the county to meet customer demands and expectations in every aspect of the angling experience.

ADV TOUR POL 3 To maintain water quality and develop shared facilities at designated water bathing sites.

ADV TOUR POL 4 To support both the enhancement of existing and development of new access to water locations in the county for recreation purposes. The provision of shared facility centres for water-based activities in the county shall be supported by the Council.

Objectives

ADV TOUR OBJ 1 To facilitate walking and cycling access to lakes and waterways from towns and villages where services are provided.

ADV TOUR OBJ 2 To support the development of infrastructure and tourism enterprises which increase the tourism offering on waterways including boating, canoeing, angling, water sports, bird watching, and the provision of storage, shelters and other facilities to enhance the user experience subject to planning permission and only where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment, including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.

ADV TOUR OBJ 3 To continue to develop and enhance the Shannon Erne Blueway from Leitrim Village to Ballinamore.

ADV TOUR OBJ 4 To prepare Habitat and Visitor Management Plans for the protection of areas which are particularly sensitive to visitors subject to the availability of funding. The first such plan will be developed for Sheemore.

ADV TOUR OBJ 5 To maximise the tourism potential of Glencar Lake and waterfall.

ADV TOUR OBJ 6 To support and facilitate the continued development of the Greenways/Blueways and maximise the economic opportunities presented by Greenways/Blueways.

ADV TOUR OBJ 7 To develop Fowley's Falls and Glenfarne Forest Park as must-see tourist destinations.

5.7 Tourism Infrastructure and Visitor Services

Carrick-on-Shannon is a key destination town and there are a variety of activities, accommodation and high quality services available in the town to cater for tourists. Recent public realm enhancements in the town improve the visitor experience and accessibility, encouraging increased dwell time and repeat visits. The Council seeks to improve signage and way finding throughout the county, linking towns and villages and connection with the waterways.

Policies

TOUR INF POL 1 To provide high quality experiences for visitors by supporting expansion in accommodation and facilities in Carrick-on-Shannon as a Destination Town and creating connections to Manorhamilton and Ballinamore via smaller towns and villages including improvements to the public realm and the sustainable development of our natural and built heritage.

TOUR INF POL 2 To encourage the clustering of tourism products and services to contribute to the vitality of towns and villages and reduce leakage from the local economy.

TOUR INF POL 3 To support the provision of visitor services within existing towns and villages, such as cafes, accommodation, and changing facilities, by providing linkages with greenways, blueways and trails where appropriate.

TOUR INF POL 4 To facilitate the sustainable development of a variety of quality tourist accommodation including hotels, guesthouses, hostels, B&Bs, holiday homes, glamping/camping/caravan and campervans at suitable locations, throughout the county.

TOUR INF POL 5 To provide signposting, information boards or interpretative signs and support the upgrade of access and other infrastructure of existing amenities to provide for development of quality public visitor infrastructure and public facilities at scenic amenity sites.

TOUR INF POL 6 To support the implementation of new tourist facilities or upgrading/extension of existing tourist facilities at tourist sites within the county, within proper planning and sustainable development principles

Objectives

TOUR INF OBJ 1 To identify opportunities for funding for infrastructural projects and facilities that support the tourism product of towns and villages and seek to maximise the benefit of such funding opportunities for the county.

TOUR INF OBJ 2 To facilitate the development of various accommodation such as hostels, hotels, guesthouses, hostels, B&Bs, holiday homes, glamping/camping/caravan and campervans along established walking/hiking routes and adjacent to existing tourism/recreation facilities, subject to satisfying normal planning criteria.

TOUR INF OBJ 3 To enhance the visitor offering in towns and villages and provide visitor interpretation, signage and public realm schemes unique to the town and village which provide tourists with a memorable '*sense of place*'.

TOUR INF OBJ 4 To support the development of the night-time economy by supporting the Purple Flag initiative in Carrick-on-Shannon and collaborating with arts, music venues, festivals and events in centres across the county.

TOUR INF OBJ 5 To support the development of new tourism products and facilities or upgrading /extension of existing tourist facilities at tourist sites.

TOUR INF OBJ 6 To work with all relevant stakeholders and Fáilte Ireland to facilitate the erection of standardised signage for tourism facilities and tourist attractions as part of national and regional initiatives.

5.8 Tourism and Climate Change

The potential environmental effects of a likely increase in tourists/tourism-related traffic volumes shall be monitored and mitigated as appropriate. Such a consideration shall include not only impacts

on natural heritage but also potential impacts on existing infrastructure (including drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) resulting from tourism proposals. The Council will endeavour to ensure that all activities are carbon neutral, climate friendly and contribute to the protection and enhancement of the environment to the maximum extent possible.

Objective

TOUR CLIM OBJ 1 To encourage and support tourism providers, festival and event organisers to incorporate green initiatives and principles.

6 URBAN SETTLEMENTS

6.1 Introduction

The towns and villages in Co. Leitrim are at the heart of social, economic and community activity. They are places where people not only work, but also live, socialise, raise their families and engage in community activities. The towns and villages of Co. Leitrim vary in terms of their size, character and the range and scale of their commercial activities. They are the lifeblood of local economies and support businesses and employment with an impact that extends into their surrounding areas and communities. Vibrant towns are important catalysts for balanced regional development. For visitors, they are the gateways to our heritage, culture and natural environment.

The strategic aim of this chapter is based on that contained in '*Our Rural Future*', namely:

> *To support the regeneration, repopulation and development of our towns and villages to contribute to economic recovery, and to enable people to live and work in a high quality environment.*

This Strategic Aim will be realised by investing in projects which support economic activity and increased footfall in our towns and villages, improve the public realm, encourage town centre living, and provide the necessary services infrastructure to support town and village regeneration and sustainable growth. This will continue the significant investment made through initiatives such as the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, and the CLÁR programme to support the regeneration of our towns and villages.

The challenges faced by our towns and villages include the effect of vacant properties on the vitality and attractiveness of towns, the impact of online shopping on town centre retail, and the closure of services such as banks and post offices where providers have found it is no longer viable to maintain these services in certain areas. The impact of COVID-19 has created further challenges for commercial activity. One of the lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic is a renewed appreciation of the importance and value of our local towns and villages and of their businesses and local shops to the wider community.

Investment in the revitalisation of our rural towns and villages as part of the post COVID-19 economic recovery has been acknowledged as a priority for Government. This investment will target measures to support the viability of local businesses and local jobs, increase economic activity and footfall, and encourage more people to return confidently to town centres to shop and socialise. It is also considered that a renewed emphasis on town centre living is critical to ensure a living town centre re-emerges to create vitality but also a sense of urban community. The Council will also seek to maximise the availability of funding programmes to revitalise town centres and by reviewing other options to bring vacant properties back into use for commercial or residential purposes.

6.2 Policy Overview

6.2.1 Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) in Chapter 6 'People, Homes and Communities' outlines how location, place and accessibility influence the quality of life that people enjoy.

Figure 6.1: Elements Supporting Quality of Life



Source: National Panning Framework

6.2.2 NWRA Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032

The RSES promotes a compact growth approach to ensure sustainable growth of more compact urban and rural settlements, supported by jobs, houses, services and amenities. A place-based approach seeks to unlock the economic potential of towns and villages and create healthier more sustainable environments. The strategy promotes accessible public spaces which promote both social and physical activity and cater for all demographics to ensure an inclusive society.

6.2.3 Framework for Town Centre Renewal 2017

The Framework for Town Centre Renewal sets out key characteristics of a successful town centre and includes an Action Plan for Town Centre Renewal. 'Key Attributes' for successful town centres are also listed which include the following Strategies:

- A Placemaking Strategy – to ensure that a town positions itself as an attractive location for investment, for talent and as a place to enjoy a good quality of life and the need for planning policy to place greater emphasis on placemaking for town centres at the key stages of development of Local Area Plans and Development Plans.
- A Visual Appearance Strategy – to ensure that town centres are attractive places to visit if they are to succeed and thrive and in particular the importance of revitalising existing spaces incrementally rather than depending on large scale redevelopment.

6.2.4 The Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015

The Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 resulted in significant changes to the social housing requirement under Part V of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended. This included the removal of the options for developers to fulfil Part V obligations by making a financial contribution or

making land available outside the development site. A Vacant Site Levy was also introduced under this legislation in response to issues of land management and housing supply generally, and to support Local Authority Development Plans. The levy was to be applied in respect of vacant sites from January 2018. The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018 increased the vacant site levy rate, from 3% of the market value of a vacant site for 2018, to 7% for 2019. The revenue generated can be used by Local Authorities for the provision of housing and regeneration development in the local area in which the vacant site is located. The Vacant Site Levy is designed to disincentivise land hoarding and to act primarily as a site activation measure, rather than an income generating mechanism. For a site to be considered vacant, it must meet certain criteria:

- For residential land, the site must be situated in an area in which there is a need for housing and a suitability for the provision of housing, and the majority of the site must be vacant.
- For regeneration land, the vacant site must exhibit an adverse effect(s) on existing amenities, or reduce the amenity provided by existing public infrastructure and facilities.

The 2015 Act defines a site as 'any area of land exceeding 0.05 hectares', excluding a person's home which is defined as a 'dwelling in which the person ordinarily resides'.

6.2.5 Housing Action Plan 'Rebuilding Ireland – An Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness'

A Housing Action Plan '*Rebuilding Ireland – An Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness*' was published in 2016. This set out a series of measures and targets by the Government that aims to increase and accelerate the delivery of housing across the country. There is a target to double the annual level of construction to 25,000 units by 2020 and to deliver 47,000 units of social housing up to 2021.

Other measures were also introduced by the Government such as the introduction of rent pressure zones, establishment of Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF) contributing towards the construction of critical public infrastructure required to deliver housing on key development sites and fast tracking of planning applications for strategic housing developments (SHDs) of 100 or more housing units to be made directly to An Bord Pleanála. Such measures are not considered to be of significance to Co. Leitrim.

6.2.6 Our Rural Future – Rural Development Policy 2021-2025

The Department of Rural and Community Development published this document in March 2021 for a post COVID 19 recovery and development of rural Ireland over the next five years. The Plan recognises the importance of digital connectivity for rural communities and enterprises focussing on remote working, education and enterprise opportunities and reiterates the ambition of delivering high speed broadband to rural areas. The Plan seeks to regenerate rural towns and villages and provide more employment in rural areas. It includes a policy to develop 9 no. Regional Enterprise Plans and work with the IDA to target 400 no. investments and 19 no. Advanced Technology Buildings all in regional locations. The Plan seeks to provide improved public transport, heath care, housing and childcare in rural areas.

6.3 Revitalising Small Towns and Villages

6.3.1 Funding Opportunities

There are a variety of funding streams available with the aim of improving towns and villages by revitalising areas and focussing on placemaking.

6.3.2 The Urban Regeneration and Development Fund

The Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF), launched in 2018, is a ten year national programme to support compact sustainable development through the regeneration of Ireland's cities and large towns. It aims to regenerate urban areas by facilitating the redevelopment of the existing built fabric of settlements in order to strengthen and support towns and cities as attractive and vibrant destinations where people choose to live and work, as well as to invest and visit. The URDF has an overall allocation of €2 billion to 2027. The types of proposals eligible for funding include:

- strategic development areas
- active land management
- measures to address building vacancy and refurbishment
- public realm improvements
- enabling infrastructure
- sustainable mobility
- transition to low carbon and climate resilience

6.3.3 The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund

The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) was established in 2018 to support job creation in rural areas, address de-population of rural communities and support improvements in towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000 people, and outlying areas. The Government have committed €1billion to be invested in rural Ireland over the period 2019 to 2027.

6.3.4 The Town and Village Renewal Scheme

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme is a key initiative under the Action Plan for Rural Development and is part of a range of measures to support the revitalisation of rural Ireland under the Government's Project Ireland 2040 Rural Regeneration Programme. Towns and villages are at the heart of our rural communities and can play an important role in revitalising rural Ireland. Its aim is to rejuvenate Ireland's rural towns and villages to make them more attractive places in which to live, work and visit. The 2021 scheme will, in particular, support projects that aid the economic and social recovery of towns and villages in response to COVID-19.

6.3.5 The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme

The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme plays an important part in strengthening rural economies and communities as part of one of the strategic objectives of the Government's Project Ireland 2040 strategy for rural communities by providing funding for the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure and for the necessary maintenance, enhancement or promotion of existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in rural areas across Ireland. The scheme supports sporting and recreational pursuits that avail of the natural assets of the countryside and contribute to healthy active lifestyles and the economic and tourism potential of the area. The 2021 scheme will, in particular, support recreational infrastructure that not only provides an outlet for the communities in which they

are situated but that also delivers added value from a tourism perspective, positioning rural areas to respond to the post COVID-19 economic environment.

6.3.6 CLÁR Programme (Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais)

The CLÁR programme is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development with delivery through Local Authorities in consultation with local community groups. Funding is provided for small-scale infrastructural projects in rural areas with the aim of creating stronger rural economies and communities by supporting sustainable development and attracting people to live and work there. The funding works in conjunction with local match funding and on the basis of locally identified priorities. The 2021 supports provided through CLÁR have been tailored to help rural communities to respond to the new COVID-19 environment and includes the addition of new funding measures.

6.3.7 Community Enhancement Programme (CEP)

The CEP was launched in 2018 and provides capital funding to community groups across Ireland. The fund focuses on enhancing the facilities available to communities and supporting groups in disadvantaged areas.

6.4 Pursuit of Town Centre First Approach

The sustainable long-term revitalisation of our rural towns and villages will require a more holistic and structured approach by encouraging increased town centre living. This Development Plan therefore advocates the '*Town Centre First*' approach which seeks to align policies and to target available resources to deliver the best outcomes for town centres. A '*Town Centre First*' approach encourages all stakeholders - Government Departments, the Local Authority, businesses and communities - to put town centres at the heart of decision making where appropriate. Locating services such as schools or medical services, for example, in town centres rather on the outskirts can help to revitalise the town by increasing footfall and creating a sense of place. The implementation of a strategic approach to town centre regeneration through utilising existing buildings and unused lands for new development, addressing vibrancy and future function while promoting residential occupancy, are all central elements to securing a sustainable future for rural towns and villages. This approach will be supported by a policy framework to bring vacant and derelict buildings back into use and to promote greater levels of residential occupancy along with more active land management to bring about such change.

Leitrim County Council will play a leading role in the regeneration and revitalisation of our towns and villages. Continuing to work directly with communities and local businesses, the Council is central to creating the conditions to improve the attractiveness of town and village centres, stimulate business and support residential development. This will be achieved through a range of measures including improvements in the public realm, the provision of civic amenities, the acquisition of strategic sites for development, including through the judicious use of Compulsory Purchase Orders, and the provision of a variety of services.

The Council will also seek to maximise the availability of funding programmes to revitalise town centres and by reviewing other options to bring vacant properties back into use for commercial or residential purposes.

6.5 Supporting Town Centre Living

The provision of the additional residential accommodation in rural towns and villages will be required to support the projected population increase provided for in the Core Strategy. More people and families living in, and relying on the services and facilities of, our towns and villages on a daily basis will help to fully revitalise them. The Programme for Government commits to implementing a strategic approach to town centre regeneration and living, through a mix of new housing developments and by utilising existing buildings and unused lands for development. The scale, design and layout of housing in our rural towns and villages should be proportionate and tailored to ensure that development responds to the character, scale and density of a particular settlement. It is also important that a mixed supply of private and social housing is provided.

The Programme for Government also commits to providing seed capital to Local Authorities to provide serviced sites to attract people to build their own homes and live in small towns and villages. These opportunities will be pursued by this Local Authority and through the policy framework contained in this Development Plan. Town centre living can also be supported by repurposing suitable vacant properties and encouraging people to live in them. It is accepted that there are a number of issues that must be overcome to seek to promote town centre living - the cost of refurbishing vacant buildings, the lack of a return on investment in terms of final property value, difficulty in identifying property owners, and the need for provision of amenities and services in town centres.

It is considered necessary for Government to introduce new supports and incentives for the refurbishment of vacant properties to increase town centre living. The review of the Development Contribution Scheme shall provide an exemption where a change of use proposes to create additional residential units within vacant or derelict/semi derelict buildings.

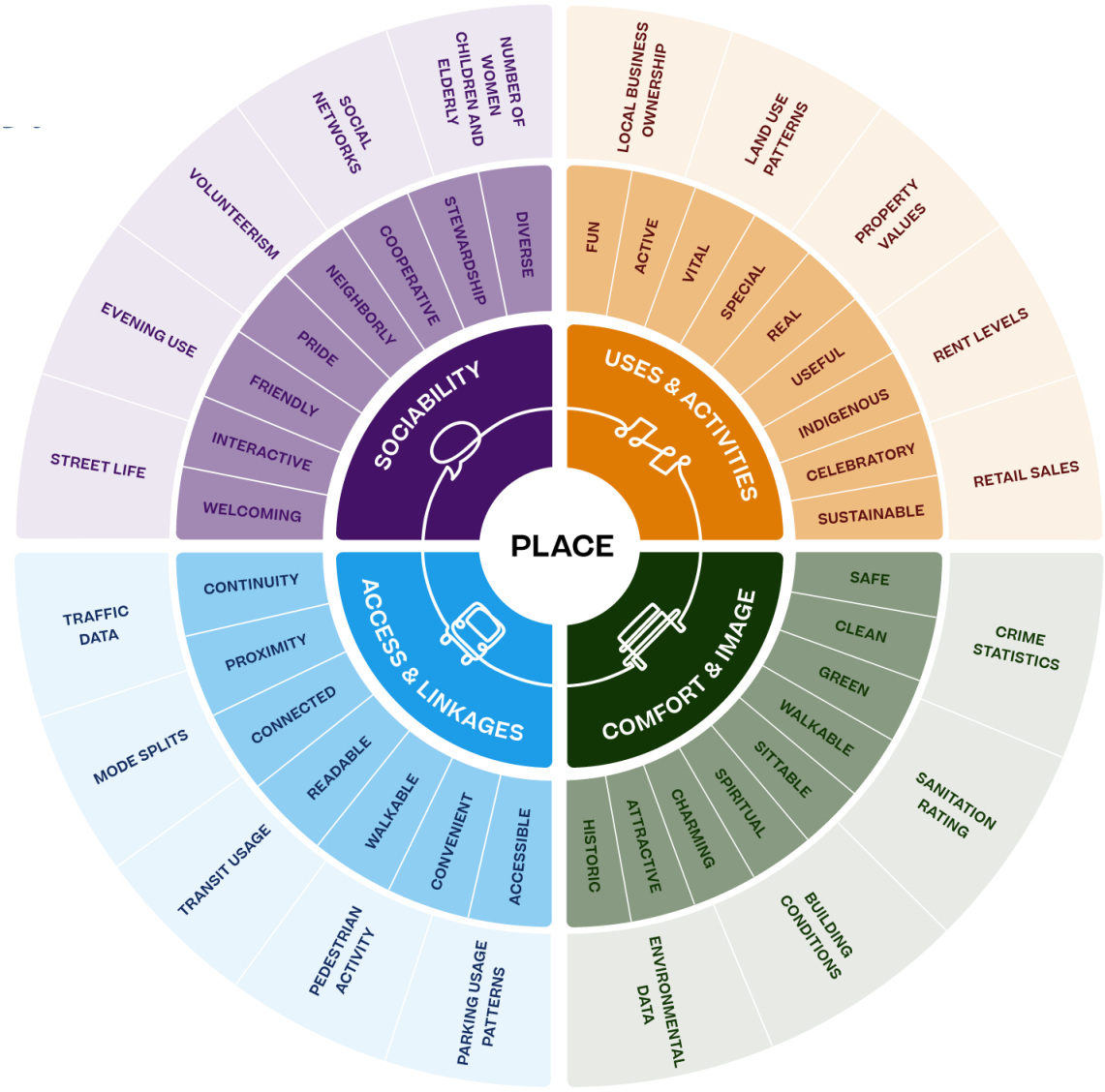
6.6 Healthy Placemaking

The economic recession has had a devastating effect on rural towns and villages with high vacancy and dereliction in our towns and villages. As a result, the vitality and viability of these settlements has been adversely affected. Leitrim County Council endeavours to support local businesses in the creation of sustainable jobs that contribute to the economic growth, vibrancy and resilience of these areas. A compact and consolidated core with active street frontage is vital to ensure vibrancy and support existing businesses. The concept of compact development seeks to consolidate towns and villages and facilitate the sustainable revitalisation of the area. In addition to achieving compact growth, it is important that a sense of place is created in the local environment that strengthens the connection between people and the place they live and work. This will improve the interaction people have with local amenities, create a local identity, thereby assisting in building and sustaining a local community.

Leitrim County Council pursues an objective to make settlements attractive and healthy places to live with recreational amenities, services and facilities, providing quality of life, and a sense of both place and community. Placemaking relates to the interrelationship and connection between people and the spaces they use. It includes how people move around places, the buildings and structures as well as the open space and landscape of an area and place. It requires a people-centred approach to the planning, design and management of settlements and the built environment. Healthy placemaking seeks to create public spaces that are vibrant, distinctive, safe and accessible and which promote and facilitates social interaction and economic growth. The availability of, and access to, services is key to creating healthier places. This includes access to adequate housing and employment choice, supported by good healthcare and education, quality public realm and access to nature, the arts and cultural heritage. The sustainable refurbishment and redevelopment of underutilised sites in core

areas will encourage town centre living and facilitate a range of additional housing choices while maintaining commercial opportunities at ground level. The reuse and regeneration of the existing building stock within the core area, development of brownfield and gap sites and the organic development of villages will create more livable settlements that people want to live, work and spend time in as their place of choice. The Council supports the provision of serviced sites and low-density housing as an alternative to one-off houses.

Figure 6.2: What Makes a Place Great?



Source: Project for Public Space www.pps.org/article/grplacefeat

The quality of the public realm plays a vital role in the creation of a place with an enhanced sense of identity, where people will choose to spend their time and create economic, social and environmental benefits. It gives great scope for public art, community based activities, temporary interventions/events, '*greening*' of town/village centres with landscaping and the inclusion of creative lighting schemes. The public realm provides the context for highlighting the built heritage of a settlement. Well maintained and presented buildings are also an important component of the public realm as in effect they frame the public realm. There are many attributes to a successful place as detailed in the image above with the overarching categories of sociability; uses and activities; access

and linkages; comfort and image. In order to attract consumers into towns and villages, a positive and memorable experience must be created.

To assist in improving the sense of place in settlements, the Council has embarked on the preparation of a significant programme of public realm improvements beginning with the towns at the top of the Settlement Hierarchy, namely Carrick-on-Shannon, Manorhamilton and Ballinamore. Funding for these projects has been secured through the URDF and RRDF funds respectively. The next public realm project is earmarked for Mohill, the first of the Tier 2B Support Towns with the Part 8 Public Consultation process having been completed in late 2020. It is intended to implement these plans and other plans within the other Tier 2B Support Towns over the life of this Plan.

Polices

PLACE POL 1 To strengthen the role and functions of towns and villages and facilitating development that will rejuvenate these settlements and make them attractive locations in which to live and work.

PLACE POL 2 To pursue a *Town Centre First*' approach in decision making to target available resources to deliver the best outcomes for town centres.

PLACE POL 3 To support the regeneration and repopulation of town centres, through the sustainable reuse of existing buildings including the conversion of the upper floors of buildings into residential use, focusing on dereliction, the appropriate development of infill consolidation site(s), underpinned by good urban design and placemaking principles. A relaxation in development standards will be considered for such projects, where it is sufficiently demonstrated that the development proposal will deliver high quality accommodation.

PLACE POL 4 To identify and realise opportunities that will support the regeneration and renewal of all towns and villages, maximising the availability of existing funding programmes.

PLACE POL 5 To enhance urban streetscapes by addressing vacancy and dereliction.

PLACE POL 6 To enhance the visual amenity of settlements and support improvements in the appearance of streetscapes and revitalising spaces.

PLACE POL 7 To encourage and facilitate improvements to the public realm of town and village centres.

PLACE POL 8 To provide accessible recreational amenities.

PLACE POL 9 To ensure a high standard of shop front design and retention of traditional shop fronts in accordance with the Leitrim County Council Guidelines on Shopfront Design, October 2003 or any replacement Design Guide.

Objectives

PLACE OBJ 1 To facilitate the development of a high quality and distinctive built environment creating a sense of place, with attractive, accessible and safe streets, spaces and neighbourhoods.

PLACE OBJ 2 To avail of all funding opportunities as they become available to facilitate the enhancement, revitalisation, renewal and regeneration of town and village centres.

PLACE OBJ 3 To promote funding streams to refurbish and repurpose vacant properties in town and villages centres as they become available.

PLACE OBJ 4 To encourage and support local community groups in initiatives seeking to enhance their town and villages including accessing available funding streams.

6.7 Compact Growth

It is an objective of the NPF and RSES that at least 30% of all new homes will be delivered within or close to the existing built-up areas of settlements with a population of 1,500 persons. This level of compact growth will be pursued in Carrick-on-Shannon, Manorhamilton and Ballinamore to ensure sustainable growth. It is also clear from consideration of the CSO defined boundary of Support Towns and Key Villages, that the majority of sites identified for new residential development are comfortably contained within their respective CSO boundaries. Each settlement is defined by a development boundary where development is encouraged in an orderly sequential manner building outwards from the central core area. This pattern of development maximises existing and future infrastructure provision in a manner that promotes sustainability, active travel and makes more efficient use of underutilised lands. This Plan will continue to support the sequential approach to the delivery of housing with priority in terms of active land management by the Council to pursue the development of infill development opportunities and the regeneration of brownfield sites. Compact growth will be achieved through active land management measures which will include:

- Proactive implementation of the Vacant Site Levy
- The identification of opportunity/underutilised lands
- The identification of potential constraints inhibiting the development of zoned lands
- Ongoing monitoring of the implementation of planning permissions, and
- The use of the full suite of powers provided to the Planning Authority to pursue such an objective including through the judicious use of Compulsory Purchase Orders, if required.

Policy

COMPACT POL 1 To facilitate the development of identified Opportunity Sites and underutilised land within the identified boundaries of individual settlements.

Objectives

COMPACT OBJ 1 To identify and monitor housing vacancy and develop Action Plans to address vacancy.

COMPACT OBJ 2 To implement the provisions of the Vacant Site Levy as a regeneration activation measure.

COMPACT OBJ 3 To promote the provision of high-quality and accessible public open spaces and promote linkage with social, cultural and heritage sites and buildings.

6.8 Regeneration and Opportunity Sites

The Vacant Site Levy was introduced under the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 as a site activation measure to bring vacant and underutilised land in urban areas into beneficial use, while also ensuring a more effective return on State investment by enabling infrastructure and helping to counter unsustainable urban sprawl. The legislation also placed a statutory obligation for all Planning Authorities to identify and establish a register of vacant sites. This site activation measure aims to encourage the release of zoned lands in order to deliver housing at appropriate locations. A variation was made to the County Development Plan 2015-2023 to incorporate the provisions of the Vacant Site Levy. Whilst the Council has a Vacant Site Register, no site has yet been included therein.

Potential exists for a more efficient and effective use of under-utilised and/or vacant sites within core areas of settlements.

Section 6.2.4 outlined the categories of site to which a Vacant Site Levy can be applied to pursuant to the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015, namely lands zoned primarily for residential purposes and/or lands in need of regeneration. For the purposes of this Plan, lands identified with a '*New Residential*' land use zoning objective or '*Mixed Use*' land use zoning objective in the specific case of Mohill are the categories of lands zoned primarily for residential purposes to which the provision of the Vacant Sites Levy will apply.

Lands in need of regeneration relate to lands identified with Town and Village Centre/Mixed Use zonings within settlements identified in Tiers 1, 2 and 3 of the Settlement Hierarchy as they offer opportunities to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres and where appropriate to consolidate urban areas. In addition, a number of sites with potential to be developed or redeveloped have been identified as '*Opportunity Sites*' in the respective Settlement Plans. These sites are considered as regeneration lands in urban settings i.e. vacant sites which '*exhibit an adverse effect(s) on existing amenities, or reduce the amenity provided by existing public infrastructure and facilities*'. The above land use zonings and '*Opportunity Sites*' may be subject to the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 with respect to the Vacant Site Levy for 'regeneration' purposes. The individual Settlement Plans are included in Volume II of this Written Statement.

A '*derelict site*' is defined as any land which detracts, or is likely to detract, to a material degree from the amenity, character or appearance of land in a neighbourhood. Leitrim County Council's Derelict Sites Register is a record of derelict sites throughout the county. Similar to the Vacant Site Levy, sites on the Derelict Sites Register are liable for a levy on an annual basis. Under the Derelict Sites Act (1990), Leitrim County Council may also serve legal notice requiring works to be carried out to address the state of dereliction.

The Council recognises the adverse impacts created by derelict sites, including from visual and environmental perspectives. Improvements to such sites have a tangible and immediate uplifting impact on the surrounding area and can serve to stem a tendency towards the spread of further dereliction. The Council is favourably disposed to working with the owners of vacant, underutilised and derelict sites/buildings to identify new uses. The Council will use its powers as necessary under the Derelict Sites Act 1991 (as amended) and the Housing and Urban Regeneration Act 2015 (as amended) to alleviate such dereliction and decay from our towns and villages.

Policies

OPP SITE POL 1 To encourage the redevelopment of centrally located vacant and/or underutilised areas within towns and villages.

OPP SITE POL 2 To support initiatives that promote the reuse, refurbishment and retrofitting of existing vacant and under utilised buildings within urban centres, including over the shop units, for town centre uses to create compact and vibrant town centres.

OPP SITE POL 3 To support the restoration of derelict sites and removal of derelict structures in prominent locations within settlements and adjacent to scenic and tourist routes, using mechanisms such as the Derelict Sites Act 1990.

Objectives

OPP SITE OBJ 1 To maintain and populate a Vacant Sites Register for Co. Leitrim in accordance with the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 to include Tier 1 – Tier 3 settlements within Co. Leitrim.

OPP SITE OBJ 2 To facilitate the implementation of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015, in particular, by way of utilising site activation measures, including the provision of the Vacant Site Levy, as appropriate to assist in bringing forward vacant and/or underutilised '*residential*' zoned land in all Tier 1, 2 and 3 centres and '*mixed use*' lands in Mohill, and 'regeneration' land into beneficial use within lands zoned for town/village centre or mixed use within the town boundary of all towns contained within Tier 1 – Tier 3 of the settlement hierarchy for Co. Leitrim.

OPP SITE OBJ 3 To implement regeneration activation measures.

OPP SITE OBJ 4 To promote and facilitate the habitation of vacant homes in accordance with the Council's Vacant Homes Action Plan.

6.9 Density

The Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, DEHLG (2009) outline sustainable approaches to the development of urban areas. The guidelines recognise that land is a scarce resource that needs to be used efficiently. The Guidelines set out a range of appropriate residential densities for different contexts based on site considerations and the level of access to services and facilities. Densities should take account of the location of a site, the proposed mix of dwelling types and the availability of public transport services. As a general principle, higher densities should be located within walking distance of town centres and high capacity public transport facilities. It is not considered that such high capacity transport facilities are present in any centre of Co. Leitrim including the Key Town of Carrick-on-Shannon. The densities outlined in the Core Strategy table reflects this reality.

The number of residential units to be delivered on a site will be determined in relation to the hierarchical status of the settlement within the Council's Settlement Hierarchy and its capacity for growth and its access to public transport and necessary social infrastructure. Furthermore, the Council acknowledges and encourages higher densities, where appropriate, given the need to reduce CO_2 emissions by reducing energy consumption and to support a more efficient use of energy in the residential and transport sectors.

Higher densities will be applied to the higher order settlement of Carrick-on-Shannon to align with its role as Key Town within the region, subject to good design and development management standards being met. It is important thereafter that the density of new development in towns and villages is reflective of the existing character and that growth is linked to infrastructural capacity. As such, there

will be a graded reduction in residential density for Self-Sustaining Growth Towns, Support Towns, Key Villages and Villages that are commensurate to the existing built environment.

It is not intended to prescribe maximum residential density standards in this Plan. The emphasis will be on providing quality-housing environments based on innovation and a design led approach. A high standard of architectural design and layout will be required. The Planning Authority will seek to ensure that new developments have individuality and a sense of place, which is generated by the interaction between the physical characteristics and features of the site and its surroundings and the layout, landscaping and design of the new housing.

Policies

DENSITY POL 1 To promote development at sustainable and appropriate densities that support compact growth and the consolidation of urban areas.

DENSITY POL 2 When assessing development proposals for new residential development that the following criteria will be considered, as appropriate:

i. Increased residential density within Carrick-on-Shannon is acceptable in principle where the subject lands are (i) within walking distance of the town centre, or (ii) are adequately serviced by necessary social infrastructure and public transport and/or (iii) designated regeneration sites and development lands which comprise in excess of 0.5ha, subject to quality design and planning merit in ensuring compact growth and the creation of good urban places and attractive neighbourhoods.
ii. Relaxation in residential density will be permitted in areas identified for the provision of serviced sites that create "*build your own home*" opportunities within the existing footprint of settlements and identified with an infill/low density designation in the Objectives Maps for individual settlements.

DENSITY POL 3 The appropriate residential density in any particular location will be determined by the following: -

a) The extent to which the design and layout follows a coherent design brief resulting in a high-quality residential environment;
b) Proximity to points of access to the public transport network;
c) The extent to which the site may, due to its size, scale, and location, propose its own density and character, having regard to the need to protect the established character and amenities of existing adjoining residential areas;
d) Existing topographical, landscape or other features on the site;
e) The capacity of the infrastructure, including social and community facilities (such as child care), to absorb the demands created by the development; and
f) Reference to the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, DEHLG (2009) or any replacement Section 28 Guidelines of relevance to density and residential development in general.

6.10 Land Use Zoning Objectives

6.10.1 Introduction

The purpose of land use zoning objectives for settlements is to indicate to property owners, investors, developers, funding agencies and the general public the types of development which the Planning

Authority considers appropriate within each land use category, to reduce the potential of conflict between uses within areas, to protect resources and to ensure that uses sensitive to the effects of the effects of flood risk are avoided. Section 10(8) of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended allows the Planning Authority to reconsider the appropriateness of land use zoning in the preparation of a draft Development Plan and the land use zoning of any area may therefore be continued, amended or removed in its entirety.

The land use zoning matrix is read in conjunction with the land use zoning objectives. The matrix provides guidance as to the acceptability of a range of specific uses within each land use zoning objective. The land use zoning matrix details the most common forms of development land uses in accordance with the Development Plan's zoning objectives under three categories as to whether a proposed use is generally '*acceptable in principle*', '*open for consideration*' or '*not acceptable*'. Land uses which are not listed in the land use zoning matrix will be considered on a case-by-case basis having regard to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and compliance with the relevant policies and objectives (including land use zoning objectives), standards and requirements as set out in this Plan, guidelines issued in accordance with Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) and guidance issued by other Government Bodies/Departments.

6.10.2 Land Use Zoning Principles

The function of land use zoning objectives is to give spatial effect to the Core Strategy and other integral components outlined in the various elements of the Development Plan. The Core Strategy has identified the appropriate level of residential growth for each settlement based on the principles of the NPF and RSES. The Economic Development Strategy has identified specific targeted roles for the development of centres in Tier 1 and 2 of the Settlement Hierarchy. Each settlement has landscape which have naturally occurred and features including watercourses and waterbodies which need to be protected from inappropriate forms of development.

An infrastructure assessment was undertaken to differentiate between zoned land that is available for development and that which requires significant further investment for such development to be realised. This is referred to as a '*tiered zoning approach*' and is required by the NPO 72 of the NPF. Irish Water were integral to the undertaking of this assessment and their co-operation is acknowledged in this regard. It is the expressed view of Irish Water that the county is well served by its water and wastewater treatment plants and, notwithstanding constraints associated with the Carrick-on-Shannon water treatment plant and the wastewater treatment plant at Carrigallen which are expected to be addressed over the lifetime of the Plan, it is envisaged that the water and wastewater treatment plants can be generally accommodate the household or population levels stated in the Core Strategy of this Plan. In the case of Drumshanbo and Mohill wastewater treatment plants however, potential availability of capacity is dependent on any additional load not resulting in a significant breach of the combined approach as set out in Regulation 43 of the Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations 2007.

Whilst there are a small number of sites, primarily relating to Enterprise and Employment lands, where extensions to footpaths/streetlights are required in conjunction with foul sewer or watermain extensions, such matters are not considered necessary to be identified as Tier 2 land use zoning sites. Irish Water are of the view that such extensions will be developer driven whilst all of the required footpath/street lighting extensions will be developed by the Council as part of and to facilitate the developments of such sites. Specific objectives in this regard have been identified in the relative Settlement Plans. It is view of this Local Authority that as we have endeavoured to adhere to the principles of compact growth/infill development that such an approach is not warranted.

There are many other planning considerations relevant to land use zoning beyond the provision of basic enabling infrastructure including overall planned levels of growth, location, suitability for the type of development envisaged, availability of and proximity to amenities, schools, shops or employment, accessibility to transport services, etc.

Weighing up all of these factors, together with the availability of infrastructure, has assisted the Planning Authority facilitating planned growth and development across the settlements of the county.

Sufficient lands have been zoned at appropriate locations throughout the county to facilitate the land use requirements for the period 2023 – 2029. The Plan promotes the development of compact growth in a sequential manner working from the centre outwards, seeks the appropriate redevelopment of brownfield sites within town and village centres and seeks to ensure that appropriate locations are identified for new forms of development.

6.10.3 Land Use Zoning Objectives

The following section sets out the land use zoning objectives that will be applicable to all statutory land use plans and the zoning objectives for the settlements to be included in the County Development Plan. Table 6.1 which follows then provides an explanation and guidance of each land use zoning objective.

Table 6.1: Land Use Zoning Objectives

Land Use Zoning	Objective
Town/Village Centre	To maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of existing town and village centres through consolidation with an appropriate mix of retailing, commercial, cultural and residential activities.
Mixed Use	To provide for a mixture of residential and compatible commercial uses.
Existing Residential	To protect and enhance the established amenity of existing residential communities.
New Residential	To provide primarily for new residential development and community services at appropriate densities for the positioning of the centre in the Settlement Hierarchy and with an emphasis on quality of design.
Enterprise and Employment	To provide for enterprise and employment creation.
General	To protect and promote the character of the Rural Village and promote a vibrant community appropriate to available physical and community infrastructure.
Open Space and Amenity	To preserve, provide for and improve active and passive recreational public and private open space.
Social and Community	To protect and provide for community, social, recreational and educational services and facilities.
Tourism Related Development	To provide for and improve tourist amenities in the county. (See Note A)
Utilities	To provide land for public infrastructure and public utilities.

Land Use Zoning	Objective
Agriculture	To provide for agriculture in a manner which protects the amenity of adjoining land uses.
Constrained Land Use	To ensure the appropriate management and sustainable use of flood risk areas designated as 'Constrained Land Use' on Settlement Plans.

Note A - Only water compatible tourism use will be considered on undeveloped lands in Flood Zone A.

This section sets out guidance to assist in the understanding of each of the land use zoning categories, followed by the Land Use Zoning Matrix which identifies permissible uses and uses open for consideration.

Table 6.2: Land Use Zoning Objectives Guidance

Land Use Zoning	Guidance
Town/Village Centre	The Council will encourage and facilitate the development of under-utilised land and brownfield sites creating a mix of uses to make the town and village centres attractive places to visit, shop and live in. The full use of upper floors in buildings, preferably for residential use, will be encouraged. The character of the town and village centres shall be protected and enhanced. Development proposals should provide a use, scale, form and design that accords with the role, function and size of the town or village centre. These areas require high levels of accessibility by all modes, including pedestrian, cyclist and public transport (where feasible).
Mixed Use	A diversity of uses for both day and evening are encouraged. These areas also require high levels of accessibility for all modes, including pedestrian, cyclists and public transport (where feasible). Compatible uses within this zone includes residential, community buildings, civic buildings, entertainment, hotels, leisure and recreation, offices, professional/specialist services and restaurants. In determining the suitability of development within this zone, regard shall be given to the environmental impact of the proposed development on neighbouring uses.
Existing Residential	This zoning allows for the conservation and enhancement of the quality and character of existing residential areas, to protect residential amenities and to allow for infill development which is appropriate to the character and pattern of development in the area. This zone is intended primarily to protect established housing development but may include a range of other uses particularly those that have the potential to support the residential function of residential communities such as schools, crèches, small shops, doctor's surgeries, amenities, etc.
New Residential	High-quality residential schemes are encouraged with convenient and safe access to local services and the creation of a safe and pleasant local environment. New housing and infill developments should be of sensitive design, which are complementary to their surroundings. Adequate

Land Use Zoning	Guidance
	undeveloped lands have been zoned in the Plan for residential use to meet the requirements for both public and private house building over the Plan period. The Council will strive towards the ideal of mixed residential neighbourhoods, where people of different social and economic backgrounds and of different ages can live in proximity and harmony to one another. This zone is intended primarily for housing development but may include a range of other uses particularly those that have the potential to foster the development of new residential communities The Planning Authority will therefore consider favourably other appropriate uses which support the overall residential function of the area. The range of uses identified above in '*Existing Residential*' zones are also appropriate in '*New Residential*' zones.
Enterprise and Employment	This zoning promotes the development of employment uses that reinforce the enterprise and employment function of the subject area and require high environmental and design standards. The identification of such lands has been chosen to cluster the heavier, traffic generating activities, associated with certain types of enterprise such as industrial uses or those which require a substantial footprint associated with their function, towards the edge of centres, with good road access while ensuring minimal impact on residential areas. Care will be exercised by the Planning Authority in the consideration of the appropriateness of proposals seeking to develop heavy industry with environmental emissions, including noise and odour with regard to the impact of such uses on adjoining more sensitive uses and on the form of established development within such zones. Where any industrial development adjoins other land uses, Leitrim County Council will require that a buffer zone is provided for and landscaped in accordance with the Development Management Standards of this Plan. 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. Residential or retail uses (including retail warehousing) will not be acceptable in this zone other than retail ancillary to another use such as showrooms.
General	The '*General*' land use zoning objective is provided within the Tier 4 settlements, *Villages*, and defines the extent of the settlement. It is different therefore in nature to the land use zoning objectives contained in the settlements in higher tiers. The objective seeks to protect and promote established villages within the rural area where housing needs can be addressed relative to their catchment and local services and smaller scale rural enterprises are to be provided. Population/growth will be managed through the Core Strategy to ensure sustainable population levels without providing for growth beyond local need and unsustainable commuting patterns. This land use zoning objective therefore provides for a range of potential land uses that can be accommodated in such settlements, at a scale commensurate with the level of existing development within the respective settlement. Such

Land Use Zoning	Guidance
	lands uses can include residential, commercial activity and enterprise and employment uses. This land use zoning objective reflects the need for a degree of flexibility to be employed in the future development of these smaller-scale settlements. In determining the suitability of proposed development within this zoning designation, regard shall be had to the potential adverse impacts on the receiving environment, including existing or neighbouring uses, infrastructural capacity demands, as well as environmental, ecological and amenity considerations. Whilst allowing for residential land use, it is not considered that such lands would be considered to be within the scope of '*Residential*' or '*Mixed Use*' land use zoning to which the provisions of Residential Zoned Land Tax (provision of Part 22A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997) would apply.
Open Space and Amenity	The use of land shall include the provision of land for parks, public woodland, pedestrian routes and greenways, riparian zones, development incidental to the enjoyment of open space (including playgrounds, outdoor recreation centres and sports centres, civic/market square, village greens, landscaped areas, shelters, 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. The Council will not normally permit development that would result in a loss of existing open space.
Social and Community	In addition to identifying lands to safeguard their future provisions, these lands also contain existing community and social facilities such as community buildings, schools, hospitals and health centres, places of worship, football pitches and other generic or specific civic, social and community uses where the objective of the Planning Authority will be to protect such uses.
Tourism Related Development	These lands seek to provide for developments linked to tourism including all types of accommodation - guesthouses, hotels, hostels, holiday homes, etc, along with restaurants, pubs and other tourism related offerings. **Note**: Only water compatible tourism use will be considered on undeveloped lands in Flood Zone A.
Utilities	This zoning primarily provides for and preserves land in the ownership of the Council or other bodies charged with the provision of services such as electricity, telecommunications, water, wastewater etc. to individual towns and villages.
Agriculture	These are lands within the development envelope for which there is no current need for an identifiable use or on the basis of their topography or risk of flooding are not considered appropriate for an alternative use. The lands are currently used for agriculture and can continue to be used for this purpose.

Land Use Zoning	Guidance
Constrained Land Use	See separate section below (Section 6.10.4)

6.10.4 Constrained Land Uses

The Land Use Zoning Objectives Maps for each settlement have excluded uses vulnerable to the effects of flooding on undeveloped areas identified as being at an elevated risk of flooding. These areas have been identified as being at risk of flooding through the undertaking of a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment which informs the preparation of this Plan. The stated objective relating to these lands contained in Table 6.1 seeks "*To ensure the appropriate management and sustainable use of flood risk areas designated as 'Constrained Land Use' on Settlement Plans*"**.**

The extent of the *'Constrained Land Uses'* are shown with a hatching corresponding to the extent of Flood Zones A and B which are overlain over the land use zoning objective underneath. Where such flood risk extents correspond with undeveloped lands, an appropriate land use zoning objective which would not facilitate the development of classes of development vulnerable to the effects of flooding has been identified such as '*Open Space*' or '*Agriculture*'.

The '*Constrained Land Use*' designation extends to existing developed lands in a number of settlements which could include lands in the centre of towns and villages. In other incidences, the actual buildings may be located outside of areas identified as being at risk of flooding but the curtilage of the property to the rear may be located at a lower level falling towards a watercourse and identified as being located within Flood Zone A and/or B. The '*Constrained Land Use*' designation generally restricts new development vulnerable to the effects of flooding being permitted while recognising that existing development uses may require small scale additional development which would contribute towards the compact and sustainable urban development of the individual town/village.

Where development proposals submitted to the Planning Authority relate to existing buildings or developed areas, the sequential approach cannot be used to locate them in lower-risk areas and the Justification Test will not therefore apply.

Proposals seeking to change the use of existing buildings from a less vulnerable use to a more vulnerable use to the effects of flooding will not normally be considered acceptable to the Planning Authority whilst some change of use proposals not increasing the vulnerability to the effects of flooding or small scale extensions to such buildings will be considered on their individual merits but are acceptable in principle.

An existing dwelling or building that is not located within an area at risk of flooding but has a large rear garden/curtilage that is located within Flood Zone A and/or B would not be suitable for a more in-depth residential development proposal which would propose a residential use within a designated constrained land use area. There are a number of such incidences occurring including in Manorhamilton.

Development proposals within the areas designated as '*Constrained Land Use*' shall be accompanied by a detailed Flood Risk Assessment, carried out in accordance with '*The Planning System and Flood Risk Assessment Guidelines*' and '*Circular PL 2/2014*' (or as updated), which shall assess the risks of flooding associated with the proposed development. Proposals shall only be considered favourably by the Planning Authority where it is demonstrated that they would not have adverse impacts or impede access to a watercourse, floodplain or flood protection and management facilities, or increase the risk

of flooding to other locations. The nature and design of structural and non-structural flood risk management measures required for development in such areas will also be required to be demonstrated, to ensure that flood hazard and risk will not be increased. Measures proposed shall follow best practice in the management of health and safety for users and residents of the development. (Please refer to Section 9.9, Flood Risk Management for further details).

Certain lands in centres such as Leitrim Village, Drumsna and Drumshanbo have been identified with a '*Tourism Related Development*' land use zoning objective on previously undeveloped or partially developed lands which are also overlain with the '*Constrained Land Use*' designation. In such areas, only development proposals which are considered to constitute water compatible development and not vulnerable to the effects of flooding will be considered favourably by the Planning Authority through the planning permission process.

Table 7.3 overleaf is from the '*The Planning System and Flood Risk Assessment Guidelines*' which will guide the Planning Authority in the assessment of development proposals within areas designated as '*Constrained Land Uses*'. The table demonstrates the vulnerability of land use in the 3 different flood risk zones to demonstrate the appropriateness of development in each zone and that which is required to meet the Justification Test.

Table 6.3: Flood Zones and Appropriate Land Uses

Land Uses	Flood Zone A	Flood Zone B	Flood Zone C
Highly Vulnerable Development	Justification Test	Justification Test	Appropriate
Less Vulnerable Development	Justification Test	Appropriate	Appropriate
Water Compatible Development	Appropriate	Appropriate	Appropriate

Source: Table 3.2 '*The Planning System and Flood Risk Assessment Guidelines*' (2009)

Table 6.4: Classification of vulnerability of different types of development

Vulnerability Class	Land Uses and Types of Development which includes:
Highly Vulnerable Development **(including essential infrastructure)**	• Garda, ambulance and fire stations and command centres required to be operational during flooding • Hospitals • Emergency access and egress points • Schools • Dwelling houses, student halls of residence and hostels • Residential institutions such as residential care homes, children's homes and social services homes • Caravans and mobile home parks • Dwelling houses designed, constructed or adapted for the elderly or, other people with impaired mobility, and • Essential infrastructure, such as primary transport and utilities distribution, including electricity generating power stations and sub-stations, water and sewage treatment, and potential significant sources of pollution (SEVESO, IPPC sites, etc.) in the event of flooding.
Less Vulnerable Development	• Buildings used for: retail, leisure, warehousing, commercial, industrial and non-residential institutions • Land and buildings used for holiday or short-let caravans and camping, subject to specific warning and evacuation plans • Land and buildings used for agriculture and forestry • Waste treatment (except landfill and hazardous waste) • Mineral working and processing, and • Local transport infrastructure
Water Compatible Development	• Flood control infrastructure • Docks, marinas and wharves • Navigation facilities • Ship building, repairing and dismantling, dockside fish processing and refrigeration and compatible activities requiring a waterside location • Water-based recreation and tourism (excluding sleeping accommodation) • Lifeguard and coastguard stations • Amenity open space, outdoor sports and recreation and essential facilities such as changing rooms, and • Essential ancillary sleeping or residential accommodation for staff required by uses in this category (subject to a specific warning and evacuation plan)
***Uses not listed here should be considered on their own merits.**	

Source: Table 3.1 '*The Planning System and Flood Risk Assessment Guidelines*'(2009)

Note:

Flood hazard and flood risk information is an emerging dataset of information. The flood risk mapping used by the Council may be altered in light of future data and analysis. Therefore, all landowners and developers are advised that Leitrim County Council accept no responsibility for losses or damages arising due to assessments of vulnerability to flooding of lands, uses and developments. Owners, users

and developers are advised to take all reasonable measures to assess the vulnerability to flooding in a particular area, prior to submitting a planning application.

6.11 Land Use Zoning Matrix

The land use zoning matrix details the most common form of land uses in accordance with the county's land use zoning objectives. These are considered as to their acceptability under the following categories:

Acceptable in Principle ('Y')
Land uses indicated under each land use zoning objective as '*Acceptable in Principle*' are generally permissible in the relevant use, subject to compliance with the relevant policies, standards and requirements set out in the Plan.

Open for Consideration ('O')
Land uses indicated as '*Open for Consideration*' are uses that may be acceptable to the Planning Authority subject to detailed assessment against the principles of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, and the relevant policies, objectives and standards set out in this Plan and where the Council is satisfied that the proposed use would not conflict with the general objectives for the zone and the permitted or existing uses. Such uses may only be permitted where they do not materially conflict with other aspects of the County Development Plan.

Not Acceptable ('N')
Land uses which are indicated as '*Not Acceptable*' in the Zoning Matrix will not generally be favourably considered by the Planning Authority except in exceptional circumstances. This may be due to the perceived effect of such a use on existing and permitted uses, the incompatibility of such a use with the policies and objectives contained in this Plan or the fact that the proposed use 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 individual merits.

Constrained Land Use
The Planning Authority has not included Constrained Land Use within the Zoning Matrix as sufficient guidance has been provided in section 4.3.1. A footnote has been included in the Zoning Matrix which should also be consulted.

Table 6.5: Land Use Zoning Matrix

Land Use	Town/Village Centre	Mixed Use	Existing Residential	New Residential	Enterprise & Employment	General	Open Space & Amenity	Social & Community	Tourism-Related Development	Utilities	Agriculture
Allotments	N	O	O	O	N	O	O	Y	O	N	Y
Amusement Arcade	O	O	N	N	N	O	N	N	O	N	N
Builder Providers	N	O	N	N	Y	O	N	N	N	N	N
Business and Technology Units	N	O	N	O	Y	O	N	O	N	N	N
Care Home	O	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	O	N	N	N
Car Park	Y	Y	N	N	O	Y	O	O	O	O	N
Cattle Shed/Slatted Units	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	O
Cemetery	N	N	N	N	N	O	O	Y	N	N	O
Childcare Facilities	Y	Y	O	Y	O	Y	N	Y	N	N	N
Cinema/Dancehall	Y	Y	N	N	N	O	N	O	O	N	N
Civic and Public Building	Y	Y	O	O	N	Y	O	Y	O	N	N
Community Facilities	Y	Y	O	O	N	Y	O	Y	O	N	N
Cultural Uses/Library	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	O	Y	O	N	N
Distribution Depot	N	O	N	N	Y	O	N	N	N	N	N
Dwelling	O	Y	Y	Y	N	O	N	O	N	N	O
Educational Facilities	Y	Y	O	O	N	Y	O	Y	N	N	O
Funeral Home	O	O	O	O	O	Y	N	Y	N	N	N
Garage/Car Repairs	N	O	N	N	Y	O	N	N	N	N	N
Guest House/Hotel/Hostel	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	O	Y	N	N
Halting Site	N	N	O	Y	N	O	N	Y	N	N	O
Heavy Commercial Vehicle Park	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
Heavy Industry	N	N	N	N	O	O	N	N	N	N	N
Hot Food Take-Away	Y	O	N	N	N	Y	N	N	O	N	N
Indoor Leisure	Y	Y	N	O	O	O	O	O	O	N	N
Light Industry	N	O	O	O	Y	O	N	N	N	N	N
Medical Services/Health Centre	Y	Y	O	O	N	Y	N	O	N	N	N
Motor Sales/Car Showroom	O	O	N	N	Y	O	N	N	N	N	N
Off Licence	Y	Y	O	O	N	Y	N	N	O	N	N
Office	Y	Y	O	O	O	Y	N	O	O	N	N
Outdoor Sport/Recreation	O	O	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	O
Park/Playground	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	O
Place of Worship	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	Y	O	Y	N	N	N
Public House	Y	Y	O	O	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N
Public Utility/Infrastructure	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Recreational Buildings/Marina	Y	Y	O	O	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Repository Store Depot	N	O	N	N	Y	O	N	N	N	N	N

Land Use	Town/Village Centre	Mixed Use	Existing Residential	New Residential	Enterprise & Employment	General	Open Space & Amenity	Social & Community	Tourism-Related Development	Utilities	Agriculture
Restaurant	Y	Y	O	O	N	Y	N	O	Y	N	N
Retail Warehouse	N	O	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Retirement/Nursing Home	O	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	O	N	N	N
Service Station	O	O	O	Y	Y	O	N	N	N	N	N
Shop (Comparison)	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Shop (Convenience)	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	Y	N	N	O	N	N
Solar Energy Development	N	O	N	O	Y	O	N	O	O	Y	O
Stables/Stable Yard	N	N	O	O	N	O	O	N	N	N	O
Telecommunication Structure	O	O	O	O	Y	O	O	O	O	Y	O
Tourism Development	Y	Y	O	O	N	Y	Y	O	Y	N	O
Tourist Camping/Caravan Park	N	N	O	O	N	Y	O	O	Y	N	O
Warehouse (Wholesale)	N	O	N	N	Y	O	N	N	N	N	N
Workshop	O	O	O	O	Y	O	N	O	O	N	O

Note:
With regard to the consideration of uses within lands identified with a Tourism, Open Space or Agricultural land use zoning objective which are also subject to the Constrained Land Use Objective, permissible uses shall be constrained to those water compatible and less vulnerable uses as relevant to the particular Flood Zone (please refer to SFRA and Table 6.4)

Non-Conforming Uses
The Plan acknowledges the existence of existing established uses that do not confirm with the primary land use zoning objective for the area but have been legally established by continuous use for the same purpose prior to 1 October 1964 or by a planning permission. Where extensions or improvements of premises accommodating these uses are proposed, each shall be considered on its merits in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and where such development would not seriously injure the amenities of the area. A reasonable expansion of non-conforming uses will generally be accepted notwithstanding the zoning objectives which may apply. The intensification of a non-conforming use will be considered with regard to zoning objectives as well as general planning considerations.

Transitional Areas
While the land use zoning objectives and zoning matrix indicates the various uses considered acceptable in each land use zone, it is important to avoid abrupt transitions in scale and use at the boundary of adjoining land use zones. In these areas, it is necessary to avoid developments that would be detrimental to the amenity of the more sensitive land use. For instance, in zones abutting residential areas, particular attention must be paid to the uses, scale, density and appearance of development proposals and to landscaping and screening proposals in order to protect the amenities of these residential areas.

Other Uses
Where a use is not listed in the matrix, development proposals will be assessed on their merits in accordance with the general guidance provided for the land use zoning objective, having regard to the principles of proper planning and sustainable development of the area and compliance with the relevant policies and objectives, standards and requirements as set out in the Plan.

Relaxation of Zoning Objectives for Protected Structures
The Council actively encourages and supports uses which are compatible with the character of Protected Structures. In certain limited cases, to ensure the long-term viability of a Protected Structure, it may be considered appropriate not to stringently apply generic zoning restrictions, including site development standards, provided the Protected Structure is being restored to the highest standard, the special interest, character and setting of the building is protected and the use and development is consistent with conservation policies and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Policies

LAND USE POL 1 To ensure that land within settlements is developed in accordance with the land use zoning objectives outlined in Table 6.1 and the guidance provided in Table 6.2 of this Chapter.

LAND USE POL 2 To protect the role of the town centre as the dominant retailing and commercial area in Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements.

LAND USE POL 3 To protect the integrity of Special Areas of Conservation where such European Sites traverse through town and village settlements which includes lands identified for development within Dromahair, Kinlough, Manorhamilton and Rossinver development envelopes. These European Sites are protected from inappropriate development under the European Habitats Directive, transposing national legislation and various provisions under this Plan which takes primacy over other Development Plan provisions.

LAND USE POL 4 The approach to Constrained Land Use described under the Constrained Land Use objective shall be complied with by proposals for development in zoned areas where flood risk presents constraints to prospective land uses.

6.12 Settlement Plans

The Core Strategy sets out the settlement hierarchy for the county, which is informed by the settlement hierarchy in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. A joint Local Area Plan with Roscommon County Council will be prepared to deliver a collaborative and integrated framework for the future development of our county town, Carrick-on-Shannon. A settlement plan has been developed for each of the other settlements (Volume II Settlement Plans). Each settlement is defined by a development boundary, wherein development is generally encouraged in an orderly sequential manner outward from the core area. This pattern of development will maximise the utility of existing and future infrastructure provision in a manner that promotes sustainability, active travel and makes more efficient use of underutilised lands.

6.12.1 Carrick-on-Shannon

Carrick-on-Shannon is the county town and is regarded as a key town in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) meaning it is a strategic employment centre and can accommodate a significant level of population growth and employment through investment in infrastructure and placemaking. It is a key priority to pursue the development of a data centre or employment use on strategically located lands on the eastern end of the town where road and electricity infrastructure are readily available, as identified in the RSES. The historic town core and location on the River Shannon makes it an attractive tourist destination. Public realm works and the provision of additional car parking makes the town centre accessible and inviting. In addition to expanding employment opportunities and infrastructure, consolidating the town centre by maintaining and enhancing retailing and hospitality is essential to ensure the vitality and viability of the town. A joint Local Area Plan with Roscommon County Council will be prepared to deliver a collaborative and integrated framework for the future development of the town.

Specific policies and objectives pertaining to the Key Town of Carrick-on-Shannon are included in various Chapters of the Plan and will govern the development framework for the town to be pursued in the Local Area Plan.

7 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

7.1 Strategic Aim

The strategic aim of this chapter is:

> "*To develop, strengthen and support vibrant sustainable communities in Leitrim where people can live, work and enjoy access to a wide range of community, health, educational facilities and amenities, suitable to all ages and needs, in both urban and rural areas, thereby supporting a high quality of life for all to enjoy*".

7.2 Statutory Context

Section 10(2) of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended outlines a list of mandatory objectives to be included in a Development Plan. A number of these objectives relate to social infrastructure, either directly or indirectly. This chapter provides the policy framework in relation to these objectives.

The Local Government Reform Act, 2014 gave legislative effect to the proposals contained in the Government's document '*Putting People First, Action Programme for Local Government*' 2012 and provides for additional areas of responsibility to the work of Local Authorities and the way they are organised.

7.3 Policy Context

7.3.1 The National Planning Framework – Ireland 2040

A core objective of the NPF is to provide comprehensive and sustainable social, economic and cultural development of the country. The NPF also places a strong emphasis on access to a range of quality education and health services, as well as promoting healthy placemaking and quality of life. National Strategic Outcomes include encouraging access to quality childcare, education and health services; strengthening rural economies and communities and enhanced amenity and heritage which are especially pertinent to this chapter of the Plan.

7.3.2 Realising our Rural Potential: Action Plan for Rural Development

'*Realising our Rural Potential: Action Plan for Rural Development*' (2017) sets out the Government's policy for the economic and social development of rural Ireland. The Action Plan for Rural Development will act as an overarching structure for the co-ordination and implementation of initiatives right across Government which will benefit rural Ireland. It is the first plan of its kind to take a cohesive and co-ordinated approach across the whole of Government to the implementation of both economic and social policies that impact on rural communities.

7.3.3 Our Rural Future : Rural Development Policy 2021-2025

Our Rural Future, published by Department of Rural and Community Development sets out the Government's blueprint to transform rural Ireland. This five year strategy will be underpinned by the updated National Development Plan. The key aims of this strategy seeks to take into account:

- An unprecedented opportunity for Rural Development post COVID-19
- A focus on attracting Remote Workers to rural communities
- Revitalising town centres, rural jobs, adventure tourism, green economy and island development, and
- Encouraging broadband roll-out to bring new opportunities in areas like eHealth, remote learning, online trading and new technologies

7.3.4 Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy

The RSES also includes ambitions to create an inclusive and vibrant society for the Northern and Western region. The RSES highlights the importance of the physical and social environment and place in which we live or work, and its impact on the health and quality of life of people. The RSES aims to create a balanced sustainable environment catering for growth that will include the most necessary social infrastructure of health care, education and training, community development, leisure facilities and cultural facilities. The RSES identifies compact growth within our town and larger village centres as an essential element in the delivery of sustainable growth to enable a critical mass of social infrastructure and therefore enable sustainable communities.

7.3.5 Other Relevant Guidance

Relevant additional national guidance and policies that have been considered in preparing this chapter include:

- Putting People First - Action Programme for Effective Local Government, 2012, Dept. of Environment, Community and Local Government
- National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan 2013-2015, National Disability Strategy Implementation Group
- National Women's Strategy 2007-2016, Department of Justice and Equality
- Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach, 2012, National Disability Authority
- Get Ireland Active, National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland, 2016
- Charter for Rural Ireland, 2016 Department of Environment, Community and Local Government
- Our Communities: A Framework Policy for Local and Community Development in Ireland, 2015, Department of Environment, Community and Local Government
- Age Friendly Principles and Guidelines for the Planning Authority, Age Friendly Ireland, 2021

This chapter reflects the overarching principles of the aforementioned national policy documents.

7.4 Local Community Development Committees and Local Economic and Community Plans

As outlined in Chapter 4, Section 4.6, the Leitrim Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) is a six-year plan (2015-2021) containing the measures necessary to promote and support community and economic development in our county. Chapter 4 dealt with the economic element of the LECP whereas this chapter deals with the community aspect of the LECP.

The LECP process is about joining up our approaches to economic and community at a local level. A Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) is responsible for the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the community elements of the LECP and to avoid duplication of Local Authority

activities in the community. The LCDC is also responsible for monitoring and overseeing the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) and Leader programmes. There are 17 members on our LCDC. Leitrim County Council's Planning, Economic Development and Infrastructure Strategic Policy Committee is responsible for preparing the economic element of the LECP. There are 10 members in our SPC.

The Leitrim County Development Plan assists in delivering the goals of the LECP by:

- Facilitating the delivery of community infrastructure
- Facilitating improved physical access to community infrastructure and services
- Facilitating the maintenance, restoration and upgrading of cultural and natural heritage of communities, environmental upgrading and general actions to enhance the environmental, amenity and physical attributes of communities
- Providing the policy framework against which individual economic and enterprise development proposals are assessed

Objective

LECP OBJ 1 To continue to promote and facilitate the delivery of the objectives and actions set out in the *Leitrim Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021* (or any subsequent replacement plan).

7.5 Joint Policing Committees

The Garda Síochána Act, 2005 established Joint Policing Committees (JPCS), whose function is *'To serve as a forum for consultations, discussions and recommendations on matters affecting the policing of the Local Authority's administrative area'.* Key functions of the JPC include keeping under review the levels and patterns of crime, disorder and anti social behaviour in that area.

The main aim of Co. Leitrim's JPC is to provide a collaborative forum where Leitrim County Council and the senior Garda Officers responsible for the policing of Leitrim, with the participation of the local Oireachtas and Elected Members and community interests, can consult, discuss and make recommendations on matters affecting policing in the county. In so doing, the JPC supports policing and enhances community safety.

The Mission of the Leitrim JPC is:

> '*To enhance the crime prevention and public safety work of An Garda Síochána, the community sector and Leitrim County Council by adopting a collaborative approach to make Leitrim a safe place to live particularly in rural parts of the county*'.

The Leitrim JPC is required to approach their work strategically, so as to ensure a co-ordinated and focused approach in tackling crime, disorder and anti social behaviour within Co. Leitrim. Accordingly, JPCs must develop a six year strategic plan, and to report on their implementation in Annual Reports to the Policing Authority. The Leitrim JPC adopted a Strategic Plan covering the period 2021 – 2026 on 10th December 2020 designed to link with the LECP for our county. Each year an Annual JPC Work Plan will be prepared which will include objectives derived from the Strategic Plan and relevant Annual Policing Plans as prepared by An Garda Síochána.

The Leitrim JPC Strategic Plan 2021-2026 identified a number of strategic priorities for inclusion reflecting the concerns of the JPC and the broader community, encompassing 6 key themes. The

implementation of the strategic priorities for the JPC is formulated by the identification of key objectives relating to each strategy to be delivered over the life-time of the Plan. They relate to:

- communication and promotion of greater awareness of the role of the Joint Policing Committee
- promotion of safe communities in Leitrim particularly in rural areas
- crime prevention
- road safety
- public safety
- protecting and engaging our youth

Objective

JPC OBJ 1 To continue to promote and facilitate the delivery of the objectives and actions set out in the *Leitrim Joint Policing Committee Strategic Plan 2021-2026* (or any subsequent replacement) which fall within the responsibility of Leitrim County Council to implement.

7.6 Social Inclusion

One of the overall aims of the Plan is the promotion of social inclusion. Social inclusion can be defined in many different ways but one of the most common understandings is that, through acting inclusively, society can ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate in, and contribute to, community life – regardless of their age, ability, nationality, religion or any of the many other characteristics which makes society diverse. It is, therefore, important that our living, working and leisure environments are designed and maintained in a manner that is accessible to all.

At a local level the Council, through its Social Inclusion Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018- 2022 and considered policies, encourages and proactively promotes an ethos of social inclusion. SICAP is overseen locally by the LCDC with support from Leitrim County Council while it is implemented through contract by Leitrim Development Company Ltd.

The Development Plan policies and objectives which advocate the development of sustainable communities with good quality public realm, access to housing, community facilities and public transport are central to the promotion of social inclusion in the county. The Plan also seeks to promote equality of opportunity and protection of human rights enshrined in the UN Charter. The Council is fully committed to developing a more socially inclusive society and promoting participation and access for all.

The support of social inclusion measures includes the revitalisation of areas by physical regeneration, planning, investment and community development and measures to improve educational attainment levels, upskilling in key competencies and skills acquisition.

Policies

SI POL 1 To promote and assist the development of an inclusive county.

SI POL 2 To ensure that all people of the county have access to the range of resources to allow them to fully participate in their local communities.

SI POL 3 To promote good placemaking and ensuring new developments are designed with good connectivity and permeability for all.

SI POL 4 To support a socially inclusive society, by providing for appropriate community infrastructure, located in local centres or in locations easily accessible to the communities they serve.

SI POL 5 To encourage and facilitate the provision of places of assembly in appropriate locations close to residential communities.

7.7 Community Participation

The need to encourage greater ownership of, and participation in, decision making has been central to numerous local and national government reform plans over the years. The current public service reform plan, '*Our Public Service 2020*' (Government of Ireland, 2017), recognises the need for a public service that is resilient and responsive to the challenges Ireland faces while effectively delivering quality services to the public. A core underlying principle of meeting this commitment is to place the public at the centre of public service. A number of headline actions were identified under three pillars:

- delivering for our public
- innovating for our future
- developing our people and organisations

Figure 7.1: The Pillars and Actions – Our Public Service



Of relevance to this chapter is Headline Action 4, which aims to '*enhance engagement and accountability around the delivery of public services so that the public and businesses have greater input into the planning, design, implementation and review of public service'* (Government of Ireland, 2019).

This action focuses on supporting public service organisations in continuing to improve engagement with the general public and local businesses through available structures, and in seeking new and emerging forums. Alongside this at a local level, the Local Authority also engages with citizens through public consultations and information provision in a variety of various ways. Members of the public can be involved directly in decision-making through the Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)

system, where membership is drawn not only from elected representatives but also from various sectors relevant to the work of the committees. Other structures, such as Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) and Public Participation Networks (PPNs) also allow members of the public to participate through more formal structures.

7.7.1 Public Participation Network

The Public Participation Network is a network of community/voluntary, social inclusion and environmental organisations, established at county level.

The Mission Statement of Leitrim PPN states that is seeks to:

> *"Promote the wellbeing of present and future generations and inclusive community participation in the economic, social and environmental development of Co. Leitrim".*

The purpose of the PPN is to:

- Allow these groups to have input and have their voices heard within the formal decision-making structures of Co. Leitrim and its environs, including Leitrim County Council.
- Organise the participation and representation of communities on decision making bodies in a fair, equitable and transparent manner.
- Strengthen the capacity of communities and community organisations to contribute positively to the community in which they live or are active.
- Provide information relevant to all community sectors and act as a hub around which information is distributed and received. With this in mind Leitrim PPN runs this website and has its own Facebook and Twitter (@leitrimppn) accounts; as well as regularly distributing information via email and other local media channels.

Figure 7.2: Leitrim PPN 'Principles and Values'



Source: Leitrim PPN

Leitrim PPN is now one of the primary ways that Leitrim County Council and other formal bodies connect with groups active in the county. Whenever the Local Authority needs people to participate in consultations or sit on the committees that form policies, such as Special Policy Committees (SPCs), it calls on the PPN to select these people by holding elections from amongst its constituent members.

Leitrim PPN has a secretariat that manage its activities at the county level. The members of this group are independent of the County Council and are elected by the members of the PPN. Every group that joins the PPN has a vote and is able to nominate candidates for positions on decision-making bodies ensuring robust collaboration. The current members of the Leitrim PPN are hugely diverse and numerous in quantum representing a wide spectrum of community organisations in the county.

Objective

PPN OBJ 1 To facilitate and support, through the Leitrim Public Participation Network, the involvement of the community in consultative structures and public participation in Local Government policy and decision making.

7.7.2 Diverse and Inclusive Communities

There are several groups considered to have specific planning and design needs. These include children, young people, and people with a disability or illness, lone parent young families, older people, travellers and members of ethnic minority groups.

Policies

IC POL 1 To recognise that people with special needs have access to and enjoy an appropriate living environment and the Council supports the provision of facilities for people with special needs.

IC POL 2 To promote the concept of active citizenship and the value of volunteering and encourage people of all ages to become more involved in and to contribute to their own communities.

IC POL 3 To promote the development of opportunities for engagement and participation of people of all ages in a range of arts, cultural, spiritual, leisure, learning and physical activities in their local communities.

7.7.3 Children and Young People

The number of children 0-4 age group fell by 11% between 2011 – 2016 while the number of children aged from 5-19 increased by 20% in the same period. In Co. Leitrim, 8,188 children accounting for some 25.5% of the county's population were 17 years or under. (CSO 2016) These figures will inform decision making on present and future needs for facilities such as childcare facilities, play areas, sports facilities, schools, health centres, etc. in the county.

Comhairle na nÓg is an initiative of the National Children's Office under the '*National Children's Strategy*'. It gives young people, under 18 years of age, a voice on issues that affect their lives and an opportunity to present those issues to policy makers. It is composed of representatives of secondary schools and relevant youth organisations who meet around six times a year and host events. An excellent example of the work of the Leitrim Comhairle is the '*Use Your Brain Not Your Fists*' project, a campaign that aims to reduce the number of assaults carried out by males between the ages of 18 and 34 years. Leitrim Comhairle won the National Impact Award in 2019 with this campaign. This category recognises a project which has had a positive effect upon the nation, enhancing the environment, cultural or social activities, transport links or the economic stability or growth of the local and national communities who use it. The Leitrim Comhairle project for 2020 was "*Open Arms*" - a tolerance and inclusion education programme specifically aimed at new communities. The project

for 2021 relates to outdoor activity space for teenagers, they will also be working on Climate Change as a topic.

Policy

CYP POL 1 To assist in the provision of community and resource centres and youth clubs/ cafes and other facilities for younger people.

7.7.4 Older People

As with the State, Leitrim's population is getting older, the population aged from 20-39 fell by 14% in the five years to 2016 whilst the age groups over 65 grew by 15% in the same period. There were 16.9% of people over 65 years old in comparison to the national average of 13.4%. whilst there was 11.4% of people over 70 years old in comparison to the national average of 9.0%.

Priorities for older people at risk of social exclusion in Co. Leitrim include maintaining their health and wellbeing, reducing social isolation, improving access to support, information, services and accessibility/mobility but also providing for the needs of their carers. Health and wellbeing are fundamental to people of all ages and the role the Local Authority plays in the implementation of their planning policy framework is central to the vision set out under the Programme for Government. In creating walkable, attractive communities and age friendly spaces, and by introducing actions to address participation and inequality, Local Authorities enable and facilitate people of all ages to enjoy healthier, more active and connected lives. People of all abilities should be able to use buildings and places comfortably and safely, as far as possible without special assistance. People should be able to find their way easily, understand how to use building facilities and spaces, and know where pedestrian facilities are, and where they may encounter traffic. Given the wide diversity of the population, a universal design approach, which caters for the broadest range of users from the outset, can result in buildings and places that can be used and enjoyed by everyone. This approach eliminates or reduces the need for expensive changes or retrofits to meet the needs of particular groups at a later stage and allows for adaptability in the future. The '*Leitrim Age Friendly Strategy 2017-2020*' seeks to increase the participation of older people in the social, economic and cultural life of Co. Leitrim for everyone's benefit. A review of this strategy is currently underway. Other 'Age Friendly' initiatives being pursued by the Council include:

- Age Friendly Business – launched in Mohill in 2019, it is anticipated that it will be introduced to other towns in the county during this plan period.
- Age Friendly Buildings and Spaces and Walkability Audits – An audit was carried out in September 2019 in Carrick-on-Shannon. It is hoped that walkability audits will take place for Manorhamilton and Ballinamore during this plan period.

Policies

OP POL 1 To promote Universal Design and Lifetime Housing in all development proposals in accordance with best practice and the policies and principles contained in Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach *(*National Disability Authority, 2012) and Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas and its companion document Urban Design Manual: A Best Practice Guide (DEHLG, 2008) and Age Friendly Principles and Guidelines for the Planning Authority, Age Friendly Ireland, 2021.

OP POL 2 To support older people to live in their own home with dignity and independence for as long as possible.

OP POL 3 To promote active retirement and positive ageing initiatives to tackle social isolation.

OP POL 4 To support the design and development of Age Friendly public spaces and buildings.

OP POL 5 To ensure new development is cognisant of the principles of '*Sustainable Neighbourhoods*' which are inclusive and are well located relative to the social, community, commercial and administrative services which sustain them.

OP POL 6 To facilitate the development and improvement of new and existing residential and day care facilities throughout the county.

Please refer to **Housing Chapter** and to **Development Management Guidelines** which also include specific policies and standards in relation to ensuring that regard is had to the Age Friendly Principles and Guidelines for the Planning Authority, Age Friendly Ireland, 2021.

7.7.5 People with Disabilities

People with disabilities and the mobility impaired face particular physical barriers to access and movement not only in buildings, but on footpaths, streetscapes, open spaces, etc. The Council will encourage integration of accommodation within a mix of housing types providing mobility and access for people with disabilities in order to remove barriers to involvement in community and employment activities.

In order to ensure an inclusive county, it is essential that the requirements of people with disabilities are met appropriately and positively. All proposals for development shall have regard to the provisions of the National Disability Authority's document *'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach – Planning and Policy'* (2012) in order to ensure that access and movement through the development is available to all users of the development.

Policy

PD POL 1 To ensure that all buildings, public and open spaces, recreational and amenity areas are accessible for people with disabilities, having regard to the Building Regulations, the objectives of 'Building for Everyone' (National Disability Authority) and 'Access for the Disabled' (No. 1 to 3)(National Rehabilitation Board).

Details of th**e Leitrim Housing Disability Strategy** is contained within the Housing Chapter of this Plan.

7.7.6 Migration and Diversity

Co. Leitrim is becoming an increasingly diverse county. According to the Census 2016, non-Irish nationals[22] account for 11.23% of county's population in comparison to 11.6% nationally. Certain areas of the county such as the larger urban centres including Carrick-on-Shannon have a more ethnic or culturally diverse population than others and service provision and community facilities in these areas should reflect the varying needs of the community. According to the Census 2016, non Irish nationals accounted for 24.4% of the population of Carrick-on-Shannon, 15.9% of the population in

[22] This relates to the usual resident population by their stated nationality rather than birth place. 435 respondents did not answer the relevant question on the Census. 31,725 respondents indicated locations other than Irish as their nationality. The U.K. accounted for 1,502 persons with Poland next at 829 persons followed by Lithuania at 177 persons.

Manorhamilton and 8.8% of the population in Kinlough reflecting the variation amongst the 3 largest urban centres in the county,

Migrant integration is a dynamic, multi-faceted and long-term process aimed at mutual accommodation and acceptance by both the migrant and host populations. The process of migrant integration involves and affects migrants, Local Government institutions, and the local community. Leitrim Development Company in conjunction with Leitrim County Council have launched the Ethnic Minority Project. The main aim of this project is to foster a greater understanding and tolerance for all communities living in Co. Leitrim.

Policy

MD POL 1 To consider cultural diversity and ethnic minorities in planning for the needs of communities.

7.8 Community Infrastructure

Community infrastructure is an essential part of all communities. Facilities such as community centres, sports centres, libraries and playgrounds can serve as a focal point for the communities they serve, and provide venues for local sporting, cultural, community, education and social events. There are a large number of voluntary agencies and community initiatives that continue to play a central role in contributing to the delivery of a wide variety of local social infrastructure facilities. The Council recognises that the provision of good quality community facilities in existing and developing areas is a key element in the development of sustainable, healthy communities across the county.

Different levels of service provision are appropriate to settlements of different sizes. It is therefore important that the Council ensures that an appropriate range of community facilities are provided in all communities, taking account of the population profile and growth targets identified in the Core Strategy. The primary role of the Local Authority is to reserve sufficient lands within the settlement centres to meet likely future demands for community infrastructure. The Council will reserve sites for community facilities as appropriate and seek to remedy deficiencies in existing developed areas. The Council will locate community facilities within existing settlements and where population levels warrant a particular service and will liaise with community groups and assist community initiatives subject to the availability of resources.

The Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines (2009) emphasise the need to integrate housing with the provision of supporting community and social infrastructure. The Guidelines acknowledge that community facilities should be located within, or close to, neighbourhood centres and be well served by public transport.

Objective

CF OBJ 1 To maintain and improve the provision of community facilities in the county.

7.8.1 Education Facilities

The population growth projected in the NPF combined with the need to deliver on the strategic objective of compact growth and sustainable development requires a collaborative approach with the Department of Education to support the provision of additional and enhanced education facilities in our communities. In considering potential emerging and future education accommodation

requirements, the Council will work with the Department of Education to identify projected population growth over the plan period in order to make sufficient provision for the planning and construction of schools and other education accommodation.

Table 7.1: Second Level Schools in Urban Centres (2020/2021 Enrolment)

School		Male	Female	Total
Carrick-on-Shannon	Carrick-On-Shannon Community School	334	332	666
Manorhamilton	St. Clare's Comprehensive School	240	252	492
Ballinamore	Ballinamore Community School	176	153	329
Drumshanbo	Drumshanbo Vocational School	156	146	302
Mohill	Mohill Community College	191	199	390
Carrigallen	Carrigallen Vocational School	207	158	365
Drumkeeran	Lough Allen College	85	71	156

Source: Department of Education

Table 7.2: Primary Schools in Urban Centres (2020/2021 Enrolment)

School		Male	Female	Total
Carrick-on-Shannon	Scoil Mhuire	227	245	472
	Gaelscoil Liatroma	78	68	146
Manorhamilton	Gaelscoil Chluainín	30	32	62
	Masterson N.S.	12	13	25
	St. Clare's N.S.	106	93	199
Ballinamore	Scoil Chlann Naofa	84	97	181
Dromahair	Drumlease N.S.	72	75	147
Drumshanbo	St. Patrick's N.S.	108	118	226
Mohill	The Hunt N.S.	7	20	27
	St. Manchan's N.S.	104	92	196
Kinlough	Four Masters N.S.	145	138	283
Carrigallen	Carrigallen N.S.	67	78	145
Drumkeeran	Drumkeeran N.S.	32	35	67
Leitrim	Leitrim N.S.	112	101	213
Cloone	Fatima N.S.	31	33	64
Kiltyclogher	Scoil Naisiúnta Mhic Diarmada	13	6	19
Dowra	St. Hugh's N.S.	24	24	48
Newtowngore	Newtowngore N.S.	17	8	25
Drumcong	St. Bríds N.S.	85	88	173
Glenfarne	St. Michael's N.S.	28	30	58

Source: Department of Education

The Department of Education have requested that the Local Authority apply a flexible approach to the suitability of school buildings, of both a temporary and permanent basis, in the consideration of permissible uses within land use zoning objectives. This is provided for in the policy framework below.

7.8.2 Third Level Education and Further Education

Third level education is an important contributory factor to the quality of life of the county's population. The Council recognises the important role of higher education in providing for the economic and social wellbeing of the county's population noting the efforts that have been madeon the part of various organisations within the county to develop third level initiatives.

The Mayo Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB) promote Adult Learning Services, Community Education, Back to Education Initiative, Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme and Adult Guidance. In addition, Leitrim Local Enterprise Office offers business information and advice, business skills training and mentoring support as well as other skills and training options to support businesses in the county. The MSLETB have courses in Drumshanbo Food Hub and Enterprise Centre and Mohill Enterprise Centre.

7.8.3 Childcare Facilities

The provision of childcare facilities is recognised as a key piece of social infrastructure required to enable people to participate in accessing employment, education and social networks. There continues to be a growth in demand for childcare services and the provision of good quality and affordable services close to local communities is supported by this Plan.

The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme provides early childhood care and education for children of pre-school age. All children are entitled to 2 full academic years or 76 weeks from September 2018 under this scheme. The recent addition of a second ECCE scheme year has increased demand for pre-school services. There are 768 no. ECCE registered children (free preschool places) in our county with the highest areas of demand including Carrick-on-Shannon, Mohill, Kinlough, Ballinamore, Dromod and Carrigallen. Leitrim County Childcare Committee assists in the development and coordination of preschool services in the county. There is a total of 1,557 children attending Early Years & Afterschool services. This is split between the level of provision between community based services which are non-profit and run by voluntary management committees (784 no. children) and privately owned services (783 no. children). Community based services had 348 no. children registered under the Community Childcare Subvention Scheme (CCSS) in August 2020. The National Childcare Scheme (NCS) will replace the CCSS.

The then Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government's produced Planning Guidelines on Childcare Facilities in 2001 which set out guidance on policies and objectives to be included in a Development Plan with respect to childcare provision. These guidelines identify appropriate locations for childcare facilities including in the vicinity of concentrations of work places, of schools, of neighbourhood, district and town centres and adjacent to public transport corridors, pedestrian routes and dedicated cycle ways. The Guidelines advocate a more pro-active role by Planning Authorities in the promotion of increased childcare provision while at the same time protecting amenities. New childcare facilities, whether in existing or developing areas, should not create a nuisance for the existing and future residents. In particular, set down/pickup areas, parking places and play areas are key considerations when planning new or extending existing childcare facilities. The Council will continue to be proactive in promoting and sustaining childcare facilities in the county. Detailed requirements and standards with childcare development projects are set out in Chapter 13 Development Management Standards.

Policies

ED POL 1 To facilitate the development of preschool, primary, post primary, third level, outreach, research, adult and further educational facilities to meet the educational needs of the citizens of the county.

ED POL 2 To apply a flexible approach to the suitability of school buildings, of both a temporary and permanent basis, in the consideration of permissible uses within land use zoning objectives.

ED POL 3 To ensure the provision of educational facilities maximises opportunities for use of walking, cycling and use of public transport.

ED POL 4 To encourage, support and develop opportunities to open up school buildings and their playing pitches to wider community usage in conjunction with the Department of Education, school management and other stakeholders.

ED POL 5 To consider the need for buffer zones and land use designations to support the strategic development of existing schools adjacent to existing and established schools (where required to facilitate potential future expansion).

ED POL 6 To encourage, promote and facilitate the provision of quality, affordable and accessible childcare facilities in accordance with national policy and relevant guidelines and in consultation with Leitrim County Childcare Committee.

ED POL 7 To require the delivery of new childcare facilities in conjunction with larger residential development proposals, in accordance with the *Childcare Facilities - Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (2001) or any replacement guidelines.

ED POL 8 To support the provision of childcare facilities of an appropriate type and scale at the following locations:

- areas of concentrated employment
- retail developments
- schools
- adjacent to public transport nodes
- villages and rural nodes
- within new and existing residential developments

ED POL 9 To permit childcare facilities in existing residential areas provided that they do not have a significant negative impact on the character or amenities of an area, particularly with regard to car parking, traffic generation and noise disturbance.

ED POL 10 To promote childcare facilities, of appropriate size and scale, in villages and rural nodes, and/or adjacent to community and educational facilities provided the proposed development:

- will not have a significant impact on the character or amenities of an area, particularly with regard to car parking, traffic generation and noise disturbance
- satisfies environmental standards

- addresses the needs of the community

Objectives

ED OBJ 1 To ensure that adequate lands are identified and reserved to cater for the establishment, improvement or expansion of all educational facilities in the county working collaboratively with the Department of Education and other stakeholders to meet current and envisaged future educational requirements beyond the Plan period.

ED OBJ 2 To facilitate the Department of Education, MSLETB, other statutory and non-statutory agencies in the necessary provision of preschool, primary, post primary and third level educational facilities throughout the county by reserving lands for such uses.

7.8.4 Healthcare Facilities

The Planning Authority has a significant role in supporting suitable healthcare provision through ensuring that there are sufficient lands reserved in the Development Plan to accommodate the development of adequate healthcare facilities for the population of an area.

Healthcare and medical facilities are provided by a range of public, private and voluntary agencies. The Health Service Executive (HSE) is the primary organisation responsible for the delivery of health care and personal social services to the people of Co. Leitrim.

The HSE provides services in the county such as nursing, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, social work, psychology, general practitioners and home help. In addition, the HSE provides disability services and services for older people, which include day care and residential facilities. Child Care services include child protection, fostering and long-term care and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

The Department of Health and Children published '*The Primary Care Strategy*' in 2001 which promotes a team-based approach to service provision, designed to make available a fully integrated primary care service. Primary care centres provide a mix of the following services at each centre: psychology; occupational therapy; physiotherapy; speech and language therapy; public health nursing; social work; primary care counselling; podiatry; dietetics. Some centres also provide community Mental Health Services and Palliative Care. The centres also accommodate local G.P. Practices. The ability of Primary Care Centres to provide local and integrated facilities, in line with the Government's Primary Care Strategy, is acknowledged and supported by the Council.

The Plan seeks to locate these facilities, together with community support services, on suitably zoned lands in close proximity to new and existing residential areas to allow communities access to multi-disciplinary health care, mental health and wellbeing services in easily accessible locations throughout the county.

Policies

HF POL 1 To co-operate with the Health Service Executive and other statutory and voluntary agencies and the private sector in facilitating the provision of appropriate health care facilities and well being services, covering the full spectrum of such care subject to proper planning considerations and the principles of sustainable development.

HF POL 2 To support the provision of new or extensions to existing health care facilities and ensure that such facilities are well located in town centres, served by public transport options, where practicable.

HF POL 3 To-operate with the Health Service Executive and other statutory and voluntary agencies in the provision of healthcare and other facilities to provide for those with specific needs such as older or young people, as well as those with learning disabilities and special needs.

HF POL 4 To consider change of use applications from residential to health care facilities/ surgeries only where the privacy and amenity of adjacent occupiers can be preserved, and the proposal does not have a detrimental effect on local amenity. The full conversion of semi-detached or terraced type dwellings will not normally be permitted.

Objective

HF OBJ 1 To facilitate the Health Service Executive and the Department of Health in the provision, improvement and expansion of Primary Care Centres, health centres and other health related facilities throughout the county through the reservation of adequate lands for such uses.

7.8.5 Healthy Communities

Sporting, leisure and recreational facilities are essential to promoting good health, social cohesion, a sense of community and enhancing quality of life and wellbeing. Nationally there has been, in recent years, an increased focus on fitness, sports and recreation generally. The provision of facilities for sports and recreation to serve our growing communities has become an increasingly important planning issue. Thus, the appropriate provision of these facilities is a key issue for Development Plans.

There is a Local Sports Partnership (LSP) in every county in Ireland and they operate under the umbrella of the Irish Sports Council. Leitrim LSP is a sub-committee of the LCDC and aims to increase the number of people involved in sport or physical activity in Co. Leitrim. There are 15 no. members on the board of Leitrim LSP, with representatives from sporting organisations, agencies involved in sport related activities, community forum and elected representatives. Leitrim LSP Strategic Plan seeks to increase participation in sports and physical activity throughout the county and to provide more quality sports and physical activity opportunities, participation and resources available to and enjoyed by all citizens.

The World Health Organisation priorities for a healthier world are set out in Health 2020. "*Healthy Ireland*" is a Government initiative which seeks to improve the health and wellbeing of the citizens of Ireland. NPO 26 of the NPF seeks to support the objectives of public health policy including Healthy Ireland and the National Physical Activity Plan, through integrating such policies, where appropriate and at the applicable scale, with planning policy.

The "*Keep Well*" Campaign, The Government Plan for Living with COVID-19: Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021 highlights the important role that individual and community resilience will play in contributing to our ongoing response to COVID-19. The launch is a call to action to everyone across our society. It is an invitation to individuals, communities, voluntary groups, sporting organisations, those involved in creativity and the arts, local heritage and history, businesses, as well as local and national government to find ways to support everyone to discover new activities and routines that will do us good.

The "*Keep Well*" campaign is aimed at showing people of all ages how we can mind our own physical and mental health and wellbeing by adding healthy and helpful habits to our daily and weekly routines. It will provide guidelines, information, and tips on things that will help us keep well through the coming months.

The '*Healthy Leitrim Strategy*' 2019-2021 aims to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Leitrim over the coming years. The plan was informed by both national and local policy alongside extensive consultation with agencies, organisations, clubs and communities. The '*Healthy Leitrim Strategy*' provides a framework for the delivery of a suite of actions that will have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of the residents of Leitrim.

Policies

HC POL 1 To work in collaboration with local communities and local development committees in the provision of recreation and amenity facilities which also respond to the demands of a growing and diverse population.

HC POL 2 To work in conjunction with the Leitrim Sports Partnership in the development of sporting facilities in the county and providing opportunities for increasing physical activity levels generally in the community.

HC POL 3 To facilitate the provision of appropriate high quality recreational and amenity facilities within the county.

HC POL 4 To increase the range of public play opportunities for children within the county by working in collaboration with local communities and local development committees.

HC POL 5 To protect existing sport, recreation and open space areas from inappropriate development.

HC POL 6 To ensure that open space provided as part of new residential developments is of high quality, designed and finished to ensure its safe use and that it is retained as communal open space to serve the social and recreational needs of the resident population. No further residential development shall be facilitated on lands identified through the planning consent process as open space to serve the residents of a development.

7.8.6 Libraries

The library service provided by the Council is playing a very important community, information, cultural and outreach facility role within the county. The public library service has for many years provided an important means of access to information and to (leisure) reading facilities and has played a major role in the advancement of the arts, education and local history throughout the county. Libraries have also become an important venue for cultural activities. This cultural role is recognised by the central role libraries occupy in the delivery of cultural projects such as the decade of centenaries and the Creative Ireland programme.

Leitrim County Council manages and operates the county public library service from its headquarters in Ballinamore which also provides a local studies library. In addition, there are 9 branch libraries throughout the county at Ballinamore, Carrick-on-Shannon, Carrigallen, Dromahair, Drumshanbo, Kiltyclogher, Kinlough, Manorhamilton and Mohill. These services play an important role in connecting and empowering communities and in providing community-based educational, cultural and lifelong

learning centres as well as hosting and facilitating events and activities in relation to business and employment, healthy living and personal well-being.

During 2019, Leitrim Library Service delivered on the strategic objectives as set out in the national library strategy '*Our Public Libraries 2022*' aimed at establishing the library as the trusted 'go to' place in the community for guidance and support in areas such as reading and literacy, lifelong learning, business and employment, healthy living and well-being. The library is a centre of community and cultural activity promoting a welcoming space for individuals and communities, celebrating diversity and fulfilling personal development.

The library service in Co. Leitrim is focused on developing the service as an evolving 21st century public service at the heart of communities. Its focus will be centred on the three strategic programmes – reading and literacy development, learning and information, and community and culture as outlined in the Government's national library strategy *'Our Public Libraries 2022: Inspiring Connecting and Empowering Communities'.*

Library buildings in Co. Leitrim offer a welcoming, public and most importantly neutral space for all. All libraries strive to ensure that library spaces are as age-friendly and sensory friendly as possible in order to ensure that library visits are an enjoyable experience. Membership is free and in addition to physical books in a variety of formats, there are a wide range of online services such as e-books, e-magazines and e-newspapers as well as e-courses and e-language learning opportunities available to members. Existing and emerging technologies such as Library Apps, enhanced Wi-Fi and self-service printing make the library a trusted 'go to' place in the community.

The Library Service intends to commence a new 5 year development plan commencing in 2021 which will aim to meet the demands of the evolving economic and community profile of the county. Improvements in library facilities and services will aim to support communities which have undergone rapid increases in population or are designated for future development as well as supporting individuals who have changing requirements in terms of remote working and blended learning.

Objective

LIB OBJ 1 To support the further development and enhancement of the library service in Co. Leitrim and the implementation of actions set out in the Library Development Plan, when completed, subject to funding being available.

7.8.7 Fire Service

Leitrim is served by a fully retained fire service. There are 5 fire stations located throughout the county; namely, Ballinamore, Carrick-on Shannon, Drumshanbo, Manorhamilton and Mohill. Three other fire stations, namely, Bundoran in Co. Donegal and Dowra and Killeshandra in Co. Cavan provide first attendance cover into parts of Leitrim on the basis that they are the nearest fire station to that area.

Leitrim Fire Service progressed and completed a number of capital projects during 2019. A new, state of the art, fire station was completed and opened in Ballinamore. A refurbishment and extension project was completed to Drumshanbo Fire Station providing a substantial improvement to the facilities available. Significant progress has also made on the Manorhamilton Fire Station project with the new site acquired and progressed to design and tender stage.

Objectives

FS OBJ 1 To support the development and enhancement of the fire service in Co. Leitrim together with necessary extensions and upgrades to existing facilities to ensure operational compliance subject to funding being available.

FS OBJ 2 To facilitate the development of a new fire station on a site identified in the Manorhamilton land use zoning objectives map subject to the undertaking of the necessary environmental assessments as part of the planning consent process.

7.8.8 Burial Grounds

Local Authorities have a statutory responsibility to provide for burial facilities. The Council will support the development of additional burial grounds and extensions to existing facilities where appropriate. The Council will assist and encourage local involvement in the upkeep and maintenance of burial grounds, and in the preservation of the heritage value of older burial grounds. Advice on the public health and other technical aspects of new burial grounds will continue to be given to local community interests.

Policy

BUR GRD POL 1 To protect historic graveyards in Co. Leitrim.

Objective

BUR GRD OBJ 1 To provide or facilitate the provision of new burial grounds and extensions to existing burial grounds to meet the needs of the county.

7.8.9 Arts and Cultural Facilities

Leitrim County Council recognises the value and importance of the arts, culture and creativity. We have seen how investment in the creative sector pays dividend in terms of the social capital it builds and how it improves the lives of our citizens and grows pride. While this is invaluable to our society; the arts, culture and creativity sectors are also invaluable contributors to the economy of the county by attracting visitors, investment and job creation.

Co. Leitrim is remarkable, relative to its size, for its levels of activity and capacity across a wide range of artforms and cultural arenas and is acknowledged as having one of the largest proportions of artists and craftspeople of anywhere in the country. The highest proportion of these are based in the north of the county where in Manorhamilton, the Leitrim Sculpture Centre boasts the widest array of material processes of any arts facility in the country, while the Glens Centre maintains a strong focus on the professional development of performing artists in theatre and music. Meanwhile, the Dock in Carrick-on-Shannon enjoys a considerable and growing national and international reputation and represents the most significant point of contact in the county for the public to engage with the arts and is also home to the Leitrim Design House. Finally, while Ballinamore is remarkable for its levels of involvement in the arts by children and young people, the proposed new Junction Centre in Ballinamore will also contain a bespoke facility for young people to engage with the arts, the only such facility in the county.

Leitrim County Council, through its Arts Office, provides information, advice and assistance to a wide range of clients and develops policies in relation to various aspects of the creative sector. It works

closely with The Arts Council and Creative Ireland and develops and co-ordinates a number of programmes independently and in association with a wide range of local, national and international partners.

The mission statement of Leitrim County Council's current Arts Plan is "*to nurture and foster the arts in all its diversity; to embrace and welcome new ideas; to create the conditions to help turn those ideas into reality; and to embed the arts and creativity into all aspects of the social, economic and cultural life of Leitrim.*" This mission statement is reflected through a series of actions that align to three strategic priorities of Public Engagement, Children & Young People, and Professional Development & Sustainability.

Policies

ART POL 1 To raise awareness of the culturally-rich and artistically vibrant offering and services provided in Co. Leitrim.

ART POL 2 To support the professional development and sustainability of those who work in the creative sector.

ART POL 3 To provide enhanced opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to explore different forms of cultural and creative expression.

ART POL 4 To strengthen Co. Leitrim's capacity as a creative hub and cultural cluster, enhancing the potential for economic development and sustainability in the sector.

8 TRANSPORT

8.1 Strategic Aim

The strategic aim of this chapter is:

> *"to support increased use of sustainable modes of transport; the integration of spatial planning more closely with transport planning to reduce the need for travel; enhancing existing strategic transportation infrastructure in the county and regional accessibility; transitioning towards a low carbon energy efficient transport system, and; the development of a safer, more efficient, effective and connected transport system within Co. Leitrim"*.

8.2 Introduction

The continued delivery, expansion and maintenance of a well-functioning, multi modal transport network is essential to delivering the county's economic competitiveness, improving the quality of life of residents and achieving better social cohesion. Accessibility and mobility for all sections of the community is vital for the future development of the county.

The Council acknowledges the importance of the existing road network in Co. Leitrim and fully appreciates the need to maximise benefits from the existing and proposed road network. However, there is acceptance that the transport sector is a significant contributory factor in the growth of greenhouse gas emissions generally. Ensuring transport infrastructure and services will be able to withstand the likely future impacts of climate change is a big challenge for this Plan having regard to the dispersed nature of our predominantly rural population and to our general dependence on the private car for transport.

Data provided by the National Transport Authority (NTA) based on Census of Population 2016 (POWSCAR) data indicates that a significant number of shorter journeys (less than 2km) are being made by car within our larger urban centres. Census 2016 indicated that Co. Leitrim has one of the highest rates of car dependence in the country with 69.1% of commuters travelling to work by car or as a passenger in a car, compared to 65.6% nationally, with just 1.1% availing of public transport (bus and rail) compared to a national average of 9.3%. The Census demonstrated that whilst there was a good uptake in bus use for travelling for education purposes, this was not replicated for travelling for work purposes. Travelling to work or school/college by cycling was negligible. It is therefore the ambition of the Council through this Plan to improve this travel pattern as a means of positively impacting on people's quality of life and on the receiving environment by reducing the need for travel and seeking to change the travel patterns for shorter trips within urban settlements to non-motorised forms of transport (cycling and walking) to the maximum extent practicable in a rural county such as Co. Leitrim.

The Council will seek to achieve a more balanced and sustainable pattern of movement within the county and will endeavour to facilitate a greater choice of transport modes to encourage a modal shift to more sustainable modes of transport and transitioning to a low carbon transport system. Furthermore, this Plan supports and encourages sustainable and compact forms of development, which, if realised, will reduce the need to travel, reduce the extent of car dependency and reduce carbon emissions from transport.

8.3 Legislative and Policy Context

There are a number of national and regional strategies and plans which provide a context for the Council's transportation strategy and policy framework. The more important are as follows:

Project Ireland 2040 - The National Planning Framework
As outlined previously, the NPF is based on achieving ten strategic outcomes, the most pertinent of which to this chapter is sustainable mobility, securing compact and sustainable growth and ensuring a transition to a low carbon and climate resistant society. A strong emphasis is therefore placed on electrification of public transport fleets and the use of electric vehicles to improve the environmental quality of our towns. The transition to more sustainable modes of travel (walking, cycling, public transport) is promoted, particularly within smaller towns and villages and in rural areas. The NPF also supports the implementation of planning and transportation strategies for urban areas, with a major focus on improving walking and cycling routes, including continuous greenway networks and targeted measures to enhance permeability and connectivity. In respect of compact growth, an emphasis is placed on renewing and developing existing settlements and delivering new housing in existing settlements thereby reducing the need to travel. Enhanced regional accessibility is also a strategic outcome of the NPF and is of relevance to this county as it provides access to the northwest of the country.

Northern and Western Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
A core objective of the RSES is also the need to promote more sustainable forms of transport to reduce energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions, such as walking, cycling, electric vehicles and the increased usage of public transport. Sustainable mobility can be realised through the effective integration of land-use and transportation; the design of roads and streets; using more sustainable modes of transport; providing supporting infrastructure and education. The RSES requires the preparation of a joint Local Transport Plan (LTP) for the Key Town of Carrick-on-Shannon and adjoining settlement of Cortober. This will support the NPF objectives of compact growth and sustainable mobility. The RSES also places a strong emphasis on enhanced regional accessibility and there are several projects identified of relevance to Co. Leitrim. The growth of the northern and western region is dependent on transport and infrastructure investment, to improve accessibility and reduce travel times between urban and rural settlements.

Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021
The document '*Building on Recovery – Infrastructure and Capital investment 2016-2021*' (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform) sets out future capital spending proposals for investment in infrastructure. €42 billion has been allocated for projects nationally up to 2021. Following a review in 2018, the Government published a new 10-year National Investment Plan for the period 2018- 2027.

National Sustainable Mobility Policy (2022)
The *National Sustainable Mobility Policy* (2022) supersedes the previous national transport policy, *Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future, A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009–2020* and sets out the strategic framework to 2030 for active travel (walking and cycling) and public transport journeys to help Ireland meets its climate obligations. The policy is accompanied by an action plan running from 2022 to 2025, which sets out a range of actions to deliver overarching policy goals of delivering at least 500,000 additional daily active travel and public journeys by 2030 and a 10% reduction in the number of kilometres driven by fossil fuelled cars.

National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020
The National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020 (Department of Transport) which is derived from Smarter Travel policy document sets out a national policy for cycling, to create a stronger cycling culture, a safer environment for cycling and improved quality of life.

Spatial Planning and National Roads - Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012
These guidelines set out planning policy considerations relating to development affecting national primary and secondary roads, including motorways and associated junctions, outside the 50-60 kmph speed limit zones for towns and villages. The guidelines seek to achieve and maintain a safe and efficient network of national roads in the broader context of sustainable development strategies, thereby facilitating continued economic growth, while encouraging a shift towards more sustainable travel and transport in accordance with the Smarter Travel policy document and its policy successor, *National Sustainable Mobility Policy* (2022).

Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, 2019
The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport sets out design standards for urban roads and streets which balance the "*place function*" (the needs of residents and visitors) with the "*transport function*" (the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, public transport, cars and goods vehicles). The DMURS sets out design guidance and standards for constructing new and reconfiguring existing urban roads and streets, incorporating good planning and design practice and focus on the public realm. It also outlines practical design measures to encourage more sustainable travel patterns in urban areas.

In May 2020, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the need to accommodate additional space for pedestrians and cyclists and to optimise the space available on streets, an Interim Advice Note was issued by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS) to Local Authorities. The Interim Note provides guidance in order to assist in the implementation on a number of measures including:

- Widening of footpaths.
- Potential pedestrianisation of some streets.
- Potential one-way systems.
- Altering traffic signal times.
- Providing additional temporary facilities for cyclists.
- Provision of some external space where appropriate to support business activities.

Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways,2018
The objective of this Strategy prepared by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, is to assist in the strategic development of nationally and regionally significant Greenways in appropriate locations constructed to an appropriate standard to deliver a quality experience for all users. It also aims to increase the number and geographical spread of Greenways of scale and quality around the country over the next 10 years resulting in a significant increase in the number of people using Greenways as a visitor experience and as a recreational amenity.

Local Link Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022
The National Transport Authority (NTA) provides rural transport services through the Local Link Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018-2022. The key priorities of this programme continue to be directed at addressing rural social exclusion and the integration of rural transport services with other public transport services. The services provided under the programme are therefore intended to fulfil a primarily social function, in meeting the needs of communities in towns, villages and rural areas.

In June 2021, Phase 1 of the Pilot Integrated TFI Local Link Public Transport Project for Co. Leitrim commenced. The project consisted of the NTA and the Donegal Sligo Leitrim Transport Coordination Unit (TCU) working closely with the HSE to plan and develop a revised network of TFI Local Link services for Co. Leitrim. The services are designed to meet the needs of mainstream public transport users as well as the transport needs of passengers accessing (non-emergency) health care services.

Climate Action Plan 2019
This Plan sets out the Government's plan of action in relation to combatting climate change and its impacts. It sets out governance arrangements including carbon-proofing our policies, establishment of carbon budgets and a strengthened Climate Change Advisory Council. A central component of the plan is the Government's commitment to undertake the following:

- 70% of the country's electricity needs will come from renewable sources by 2030
- accelerate the take up of EV cars and vans so that 100% of all new cars and vans are EVs by 2030. This will enable achieving our target of 950,000 EVs on the road by 2030
- this means approximately one third of all vehicles sold during the decade will be Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV) or Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV)
- make growth less transport intensive through better planning, remote and home-working and modal shift to public transport
- increase the renewable biofuel content of motor fuels
- set targets for the conversion of public transport fleets to zero carbon alternatives

NTA Guidance
In addition to the above policy framework the Development Plan has been informed by the following guidance:

- The National Cycle Manual
- Permeability Best Practice Guide
- Achieving Effective Workplace Travel Plans: Guidance for Local Authorities
- Workplace Travel Plans: A Guide for Implementers
- Toolkit for School Travel
- Guidance Note on Area Based Transport Assessment (NTA and TII)

Age Friendly Principles and Guidelines for the Planning Authority, Age Friendly Ireland, 2021
All Local Authorities have formally adopted the Age Friendly Programme representing the first full national roll out of the model. In line with the objectives of the 2020 Programme for Government, services should be located within close proximity to where people live; improve the effectiveness of transport services and reduce barriers within the public realm thereby allowing older people to use public spaces in an accessible and inclusive manner.

This chapter reflects the overarching principles of these national policy documents.

8.4 Integration of Land use Planning and Transportation

The integration of land use and transportation is a fundamental principle of the national policy document '*Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future*' and its policy successor, *'National Sustainable Mobility Policy' (*2022) and will inform the policy framework pursued in this Plan. By shaping the pattern of development and influencing the location, scale, density, design and mix of land-uses, the integration of land-use and transportation can help reduce the need to travel and facilitate sustainable urban development.

This Plan promotes an integrated approach to land-use and transportation which aligns with the Core Strategy and directs most of the future development into existing towns and settlements within Co. Leitrim, to reduce car dependency to the maximum amount possible. The Plan strongly supports the creation of compact growth, consolidation of existing settlements and prioritisation of the development of brownfield lands across the settlement hierarchy, which in turn will encourage the use of public transport, cycling and walking as viable alternatives to the private car. Lands identified for residential development in the Land Use Zoning maps of the principal towns are generally located within the built-up area and are situated close to or within the core areas of the settlements in order to encourage the consolidation of the settlements and make active travel (walking and cycling) more viable.

Land Use and Transportation Strategies also play a vital role in supporting better coordination and integration of development planning. It is Council policy to prepare an Area Based Transport Plan for Carrick-on-Shannon/Cortober in conjunction with Roscommon County Council, to realise its role as a Key Town in our region.

Policies

ILU POL 1 To support and facilitate the integration of land use with transportation infrastructure, through the development of sustainable compact settlements and promotion of higher residential densities at appropriate locations, well served by public transport to the extent practicable in a rural county with smaller urban centres such as Co. Leitrim.

ILU POL 2 To support the development of a low carbon transport system by continuing to promote modal shift from private car use towards increased use of more sustainable forms of transport such as cycling, walking and public transport in circumstances where alternative options are available.

ILU POL 3 To support the maintenance and optimisation of the county's existing transport infrastructure to ensure its optimal use in line with National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland's (NIFTI's) modal hierarchy and seek to undertake appropriate traffic management measures to prioritise road users in line with the modal hierarchy.

ILU POL 4 To strengthen inter-regional connectivity, through the improvement of inter-urban road, bus and rail connectivity, with a particular emphasis on improved connectivity between the largest urban centres and access to ports and airports, for the movement of both people and goods.

ILU POL 5 To promote the integration of land use and transport planning measures which facilitate sustainable transportation options, economic, societal and climate returns on transport investment and minimisation of environmental impacts.

ILU POL 6 New transport infrastructure projects, including blueways and greenways, that are not already provided for by existing plans/programmes, which have been subject to environmental assessment, or are not already permitted, will be subject to feasibility assessment, considering need, environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report, and objectives relating to sustainable mobility. Where feasibility is established, a Corridor and Route Selection Process will be undertaken, where appropriate, in two stages: Stage 1 – Route Corridor Identification, Evaluation and Selection; and Stage 2 – Route Identification, Evaluation and Selection. This

Corridor and Route Selection Process will not be applicable to national roads schemes which are required to be progressed in accordance with statutory processes and TII Publications, including the Project Management Guidelines and Project Appraisal Guidelines.

Objectives

ILU OBJ 1 To transition towards sustainable and low carbon transport modes, through the promotion of alternative modes of sustainable transport and '*walkable communities*' together with the achievement of compact settlement forms close to established public transport.

ILU OBJ 2 To promote and deliver a sustainable, integrated and low carbon transport system with ease of movement throughout Co. Leitrim by enhancing the existing transport infrastructure in terms of road, bus, rail, cycling and pedestrian facilities.

8.5 Modal Share and Sustainable Mobility

In accordance with subsection 10(2)(n) of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended a key requirement of a Development Plan is the promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas. Such measures seek to:

- reduce energy demand
- reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions
- adapt to climate change having regard to location, layout and design of new development.

As the key land use and transportation planning document for the county, this Plan seeks to address these requirements in a holistic and consistent manner. In particular, Chapter 2, *Core Strategy*, provides the overarching strategic policy direction to develop more compact forms of growth within our settlements. The achievement of compact growth, consolidation and prioritisation of development of vacant or underused brownfield sites within settlements reduces the need for travel to school, services and recreational by means other than walking and cycling to the maximum extent practicable. This will result in increasing levels of sustainable mobility within our settlements for shorter trips as viable and realistic alternatives to the dependence on the private car. An enhanced bus service connecting smaller centres to larger centres will seek to reduce car based transport trips in conjunction with increased acceptance and use of electric charging vehicles. Moreover, Chapter 12 of this Plan, *Climate Action & Renewable Energy*, establishes specific policies and objectives aimed at mitigating the causes of climate change and adapting to the effects of climate change with transportation a key focus.

As outlined previously, Co. Leitrim is the most rural county in Ireland at the 2016 Census of Population[23]. It is not therefore surprising that there is a significant reliance on private car transportation within the county. This in turn is a significant source of GHG emissions with the transport sector as a whole accounting for 22% of the total GHG emissions for Co. Leitrim[24]. In this

[23] Settlements below 1,500 inhabitants are defined as 'rural' under the CSO definitions. The rural aggregate population of Leitrim was recorded in 2016 as being 28,622 out of a total county population of 32,044, equating to approximately 89.3% of the population of Leitrim in 2016 being classified as a rural distribution.

[24] *Climate Resilient Opportunities or Generations Ahead (CRÓGA) Project*, developed by Good Energies Alliance Ireland (GEAI) with support from the EU Eramus + Programme and the Irish Environmental Network (2019).

regard there is a clear need for the enhancement of sustainable mobility options in the county albeit tempered by the reality of seeking to cater for a largely dispersed rural population.

8.6 Modal Share in Leitrim

In terms of obtaining information on modal share within the county, the Planning Authority is reliant on the 2016 Census of Population, from which the Place of Work, School or College Anonymised Records (POWSCAR) dataset is derived. The Council liaised with the National Transport Authority (NTA) in interrogating the POWSCAR dataset to derive modal share information in respect of internal journeys within settlements and journeys made from settlement to settlement within the county as well as external journeys beyond the county boundary. This analysis was also applied to Carrick-on-Shannon/Cortober, given its status as a Key Town and in advance of the preparation of a Local Transport Plan for the town. The support of the NTA in providing this information to the Council is acknowledged.

Table 8.1 and Figure 8.1 detail the modal share for persons travelling to work, school or college in Co. Leitrim for 2016. The modal share for commuting by private motor vehicle to work and education represents 77.1% (i.e. motor car driver and passenger, van and other including lorry), which is higher than the rest of the country at 68% and significantly above the national target of 45% for car commuting trips.

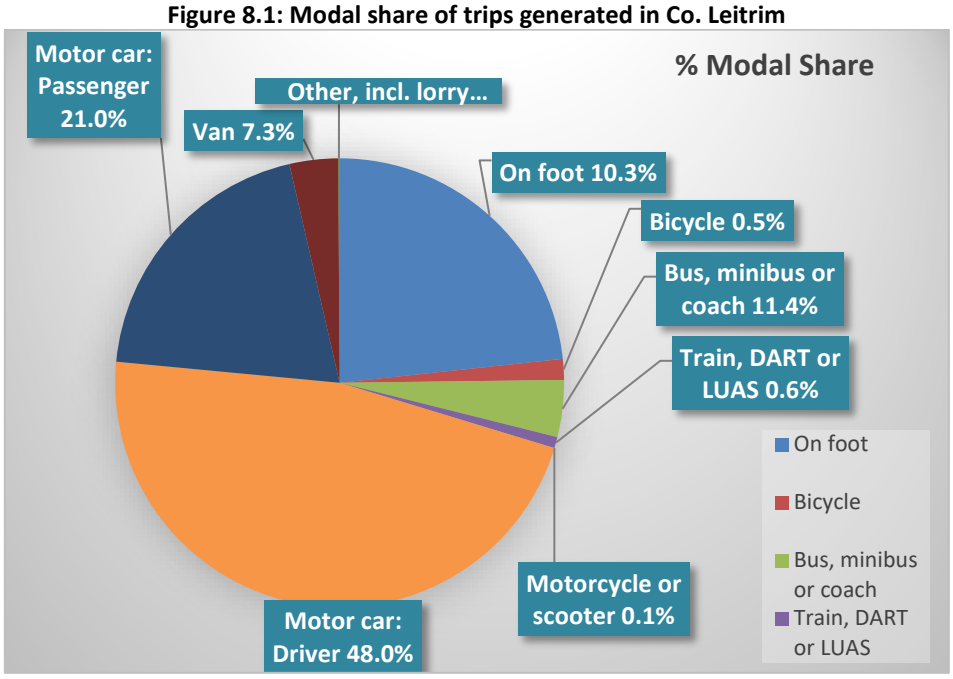
This trend in modal share for the county is largely replicated in the context of Carrick-on-Shannon (Table 8.2 and Figure 8.2), where commuting by private motor vehicle (i.e. motor car driver and passenger, van and other including lorry) to work and education within the settlement represents 70.3% of the modal share. Whilst there is a discernible improvement in active travel patterns, with a 23.3% modal share for journeys by foot, compared to the 10.3% equivalent for the county, the relatively low levels of internal trips made by cycling remain a concern.

Table 8.1: Modes of Travel to Work, School or College in Co. Leitrim 2016

Travel Mode	Number of Persons	% Modal Share
On foot	1,854	10.3%
Bicycle	98	0.5%
Bus, minibus or coach	2,040	11.4%
Train	105	0.6%
Motorcycle or scooter	19	0.1%
Motor car: Driver	8,612	48.0%
Motor car: Passenger	3,759	21.0%
Van	1,311	7.3%
Other, Including lorry	141	0.8%
Total	17,939	100%

Source: CSO Census of Population 2016

Figure 8.1: Modal share of trips generated in Co. Leitrim



Source: CSO Census of Population 2016

Whilst the POWSCAR data does not capture behavioral aspects of modal choice, safety and convenience are typically key motivating factors for cycling. In this regard, some of the designated cycling network within Carrick-on-Shannon is not fully integrated or segregated from motor traffic, with a number of routes also coinciding with narrow carriageways or busy junctions and thoroughfares such as the Shannon Roundabout on the N4 road.

In developing the Local Transport Plan to inform the LAP for Carrick-on-Shannon/Cortober, the Council will liaise with the NTA, Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), Roscommon County Council and other relevant stakeholders with a focus on achieving a substantial modal shift to more active travel, including cycling.

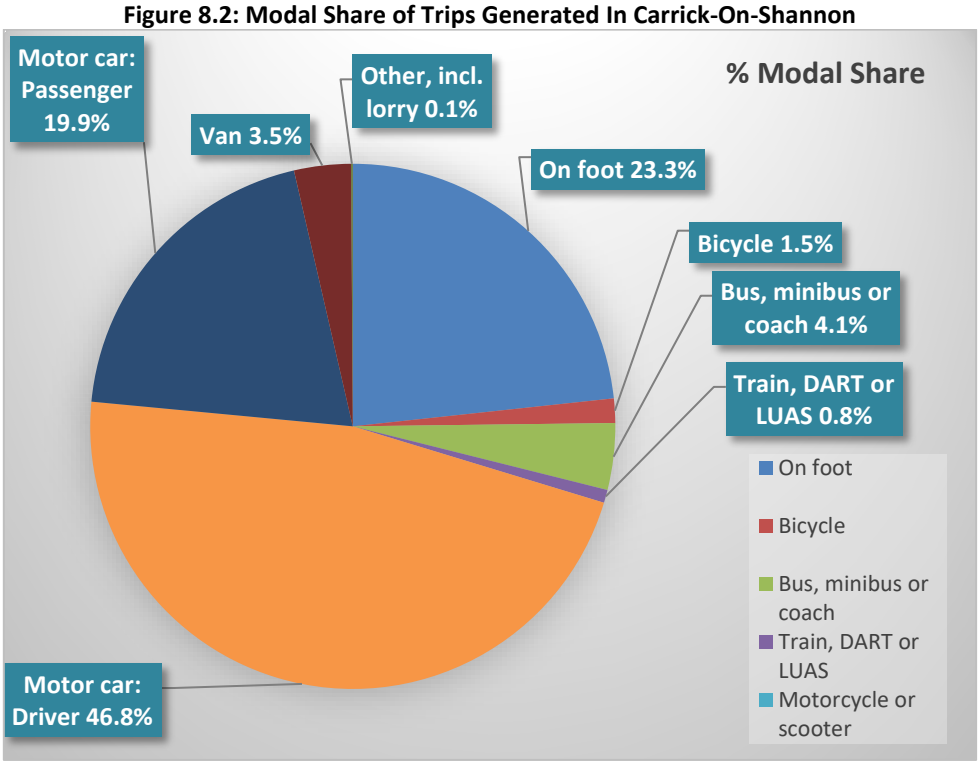
The dominance of private car transportation is also reflected in Figure 8.3 which details the modal share of education generated trips within the county, categorised by distance travelled.

Table 8.2: Modes of Travel to Work, School or College in Carrick-on-Shannon

Travel Mode for Trips	Number of Persons	% Modal Share
On foot	527	23.3%
Bicycle	34	1.5%
Bus, minibus or coach	92	4.1%
Train	17	0.8%
Motorcycle or scooter	1	0.0%
Motor car: Driver	1058	46.8%
Motor car: Passenger	449	19.9%
Van	80	3.5%
Other, Including lorry	3	0.1%
Total	2,483	100%

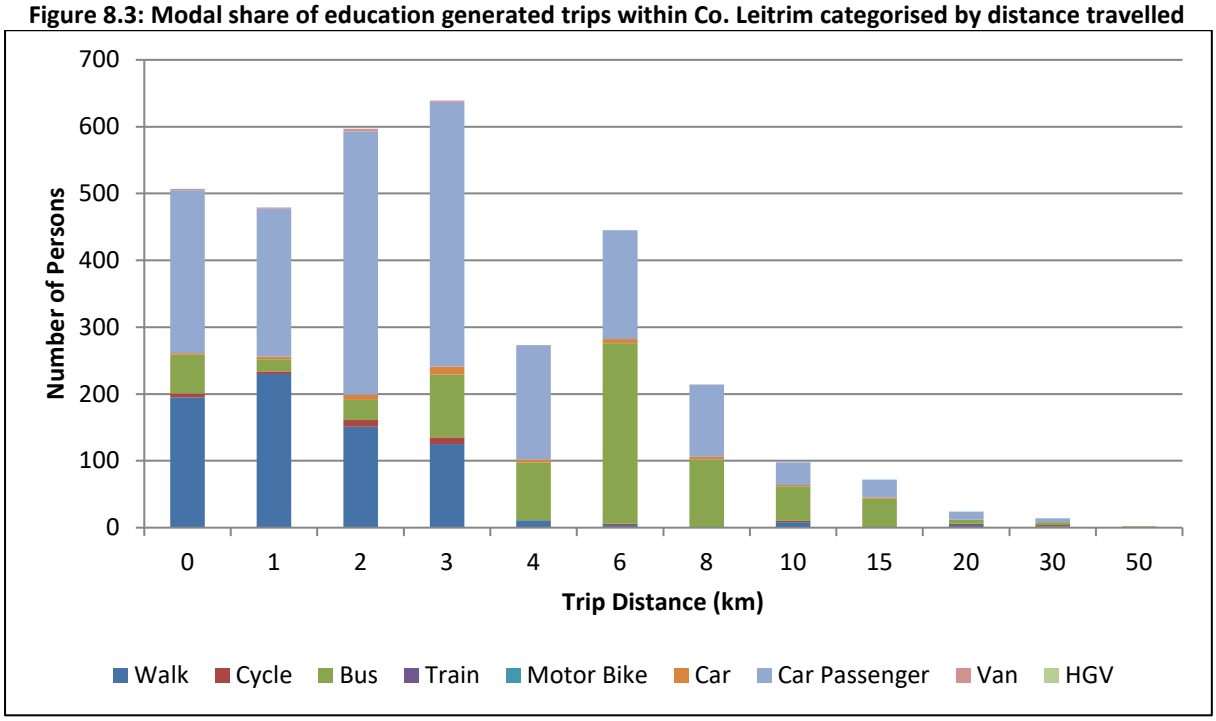
Source: CSO Census of Population 2016

Figure 8.2: Modal Share of Trips Generated In Carrick-On-Shannon



Source: CSO Census of Population 2016

Figure 8.3: Modal share of education generated trips within Co. Leitrim categorised by distance travelled



Source: CSO Census of Population 2016

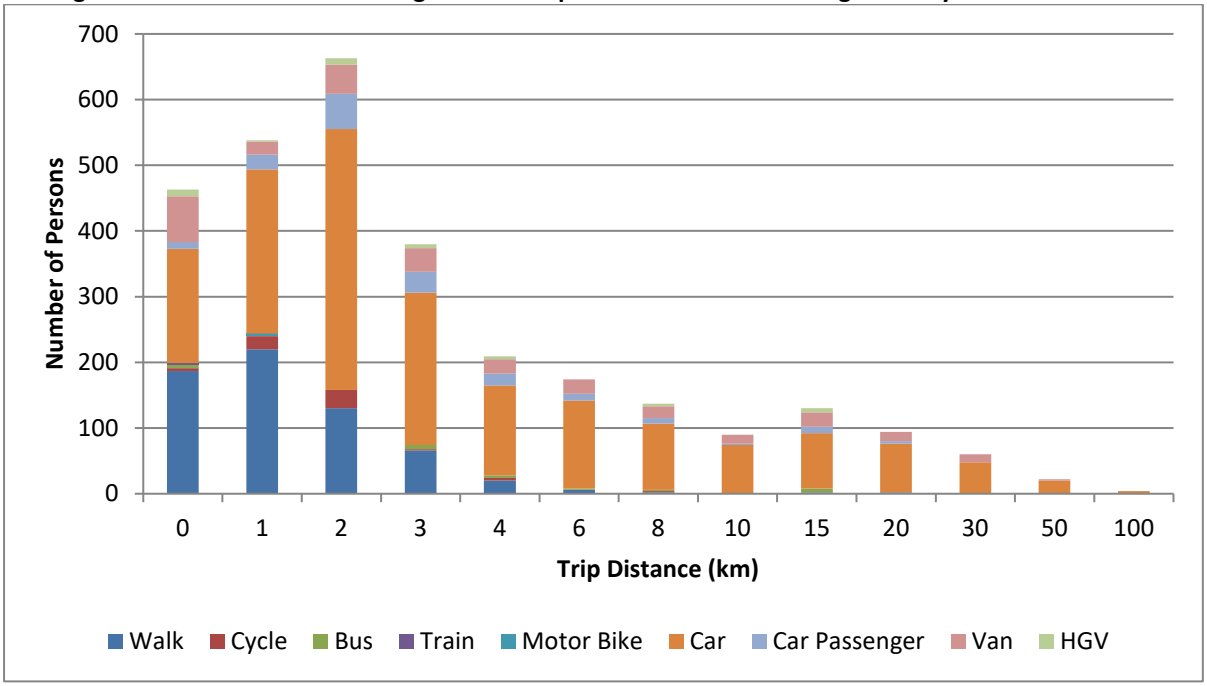
As depicted in Figure 8.3, even for education generated trips within the county of less than 1km, the private car dominates (car driver and car passenger), although for distances of 1–2km walking is marginally more popular than the private car. For distances between 2-8km the private car remains the dominant modal choice, although overtaken by bus transport for distances between 10km and 15km, reflecting the popularity and viability of the rural school bus network in the county. However, again, the low uptake in cycling, particularly over short distances, is of particular concern. Whilst the

reasons for this are unknown, owing to the large uptake in walking for trips up to 4km distances, concerns in relation to cycling safety, network design and security rather than inclement weather may be more likely factors in discouraging cycling.

A similar pattern in modal share is found in work generated trips within the county based on distance, as depicted in Figure 8.4 overleaf.

For work generated trips up to 1km, walking is marginally the most popular form of travel (187 persons), closely followed by the private car (184 persons comprising of car drivers and passengers). For the remaining distances (i.e. 1km to 100km) for work generated trips within the county, the private car is the overwhelming dominant mode of transport with other sustainable and active forms of travel such as bus and cycling faring poorly in modal share.

Figure 8.4: Modal share of work generated trips within Co. Leitrim categorised by distance travelled



Source: CSO Census of Population 2016

8.7 Promoting Sustainable Mobility

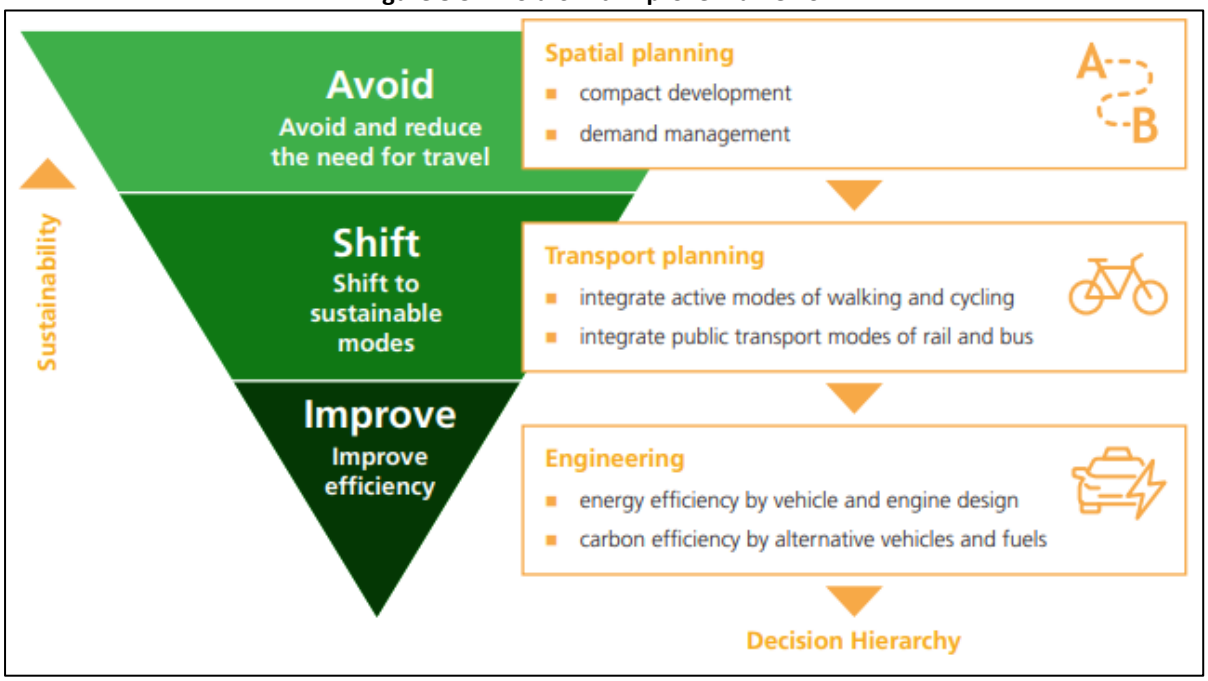
Sustainable mobility is about the movement of people and goods in a manner that engenders quality of life and ease of access for all and seeks to encourage a modal shift in favour of public transport and other active modes. Achieving significant modal shift and delivering a more sustainable mobility model is dependent on a wide range of factors including government investment in public transport, active travel and shared mobility as viable alternative travel options as well as conscious behavioural choices. Given the extent of the dispersed rural population within the county, the provision of public transport outside of the larger settlements of the county is a significant challenge in terms of viability and representing a viable alternative to the private car. For context, just 36.4% (11,648 persons[25]) of the total population of the county resided within the thirteen settlements which comprise Tiers 1-3 of the Settlement Hierarchy of this Plan. Furthermore, only Carrick-on-Shannon and probably

[25] The settlement of Carrick-on-Shannon shares an administrative boundary within Co. Roscommon with the Co Leitrim element of the settlement estimated to have comprised of 3,422 persons at the 2016 Census.

Manorhamilton now exceed a population of 1,500 people which demonstrates the relatively small scale of settlements in our county.

This Plan seeks to reduce the reliance on the private car by promoting and facilitating more sustainable modes of transport and supporting development in locations that would reduce the need to travel. Underpinning the various policies and objectives aimed at delivering more sustainable mobility is the *'Avoid-Shift-Improve'* (ASI) Framework (as set out in Figure 8.5). This model is based on avoiding or reducing the need to travel, shifting to more environmentally friendly modes and improving the energy efficiency of motorised transport modes. The aim is to reduce congestion, enhance quality of life and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in our settlements. The increase in active travel modes will contribute to improved healthy lifestyles and is an essential response to climate change.

Figure 8.5: Avoid-Shift-Improve Framework



Source: Environmental Protection Agency

Guided by the principles espoused in this framework, as well as other best practice examples in land use and transportation modelling, the Council will seek to influence overall travel demand and achieve a modal shift through land use planning, optimising opportunities to make sustainable travel choices, providing a high-quality transport network and system which is effective, accessible and responsive to technological change and reduces the contribution of transport to climate change.

Reduction in trip generation for the private car is a particular challenge for Co. Leitrim. Modal share was recorded at a rate of 77% (2016 Census) which remains well in excess of key national modal share target of 45% modal share for the private car by 2020 as set out in the previous national transport policy document, *'Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020'*. This policy document also set out a target of 55% of total commuter journeys to work being undertaken by walking, cycling and public transport by 2020. For comparison, 24.4% of equivalent commuter journeys were undertaken in Co. Leitrim based on the 2016 Census data.

In facilitating a change towards a more sustainable mobility model, there is a need to ensure that alternatives to the car are integrated in the design of streets and public spaces, prioritising cycling and walking as active transport modes. Moreover, a collaborative approach between the Council and key transport providers such as the National Transport Authority (NTA), Transport Infrastructure Ireland

(TII) and key stakeholders will be required to facilitate this change. Achieving sustainable mobility will require a suite of actions which involves:

- focusing population and employment growth in urban areas
- providing alternative options to the car, namely, walking, cycling and public transport;
- improving fuel efficiency, promoting energy efficient driving and alternative technologies
- permeability and accessibility improvements

The challenge for Co. Leitrim within the lifetime of this Plan is to, therefore, integrate land use and transportation policy and give greater emphasis to the factors that have a positive role in promoting sustainable transport to reduce levels of car dependency such as:

- Promoting higher densities at appropriate locations;
- Mixing land uses;
- Designing for compact settlement forms; and
- Concentrating appropriate development on transport corridors and linkages.

The management of space in town and village centres should deliver a high level of priority and permeability for walking and cycling to create accessible, attractive, vibrant and safe places to work, live, shop and engage in community life.

Policies

MSSM POL 1 To support sustainable mobility, enhanced regional accessibility and connectivity within Co. Leitrim in accordance with the National Policy Outcomes of the National Planning Framework 2040 and the National Development Plan.

MSSM POL 2 To promote the transition to a low carbon integrated transport system through the use of design solutions and innovative approaches with regards to the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets and the complementary publication '*The Treatment of Transition Zones to Towns and Villages on National Roads*' by Transport Infrastructure Ireland, and subsequently to shift to environmentally sustainable modes of transport.

MSSM POL 3 To continue to work with the relevant transport providers, agencies and stakeholders to facilitate the integration of active travel (walking and cycling) with public transport. (See also **ST POL 5** in Chapter 12 - Climate Change and Renewable Energy in this regard)

MSSM POL 4 To promote more compact development forms that reduce overall demand for private transport and support proposals that encourage modal shift towards sustainable travel modes.

MSSM POL 5 To encourage better integration of transport services with the aim of reducing car trips by encouraging and fostering improved consultation and co-operation between both public and private providers of transport services operating in the county and wider region, including all providers of bus and rail services.

Objectives

MSSM OBJ 1 To prepare a Local Transport Plan in collaboration with the National Transport Authority (NTA), Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), Roscommon County Council and other relevant stakeholders for the Key Town of Carrick-on-Shannon and establish specific modal share targets for the town to be incorporated into the forthcoming Carrick-on-Shannon Local Area Plan. This will include devising and implementing an effective monitoring programme for the achievement of the modal share targets contained therein.

MSSM OBJ 2 To prepare a transport strategy for the county in co-operation with other transport agencies to include the National Transport Authority, Transport Infrastructure Ireland and the Department of Transport within 2 years of the publication of the POWSCAR data from the 2022 Census. The transport strategy will outline measures, if implemented, to achieve an agreed modal share target for private car for total commuter journeys within the county and a target of total commuter journeys to be undertaken by sustainable mobility modes such as walking, cycling and public transport within the life of this Plan. This will include devising and implementing an effective monitoring programme for the achievement of the modal share targets contained therein. (See also **ST OBJ 1** in Chapter 12 - Climate Change and Renewable Energy in this regard.)

8.8 Walking and Cycling

Walking and cycling are the most sustainable modes of transport and are key components to movement and accessibility in urban and inter-urban areas. Benefits accruing for both the environment and population, include reducing air and noise pollution and traffic congestion as well as contributing to healthy and more active lifestyles. Encouraging and promoting walking and cycling as a sustainable mode of transport and moving away from reliance on the private car will depend on providing well connected and integrated pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. Pedestrian and cycle facilities will be most successful where they form a coherent network, place an emphasis on safety, and directly serve the main areas where people wish to travel.

Policies

WC POL 1 To promote walking and cycling as efficient, healthy and environmentally friendly modes of transport by securing the development of a network of direct, comfortable, convenient and safe cycle routes and footpaths, particularly in town centres and in the vicinity of schools.

WC POL 2 To work with all relevant stakeholders to seek to ensure a significant increase in walking in Co. Leitrim, by emphasising the quality of the pedestrian and street environment, promoting simplified streetscapes and ensuring access for all.

WC POL 3 To design pedestrian and cycling infrastructure in accordance with the principles, approaches and standards set out in the National Cycle Manual, the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets and international best practice.

WC POL 4 To require that consideration be given to sustainable transport movement at the earliest design stage of development proposals, to ensure accessibility by all modes

of transport and all sections of society and promote the provision of parking space for bicycles in development schemes.

WC POL 5 To work with the National Trails Office, Coillte, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the Department of Transport and other relevant stakeholders, to improve on the existing level of infrastructure and facilities for walking and cycling in Co. Leitrim.

WC POL 6 To require adequate filtered permeability solutions in relation to large-scale residential, commercial or mixed-use development proposals (both in terms of new development and retrofitting into existing built-up areas) to facilitate active travel, accessibility and connectivity in settlements.

Objectives

WC OBJ 1 To support the establishment of a network of interlinked cycle ways and walkways in the county and linking with the adjoining counties, having regard to best practice standards including the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets and the NTA Cycle Manual or any amending/superseding national guidance or manuals.

WC OBJ 2 To enhance placemaking and improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity to existing train stations (Carrick-on-Shannon and Cortober) and improve bus stops/future transport interchanges.

WC OBJ 3 To improve the streetscape environment for pedestrians, cyclists, and people with special mobility needs by providing facilities to enhance safety and convenience, including separation for pedestrian infrastructure from vehicular traffic.

WC OBJ 4 To investigate the feasibility of providing a '*Bike Sharing Scheme*' for Carrick-on-Shannon to facilitate and encourage modal shift.

WC OBJ 5 To identify and implement a programme of footpath extensions in towns and villages to ensure that all multiple housing developments are connected to their respective urban centres to promote walking as a sustainable mode of transport. The implementation of this programme is dependent on funding programmes being identified.

WC OBJ 6 To work with the Active Travel Initiative of the National Transport Authority to deliver a network of cycle routes in towns in order to encourage cycling as an everyday mode choice, in particular to provide cycling infrastructure near schools.

8.9 Blueways and Greenways

The Council recognises the numerous benefits arising from the further development of Blueways and Greenways in Leitrim, as a tourism product with significant potential to attract internal and overseas visitors, for local communities in terms of economic benefits, and for all users as an amenity for physical activity and a contributor to health and wellbeing. Accordingly, it is Council policy to continue to expand and create an integrated network of Blueways and Greenways across the county and maximise pedestrian and cycle access to same.

Blueways are a network of multi-activity recreational trails, based on or alongside lakes, canals and rivers. They provide scenic routes into the heart of rural Co. Leitrim by walking, cycling, canoeing, kayaking or stand-up boarding. Leitrim County Council in partnership with Waterways Ireland and Fáilte Ireland, have developed a valuable Blueway product over the past number of years between Battlebridge and Drumshanbo along the Leitrim Canal including the impressive floating boardwalk section at Acres Lake and onwards to connect to the Lough Allen Hotel & Lough Allen Centre at Currachuill, Drumshanbo. More recently, work has been completed on sections of the Ballinamore to Ballyconnell Canal between Leitrim Village and Kilclare along the former towpath. Carrick-on-Shannon and Drumshanbo form part of the Shannon Blueway with Leitrim Village and Ballinamore forming part of the Shannon Erne Blueway. The Council is currently undertaking environmental feasibility studies of options to link Carrick-on-Shannon to Leitrim Village and Battlebridge by way of dedicated Blueway. This project is also included in the approved Shannon Master Plan within the Hidden Heartlands area.

Greenways are off-road routes for walkers, cyclists and other forms of non-motorised transport which are often created along abandoned rail lines. There are proposals to develop the former Sligo Leitrim Northern Counties Railway (SLNCR) between Collooney and Enniskillen (through Dromahair, Manorhamilton and Glenfarne) and the Cavan and Leitrim rail line between Dromod and Belturbet (through Mohill, Fenagh, Ballinamore and Garradice) as greenways. Demonstration stretches have been developed along the SLNCR at Dromahair, Manorhamilton and Glenfarne whilst one is under construction linking Ballinamore with Corgar Lake on the former Cavan and Leitrim rail line. It is planned to extent the latter demonstration stretch onwards to Aughawillan.

Leitrim County Council received confirmation of funding from the Department of Transport to bring the SLNCR Greenway project through the planning process, detailed design and get the project ready for construction. This project requires the co-operation of four Local Authorities – Sligo, Leitrim and Cavan County Councils along with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.

The Cavan Leitrim Greenway project requires the co-operation of Cavan County Council and a preliminary feasibility study including screening for Environmental Impact Assessment and Appropriate Assessment has been completed. The Council will continue to work with Cavan County Council and local rail to trail groups to bring this project to planning and design stage.

Policies

BG POL 1 To continue to support the develop an integrated and connected network of sustainable greenways, blueways and green routes within Co. Leitrim and into adjoining counties.

BG POL 2 To support the implementation of the strategy for Greenway Development in Ireland - "*Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways*" in relation to the development and extension of greenways throughout the county.

BG POL 3 To progress the expansion of the National Cycle Network.

BG POL 4 To protect established Greenways and Blueways within the county against inappropriate new vehicular accesses and increased traffic movements.

BG POL 5 To engage in the Compulsory Purchase Order process, when required, to facilitate the timely delivery of the Greenway and Blueway programme within the county.

Objectives

BG OBJ 1 To facilitate and lead in the delivery and completion of the Sligo Leitrim Northern Counties Railway Greenway along/adjoining the former Sligo Leitrim Northern Counties Railway (SLNCR) between Collooney, Co. Sligo and Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh in co-operation with Sligo and Cavan County Councils and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council subject to obtaining the necessary planning consent and only where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment, including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network. All proposed developments shall be in accordance with the Birds and Habitats Directives, Water Framework Directive and all other relevant EU Directives.

BG OBJ 2 To seek to advance the design and obtaining necessary planning consent to construct a Greenway along/adjoining the former Cavan & Leitrim Rail line between Dromod and Belturbet, Co. Cavan in co-operation with Cavan County Council. The required planning consent will require the demonstration that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment, including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network. All proposed developments shall be in accordance with the Birds and Habitats Directives, Water Framework Directive and all other relevant EU Directives.

BG OBJ 3 To develop, in conjunction with the Local Rail to Trail Group and local communities, demonstration stretches along/adjoining the former Cavan & Leitrim Rail line subject to undertaking the necessary environmental assessment, obtaining the necessary planning consents and obtaining the legal agreement of affected landowners.

BG OBJ 4 To deliver a Blueway linking Carrick-on-Shannon to Leitrim Village and onwards to Battlebridge subject to obtaining the necessary planning consent and only where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment, including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network. All proposed developments shall be in accordance with the Birds and Habitats Directives, Water Framework Directive and all other relevant EU Directives.

BG OBJ 5 To complete the Blueway from Kilclare to Ballinamore subject to obtaining the necessary planning consent and only where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment, including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network. All proposed developments shall be in accordance with the Birds and Habitats Directives, Water Framework Directive and all other relevant EU Directives.

BG OBJ 6 To promote Co. Leitrim as an unsurpassed walking destination and support the further development of walking trails in the county, augmenting the visitor experience through the provision of enabling infrastructure and visitor interpretation along trails, including storyboards, artworks and other media, to create a greater sense of place, connecting and immersing visitors in our local heritage and stories.

BG OBJ 7 To support the provision of services for visitors using walking and cycling trails which are appropriate to the location and activity, including bike rental and service points, picnic benches at scenic locations, public toilets, and other ancillary services in remote areas.

BG OBJ 8 To promote the principles of '*Leave no Trace*' in all trail information panels, promotional materials and events and use all statutory procedures to deter negative environmental impact resulting from use of our trails and outdoor recreation amenities.

BG OBJ 9 To encourage access to forestry and woodlands, including private forestry, in co-operation with key stakeholders for walking routes, bridle paths, mountain biking, nature walks, orienteering, hiking, recreational areas and other similar facilities and to retain existing public rights of ways through forest lands where such rights of way exist.

BG OBJ 10 To maximise both pedestrian and cycle connectivity to the network of existing greenways and blueways within the county.

BG OBJ 11 To work with the Active Travel Initiative of the National Transport Authority and other stakeholders such as Fáilte Ireland and Waterways to develop a co-ordinated approach to the selection, delivery and servicing of future greenways, blueways and trails throughout the county.

BG OBJ 12 To support and facilitate the development of a greenway linking Spencer Harbour to Drumkeeran subject to obtaining the necessary planning consent and where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment, including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network. All proposed developments shall be in accordance with the Birds and Habitats Directives, Water Framework Directive and all other relevant EU Directives.

8.10 Public Transport

The Council acknowledges the importance of the provision of high-quality public transport services and will facilitate transport service providers where possible to expand and improve in the quality of services on offer. Future growth, both in terms of employment and residential development, must be developed on the basis of sustainable modes of transport to the maximum degree practicable.

The south of the county, including the Key Town of Carrick-on-Shannon, is well served by both rail and bus, being located on the Dublin – Sligo national transport route. Consideration should be given to the development of integrated transport hubs within the county and the promotion of public transport connectivity between designated towns and villages. It is considered that '*Connecting Ireland*' has significant potential to dramatically improve the public transport offer within and from the county and will be supported in this Plan. The Council supports the continuation and expansion of public transport services and will support the provision of additional public transport by both public and private sector operators.

It is worth noting the challenges that face Co. Leitrim in that that the county has a very dispersed settlement pattern and the lowest population density of any county (20 persons per sq. km, compared to the national average of 70 persons per sq. km). Furthermore, the lack of viable alternative sustainable modes of transport is also a significant contributing factor for the high usage of private cars in the county. Just over 1% of commuters in Leitrim use public transport, compared to the national average of 9.3%. Achieving sustainable mobility will require working with key stakeholders, including the National Transport Authority, to achieve it through a suite of actions/funding programmes.

8.10.1 Rail

Carrick-on-Shannon is served by the Dublin/Sligo rail line with the station located in the adjoining village of Cortober. Dromod is also served by this line with the extent of car parking available having been extended significantly over the past couple of years. Trains operate on the route several times daily. Currently there are no other train stations operating within the county as this is the only active rail line.

Iarnród Éireann have produced their strategic policy document entitled "*Iarnród Éireann Strategy 2027"*. The strategy outlines how Iarnród Éireann will play a key role supporting economic recovery post the COVID-19 pandemic and in delivering high capacity sustainable public transport solutions to cater for the increase in travel resulting from the anticipated population and employment growth nationally. It also outlines how they will meet the demanding targets for reductions in harmful emissions and in delivering the National Transport Authority's transport strategy objectives. This new Strategy includes developments for commuter, regional and Intercity rail. The Dublin – Sligo route will see increases in services to two-hourly all day with hourly peak services along part of the line, from Longford to Dublin. The strategy envisages a reconfiguration of Sligo Town station and passing loop at Ballymote which will benefit Co. Leitrim in terms of reliability and service levels and double tracking along the Maynooth/Mullingar section of the line. It is envisaged that train sizes will increase on the Sligo line during this period and increased frequency between Longford & Dublin will create further capacity on trains for passengers west of Longford.

The improvements to the infrastructure and frequency of trains on the Dublin-Sligo route will be an important contributory element to achieving use of sustainable alternative transport modes in Co. Leitrim.

8.10.2 Bus

The development of a quality bus system as an alternative to private car use is an essential element of an integrated and balanced land use transport system. Carrick-on-Shannon is well serviced by Bus Éireann expressway services being located on the Sligo to Dublin national route which includes connecting to Dublin airport. Manorhamilton is located on the Sligo to Enniskillen expressway service with 7 no. services in each direction daily. There is a need for increased bus services to improve connectivity between the main centres in the county and adjoining regional centres. There are also private bus routes which serve Sligo on a daily basis (commuters and students) in addition to weekend services facilitating students to Athlone, Galway and Limerick third level educational facilities.

8.10.3 Public Transport in Rural Areas

The availability of public rural transport plays a major role in combatting rural isolation and acts as a catalyst in creating models of partnership, at all levels, where key sectors actively engage in transport provision, to ensure equality of access for all.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) provides rural transport services through the Local Link Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018-2022. The key priorities of this programme continue to be directed at addressing rural social exclusion and the integration of rural transport services with other public transport services. The services provided under the programme are therefore intended to fulfil a primarily social function, in meeting the needs of communities in towns, villages and rural areas. The main settlements in the county are serviced by both public and private bus operators. The Local Link currently operates seven routes in Co. Leitrim. These routes are widespread throughout the county and broadly operate between four and seven times a day on the route six days a week. The Manorhamilton to Carrick-on-Shannon route operates three days per week. A new route was announced in March 2021 connecting Ballinamore and Sligo. All of Co. Leitrim is in the final stages of a full new coverage transport roll out of Local Link services.

The further development of Local Link and other similar public transport services is essential to provide a modal shift to public transport in the rural parts of the county. Leitrim County Council will work with public transport providers to improve and expand the public bus services within the county and strengthen linkages to other areas outside of the county.

Policies

PT POL 1 To support the continued integration of national, regional and local bus and rail services to ensure the delivery of a fully integrated public transport service within Co. Leitrim.

PT POL 2 To promote the use of and facilitate improvements to existing public transport services to support initiatives designed to improve bus/coach/rail interchange facilities.

PT POL 3 To continue to work with the relevant transport providers, agencies and stakeholders to facilitate the integration of active travel (walking and cycling) with public transport, thereby making it easier for people to access and use the public transport system.

PT POL 4 To support Iarnród Éireann in the implementation of "*Iarnród Éireann Strategy 2027"* in delivering high capacity sustainable public transport solutions to cater for the increase in travel resulting from the anticipated population and employment growth and in the upgrading of the existing Dublin – Sligo route and frequency/capacity of service.

PT POL 5 To support the operation of existing bus services and facilitate the provision of improved facilities for bus users in towns and villages, including the provision, in collaboration with the relevant agencies, of set down areas for coaches and bus shelters for passengers.

PT POL 6 To work with the NTA and Bus Éireann to make all existing public transport services throughout the county more accessible for wheelchair users and those with disabilities.

PT POL 7 To support and encourage public transport providers and rural community transport initiatives to enhance the provision of public transportation services linking the rural villages to the main towns within Co. Leitrim.

PT POL 8 To support the National Transport Authority in the provision of and expansion of Local Link through encouraging further integration with other public transport services; ensuring fully accessible vehicles operate on all services; increasing patronage among children and young people; encouraging innovation in the service as a means of reducing social isolation and as a viable long-term sustainable public transport option.

PT POL 9 To ensure new development areas and employment land-uses are permeable for walking and cycling and are laid out in such a way as to facilitate the operation of public transport by residents and employees***.***

Objectives

PT OBJ 1 To provide bus priority measures on existing and planned road infrastructure, where appropriate, in collaboration with the National Transport Authority, Bus Éireann and Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

PT OBJ 2 To deliver, in conjunction with the NTA and the Department of Transport, a Public Transportation Hub in Carrick-on-Shannon to accommodate national, regional and local bus services.

PT OBJ 3 To co-operate with the NTA and other relevant agencies in their reviews of the network of bus routes in Co. Leitrim through the '*Connecting Ireland Programme*', and to support and encourage public transport operators to provide improved bus services in, and through, the county.

PT OBJ 4 To seek the expansion and improvement of car parking, taxi and bus set down facilities at Carrick-on-Shannon train station located in Cortober as part of the preparation of the joint Local Area Plan for Carrick-on-Shannon/Cortober in conjunction with Roscommon County Council.

PT OBJ 5 To provide suitable infrastructure on public transport corridors to improve safety and efficiency for public transport users.

8.10.4 Electric Vehicles

Electric Vehicles (EV) refer to both Battery Electric Vehicles (BEV) and Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEV). Benefits of electric vehicles include the emission of zero tailpipe greenhouse gas emissions thereby helping to improve air quality in our towns and villages, as well as reducing noise pollution. Ireland's target was to achieve 10% electric vehicle usage by 2020. There are a limited number of charging points around the county and this Plan promotes the further installation and expansion of charging points for these vehicles. In 2021, there are only 2 public electric charging points registered in Co. Leitrim located in Carrick-on-Shannon (St. Georges Terrace) and at Mohill (Hyde Street). There are also 2 charging points at Lunneys, Cortober. There is also private electric charging point at The Bush Hotel, Carrick-on-Shannon and at Lough Rynn Hotel, Mohill.

The Council will continue to support and facilitate the development of infrastructure to increase the usage of electric vehicles by the inclusion of dedicated fully functional Electrical Vehicle (EV) charging points.

Policies

EV POL 1 To facilitate the provision of electricity charging infrastructure for electric vehicles at appropriate locations.

EV POL 2 To support the Government's Electric Transport Programme to increase the usage of Electric Vehicles with support facilities, through a roll-out of additional electric charging points in collaboration with relevant agencies at appropriate locations. (See also **ST POL 2** in Chapter 12 - Climate Action and Renewable Energy in this regard)

EV POL 3 To support the provision of e-bike chargers at appropriate locations and as part of public realm enhancement schemes at appropriate locations, subject to the availability of funding.

8.10.5 Car Parking

The management of parking in the county is important to its efficient economic development. Providing for additional parking in towns encourages further use of private cars and makes public

transport a less attractive or viable option. Access to the town centre is essential for the successful operation of business. There is a balance to be achieved between facilitating necessary parking in the short term, and the overall objective in the longer term of having improved public transport as a viable alternative and as that becomes available, of discouraging use of private cars. Car parking standards will also be reviewed in town centres to reflect the proposed modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable forms of transport, such as public transport, cycling and walking where practicable.

Policies

CP POL 1 To manage on-street and off-street car parking to accommodate longer term parking in less convenient and under utilised off street car parks.

CP POL 2 To promote, over time, the reduction in car parking standards in suitable town centre locations, commencing in Carrick-on-Shannon, to encourage a modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable forms of transport, such as public transport, cycling and walking.

CP POL 3 To ensure that planning applications for surface car parking/Local Authority own developments are accompanied by adequate landscaping proposals to soften the hard landscape and promote biodiversity.

CP POL 4 To promote the provision of Age Friendly parking arrangements and further provide for the improvement of parking arrangements for people with disabilities.

CP POL 5 To require provision of parking standards in accordance with the standards set out in Chapter 13: *Development Management Standards* for all developments.

Objectives

CP OBJ 1 To implement a programme of traffic and parking management measures in towns and villages throughout the county, as resources permit.

CP OBJ 2 To review the need for additional off-street car parks in Towns and Key Villages and, if required, to acquire land to develop further car parks availing of available national funding opportunities.

8.10.6 Bicycle Parking

Cycling is becoming increasingly recognised for its contribution to a sustainable and healthy form of transport for work, education and leisure trips within and around the county. Provision of secure cycle parking facilities is essential for supporting the promotion and development of cycling as a more sustainable mode of transport. The provision of convenient and secure high quality cycle parking facilities at trip origins and destinations is a key factor in influencing modal choice and should be appropriately designed into the urban realm and new developments to ensure that adequate facilities are provided. A lack of appropriate cycle parking facilities is often cited as a barrier to cycling and cycle ownership and could be a constraint on the future growth of cycling. The provision of high quality cycle parking should be regarded as an integral part of any new development.

Policies

BP POL 1 To ensure the provision of appropriate secure, safe, convenient and accessible bicycle parking facilities as part of any new developments in towns and villages to encourage modal shift away from private cars to more sustainable modes of transport.

BP POL 2 To promote walking, cycling and public transport by maximising the number of people living within walking and cycling distance of town/village centres, public transport services (where available) and other services at the local level such as schools.

BP POL 3 To encourage and promote cycling through the provision of segregated cycle lanes and paths and improved crossings.

BP POL 4 To promote on site changing and shower facilities for cyclists in developments categorised as people intensive such as office and manufacturing facilities, educational facilities, commercial developments, etc.

BP POL 5 To ensure the provision of appropriate secure, safe, covered, lit, convenient and accessible long-stay bicycle parking facilities as part of any new developments such as places of employment or schools to encourage modal shift away from private cars to more sustainable modes of transport.

8.11 Roads

The Council acknowledges the importance of Co. Leitrim's strategic road infrastructure in providing intra and inter county movement of goods and services. Whilst the Plan supports the promotion of sustainable transport, it is recognised that the roads infrastructure maintains a central position in the overall transportation network.

A modern, efficient and safe road network is vital for the future development of Co. Leitrim. The existing public road network in Co. Leitrim extends to approximately 2,150 km in length, with over 56km of National Primary roads traversing the county. Both regional and local roads provide vital links between the towns and villages to retail, service and employment centres throughout the county and to adjoining counties. Table 8.3 overleaf provides a summary of the existing road classes and lengths in Co. Leitrim.

Significant investment and improvements in the existing road infrastructure have been made by the Local Authority in terms of upgrades, realignments, maintenance, traffic management measures, traffic calming measures and road safety measures, and it is important to protect and maintain the carrying capacity of this road network in the future as deemed necessary and as resources allow.

Table 8.3: Co. Leitrim Road Classes and Lengths

Road Class	Length (km)
National Primary Road	56
National Secondary Road	0
Regional Road	332
Local Road	1,769
Total	2,157

The policy framework pursued within this Plan will support and encourage sustainable and compact forms of development which will have minimal impact on the carrying capacity, efficiency and safety of the road network.

8.11.1 National Roads

The national road network caters for the efficient and safe movement of long-distance traffic. There are three National Primary Roads in Co. Leitrim:

- N4 (connecting Dublin to Sligo)
- N15 (connecting Sligo to Letterkenny)
- N16 (connecting Sligo to Enniskillen)

The national road network in the county provides an essential means of access from the county to Dublin and other regional centres of scale including Sligo and Enniskillen.

8.11.2 National Road Improvement Projects

Leitrim County Council adopted an ambitious Capital Programme for the period 2020-2025 which includes up to the first half of the Plan period. The Council, with the support of Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), will seek to progress and develop the following schemes within Co. Leitrim:

Table 8.4: National Road Projects – Leitrim Capital Programme 2020-2025

Project	Estimated Cost (€)	Expected Completion
N15 Pavement Strengthening	2,040,000	2021
N16 Drummahan Upgrade Scheme	4,930,000	2021
N16 Pavement Strengthening	7,115,000	2022-2025
N16 Munakill Upgrade	12,100,000	2023-2025
N16 Future Upgrade	6,000,000	2023-2025
N4 Carrick-on-Shannon to Dromod Project	115,500,000[26]	Planning Consent & CPO by 2024
N4 Pavement Strengthening	2,414,000	Completed in 2020
Total	**150,099,000**	

8.11.2.1 N4 Carrick-on-Shannon to Dromod Project

The N4 is particularly critical in terms of wider connectivity, linking the Regional Growth Centres of Sligo to Dublin in addition to the benefit of enhanced regional and national connectivity to the Key Town of Carrick-on-Shannon. The RSES, consistent with National Development Plan investment commitments, seeks to progress the N4 Carrick-on-Shannon to Dromod scheme through pre-appraisal and early planning and shall thereafter proceed to construction and be delivered to an appropriate level of service within the lifetime of the RSES. The development of a transportation solution to the

[26] The TII indicate that the cost of this scheme is between €200 to €250 million in their Major Roads Projects Active List published in March 2021.

existing congestion experienced in Carrick-on-Shannon on the national and regional road network is a critical element in the Transportation Strategy being pursued by this Council. A solution is needed to address transportation issues which include congestion on the main routes approaching and, within the town centre. This will be further developed in a Local Transport Plan to be prepared in tandem with the Carrick-on-Shannon/Cortober Local Area Plan which shall seek to maximise the consideration of opportunities to improve public transportation options and improved non motorised modal shift.

Details on the Preferred Transport Solution were announced in May 2022 comprising of the following components: (1) Active Travel Component (2) Public Transport Component (3) Demand Management Measures and (4) a Road Component.

The non-road components advocate improvements to the walking and cycling infrastructure within Carrick-on-Shannon and Cortober, in addition to enhancements to local bus services and specific interventions to control demand and reduce trips, all of which would support an increase in sustainable trip making. This, in turn, could lead to a reduction in traffic levels and congestion in the town.

The road component of the Preferred Transport Solution includes the development of a new urban street in Carrick-on-Shannon, linking the Castlecara Road just south of St. Mary's GAA club to the Leitrim Road (R280) north of Lis Cara housing development, in addition to a Preferred Option Corridor in which the existing road infrastructure can be upgraded or new infrastructure can be built. The corridor deviates from the existing N4 to the west of Cortober, Co. Roscommon where it progresses off-line south of the existing N4, north of the Dublin-Sligo railway line. The corridor progresses east, crossing the R368 and subsequently crossing the River Shannon in the townland of Cordrehid on the Cortober side of the River Shannon over to the townland of Attirory on the Carrick-on-Shannon side of the River Shannon. The corridor joins the existing N4 again in the townland of Lisseeghan. The corridor then progresses eastwards along the line of the existing N4 and ceases in the townland of Faulties, as announced in May 2022.

8.11.2.2 N16 National Primary Road

The existing N16 national primary road is deficient in terms of alignment and surface condition, resulting in slow journey times and hazardous traffic conditions. On a strategic level, the RSES acknowledges the importance to develop a cross-border core east-west route and this is best served through a Sligo - Enniskillen – Dundalk corridor. RPO 6.8 of the RSES provides, inter alia, the delivery of a number of projects including the N16 from Sligo to Blacklion which shall be pursued, in consultation with and subject to the agreement of TII, through pre-appraisal, early planning and to construction as priority projects to be delivered to an appropriate level of service in the medium-term. Whilst it would not be expected that this would be realised within the life of this Plan, the Council are fully supportive of this policy.

8.11.2.3 Route Reservations

The Council will support the implementation of the TII projects as outlined above and will preserve free from development proposed road realignment/improvement lines and associated corridors where such development would prejudice the implementation of Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) or County Council plans.

8.11.2.4 Access to National Roads

National policy in relation to access to national roads is set out in the *Spatial Planning and National Road Guidelines* (2012) and is adhered to in this Plan. The Guidelines state (Section 2.5) that "*The*

policy of the Planning Authority will be to avoid the creation of any additional access point from new development or the generation of increased traffic from existing accesses to national roads to which speed limits greater than 60kmh apply. This provision applies to all categories of development, including individual houses in rural areas, regardless of the housing circumstances of the applicant".

In order to safeguard the carrying capacity and safety of these roads, access for residential development will be restricted onto National Primary Roads. Regard shall be had to the requirement in the Spatial Planning and National Roads Planning Guidelines 2012, to preserve the carrying capacity of these routes and safeguard their strategic role.

8.11.2.5 Exceptional Circumstances

Government policy regarding access onto national roads as provided for in the "*Spatial Planning & National Roads Guidelines*" seeks to avoid the creation of any additional access point from new development/intensification of traffic from existing entrances onto national roads outside the 60 kph speed limit. Section 2.6 of the guidelines provides for exceptional circumstances to the above general policy provision. Planning Authorities may identify stretches of national roads where a less restrictive approach may be applied as part of the Development Plan process. The guidelines provide that a less restrictive approach may be adopted in the case of developments of national and regional strategic importance which by their nature are most appropriately located outside urban areas, and where the locations concerned have specific characteristics that make them particularly suitable for the developments proposed.

It is not the intention of the Planning Authority to identify any such locations in the Plan.

8.11.3 Strategic Links

In addition to the 3 National Primary Roads referred to Section 8.11.1, the R280 Regional Road is also considered a '*Strategic Link*' shown on the Core Strategy Map in Chapter 2. The R280 Regional Road runs along the backbone of the county, linking the N4, the N15 and the N16 National Primary Routes. This road connects Carrick-on-Shannon to Manorhamilton and onwards to the N15 at the Bundoran/Ballyshannon Bypass and it is a vital link for the north of the county to prosper. The Council will seek additional funding to prioritise this road for upgrading potentially to National Secondary standard and status.

8.11.4 Regional Roads

Regional roads provide important strategic linkages within the county and to the national road network and other counties. In order to protect the investment in these roads and to maintain their strategic function, it will be necessary to exercise control over new development requiring access to these roads by restricting new access points to a minimum in the interests of road safety for all users.

8.11.4.1 Strategic Regional Roads

In addition to the R280, the following roads are considered of strategic importance:

- R201 regional road (N4 at Annaduff via Carrigallen to the Leitrim – Cavan county boundary)
- R202 regional road (Dromod - Enniskillen)
- R199 regional road (Ballinamore – near Killeshandra, Co. Cavan)

These regional roads are likely to grow in significance as the economies and societies on both sides of the border are more closely integrated. The Council supports the upgrading of these routes.

Investment in these roads will be prioritised and the creation of new access points onto these routes will be strictly controlled, in line with the policies currently set for national routes.

Access to Regional Roads

The consideration of new individual housing proposals affecting all Regional Roads shall have regard to the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines (2005) as follows:

- In site selection, avoid the creation of unnecessary new accesses, where access can be provided off a nearby local road serving the same landholding.
- Ensure that necessary new entrances provide effective visibility for both users of the entrance and users of the public roads so that opportunities for conflicting movements are avoided, taking account of all relevant considerations such as traffic levels, typical vehicle speeds, plans for realignment, etc.
- Avoid the premature obsolescence of regional roads through creating excessive levels of individual entrances.

8.11.5 Local Roads

Local roads serve an important economic role and have a valuable social and community function, as they are often the sole means of access for local economic activity. In its programme of spending over the Plan period, the Council will prioritise its spending on local roads which are deficient according to the strategic benefits and improved traffic and pedestrian safety which will result. The Council will have regard to the transportation needs of development generally, particularly that associated with agribusiness, tourism and the need to promote rural development and diversification in the prioritising of its spending.

Access to Local Roads

For new developments, access onto the road network is a key issue, particularly in rural areas. The intensification of use of an existing access is normally preferable to the creation of a new access onto a rural road. Where new entrances are necessary, the relevant road design standards will be applied (TII Publications Rural Road Link Design in rural situations and Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets 2019 in urban situations within the 50/60 kph zone). Such road standards are required to guarantee the safety of the public in the county and protect the carrying capacity of the road network.

Policies

TRAN POL 1 To maintain and protect the safety, capacity and efficiency of national roads and associated junctions in accordance with the Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DECLG, 2012).

TRAN POL 2 To protect the national road network from new access points and the intensification of existing accesses onto or adjacent to national roads in accordance with the requirements of Section 2.5 of Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DECLG,2012) to maintain traffic capacity, minimise traffic hazard and protect and maximise public investment in such roads.

TRAN POL 3 To require all applications for significant development proposals to be accompanied by a Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA) and Road Safety Audit (RSA), carried out by suitably competent persons, in accordance with the TII's Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines.

TRAN POL 4 To restrict the creation of new accesses onto Regional Roads, particularly the R280 and identified Regionally Important Roads (R199, R201 & R202) where access to a lower category road is available.

TRAN POL 5 To avoid the creation of any additional access point from new development/intensification of traffic from existing entrance onto national roads outside the 60kph speed limit.

Objectives

TRAN OBJ 1 To support and provide for improvements to the national road network, in conjunction with Transport Infrastructure Ireland, including reserving corridors for proposed routes, free of development, so as not to compromise the implementation of future road schemes.

TRAN OBJ 2 To preserve a corridor to enable design options for national road improvements and upgrade projects to be advanced following the route selection process having been completed and to preserve such routes when identified free from development which would prejudice their construction.

TRAN OBJ 3 To progress and develop, with the support and co-operation of Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), the following schemes:

i. N4 Carrick-on-Shannon to Dromod Project from Faulties townland to Drumharlow townland in Co. Roscommon (in conjunction with Roscommon County Council)
ii. N16 upgrades at Drummahan and Munakill
iii. To continue the programme of further upgrades to deficient sections of the N16 route through the county

TRAN OBJ 4 To seek to progress the design and development of a sustainable transport solution to the N16 National Primary Road through Manorhamilton in conjunction with Transportation Infrastructure Ireland.

TRAN OBJ 5 To seek additional funding to upgrade substantial sections the R280 Regional Road identified in this Development Plan as being a Strategic Link and to pursue to upgrade the status of the road to National Secondary standard and status.

TRAN OBJ 6 To seek additional funding to upgrade substantial sections of the R199, R202 and R202 Regional Roads identified in this Development Plan as being Regionally Important Roads.

TRAN OBJ 7 To construct a new bridge over the River Shannon to replace the now deficient Hartley Bridge (in conjunction with Roscommon County Council) on the L3400 Local Road linking Carrick-on-Shannon to Cootehall.

TRAN OBJ 8 To construct a new bridge over the Drowes River to replace the now deficient Lennox Bridge (in conjunction with Donegal County Council) on the R280 Regional Road linking Kinlough to Bundoran.

TRAN OBJ 9 To seek to progress the design of individual link roads within towns subject to funding being available, to progress the link roads through the planning consent process, land acquisition and construction.

TRAN OBJ 10 To complete the Inner Relief Road at Ballinamore to include bridge widening by progressing the scheme through design and funding subject to funding being identified.

TRAN OBJ 11 To seek to progress the design and construction of a new pedestrian bridge over the River Shannon at Roosky on the R371 in conjunction with Roscommon County Council.

TRAN OBJ 12 To continue the programme of pavement improvement and maintenance, safety measures, signage and markings and winter maintenance on roads within the county in accordance with the agreed annual Roads Programmes.

TRAN OBJ 13 To co-operate with Roscommon County Council and other relevant stakeholders to prepare a Local Transport Plan for Carrick-on-Shannon/Cortober ensuring that this process is guided by the NTA/TII document '*Area Based Transport Assessment*' to the extent required for a combined urban centre of this scale.

TRAN OBJ 14 Provide cycle routes/lanes around Co. Leitrim under smarter travel/active travel measures.

9 INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY

9.1 Introduction

The strategic aim of this chapter is

> *"to identify the required physical infrastructure to be provided to facilitate the expected growth in households and employment levels outlined in the Core Strategy whilst ensuring that the receiving environment is protected to the maximum extent possible."*

The achievement of this strategic aim includes the provision and maintenance of the necessary water, wastewater, surface water and flood alleviation infrastructure throughout the county provided by the Local Authority, in conjunction with the Office of Public Works and by Irish Water. In addition, the County Development Plan provides the supporting policy framework to facilitate the provision of high-quality information communication technology to include, broadband, telecommunication information and an electricity network infrastructure to support and enhance the infrastructure and energy capacity of the county.

9.2 Water Infrastructure

The provision of an adequate infrastructure and supply of water and wastewater facilities is critical to facilitate and sustain the growth of the county for the period of this Plan and beyond. In 2014, Irish Water became the regulatory body for water in Ireland. Irish Water is responsible for the provision and operation of public water supply, wastewater collection and treatment services nationally, including strategic planning, policy development and capital investment planning and delivery. It is an objective of Irish Water to provide both drinking water and wastewater capacity to facilitate growth in accordance with Core Strategies at county level, and with national and regional planning policies and objectives (subject to the constraints of the Irish Water Capital Investment Programme). Leitrim County Council retains its role in facilitating the provision of adequate water services, in conjunction with Irish Water, at a local level, through Service Level Agreements (SLAs). Leitrim County Council is responsible for the implementation of the Rural Water Programme (including group schemes, private regulated water supplies and well grants), surface water drainage, flooding and monitoring of surface water quality. The Council also remains the designated Water Authority for the assessment and approval of individual domestic on-site wastewater treatment systems in the county.

The delivery, integration and implementation of water and wastewater projects and infrastructural improvements are the responsibility of Irish Water. Leitrim County Council will continue to work closely with Irish Water to ensure that there are adequate water and wastewater facilities in the county and to ensure that the projected growth in housing and economic development is facilitated through the provision of the required water services infrastructure.

There has been investment in water and wastewater infrastructure in Co. Leitrim over the past 15 years which has been central in facilitating the extensive residential and economic development experienced during that period assisted through the Upper Shannon Rural Renewal Scheme. As a result of this substantial investment, there remains capacity available in most centres throughout the county to facilitate the continued, planned development and growth of the county.

In addition to aligning with housing targets contained in the Core Strategy, the environmental appropriateness of further development, having regard to any constraints in water services

infrastructure, will be assessed by the Council in conjunction with Irish Water, in the assessment of planning proposals.

9.3 Water Supply

In terms of water supply, an adequate, potable and clean supply of water is essential. Irish Water is responsible for providing and maintaining adequate public water supply infrastructure. There are also numerous group schemes operating in the county.

In areas that are unserviced by either a public water supply or a group water scheme, water supply comprises mainly of wells for single dwellings. In the interest of safeguarding public health, the Council restricts the sinking of private wells in areas where a public water supply is available.

In general, there is sufficient water supply treatment capacity in the county to meet the needs of the target population identified in the Core Strategy. The public water supply in Leitrim is split into three Water Resource Zones (WRZs), the South Leitrim Regional Water Supply Scheme, the North Leitrim Regional Water Supply Scheme and the Kinlough Tullaghan Water Supply Scheme.

Irish Water is preparing for the future by developing the National Water Resources Plan (NWRP). The strategic plan for water services will outline how we move towards a sustainable, secure and reliable public drinking water supply over the next 25 years, whilst safeguarding our environment. The NWRP will outline how Irish Water intends to maintain the balance between our supply from water sources and demand for drinking water over the short, medium and long-term. This will allow preparation for the future and ensure the provision of sufficient safe, clean drinking water to facilitate the social and economic growth of our country.

A three-pillar approach will be used in the NWRP:

1. lose less - leakage reduction and network efficiency
2. use less - water conservation measures
3. supply smarter - sustainable supplies

Following public consultation, the NWRP Framework Plan was adopted in Spring 2021. The next stage of the NWRP is now underway which will involve the development of four regional water resources plans which will identify plan-level approaches to address the identified need in a sustainable manner.

The South Leitrim Regional Water Supply Scheme (SLRWSS) serves Carrick-on-Shannon, Drumshanbo, Mohill, Ballinamore, Leitrim Village, Dromod, Carrigallen, Cloone. Newtowngore, Rooskey, Drumsna and Jamestown. Ongoing monitoring of the Carrick-on-Shannon Water Treatment Plant (WTP) which serves the SLRWSS is required over the initial period of the Plan. As part of the National Water Resource Plan, it has been assessed that the SLRWSS, which supplies the key town of Carrick-on-Shannon, may require further investigative studies or interventions to facilitate significant new connections to the network. It is anticipated that ongoing and planned minor upgrade works, as well as leakage reduction activities, will provide capacity to accommodate growth in the short term. However, depending on the impact of these measures, a further upgrade at Carrick-on-Shannon water treatment plant may be required in order to accommodate the targeted growth in Carrick-on-Shannon and environs over the full plan period. It is envisaged that this would be undertaken in the 2025-2029 Investment Plan period, subject to funding approval.

The North Leitrim Regional Water Supply Scheme (NLRWSS) serves Manorhamilton, Dromahair and Drumkeeran. The NLRSSS was recently upgraded and is more than adequate to provide for the projected level of growth in these towns.

Finally, the Kinlough Tullaghan Water Supply Scheme is a small scheme supplying Kinlough and Tullaghan and Group Water Schemes along the coastal area of the county. This scheme has spare capacity at present of about 300m^3/day. The Kinlough Tullaghan WRZ is likely to require further investigative studies or interventions to facilitate significant new connections to the network

In relation to water networks, Irish Water and Leitrim County Council are continually progressing leakage reduction activities, mains rehabilitation activities and capital maintenance activities. Irish Water and Leitrim County Council will continue to monitor the performance of the networks to ensure that the most urgent works are prioritised as required. Mains rehabilitation works have been carried out in recent years on distribution and trunk mains through the county, including in Carrick-on-Shannon, Ballinamore, Mohill and Manorhamilton.

9.4 Waste Water

The provision of well-maintained, quality wastewater treatment infrastructure is essential to facilitate sustainable development in the county in line with the Core Strategy. Irish Water has responsibility for the provision and management of wastewater facilities serving sewered towns and villages.

Outside of the larger towns and villages most developments in Co. Leitrim are treated by individual proprietary wastewater treatment plants and septic tanks. Developments in these unserviced areas must demonstrate that the onsite wastewater treatment system can safely and adequately dispose of effluent in accordance with the relevant EPA Code of Practice.

Projects have recently been completed at Drumshanbo, Mohill and Manorhamilton Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTPs). A further upgrade of the Carrigallen WWTP is being progressed under Irish Water's Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme which is intended to provide growth capacity at WWTPs which would not otherwise be provided for in our 2020-2024 Capital Investment Plan.

In relation to wastewater networks, while there may be some localised constraints, there are no significant known bottlenecks in the wastewater networks in Leitrim's settlements. A strategic Network Development Plan will be prepared for Carrick-on-Shannon in 2021, which will help inform how zoned sites within the town can be serviced.

Policies

WI POL 1 To collaborate with Irish Water in the preparation and prioritisation of their Investment Plans to ensure that the required piped water services capacity and infrastructure in the county is provided in a timely manner to facilitate future growth in accordance with the Core Strategy.

WI POL 2 To prohibit the discharge of additional surface water to combined (foul and surface water) sewers in order to maximise the capacity of existing collection systems for foul water.

WI POL 3 To support Irish Water in the promotion of effective management of trade discharges to sewers in order to maximise the capacity of existing sewer networks and minimise detrimental impacts on wastewater treatment works.

WI POL 4 To ensure that all new developments connect to the public wastewater infrastructure, where available, and to encourage existing developments that are in close proximity to a public sewer to connect to that sewer subject to obtaining a connection agreement with Irish Water.

WI POL 5 To ensure the efficient and sustainable use and development of water resources and water services infrastructure, in order to manage and conserve water resources in a manner that supports a healthy society, economic development requirements and a cleaner environment. Water abstractions should ensure appropriate levels of environmental management and protection, including ensuring compliance with the Water Framework Directive and Habitats Directive.

WI POL 6 To ensure that adequate water services will be available to service development and that existing water services are not negatively impacted upon prior to making a decision to grant planning permission.

WI POL 7 To require all new development to provide a separate foul and surface water drainage system and to incorporate sustainable urban drainage systems where appropriate in new development and the public realm.

WI POL 8 To require developments to connect to public water supplies where available.

Objectives

WI OBJ 1 To work closely with Irish Water to identify and facilitate the timely delivery of the water services infrastructure required to realise the development objectives of this Plan.

WI OBJ 2 To pursue and support Irish Water in the upgrade of the Carrick-on-Shannon Water Treatment Plant as a project necessary to deliver the growth model outlined in the Core Strategy of this Plan.

WI OBJ 3 To protect both ground and surface water resources including taking account of the impacts of climate change, and to support Irish Water in the development and implementation of Drinking Water Safety Plans and the National Water Resources Plan.

WI OBJ 4 To promote water conservation and demand management measures among all water users, and to support Irish Water in implementing water conservation measures such as leakage reduction and network improvements.

WI OBJ 5 To ensure that adequate storm water infrastructure is provided in order to accommodate the planned levels of growth within the Plan area and to ensure that appropriate flood management measures are implemented to protect property and infrastructure.

WI OBJ 6 To support the servicing of rural villages and graigs to include the development of serviced sites as an alternative to one-off housing in the countryside.

WI OBJ 7 To facilitate the provision of appropriate sites for required water services infrastructure.

WI OBJ 8 To proactively implement the Rural Water Programme and to transfer/transition rural schemes to Irish Water where possible and appropriate.

9.5 Water Quality

Leitrim County Council has an important role to play in the protection, maintenance and improvement of water quality through the planning and management of future development. Water quality is a key issue that affects us all and its protection is the responsibility of all sections of society in conjunction with the Local Authority. The quality of water can be easily damaged and is difficult to restore, leading to often widespread and long-term effects.

The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) sets out the protection and enhancement of the country's water resources. This Directive establishes a framework for the protection of all waterbodies for the benefit of everyone, in terms of water quality and quantity. The protection of water for wildlife and their habitats is also included under the Directive.

The WFD sets out the strategic response to the threat of pollution and its four objectives are:

1. prevent further deterioration of water quality
2. restore '*good*' status of water quality and quantity for ground waters and '*good*' or '*high*' status for surface waters
3. reduce chemical pollution of water sources
4. achieve protected area objectives[27]

Management of water resources must be planned and implemented, through national River Basin Management Plans which set standards on what each EU member state must achieve. The River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) 2018-2021 was published in April 2018 and outlines the measures required to improve water quality and achieve '*good*' ecological status in water bodies (rivers, lakes, groundwaters) by 2027. The RBMP takes an integrated approach to the protection, improvement and sustainable management of the water environment. The RBMP encompasses a new approach to catchment management and includes selected waterbodies for action.

[27] Protected areas are those requiring special protection under existing national or European legislation, either to protect their surface waters or groundwater, or to conserve habitats or species that directly depend on these sites.

For the purposes of the WFD, most of Leitrim is located within the Upper Shannon WFD catchment whilst other parts of the county are within the Erne Basin WFD catchment and the Sligo Bay WFD catchment. Leitrim County Council is implementing the programme of measures to address significant pressures on water outlined in the RBMP and will for the subsequent RBMP 2022-2027. These measures include working with all relevant stakeholders to ensure appropriate measures are taken to provide adequate protection of both water quality and quantity. This work includes working with the Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO), the Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme and other agencies, stakeholders and the public to restore water quality status in Areas for Action identified in the RBMP (see Table 9.1) and protect water quality in areas outside of this network. Specific care is required for the protection for the High-Status objective waterbodies (near pristine waterbodies) in Co. Leitrim which may require additional measures to meet their specific requirements.

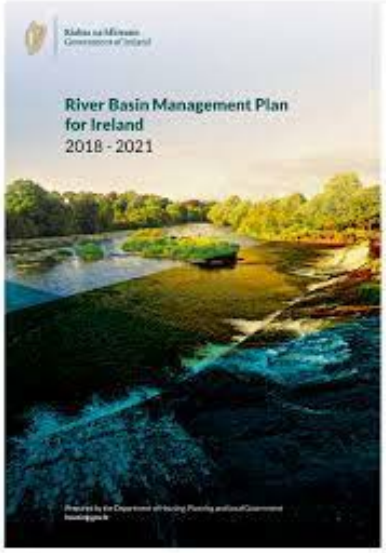


Table 9.1: Prioritised Areas for Action - River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018 – 2021

Region	Area for Action	Local Authority
Border	Lough Allen	Leitrim
	Duff	Leitrim/Sligo
	Cullies	Leitrim/Cavan
	Lough Melvin and Drowse	Leitrim
	Yellow (Ballinamore)	Leitrim
	Upper Bonet	Leitrim
	Lough Gill	Leitrim/Sligo
	Glencar Lake	Leitrim/Sligo
Western	Killukin/ Shannon	Leitrim
	Lough Rinn/Forbes	Leitrim/Longford

Source: River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021

The Council has responsibility in the areas of maintaining, improving, enhancing and protecting the ecological quality of all waters in the county. The work includes implementation of pollution control measures, licensing of effluent discharges, implementing and monitoring compliance with environmental legislation, and drawing up pollution contingency measures, development control and forward planning.

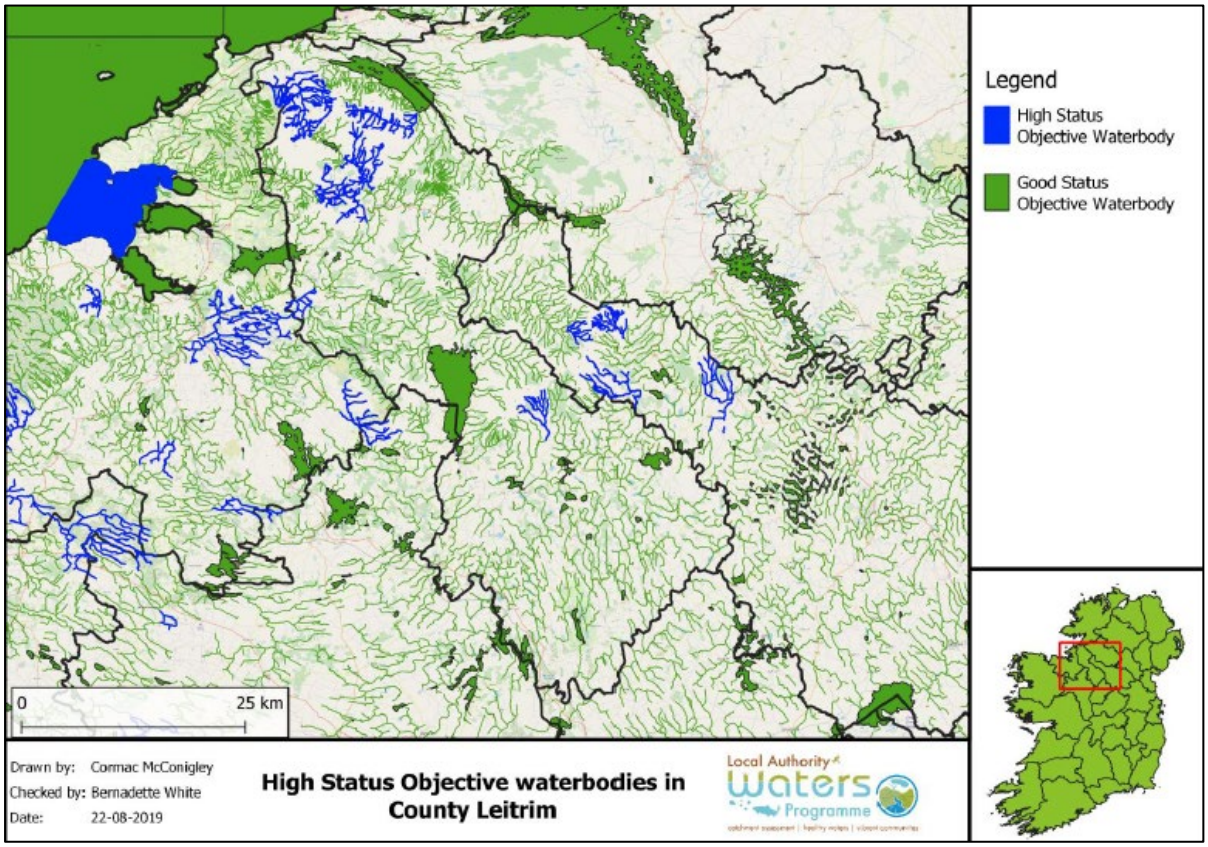
The Council supports the development of Drinking Water Protection Plans in line with the requirements of the WFD and the current and future cycles of RBMPs. In this regard, the Council supports mitigation and protection measures for all protected areas, including Drinking Water Protected Areas and associated Source Protection Plans.

The Council will continue to take appropriate measures in relation to all development in order to prevent ground and surface water pollution and will implement the RBMPs for Ireland 2018-2021 and its successors.

9.5.1 Blue Dot Programme

The RBMP 2018-2021, sets out the targets and measures Ireland will implement to achieve the objectives of the WFD. One of the key measures to address the decline in high status waterbodies is the setting up of the "*Blue Dot Catchments Programme*" and associated Steering Group to specifically target the maintenance and restoration of high status waterbodies. Many of these high status waterbodies are located in headwaters in upland areas. This programme should have multiple benefits, including awareness-building and education regarding pressures, the initiation of small-scale projects within communities and the improvement of water quality and biodiversity.

Figure 9.1: High Status Objective Waterbodies in Co. Leitrim



Co. Leitrim has a number of Blue Dot designations primarily to the north of the county.

Table 9.2: Co. Leitrim High Status Objective Waterbodies

Water Body/Sampling Period	SW 2007-2009	SW 2010-2012	SW 2010-2015	SW 2013-2018
Aghacashlaun_010 (River)	High	High	High	Good
Bonet_020 (River)	High	High	Good	High
Duff_010 (River)	High	High	Good	Good
Duff_020 (River)	High	High	Good	High
Glenaniff_010 (River)	High	High	High	Good
Shanvaus_010 (River)	High	High	Good	Good

Source: Catchments.ie

9.6 Groundwater

Groundwater is used to supply some water supply schemes and is also used by a significant number of households in the county who are dependent on private wells. A number of group schemes are also dependant on groundwater (aquifers). Groundwater also contributes to the river system.

The Geological Survey of Ireland has not yet completed a Groundwater Protection Scheme for Co. Leitrim. The overall aim of a Groundwater Protection Scheme is to preserve the quality of groundwater, for drinking water, surface water ecosystems and terrestrial ecosystems, for the benefit of present and future generations.
The groundwater protection schemes are based on information provided by a suite of maps, including:

- Groundwater protection zones, hydrogeological data;
- Aquifers;
- Vulnerability;
- Outcrop and depth to bedrock;
- Subsoils geology, and;
- Bedrock geology.

It is considered important that a Groundwater Protection Scheme is prepared within the life of this Plan to provide guidance for Leitrim County Council in decision making on the location, nature and control of developments and activities in order to protect groundwater.

The use of private wells to provide water to houses remains the responsibility of the house owner. Private wells are not regulated under the European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulations 2014 and Irish Water has no role to play. The Local Authority plays an advisory role solely on such matters.

9.6.1 Source Protection Areas

Groundwater sources, particularly for public, group scheme and industrial supplies, are of critical importance. Consequently, Source Protection Areas are delineated around groundwater sources to provide protection by placing tighter controls on activities within those areas. Source Protection Areas are divided into Inner Protection Areas and Outer Protection Areas[5].

Irish Water has adopted the World Health Organisation (WHO) Water Safety Plan approach. Drinking Water Safety Plans (DWSPs) seek to protect human health by identifying, scoring and managing risks to water quality and quantity; taking a holistic approach from source to tap. The '*source*' component of DWSPs is a key component and a priority within Irish Water, as protecting and restoring the quality of raw water is an effective and sustainable means of reducing the cost of water treatment in line with Article 7(3) of the WFD.

Development within Source Protection Areas shall be subject to stringent requirements in accordance with the Groundwater Protection Scheme and the Water Services Acts 2007 & 2012. Developments which include on-site wastewater treatment in Inner Source Protection Areas of Extreme Vulnerability shall be subject to strict Development Management requirements.

In practical terms, protection of groundwater can be achieved through the encouragement of best practice in agricultural and industrial activities and through best practice in the installation and use of wastewater treatment systems.

Policies

WQ POL 1 To protect existing groundwater sources and aquifers in the county and to manage development in a manner consistent with the protection of these resources.

WQ POL 2 To support the preparation of Drinking Water Protection Plans and Source Protection Plans to protect sources of public water supply, in accordance with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive and the current and future cycles of River Basin Management Plans. In this regard, the Council supports mitigation and protection measures for all protected areas, including Drinking Water Protected Areas.

WQ POL 3 In conjunction with Irish Water, to have regard to the EPA 2019 publication "*Drinking Water Report for Public Water Supplies 2018*" (and any subsequent update) in the establishment and maintenance of water sources in the county.

WQ POL 4 To ensure that the delivery and phasing of water services are subject to the required appraisal, planning and environmental assessment processes and avoid impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.

WQ POL 5 To encourage the use of catchment-sensitive farming practices, in order to meet Water Framework Directive targets and to comply with the objectives of the River Basin Management Plan.

WQ POL 6 To discourage the over-concentration of individual septic tanks and treatment plants in any given area to minimise the risk of groundwater pollution.

WQ POL 7 To seek to protect water quality in areas of high groundwater vulnerability in the consideration of development proposals which rely on individual wastewater treatment systems, and which would increase effluent loading from such systems within a concentrated area.

WQ POL 8 To provide guidance and advice regarding the protection of water supply to private wells with the overall responsibility remaining with the householder.

WQ POL 9 To permit new development only in instances where it has been demonstrated to the satisfaction of Irish Water that there is sufficient capacity (in compliance with the Water Framework Directive and River Basin Management Plan) for appropriate collection, treatment and disposal of waste water to cater for the anticipated loading arising from the proposed development.

WQ POL 10 To assess proposals for development in terms of their impact on human health to include, inter alia, the potential impact on existing adjacent developments, on existing land uses and/or the surrounding landscape. Where proposed developments would be likely to have a significant adverse effect on the amenities of the area through pollution by noise, fumes, odours, dust, grit or vibration, or cause pollution of air, water and/or soil, mitigation measures shall be introduced in order to eliminate adverse environmental impacts or reduce them to an acceptable operating level.

WQ POL 11 Where brownfield redevelopment is proposed, adequate and appropriate investigations shall be carried out into the nature and extent of any soil and groundwater contamination and the risks associated with site development work.

Objectives

WQ OBJ 1 To promote public awareness of water quality issues and the measures required to protect surface water, coastal and transitional waters and groundwater bodies from inappropriate and damaging development.

WQ OBJ 2 To achieve our targets of attaining and maintaining a minimum of '*good status*' in all water bodies in compliance with the Water Framework Directive and to co-operate with the implementation of the National River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021, and subsequent replacement plans. This includes contributing towards the protection of Blue Dot catchments and drinking water resources whilst having cognisance of the EU's Common Implementation Strategy Guidance Documents No. 20 and 36 which provide guidance on exemptions to the environmental objectives of the Water Framework Directive.

WQ OBJ 3 To implement the measures of the River Basin Management Plan, including continuing to work with communities thought the Local Authority Waters Programme to restore and improve water quality in the identified areas of action.

WQ OBJ 4 To ensure that development will not have an unacceptable adverse impact on water quality including surface water, ground water, designated source protection areas, river corridors and associated wetlands.

WQ OBJ 5 To request the Geological Survey of Ireland to complete a Groundwater Protection Scheme for Co. Leitrim to assist in decision making by the Local Authority on the location, nature and control of developments and activities in order to protect groundwater.

WQ OBJ 6 To promote the sustainable use of water and water conservation measures in existing and new development within the county and encourage demand management measures among all water users.

9.7 Wastewater Treatment and Disposal

The EPA Practice *Code of Practice for Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (Population Equivalent ≤ 10) (March 2021)* will be generally adhered to where applications for individual house development or replacement houses on unserviced lands are being considered by the Planning Authority. The installation standards of the wastewater treatment systems will be strictly controlled through assessment and certification by appropriately qualified persons.

Due to the underlying nature of the sub soils which are present across the majority of Co. Leitrim (estimated at 87% of our soils), the soil percolation tests tend to fail to meet the acceptable percolation rates required to comply with the EPA Code of Practice and the sites are deemed unsuitable for discharge of treated wastewater or effluent to ground. Leitrim County Council has been attempting to identify options that could be explored to provide a waste water treatment system solution that would be suitable, acceptable and affordable. In this regard, Leitrim County Council has been actively pursuing innovative solutions to facilitate the design of a wastewater treatment and

disposal facility that would have the potential to have a zero discharge or near zero discharge of effluent and, if successful, allow sites with poor percolation characteristics to treat the discharge of treated wastewater in a manner which was not prejudicial to public health. This process involves the use of Integrated Constructed Wetlands and the transposition of a willow based facility, currently used in Denmark (and other European countries), to the Irish context. The successful testing of such facilities would be of significant importance to the county as much of the soil types in Co. Leitrim are such that effective percolation cannot occur and current environmental requirements prevents the installation of traditional wastewater systems (that have a discharge to ground) on such soil types.

One further option now being considered would be the direct discharge form domestic wastewater systems to surface waters and provide appropriate levels of environmental protection with associated general application rules/alternative licensing system. Leitrim County Council have explored this option regionally (with Roscommon, Longford, Cavan and Monaghan County Councils) and subsequently then with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. A working group has now been established under the auspices of the CCMA Committee system to further explore this matter. The Council believes that there is the potential for an intervention in the Wastewater Pollution Regulations to accommodate a more suitable consent system for domestic scenarios.

In order to protect human health and water quality from the risks of domestic wastewater treatment systems, the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) National Inspection Plan for Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems 2018-2021 requires each Local Authority to develop a local site selection plan. This plan documents the application of the site selection methodology and outlines the justification for the selection of priority areas and individual sites. The Council is acutely aware that poorly functioning septic tanks/effluent treatment plants can cause groundwater pollution that may lead to the contamination of wells, group water schemes and watercourses.

Policies

WWT POL 1 To ensure that private wastewater treatment plants, where permitted, are operated in compliance with the EPA *Code of Practice for Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (Population Equivalent ≤ 10) (March 2021)*, as may be amended.

WWT POL 2 To promote the discontinuation of use of septic tanks/individual wastewater treatment systems and the connection of houses to piped foul sewers in all cases where this is feasible (subject to connection agreements with Irish Water) and require that all new developments utilise and connect to the piped wastewater infrastructure where available.

WWT POL 3 The Planning Authority will consider where appropriate proposals for private communal sewerage schemes, subject to the protection of the receiving environment, in the following cases:

1. In areas where Irish Water do not propose to carry out a piped wastewater collection and treatment scheme.
2. In areas where Irish Water intend at a later stage to provide a piped wastewater collection and treatment scheme.

In the latter case, schemes should be so designed as to be capable of being connected to the Irish Water scheme in due course. Such schemes shall be purpose designed, appropriate in scale, specification and capacity, designed to the needs of users and shall be subject to legally binding maintenance and bonding arrangements agreed

with the County Council. Such proposals shall adhere to the EPA Code of Practice for Small Communities.

Objective

WWT OBJ 1 To continue to research and trial options in conjunction with academic partners and other stakeholders to provide an acceptable waste water treatment system solution to the poor percolation characteristics of sub soils which affect the majority of the county that would be suitable, affordable and not represent a risk of pollution to ground or surface waters or to public health.

9.8 Flood Risk Management

Flooding is a natural phenomenon as part of the hydrological cycle. There are many factors that influence flood behaviour and the degrees of risk that it possesses. Like other natural processes, flooding cannot be completely eliminated, but its impacts can be minimised with proactive and environmentally sustainable management. The accepted national policy response to flood protection is now to manage the risk to life and property as sustainably as possible and to consider flood risk and its related impacts on development on a catchment basis, as well as on an individual location basis. This will facilitate sustainable development through the reduction of future flood damage, and hence reduce the associated potential economic and social costs.

The management of flood risk focuses on the key sources of flooding which are identified as:

- fluvial or riverine flooding arising from rivers and streams
- pluvial flooding in low spots following heavy rainfall
- drainage flooding due to the failure or inadequacies of the drainage system
- groundwater flooding, occurring when the level of water stored in the ground rises to meet the ground surface and flows out over it, as a result of prolonged rainfall

It is not considered that coastal flooding is a significant factor affecting our short coastline although erosion of the shoreline is affecting an area close to Tullaghan.

The Planning Authority undertook a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) as part of the preparation of the Plan, consistent with "*The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities*" (2009). This has informed land use zoning decisions in the Plan and will inform such decisions in the subsequent Local Area Plan for Carrick-on-Shannon/Cortober to ensure that land uses sensitive to the effects of flooding are avoided in areas identified as being at risk of flooding.

Three key principles that are required to be adopted by Planning Authorities when considering flood risk are as follows:

1. Avoid the risk, where possible
2. Substitute less vulnerable uses, where avoidance is not possible
3. Mitigate and manage the risk, where avoidance and substitution are not possible

Flood zones are geographical areas within which the likelihood of flooding is in a particular range, and they are a key tool in flood risk management within the planning process as well as in flood warning and emergency planning. There are three types or levels of flood zones defined for the purposes of the guidelines:

- Flood Zone A – where the probability of flooding is highest (greater than 1% or 1 in 100 for river flooding or 0.5% or 1 in 200 for coastal flooding) and where a wide range of receptors would be vulnerable;
- Flood Zone B – where the probability of flooding is moderate (between 0.1% or 1 in 1000 and 1% or 1 in 100 for river flooding and between 0.1% or 1 in 1000 year and 0.5% or 1 in 200 for coastal flooding), and;
- Flood Zone C – where the probability of flooding is low (less than 0.1% or 1 in 1000 for both river and coastal flooding).

This Plan has relied on the first two principles and has avoided the risk or substituted less vulnerable uses to the effects of flooding as areas at risk of flooding. The SFRA includes details of the Justification Tests undertaken for land use zoning objectives included in the Plan.

The Office of Public Works (OPW) is the lead State body responsible for the coordination and implementation of Government policy on the management of flood risk in Ireland. The OPW, in conjunction with Leitrim and other County Councils, undertook the National Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme, through which Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs) and flood maps were prepared. This was the largest ever flood risk study in Ireland to date, undertaking a detailed engineering assessment of 300 areas or communities believed to be at significant risk of future flooding. The CFRAM Programme included analysis of flood risk in Ballinamore, Carrick-on-Shannon, Drumshanbo, Leitrim, Manorhamilton and Mohill.

In 2018, the OPW published 29 Flood Risk Management Plans to address flood risk in Ireland. These plans include 118 additional Flood Relief Schemes, 4 of which are located in Co. Leitrim, namely Carrick-on-Shannon/Cortober, Leitrim Village, Mohill and Dromod. These schemes will be implemented under the ten-year €1 billion investment programme.

Leitrim County Council have appointed consultants to prepare the schemes in Carrick-on-Shannon and Leitrim Village. At present the OPW is carrying out a detailed flood map review of the town of Mohill. This will identify areas of concern for flooding. Following this map review Leitrim County Council will advance a flood relief scheme to protect properties identified Dromod was not included in the first tranche of schemes announced for funding by the OPW. Leitrim County Council will continue to work with the OPW to progress a suitable scheme in Dromod over the life of this Plan.

In preparing this Plan, the Local Authority had full regard to the proposed development of flood relief schemes in Carrick-on-Shannon, Leitrim village, Mohill and Dromod, to ensure that zoning or development proposals do not impede or prevent the progression of these measures.

Policies

FRM POL 1 To adopt a comprehensive risk-based planning approach to flood management to prevent or minimise future flood risk. In accordance with the Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, the avoidance of development in areas where flood risk has been identified shall be the primary response.

FRM POL 2 To ensure that a flood risk assessment is carried out for any development proposal, in accordance with the Planning System and Flood Risk Management (DoEHLG/OPW 2009) and Circular PL2/2014. This assessment shall be appropriate to the scale and nature of risk to the potential development.

FRM POL 3 To consult with the OPW in relation to proposed developments in the vicinity of drainage channels and rivers for which the OPW are responsible, and to retain a strip on either side of such channels where required, to facilitate maintenance access thereto. In addition, to promote the sustainable management and uses of water bodies and avoid culverting or realignment of these features.

FRM POL 4 To protect and enhance the county's floodplains and wetlands as '*Green Infrastructure*' which provides space for storage and conveyance of floodwater, enabling flood risk to be more effectively managed and reducing the need to provide flood defences in the future, subject to normal planning and environmental criteria.

FRM POL 5 To protect the integrity of any formal flood risk management infrastructure, thereby ensuring that any new development does not negatively impact any existing defence infrastructure or compromise any proposed new defence infrastructure.

FRM POL 6 To ensure that where flood risk management works take place that the natural, cultural and built heritage, rivers, streams and watercourses are protected and enhanced to the maximum extent possible.

FRM POL 7 To ensure each flood risk management activity is examined to determine actions required to embed and provide for effective climate change adaptation as set out in the OPW Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan Flood Risk Management applicable at the time.

FRM POL 8 To consult, where necessary, with Inland Fisheries Ireland, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and other relevant agencies in the provision of flood alleviation measures in the county.

FRM POL 9 To ensure that in assessing applications for developments, that consideration is had to the impact on the quality of surface waters having regard to targets and measures set out in the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021 and any subsequent local or regional plans.

FRM POL 10 Development proposals will need to be accompanied by a Development Management Justification Test when required by the Guidelines. Where only a small proportion of a site is at risk of flooding, the sequential approach shall be applied in site planning, in order to seek to ensure that no encroachment onto or loss of the flood plain occurs and/or that only water compatible development such as 'Open Space' would be permitted for the lands which are identified as being at risk of flooding within that site.

FRM POL 11 To require proposals for development to comply with requirements of the Planning System and Flood Risk Assessment Guidelines including providing detailed design specifications as may be required to assess the impact of development.

a) Extensions of existing uses or minor development within flood risk areas shall not: obstruct important flow paths; introduce a number of people into flood risk areas; entail the storage of hazardous substances; have adverse impacts or impede access to a watercourse, floodplain or flood protection and management facilities; or increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.

b) Applications for development within Flood Zones A or B, and on lands subject to the mid-range future scenario floods extents, as published by the Office of Public Works, shall be subject to site specific flood risk assessment. Such assessments shall consider climate change impacts and adaptation measures and shall provide details of structural and non-structural flood risk management measures, to include, but not be limited to specifications of the following:

Floor Levels
In areas of limited flood depth, the specification of the threshold and floor levels of new structures shall be raised above expected flood levels to reduce the risk of flood losses to a building, by raising floor heights within the building structure using a suspended floor arrangement or raised internal concrete platforms.

When designing an extension or modification to an existing building, an appropriate flood risk reduction measure shall be specified to ensure the threshold levels into the building are above the design flood level. However, care must also be taken to ensure access for all is provided in compliance with Part M of the Building Regulations.

Where threshold levels cannot be raised to the street for streetscape, conservation or other reasons, the design shall specify a mixing of uses vertically in buildings – with less vulnerable uses located at ground floor level, along with other measures for dealing with residual flood risk.

Internal Layout
Internal layout of internal space shall be designed and specified to reduce the impact of flooding [for example, living accommodation, essential services, storage space for provisions and equipment shall be designed to be located above the predicted flood level]. In addition, designs and specifications shall ensure that, wherever reasonably practicable, the siting of living accommodation (particularly sleeping areas) shall be above flood level.

With the exception of single storey extensions to existing properties, new single storey accommodation shall not be deemed appropriate where predicted flood levels are above design floor levels. In all cases, specifications for safe access, refuge and evacuation shall be incorporated into the design of the development.

Flood-Resistant Construction
Developments in flood vulnerable zones shall specify the use of flood-resistant construction aimed at preventing water from entering buildings – to mitigate the damage floodwater caused to buildings.

Developments shall specify the use of flood resistant construction prepared using specialist technical input to the design and specification of the external building envelope – with measures to resist hydrostatic pressure (commonly referred to as “tanking”) specified for the outside of the building fabric.

The design of the flood resistant construction shall specify the need to protect the main entry points for floodwater into buildings – including doors and windows (including gaps in sealant around frames), vents, air-bricks and gaps around conduits or pipes passing through external building fabric.

The design of the flood resistant construction shall also specify the need to protect against flood water entry through sanitary appliances as a result of backflow through the drainage system.

Flood-Resilient Construction
Developments in flood vulnerable zones that are at risk of occasional inundation shall incorporate design and specification for flood resilient construction which accepts that floodwater will enter buildings and provides for this in the design and specification of internal building services and finishes. These measures limit damage caused by floodwater and allow relatively quick recovery.
This can be achieved by specifying wall and floor materials such as ceramic tiling that can be cleaned and dried relatively easily, provided that the substrate materials (e.g. blockwork) are also resilient. Electrics, appliances and kitchen fittings shall also be specified to be raised above floor level, and one-way valves shall be incorporated into drainage pipes.

Emergency Response Planning
In addition to considering physical design issues for developments in flood vulnerable zones, the developer shall specify that the planning of new development also takes account of the need for effective emergency response planning for flood events in areas of new development.

Applications for developments in flood vulnerable zones shall provide details that the following measures will be put in place and maintained:

- provision of flood warnings, evacuation plans and ensuring public awareness of flood risks to people where they live and work
- coordination of responses and discussion with relevant emergency services i.e. Local Authorities, Fire and Rescue, Civil Defence and An Garda Siochána through the SFRA; and
- awareness of risks and evacuation procedures and the need for family flood plans.

Access and Egress During Flood Events
Applications for developments in flood vulnerable zones shall include details of arrangements for access and egress during flood events. Such details shall specify that:

- flood escape routes have been kept to publicly accessible land;
- such routes will have signage and other flood awareness measures in place, to inform local communities what to do in case of flooding;
- this information will be provided in a welcome pack to new occupants.

Further Information
Further and more detailed guidance and advice can be found at http://www.flooding.ie and in the Building Regulations.

c) In Flood Zone C, where the probability of flooding is low (less than 0.1%), site-specific Flood Risk Assessment may be required and the developer should satisfy themselves that the probability of flooding is appropriate to the development being proposed. The County Development Plan SFRA datasets and the most up to

date information on flood risk, including that relating to climate scenarios, should be consulted by prospective applicants for developments in this regard and will be made available to lower-tier Development Management processes in the Council.

FRM POL 12 To require that Strategic Flood Risk Assessments and site-specific Flood Risk Assessments shall provide information on the implications of climate change with regard to flood risk in relevant locations. The *Flood Risk Management – Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan* (2019) shall be consulted with to this effect.

FRM POL 13 To require the submission of site-specific Flood Risk Assessments for developments undertaken within Flood Zones A & B and on lands subject to the mid-range future scenario floods extents, as published by the Office of Public Works. These Flood Risk Assessments shall consider climate change impacts and adaptation measures including details of structural and non-structural flood risk management measures, such as those relating to floor levels, internal layout, flood-resistant construction, flood-resilient construction, emergency response planning and access and egress during flood events.

FRM POL 14 To require the undertaking of site-specific flood risk assessments for applications for development on land identified as benefitting land which may be prone to flooding.

FRM POL 15 To ensure that new developments proposed in Arterial Drainage Schemes and Drainage Districts do not result in a significant negative impact on the integrity, function and management of these areas.

FRM POL 16 Any potential future variations to and review of the Plan shall consider, as appropriate any new and/or emerging data relating to flood risk.

Objectives

FRM OBJ 1 To implement and comply fully with the recommendations of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment prepared as part of this Plan.

FRM OBJ 2 To implement in conjunction with the Office of Public Works the recommendations contained in the Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMP's), including planned investment measures for managing and reducing flood risk, subject to obtaining the necessary planning consent and undertaking the required environmental assessments.

9.9 Storm Water Management

Surface water drainage systems are designed to channel stormwater (rainwater) to the nearest suitable river. Rain falling on impervious surfaces is usually directed into surface water drainage systems. Surface water drainage systems are effective at transferring surface water quickly, but they can cause the volume of water in the receiving watercourse to increase more rapidly thereby increasing flood risk. Best practice is to separate the surface water drainage system from the foul drainage system to maximise the efficiency of waste water treatment plants.

Leitrim County Council is responsible for storm water management including surface water drainage. All new development proposals must demonstrate how surface water runoff will be appropriately managed and discharged. Leitrim County Council advocates the management of surface water

through Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) in town and village centre locations. SuDs is widely recognised as a '*Green Infrastructure*' based approach to drainage and storm water management and can also play a role in improving water quality. It aims to mimic the natural drainage of a site, to minimise the effect of a development on flooding and pollution of waterways, through various engineering solutions, including using porous surface treatments, ponds, swales, filter drains or other installations. SuDS can provide areas where the natural processes of rainwater interception, storage and infiltration can take place within the more built environment of town and village centres, offering a more sustainable approach to the management of urban storm water runoff from impermeable surfaces than the conventional underground pipe and storage based solutions.

Policies

SWM POL 1 To implement Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) in developments to encourage a more sustainable approach to storm water management.

SWM POL 2 To resist the discharge of additional surface water to combined sewers and promote Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDs) and solutions to maximise the capacity of towns with combined drainage systems, where practicable.

SWM POL 3 To require that new developments are adequately serviced with surface water drainage infrastructure which meets the requirements of the Water Framework Directive, associated River Basin Management Plans and CFRAM Management Plans.

SWM POL 4 To limit the rate of surface water run off to pre development levels for all green-field developments.

SWM POL 5 In the case of one-off rural dwellings, surface water shall be disposed of, in its entirety within the curtilage of the development site by way of suitably sized soak holes.

Objectives

SWM OBJ 1 To require the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) to minimise and limit the extent of hard surfacing and paving and require the use of sustainable drainage techniques where appropriate, for new development or for extensions to existing developments, in order to reduce the potential impact of existing and predicted flooding risks.

SWM OBJ 2 To encourage the use of Green Roof technology particularly on apartment, commercial, leisure and educational buildings.

9.10 Waste Management

Waste management involves measures to protect the environment and human health by preventing or reducing adverse impacts of the generation and management of waste. Waste management is regulated by national and European legislation, with policy and enforcement operated between the Department of the Environment, Climate Action and Communications, the EPA and Local Government. Waste management policy is predicated on the EU Waste Hierarchy of prevention, preparing for reuse, recycling, energy recovery and sustainable disposal.

Maintaining economic progress in the county is contingent on a good environment and the availability of necessary waste management facilities. Co. Leitrim is located within the Connacht-Ulster Waste

Management Region, governed by the Waste Management Plan 2015–2021. Leitrim County Council provides two civic amenity centres (Recycling Centres) at Mohill and Manorhamilton. A bring-centre is an unstaffed recycling centre where a range of recycling banks is available. There are currently 40 such bring-centres located throughout Co. Leitrim. This gives Leitrim one of the highest bring-centre per capita ratios in the country. At all our bring-centres, recycling banks for glass bottles/jars and drink cans are provided, while at some of our bring-centres, textile banks are also available.

In line with the principles of sustainable development, the Council will continue to promote a waste prevention and minimisation programme to target all aspects of waste in the county, focusing on both commercial and domestic waste producers. It is considered that raising the awareness of citizens and businesses owners with regard to their responsibilities as producers of waste is essential.

This accords with the transition to a more circular economy and bio economy, as espoused in national policy in the form of the *Whole-of-Government Circular Economy Strategy* launched in December 2021, where the value of bio- based products, materials and resources is maintained in the economy for as long as possible, and the generation of waste is minimised. This Plan supports the move to a more circular economy as this will save resources, increase resource efficiency, and help to reduce carbon emissions. The successful implementation of circular economy principles will help to reduce the volume of waste that the county produces.

Policies

WM POL 1 To support the implementation of the Connacht-Ulster Regional Waste Management Plan 2015-2021 (as amended) or any replacement plan with particular emphasis on encouraging reuse, recycling and disposal of residual waste.

WM POL 2 To encourage and support waste prevention, minimisation, reuse, recycling and recovery as methods of managing waste.

WM POL 3 To facilitate the transition from a waste management economy to a green circular economy to increase the value recovery and recirculation of resources.

WM POL 4 To encourage and support the provision of separate collection of waste in accordance with the requirements of the Waste Management (Food Waste) Regulations 2009, the Waste Framework Directive Regulations, 2011 and other relevant legislation.

WM POL 5 To promote and facilitate communities to become involved in environmental awareness activities and community based recycling initiatives or environmental management initiatives that will lead to local sustainable waste management practices.

WM POL 6 To encourage the development of waste infrastructure and associated developments in appropriate locations, as deemed necessary in accordance with the requirements of the Connacht-Ulster Regional Waste Management Plan 2015-2021 (as amended) or any replacement plan.

WM POL 7 To require the provision of bring banks, bottle banks or other appropriate recycling facilities as part of the overall development in the case of new or extended commercial, employment, educational, recreational facilities and managed residential developments (in excess of 20 no. residential units).

WM POL 8 To encourage the recycling of construction and demolition waste and the reuse of aggregate and other materials in future construction projects.

WM POL 9 To facilitate high quality sustainable waste recovery and disposal infrastructure/technology including composting (anaerobic digester) plants for managing organic solid waste, at appropriate locations, within the county subject to the protection of the amenities of the surrounding environment including European Sites, and in keeping with the EU waste hierarchy.

Objectives

WM OBJ 1 To continue to maintain the level of provision of existing civic amenity sites in the county in accordance with Waste Management Plan 2015 – 2021 or any replacement plan.

WM OBJ 2 To ensure that the Council fulfils its duties under the Waste Management (Certification of Historic Unlicensed Waste Disposal and Recovery Activity) Regulations 2008 (S.I. No 524 of 2008), including those in relation to the identification and registration of closed landfills.

WM OBJ 3 To identify suitable sites for additional recycling centres and bring bank facilities subject to the availability of appropriate funding and infrastructure, through the public or private sector, as appropriate.

WM OBJ 4 To facilitate the provision of appropriate waste recovery and disposal facilities in accordance with the principles set out in the appropriate Waste Management Plan applicable from time to time made in accordance with the Waste Management Act 1996 (as amended).

WM OBJ 5 To continue to reduce incidents of littering through the continued implementation and updating of the Council's Litter Management Plan.

WM OBJ 6 To continue to support and work with local Tidy Towns groups in the maintenance and conservation of our towns and villages throughout the county.

9.11 Air Quality

The Council recognise the need to ensure the highest standards of air quality. Air quality can deteriorate in town centre locations as a result of transport emissions, especially road transport emissions of NOx, fine particulate matter (PM2.5) and black carbon arising from increase in diesel cars and buses; power generation and emissions from industry, agriculture and agricultural activities that lead to methane and nitrous oxide emissions; burning of fossil fuels e.g. gas, peat, and coal resulting in carbon dioxide emissions and the persistent problem of '*smoky*' emissions from the use of solid fuel in homes and backyard burning.

Air pollution is monitored by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Leitrim County Council. Primary responsibility for monitoring air quality, as well as the nature and extent of emissions is assigned to the EPA. Under the Air Pollution Act 1987, primary responsibility for addressing local instances of air pollution is assigned to Local Authorities. The Council's role in relation to air quality is therefore to promote a reduction in air pollution, through the implementation of relevant legislation and through the provision of advice and guidance on best practice.

Results of air quality monitoring can be viewed on the EPA website. The EPA has introduced the National Ambient Air Quality programme (AAMP) which will see a greater number of monitoring locations established; one location has been introduced in Carrick-on-Shannon.

Policies

AQ POL 1 To promote the preservation of best ambient air quality compatible with sustainable development in accordance with the EU Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive (2008/5/0/EC) and ensure that all air emissions associated with new developments are within Environmental Quality Standards as out in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (SI No. 180 of 201) (or any updated/superseding documents).

AQ POL 2 To promote air quality improvements, where practicable, through a shift to more sustainable modes of transport, reduced use of fossil fuels and a resulting reduction in carbon dioxide emissions.

9.12 Noise Pollution

The Environmental Noise Regulations 2006 give effect to EU Directive 2002/49/EC relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise. The regulations set out to "*provide for an implementation in Ireland of a common approach within the European Community intended to avoid, prevent or reduce on a prioritised basis the harmful effects, including annoyance, due to exposure to environmental noise*" (Article 4(1) S.I No. 140/2006). As part of the regulations, a Noise Action Plan is required to be created and adopted. The Leitrim County Council '*Noise Action Plan 2018-2023*' has been prepared primarily to address the environmental noise from major roads in the county. The action planning area covers the N4 (Dublin-Sligo) and N15 (Sligo-Letterkenny) national primary roads. The purpose of the Action Plan is to undertake to manage the existing noise environment and protect the future noise environment within the action planning area. Management of the existing noise environment may be achieved by prioritising areas for which further assessment and possible noise mitigation may be required.

The Council will seek through the Development Management process to reduce noise levels and/or vibration effects at site boundaries or within adjacent sensitive areas, especially residential areas, to acceptable limits/levels by measures such as layout, design and/or attenuation mechanisms. The Council will require the submission of Noise Impact Assessments where it is proposed to introduce noise creating uses in proximity to noise sensitive uses, such as residential areas, and may impose conditions mitigating such impacts where permission is being granted. Similarly, where noise sensitive uses are proposed within proximity to a noise source, such as national roads, rail lines, etc., proposals shall include noise and/or vibration attenuation measures in any planning application. The assessment of individual proposals will be governed by the criteria contained in the Development Management chapter of this Plan.

Policies

NP POL 1 To support the implementation of the Noise Directive 2002/49/EC and associated Environmental Noise Regulations 2006.

NP POL 2 To require industrial and warehousing development proposals to be assessed against the Noise Assessment Criteria contained in Section 13.12.2 of Chapter 13, Development Management Standards.

NP POL 3 To have regard to acoustical planning in the planning process to ensure that future developments include provisions to protect the population from the effects of environmental noise in the interests of residential amenity and public health.

NP POL 4 Development proposals should identify and implement noise mitigation measures, where warranted, for development proposed in the vicinity of existing or proposed national roads. The costs of implementing mitigation measures shall be borne by the developer, as the Authority will not be responsible for the provision of additional noise mitigation.

Objective

NP OBJ 1 To implement the actions contained in the Leitrim Noise Plan 2018-2023 (or any replacement Plan) which seeks to address environmental noise from major roads in the county and which endeavours to maintain satisfactory noise environments where they exist.

9.13 Light Pollution

The Council seeks to achieve an equilibrium between the need to ensure adequate lighting to contribute to safety and security in towns and villages with the need to protect residential amenity, protection of wildlife habitats, energy waste and carbon emissions. While adequate lighting is essential to a safe and secure environment, light spillage from excessive or poorly designed lighting is increasingly recognised as a potential nuisance to surrounding properties and a threat to wildlife, may pose a traffic hazard and can reduce the visibility of the night sky.

Artificial Light at Night (ALAN) is a matter of increasing public interest in terms of environmental pollution. Co. Leitrim enjoys the lowest average light emissions in Ireland with a rate of 0.52 (nW/cm2/sr) as measured in January 2019 (CSO, 2019). Lux levels are a measurement used to identify lighting levels. Details of lux levels should be required at planning application stage for floodlight installation, large scale external artificial lighting proposals and illuminated advertisements as outlined in Chapter 13 - Development Management.

Policies

PL POL 1 To control lighting in urban and rural areas and in particular in sensitive locations, in order to minimise impacts on residential amenity, habitats and species of importance.

PL POL 2 To require the use of energy efficient public/street lighting in all new development proposals.

9.14 Major Accident Directive

The prevention of major accidents in establishments where dangerous substances are produced, used, handled or stored falls under the Major Accidents Directive (known as the Seveso III Directive[28]). The Directive seeks to prevent accident hazards involving dangerous substances and limit the

[28] The Seveso III Directive, 2012/18/EU came into force in Ireland on 1st June 2015 replacing the Seveso II Directive, 96/82/EC.

consequences to both people and the environment. However, as accidents may nevertheless occur, it also aims at limiting the consequences of such accidents not only for human health but also for the environment. The Directive covers establishments where dangerous substances may be present (e.g. during processing or storage) in quantities above a certain threshold. Excluded from the Directive are certain industrial activities which are subject to other legislation providing a similar level of protection (e.g. nuclear establishments or the transport of dangerous substances). Depending on the amount of dangerous substances present, establishments are categorised in lower and upper tier establishments, the latter are subject to more stringent requirements.

At present, there are no Seveso II sites in the county. The Council is aware of its responsibilities regarding the *Major Accidents Directive* and will work closely with the Health and Safety Authority in the event of an establishment handling dangerous substances that falls within the meaning of such substances as defined by the *EU (Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations 2006* (S. I. No. 74/2006) being established within the county or likely to impact on the county.

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) acting as the Central Competent Authority issues technical advice to Planning Authorities in respect to establishments designated as containing hazardous substances. In addition to normal planning requirements, the Planning Authority will seek to ensure that development complies with this advice.

The Council reminds potential operators of their obligation to inform the Planning Authority and the Health and Safety Authority if their development is likely to be classified under the *Major Accidents Directive* and their obligation to obtain planning permission if an existing operation is expanded, changed or intensified in such a way as to be classified under the directive in the future.

If such establishments are located within the county, or bordering the county, planning applications for other developments in the vicinity of the establishment will be referred to the HSA and the Council will generally follow the recommendations of the HSA in determining that application.

Policies

SEV POL 1 To comply with the Seveso III Directive in reducing the risk and limiting the potential consequences of major industrial accidents.

SEV POL 2 To have regard to the advice of the Health & Safety Authority when considering proposals for new SEVESO sites.

SEV POL 3 To permit new Seveso development only in low risk locations within acceptable distances from vulnerable residential, retail and commercial development.

9.15 Energy Networks Infrastructure – Electricity and Natural Gas

The development of secure and reliable electricity transmission infrastructure is recognised as a key factor in supporting economic development and attracting investment to an area. The Council supports upgrading of the electrical transmission network both within the county and adjoining counties. The Council recognises that an adequate and reliable electricity and gas supply/infrastructure is essential if the county is to develop and compete nationally for investment and is committed to advocating and facilitating the extension and consolidation of networks in the county.

EirGrid is responsible for power across the electricity transmission grid, ensuring a safe, secure and reliable supply of energy to homes, businesses and industry across the country. ESB is the asset owner of the transmission system and distribution system and ESB Networks provides the essential service of building, managing and maintaining the electricity networks in Leitrim and throughout Ireland. The Council recognises that essential electricity infrastructure upgrades are necessary. These have been detailed in EirGrid's "*Tomorrow's Energy Scenarios 2019 Systems Needs Assessment*" and the Council will support EirGrid where practicable in the delivery of their requirement to facilitate electricity targets set out in the Government's Climate Action Plan 2019 and The National Energy and Climate Plan 2021 – 2030

An understanding of locations of the higher voltage electricity infrastructure is also useful when seeking to identify regional opportunities that may attract industries (e.g. data centres, renewables, etc.). This is acknowledged in the RSES which includes RPO 16 which states "*The NWRA shall co-ordinate the identification of potential renewable energy sites of scale in collaboration with Local Authorities and other stakeholders within 3 years of the adoption of the RSES. The identification of such sites (which may extend to include energy storage solutions) will be based on numerous site selection criteria including environmental matters, and potential grid connections*". The county is also particularly rich in renewable energy resources as identified in the Renewable Energy Strategy. The electricity transmission grid brings power from where it is generated to where it is needed throughout Ireland. It is a consequence therefore of renewable energy production that additions to the electricity transmission grid in terms of transmission infrastructure will occur to harness the considerable renewable energy resource of our county. The vast majority of this renewable energy will come from wind farms and EirGrid is required by law to connect them to the national grid.

One of EirGrid's strategic projects within the NWRA is the North West Project known as the Renewable Integration Development Project which will traverse counties Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim. This is a cross border project to identify the optimum reinforcement of the electricity transmission grid in the north and the north-west of the island to cater for expected power output from renewable energy sources. This will require new power lines to be built.

Co. Leitrim is not currently served by a gas network operated by Gas Networks Ireland. There are currently no network extensions under construction. Within the lifetime of the RSES, it is the stated ambition of our region to explore the extension of the network into counties Sligo, Roscommon, Donegal and Leitrim and in the first instance examine the feasibility and logistics of such an extension to supply potential domestic and business customers in additional locations. The secure supply of natural gas is in itself an important part of the suite of infrastructure necessary to assist in the improvement of regional accessibility generally.

Policies

ENI POL 1 To support the development of a safe, secure and reliable electricity network which assists EirGrid in their grid development programme, as set out in the Grid Development Strategy – Your Grid, Your Tomorrow, 2017 and Tomorrow's Energy Scenarios 2017: Planning our Energy Future, 2017.

ENI POL 2 To co-operate and liaise with statutory and other energy providers in relation to power generation in order to ensure that the energy needs of future population and economic expansion within designated growth areas and across the wider region can be delivered in a sustainable and timely manner, which minimises impacts on environmental sensitive and high visual quality areas and that capacity is available at local and regional scale to meet future needs.

ENI POL 3 To require comprehensive studies to be undertaken for all technical and environmental considerations, to inform the assessment of proposed transmission routes brought forward for planning consent.

ENI POL 4 To support the renewal, reinforcement and strengthening of the electricity transmission network with particular reference to the regionally important projects such as Renewable Integration Development Project.

ENI POL 5 To support the necessary integration of the transmission network requirements to allow linkages with renewable energy proposals at all levels to the electricity transmission grid in a sustainable and timely manner.

ENI POL 6 To support the build-out of the gas supply network into Co. Leitrim.

Objective

ENI OBJ 1 To safeguard existing strategic energy corridors from encroachment by other developments that could compromise the delivery of energy networks.

9.16 Information Communications and Technology

9.16.1 Digital Strategy for Co. Leitrim

'Digital Leitrim', is the title for the Co. Leitrim Digital Strategy. It will co-ordinate all activities for the development of a collaborative digital society and economy over the period to 2023. This is the first Digital Strategy for the county and as such, '*Digital Leitrim* 'will build the foundations for and set the direction for digital development in the county over the coming decade. The strategy will build on existing resources, knowledge, networks and plans to create a forward thinking, creative Co. Leitrim that respects and protects its natural resources & environment, its culture & heritage, its people and their skills and talents.

Leitrim County Council will use this Digital Strategy to bring together a number of actions and objectives from the community and civic society, enterprise, education, cultural and environmental fields and apply a digital dimension to all aspects of development. The Digital Strategy will help pave the way for future priorities and shape how the county allocates it resources and works collaboratively for a more innovative, creative and low carbon future. It will address issues of rural isolation and decline, economic and agricultural innovation, cultural and tourism promotion with low carbon impacts and environmental protection to the core.

Policy

DS POL 1 To support the implementation and roll out of action contained in the Digital Strategy for Leitrim 2021-2023 or any replacement Strategy.

9.17 Broadband

Broadband is one of the key drivers in maintaining competitiveness and supporting socio-economic development. It provides a connectivity that has transformed the way people and businesses operate. The availability of high speed and reliable broadband is becoming a prerequisite for economic competitiveness and there is also an increased reliance on broadband for communication and

entertainment. The COVID-19 pandemic with its associated social distancing has led to a paradigm shift in terms of accepting remote work and social practices and these have become extensively prevalent. It is anticipated that many of the trends that developed in response to COVID-19 will remain, potentially speeding up the reliance on broadband.

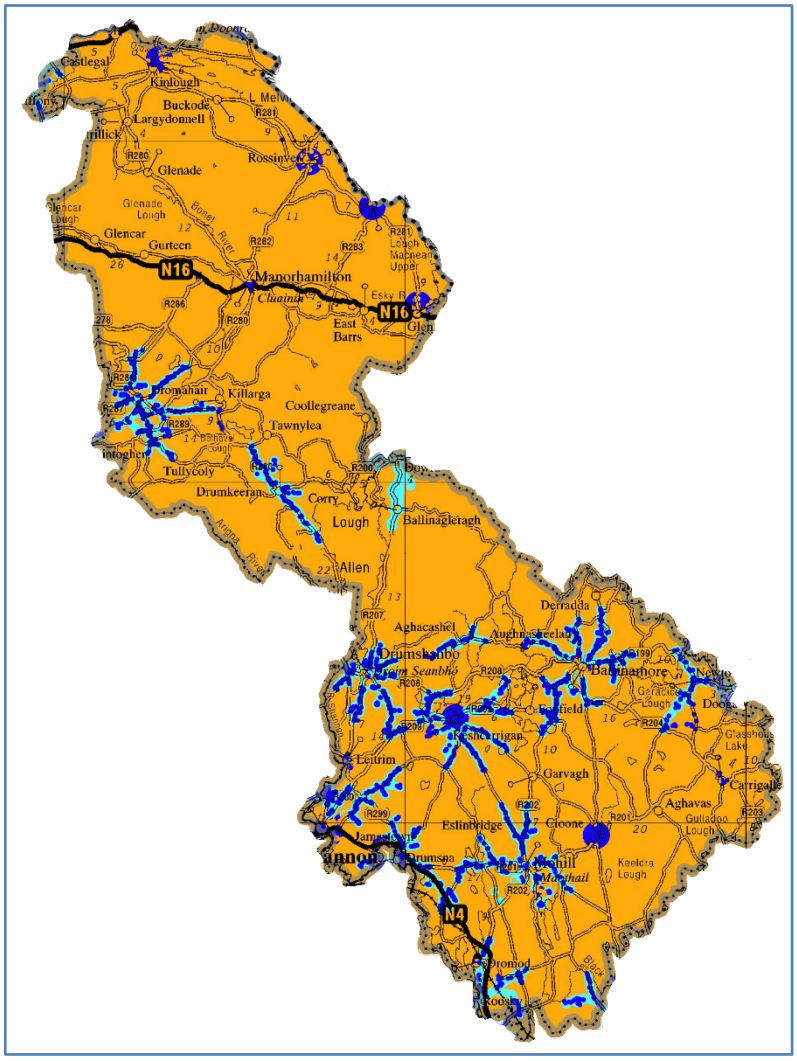
Co. Leitrim will benefit from the rollout of several Government led broadband schemes including the National Broadband Plan, Rural Broadband Scheme and Broadband for Schools which is a significant advancement in relation to the digital infrastructure that has taken place within the telecommunications sector in the county.

The National Broadband Plan (NBP), part funded by the Irish Government and the European Regional Development Fund, is the Government's plan to deliver high speed broadband services to all businesses, farms and households in Ireland, providing broadband to underserved areas where the market has failed due to factors such as low population density and ensuring that people living and working in rural areas have the same digital opportunities as those in urban areas.

The targets of the NBP includes:

- 70Mbps-100Mbps available to at least 50% of the population with a majority having access to 100Mbps.
- At least 40Mbps, and in many cases much faster speeds, to at least a further 20% of the population and potentially as much as 35% around smaller towns and villages.
- A minimum of 30Mbps available to all properties, no matter how rural and remote.

Figure 9.2: National Broadband Plan Intervention Areas in Co. Leitrim



Some of Co. Leitrim's towns suffer from broadband deficiencies, which are detrimental to their economic growth. The Council will work towards remedying this, through facilitating the implementation of the National Broadband Plan. There are 11,595 no. premises in Co. Leitrim without access to high-speed broadband. This represents 52% of the total premises in the county. The extent of the Intervention Areas is shown on Figure 9.2 opposite. Under the NBP, the Government will invest €56m in Co. Leitrim. In Figure 9.2, the amber areas are the target areas for the State intervention of the National Broadband Plan. The blue area are where commercial operators are delivering or have indicated plans to deliver high speed broadband services.

Broadband Connection Point (BCP's) are public locations which have been selected to receive high speed connectivity in the first year of the National Broadband Plan by the Department of Rural and Community Development. This included 12 no. BCPs in Co. Leitrim, 5 no. of which have been provided at Aghanlish Community Centre, Askill Community Centre, Gortletteragh Community Centre, Killargue Community Centre and Glencar Waterfall. An additional 5 no. sites are due for completion later this year at Aughavas GAA, Aughawillan GAA & Aughawillan Community Centre, Teach Dúchas Drumeela and Killenummery Hall. 2 no. additional sites are pending site surveys with potential for BCP's at the new Ballagh Centre, Rossinver and Leitrim Gaels Community Facility. In addition, the NBP will provide high speed broadband to 12 no. national schools in the county in the initial roll out phase with 2 schools (Saint Michael's National School, Glenfarne and Aughawillan National School) already operational.

The Metropolitan Area Network (MAN), a network of ducting and fibre optic cable has been installed in Carrick-on-Shannon and Manorhamilton, which can be used to provide services including telecoms, Internet access, television, telematics and CCTV.

The county is part of the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC). Under this platform, the AEC Hub Network has been developed. This classifies all the enterprise hubs and co-working spaces along the AEC and a shared online booking system has been developed to coordinate and promote the facilities. Co. Leitrim has 9 no. hub sites included within this project.

Leitrim County Council is also part of the Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy Project (USEFE), this is a partnership between Cavan, Leitrim, Longford, Bord na Mona and ESB. Under this project, the Council have developed a partnership between The Hive in Carrick-on-Shannon, Cavan Digital Hub in Cavan town and Edgeworthstown Enterprise Hub in Co. Longford to develop the facilities to promote co-working/remote working in the region.

Policies

BR POL 1 To support and facilitate the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications and public and private agencies as appropriate, in improving high quality broadband infrastructure throughout the county and supporting the roll out of the National Broadband Plan.

BR POL 2 To support and facilitate the delivery of the National Broadband Plan and Leitrim County Councils Digital Strategy as a means of developing further opportunities for enterprise, employment, education, innovation and skills development, for those who live and work in rural areas throughout Leitrim, where appropriate.

BR POL 3 To promote the potential of the Metropolitan Area Network fibre optic cable managed by eNET.

9.18 Telecommunications

The Council recognises the importance of advanced communications infrastructure for an information-based society, and as a key support for business, education and research. The Council will support and facilitate the provision of advanced communication networks and services to the extent required to contribute to national, regional and local competitiveness and to attract inward investment. The Council will also encourage the further co-ordinated and focused development and extension of telecommunications infrastructure including broadband connectivity in the county, particularly in the Tier 2A and 2B Towns, as a means of improving their economic competitiveness.

The Council considers the provision of a state of the art telecommunications network to be critical in addressing the county's peripherality and will seek to ensure the county is served by the most up-to-date technology available. The Council will seek to achieve a balance between facilitating the provision of telecommunications services in the interests of social and economic progress and protecting residential amenities and environmental quality. The Council will have due regard to the guideline issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, '*Planning Guidelines for Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures*' (1996) and Circular Letter Pl 07/12. The assessment of individual development proposals will be governed by the criteria contained in the Development Management chapter of this Plan.

Policies

TEL POL 1 To promote and facilitate the provision of a high quality telecommunications infrastructure network throughout the county having regard to the requirements of the "*Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures – Guidelines for Planning Authorities*".

TEL POL 2 To support service providers in the development of key telecommunications infrastructure.

TEL POL 3 To support the delivery of high capacity Information Communications Technology Infrastructure, broadband connectivity and digital broadcasting, throughout the county, in order to ensure economic competitiveness and in enabling more flexible work practices.

TEL POL 4 To encourage co-location of antennae on existing telecommunications structures. The shared use of existing structures will be required where the numbers of masts located in any single area is considered to have an excessive concentration.

TEL POL 5 To ensure that telecommunications structures are located to minimise and /or mitigate any adverse impacts on communities, residential properties, schools and the built or natural environment.

Objective

TEL OBJ 1 To ensure that all areas of the county have adequate mobile communication coverage and in particular to require service providers to provide services in areas where existing coverage is poor.

10 RURAL DEVELOPMENT

10.1 Introduction

The strengthening of rural economies and communities is one of the national strategic outcomes of the NPF. This is of particular importance to Co. Leitrim, which is predominantly a rural county, with the vast majority of our population rural-based, living outside of defined settlements and the majority of our land in agricultural or forestry use. In the context of this chapter, '*rural*' relates to the open countryside outside of settlements as outlined in the Core Strategy. This Plan presents a rural housing policy in Chapter 3 which seeks to balance the need to sustain rural communities with the need to protect Leitrim's natural heritage, environment and landscape qualities. The rural housing policy differentiates between the pressure for one off housing in the areas surrounding large towns from the remainder of the countryside. The Plan seeks to support the appropriate and sustainable development of rural areas by encouraging growth and arresting decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades and by managing the growth of areas that are under strong urban influence, while sustaining vibrant rural communities. A consolidation of housing within rural villages and small towns is equally encouraged to create vibrant rural communities that can support a transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society but also bring life and vibrancy back into our smaller settlements.

The Council recognises that rural-based employment extends beyond what are considered as traditional rural sectors to include all aspects of the economy. The rollout of broadband and key tourism infrastructure such as greenways and blueways has begun to revitalise some of our rural areas and facilitated increased levels of rural diversification. The workplace measures introduced to combat the COVID-19 pandemic have illustrated the effectiveness of remote working as a viable alternative for many to traditional office-based employment, and the advances in remote working technologies will ensure that home-working will be an increasingly significant workplace for many into the future. Such trends will have a significantly positive impact on further sustaining and revitalising rural communities, with issues such as quality of life, reducing personal carbon footprint and health benefits featuring more prominently in the choices in relation to where people live and work.

This chapter sets out the policies required for sustainable rural development, in a manner that is consistent with the guidance, strategies and policies at national and regional level. The Plan seeks to ensure that agricultural activity is accommodated, and environmental assets are protected. A consolidation of housing within rural villages is encouraged to create vibrant rural communities that can support a transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society but also bring life and vibrancy back into our smaller villages. This Plan will include policies and objectives to ensure that Co. Leitrim's rural areas capitalise on their potential while protecting the environmental assets that define their character and value. Rural diversification opportunities are vital for sustaining a viable rural economy. However, a balance needs to be maintained between facilitating appropriate forms of rural development and protecting the rural environment. This Plan will aim to provide an enabling policy framework which strikes to achieve this balance.

10.2 Vision

"*To support agriculture and the rural economy whilst protecting the environment and maintaining a stable population in rural areas to ensure the maintenance of vibrant rural communities*".

10.3 Policy Context

10.3.1 Sustainable Rural Housing, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2005

The Circular letter PL2/2017, issued by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government in May 2017, advised Local Authorities that the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines are currently being revised to ensure the rural housing policies and objectives contained in Local Authority Development Plans comply with Article 43 of the EU Treaty on the freedom of movement of citizens. At the date of publication, the revised Guidelines have not been issued. The Council will have regard to the current Guidelines and any future guidelines issued in relation to rural housing development.

10.3.2 Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework (NPF)

The NPF acknowledges that *'rural areas have a major role to play in Ireland 2040 and encourages Local Authorities to ensure that connectivity gaps are addressed and that planning and investment policies support job creation in the rural economy'.* Improved coordination of existing investment programmes dealing with social inclusion, rural development and town and village renewal are sought, as is planning for the future growth and development of rural areas.

National Strategic Objective (NSO 3) identifies traditional pillars of the rural economy, such as the natural resource and the food sector, as being key to future economic development as well as those emerging from improved connectivity and broadband access which has the potential to yield further rural economic development opportunities.

Section 3.17.2.2 outlines the rural housing considerations for Co. Leitrim as contained in the NPF.

10.3.3 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020- 2032 (NWRA RSES)

In relation to forestry, a Regional Fora is to be established '*to set out a framework for sustainable afforestation across the region that enables government policy to grow the sector and that addresses community concerns and perceptions*' (RPO 5.24).

Section 3.17.2.3 outlines the rural housing considerations for Co. Leitrim as contained in the RSES.

10.3.4 Realising our Rural Potential: Action Plan for Rural Development 2017

This Action Plan aims to unlock the potential of rural areas through a framework of supports at national and local level which will ensure that people who live in rural areas have increased opportunities for employment locally, access to public services and social networks that support a high quality of life.

A number of key initiatives proposed as part of the Strategy include the Town and Village Renewal Scheme and the Delivery of the 2014-2020 EU LEADER Programme. The Action Plan for Rural Ireland builds on the commitments contained in the Charter for Rural Ireland and sets out a clear roadmap for its implementation.

10.3.5 Charter for Rural Ireland

This Charter (2016) contains a number of commitments which help to establish the foundations for the rejuvenation of the rural economy and rural society as a whole. The Charter is '*a statement of Government commitment to support Rural Ireland's regeneration and to underpin the future sustainable development of Ireland's rural communities*'.

10.3.6 Rural Development Programme 2014-2020

This Rural Development Programme is based on the EU framework for rural development and the objective of the programme is to foster the development of rural areas through innovation, locally based, bottom up development strategies. The Local Community Development Committees (LCDC) and LEADER are the programme implementation bodies.

10.3.7 Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025

'*Our Rural Future*', produced by the Department of Rural and Community Development represents the whole of Government's blueprint for a post COVID-19 recovery and development of rural Ireland over the next 5 years. It provides the framework to achieve the vision of transforming the quality of life and opportunity for people living in rural areas.

The policy reflects the unprecedented change in living and working patterns during COVID-19 and the significant opportunities this presents for rural communities – from remote working and revitalising our town centres to job creation, developing a green economy and enhancing our outdoor amenities. It is supported by 150 no. commitments to be implemented across a range of Government Departments and agencies, which will address the challenges facing communities and deliver new opportunities for people living in rural areas. Further commitments will be added to over the lifetime of the policy to respond to emerging needs and opportunities in rural areas.

'*Our Rural Future*' will be underpinned by investment across Government in areas such as the roll out of high-speed broadband, remote working facilities, job creation, town centre regeneration, community development, improvements in regional and local roads, new cycling and walking infrastructure, expanded rural transport services, funding for tourism, culture and heritage projects, and a just transition to a climate-neutral society.

The Vision emphasises the interdependence of rural and urban areas and recognises:

- the centrality of the people who live in rural Ireland
- the importance of vibrant and lived-in rural places
- the possibilities for rural areas to support quality jobs and contribute to sustaining our shared environment

The policy will encourage and support rural communities to develop cohesive and integrated plans to meet the long-term needs of their own particular area, recognising that each rural place is different and there is no one-size-fits-all solution to meet the developmental needs of every area.

Outcomes
The high-level outcomes of delivering this policy will see

- more people living in rural Ireland, including in our towns and villages and on the islands
- more people working in rural Ireland, with good career prospects, regardless of where their employer is based
- rural Ireland contributing to, and benefiting from, the transition to a low-carbon economy and a climate-neutral society
- rural towns being vibrant hubs for commercial and social activity
- rural communities, and especially young people, having an active role in shaping the future for rural Ireland.

Thematic Objectives
'*Our Rural Future*' addresses the following thematic objectives:

- optimising the opportunities for rural communities from high speed broadband, in particular through investment in remote working
- supporting improved quality employment and career opportunities in rural areas
- assisting the regeneration, repopulation and development of rural towns and villages
- enhancing the participation, leadership and resilience of rural communities
- enhancing public services in rural areas
- transitioning to a climate neutral society
- supporting the sustainability of agriculture and natural resources
- supporting the sustainability of our island and coastal communities
- nurturing our culture and heritage (runs throughout the other thematic areas)

10.4 Rural Economy

Leitrim is a predominantly rural county, with much of its population rural-based and the majority of the land in the county is in agricultural or forestry use. Construction, engineering, manufacturing, quarrying, tourism related services, transport, energy production, forestry, agriculture, food, education, waste disposal and health are all areas of employment in the rural areas of Co. Leitrim. The Council recognises, however, that rural-based employment extends beyond these traditional rural sectors to include all aspects of the economy. A national strategic outcome of the NPF is '*Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities'*. Rural areas play a key role in defining our identity, in driving our economy and our high-quality environment and are part of the county's strategic development during the plan period. In addition to the natural resources and food sector as traditional pillars of the rural economy, improved connectivity facilitating home working and digital hubs, broadband and rural economic development opportunities offer the potential to ensure our rural areas remain and strengthen as a living and working community.

Chapter 4 - Economic Development deals with rural diversification and economic enterprises in further detail.

Policies

RUR ECON POL 1 To support the continued vitality and viability of rural areas by promoting sustainable social and economic development whilst recognising the need to protect the value and character of open countryside.

RUR ECON POL 2 To facilitate the continuation of agriculture, and the broadening of the rural economy, while conserving the landscape, environment and natural diversity of the countryside.

RUR ECON POL 3 To accommodate proposals for new employment and enterprise development that may emerge (subject to proper planning and sustainable development considerations) and for which there are strong locational factors that do not apply to the same extent elsewhere. This would include the development of manufacturing facilities dependent on rural resources in appropriate locations.

RUR ECON POL 4 To maximise the potential synergies and development opportunities between tourism, crafts and food sector particularly along the Blueway and Greenway proposition being developed across and through the county.

RUR ECON POL 5 To provide for the sustainable development of fisheries, where this is in compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives and other ecological protection objectives. Where new infrastructure is being provided, it should be positioned at already modified locations where feasible and sedimentation and siltation issues should be considered, with floating infrastructure used where feasible. Fishery related developments may necessitate the preparation of a Visitor/Habitat Management Plan that includes requirements in relation to sustainable fishing practices that would not affect the ecological site integrity and invasive species.

RUR ECON POL 6 To avoid the creation of any additional access point from new development or the generation of increased traffic from existing accesses to national roads to which speed limits greater than 60 kmh apply.

Objectives

RUR ECON OBJ 1 To promote rural economic development, recognising the need to advance the long term sustainable social and environmental development of rural areas and encouraging economic diversification and facilitating growth of rural based enterprises.

RUR ECON OBJ 2 To promote the growth of rural enterprises and activities that are resource dependent.

RUR ECON OBJ 3 To develop and support sustainable and economically efficient rural economies enhancing sectors such as agricultural and food, forestry, fishing and aquaculture, energy and extractive industries, the bio-economy, renewable energy, tourism, outdoor recreation and creative arts sector and facilitating diversification into alternative on-farm and off-farm activities, while protecting the natural landscape and built heritage.

RUR ECON OBJ 4 To identify and protect rural resources, such as locally and regionally important aquifers and water sources, from development which would prejudice their sustainable future usage.

RUR ECON OBJ 5 To support and promote certified organic farming and producers operating in the county including the facilitation of farmer's markets at appropriate locations.

RUR ECON OBJ 6 To increase collaboration initiatives by small artisan food producers to maximise its current and potential contribution to the food and agri-economy, culture, tourism and quality of life offer.

10.5 Agriculture

Leitrim is a very rural county with a diverse range of farming activity. Farmers in Co. Leitrim have a strong historical attachment to the land. A high number of people are committed to farming with a proactive interest in investing in its future. The structure of farming in Co. Leitrim is characterised by small-scale farms with low economic potential and asset value due to the poor quality of soils,

fragmentation and scale. The land area farmed in the county is 89,719 hectares made up of 3,656 no. farms (from 4,516 no. in 1991) with an average size of 24.5 hectares. 49.3% of farms are less than 20 hectares in size with only 8.4% being larger than 50 hectares in size. Enterprises with higher potential returns such as dairy farming have declined. There is significant dependence on lower income systems such as the production and sale of weanlings in the cattle sector and store lambs from hill farms in the sheep sector. The average income derived from farming in Co. Leitrim is the lowest in the country. Table 10.1 provides a statistical overview highlighting the continued importance of farming and the agri food industry to Co. Leitrim.

Leitrim County Council recognises the significant contribution that farming as a practice and the farming community as a whole make to the overall social and economic fabric of our county. This is reflected in the significant farming participate rate within the county. Moreover, this Plan acknowledges the significant inroads in farming diversification within the county in recent years through the engagement of various farming practices. Moreover, Co. Leitrim has a long tradition of livestock trading throughout the county with a number of active livestock marts in Manorhamilton, Drumshanbo, Mohill and Carrigallen facilitating the buying and selling of cattle, sheep and horses on a regular basis. Such livestock marts are recognised as a key economic driver in their respective locations providing a stable source of direct employment through employees of the marts but also indirectly through service providers within these mart towns to cater for participating farmers and livestock traders.

Agriculture in Co. Leitrim supports thousands of jobs in the rural economy, both directly in food & drink processing and also in the wider agri-industry, including input suppliers, agricultural contractors, jobs in auctioneering, transport and engineering and in accountancy, legal, veterinary and other advisory services. It is estimated that the number of food and drink processing jobs supported by agricultural output of county is in the order of 445 no. jobs.

The agriculture sector is a significant source of economic activity throughout the county. It contributes to exports, provides the raw materials for the food processing industry and has potential for providing more added value in the artisan food sector. The Council will continue to adopt a positive approach to applications for sustainable agricultural developments generally, subject to the protection of ground waters, residential amenities, designated habitats and the landscape.

Table 10.1: Importance of Farming and the Agri-food Industry in Leitrim

Farm Structure		**Farm Income and Direct Payments**	
Number of Farms	3,656	Farm Income	€20m
Average Farm Size	24.5 ha	Direct Payments	
Land area farmed	89,719 ha	Basic Payment	€18.9m
Numbers employed at farm level (FTE)	3,864	Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme	€7.2m
Stock on farm		Beef Data Genomics Programme	€1m
Number of dairy cows	1,971	Agri-environment payments	€7m
Number of other (beef) cows	26,497	Forestry Premium	€2.4m
Number of ewes	68,907	**Value of Output and Exports**	
Forestry		Value of Agricultural Output	€63m

Farm Structure		Farm Income and Direct Payments	
Land area under private forestry	14,297 ha	Value of Agricultural Exports arising from the agricultural output in county	€92m
Output from private forestry	22,489 m^3		

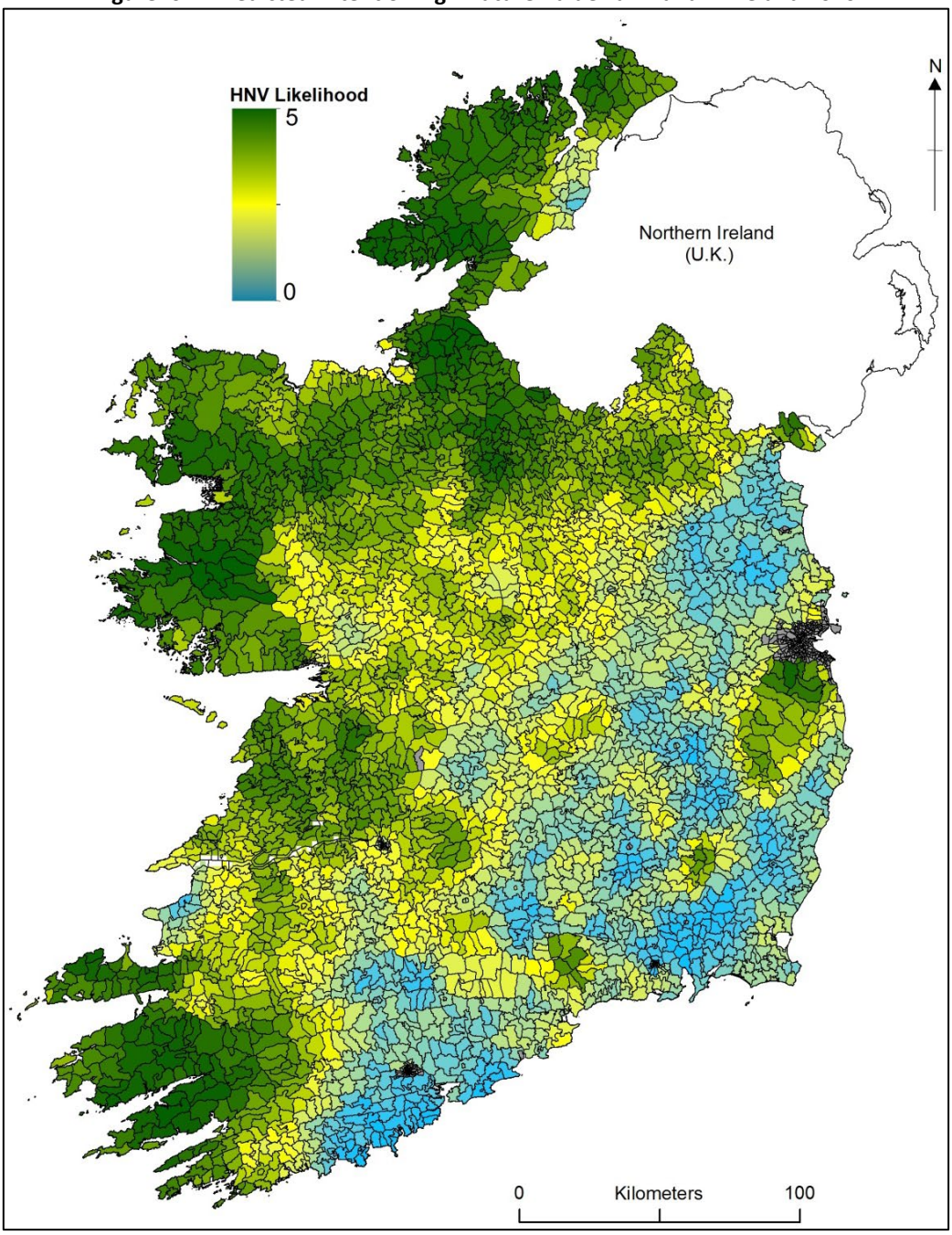
Source: IFA Value of Agricultural Factsheets

In recognition of the key role agriculture plays in the social and economic fabric of the county, agriculture formed a key element of the Special Policy Committee (SPC) Scheme 2019 – 2024 adopted by Leitrim County Council in 2019. Agriculture has been included as part of a dedicated SPC along with the complementary themes of environment and climate action in delivering more sustainable practices. In this regard, notable advances in sustainable agricultural development have taken place in the county. For example, the Leitrim Sustainable Agriculture Group (LSAG) was set up to promote environmental and sustainable farming practices in Leitrim. The group currently has 35 no. farming members from a variety of farming enterprises in Leitrim and is currently engaged in training on water quality and biodiversity issues and the long term goal is to make Leitrim farms viable and sustainable whilst enhancing the environment in which we live.

Leitrim County Council supports the role of agriculture and the agri-foods sector in continuing to drive economic development, supporting employment and creating sustainable rural jobs in the county.

High Nature Value (HNV) farmland is extensively managed farmland that has high biodiversity characteristics. This farmland is important for the conservation of semi-natural habitats and the plants and animals linked with them. Supporting this type of farmland will ensure high levels of farmland biodiversity, vibrant rural communities, high water, air and soil quality and resistance to flooding among other things. These farms occur most frequently in areas that are mountainous, or areas where natural constraints prevent intensification. Farming sustains the biodiversity of these landscapes and is integral to maintaining their high nature value. The extent of HNV farmland is Co. Leitrim is extensive.

Figure10.1: Predicted Extent of High Nature Value Farmland in Ireland 2016



Source: Catchments.ie

Whole Farm HNV occurs where the main grazing areas of farmlands are managed extensively and are dominated by peatland and semi-natural grasslands. Whilst often associated with upland farms that have peatland habitats such as blanket bog and heath, they may also be lowland farms dominated by species-rich wet or dry grasslands such as those in north Leitrim.

Partial HNV farmland has similar properties but for part of the farm only. Part of the farm (usually around 50%) has low stocking levels on semi-natural habitats, while part of the farm has agricultural grassland that can be farmed more intensively. These farms could have semi-natural grassland habitats such as wet grassland, dry calcareous grassland or commonage alongside improved agricultural grassland along with field boundaries such as hedgerows, drainage ditches, treelines,

stone walls or earth banks and maybe a pond or a patch of scrub or woodland. This type of farmland can occur where there is a mixture of grassland intensities in a landscape such as Co. Leitrim.

The Plan support Ireland's commitment to restore, preserve and enhance High Nature Value farmland in the Rural Development Programme. A greater appreciation of farmland nature value will assist our understanding of the impacts on farming practices/intensification on farmland biodiversity through, for example, land use change, climate change, or alternative scenarios for the agricultural sector.

Policies

AGR POL 1 To maintain a vibrant and healthy agricultural sector based on the principles of sustainable development whilst at the same time finding alternative employment in or close to rural areas to sustain rural communities.

AGR POL 2 To support and facilitate farm diversification including enterprise creation opportunities (added value food, renewable energy, etc.), organic food and agri-tourism enterprises including visitor accommodation and related activities such as open farms and health farms across the county subject to the retention of the holding for primarily agricultural use and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

AGR POL 3 To support agri-tourism in the form of visitor accommodation and other agri-tourism related activities such as open farms, health farms, etc.

AGR POL 4 To work with relevant stakeholders in identifying and protecting from inappropriate forms of development areas of High Nature Value agricultural land in the county to include consideration of future climate scenarios and water quality and availability for agricultural purposes.

AGR POL 5 To support and encourage farm-based renewable energy technologies as a means of improving the shift toward a low-carbon and climate resilient economy in the agriculture, food and forestry sectors.

AGR POL 6 To support and encourage the participation and development of careers in agriculture for our young people and support the progression of land leasing and farm partnership schemes.

Objective

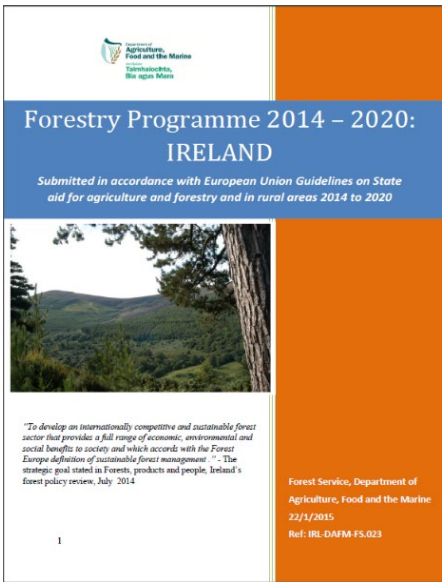
AGR OBJ 1 To facilitate the development of agriculture while ensuring that natural waters, wildlife habitats and conservation areas are protected from pollution.

10.6 Forestry

10.6.1 National Policy

The national policy and ambition on forestry is extremely clear as set out in the Forestry Programme 2014 – 2020 which is presently being reviewed with a new Forest Programme being finalised in 2023. The Forest Programme seeks "*to develop an internationally competitive and sustainable forest sector that provides a full range of economic, environmental and social benefits to society and which accords with the principles of sustainable forest management".*

To realise this ambition, there are a series of financial supports in place of up to 100% set up grants for establishment and maintenance of new forests and woodlands including fencing. The grant aid and premiums on offer depend on the species planted with higher rates available for deciduous trees.



The Climate Action Plan 2021 provides for a number of actions relating to forestry development and recognises the important role forestry provides as the single largest land-based climate change mitigation measure available to Ireland. In addition, the Plan recognises the increasing potential of forestry in providing sustainable substitute products for conventional carbon-heavy construction materials such as concrete, brick and steel. Relevant actions provided in the Climate Action Plan 2021 relating to forestry development include:

- the implementation of 'Project Woodland', the government initiative to develop a shared approach for trees, woods and forests and to inform the preparation of the new Forestry Strategy and new Forestry Programme for publication in 2023 (Actions 364 and 365);
- Implement Forestry Programme 2014-2022 (includes 2-year extension) (Action 366);
- Increase the level of afforestation to meet targets (Action 367); and
- Increase output of forestry licences to meet demand (Action 368).

It is notable that, aside from Action 367 which identifies the planting of 1,500ha of native woodland on Bord na Móna cut-over-bogs and unlike the previous Climate Action Plan 2019, no other planting target is provided in the Climate Action Plan 2021, with the presumption that the new Forestry Programme to be published in 2023 will identify such targets.

Forestry can play an important role in helping with climate change mitigation, through carbon sequestration and the provision of renewable fuels and raw materials. Forestry is a major carbon sink and afforestation is the most significant mitigation option that is available to Ireland's land use sector. Ireland is committed to the practice of Sustainable Forest Management, which, under the Helsinki and Lisbon Agreements, means '*the stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way and at a rate that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regenerative capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions as local, national and global levels and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems*'. A key objective of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's 'Growing for the Future – A Strategic Plan for the Development of the Forestry Sector in Ireland' (1996) has remained '*to develop forestry to a scale and in a manner which maximises its contribution to national economic and social well-being on a sustainable basis and which is compatible with the protection of the environment*'.

10.6.2 Forestry in Leitrim

Forestry in Co. Leitrim has the highest ratio of forestry planted of any county in the State at 18.9% in 2017 compared to the national average level of 11%. Preliminary results from the 4th National Forestry Inventory (NFI), completed in 2022, indicates that the extent of forest cover in the county in 2021 has increased to 20.1% (32,039ha), with Leitrim remaining the county with the highest percentage of forest cover, compared to a national average level of 11.6%[29]. Notwithstanding these preliminary

[29] '*Forest Statistics Ireland 2022*', Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (2022)

results, it should be noted that at the time of writing the 3rd edition of the NFI, conducted in 2017, remained the most comprehensive dataset on national forest cover.

The soils in Co. Leitrim are generally well-suited to commercial forestry plantation development as they are rich in mineral gley, surface water gley, peaty gley and brown poolzolic soils. The favourable soil and climatic conditions result in relatively rapid growth rates of coniferous species where the strength and quality of the wood is less than where it grows at a slower rate. Furthermore, poor root penetration can often lead to windthrow (dependent on elevation aspect and exposure) with its associated environmental consequences including aquatic issues arising.

Private plantation forests accounted for just over half (51.3%) of the forest area in the county in 2017 with the remaining (48.7%) consisting of publicly owned forestry managed for the State by Coillte. The extent of these lands is shown in Figure 10.2. This is qualified by noting that an additional 846 hectares of lands have been planted since 2017 up to and including 2021 based on the *Forest Statistics Ireland 2022* report from DAFM.

Figure 10.2: Extent of Forest Cover in Co. Leitrim 2017

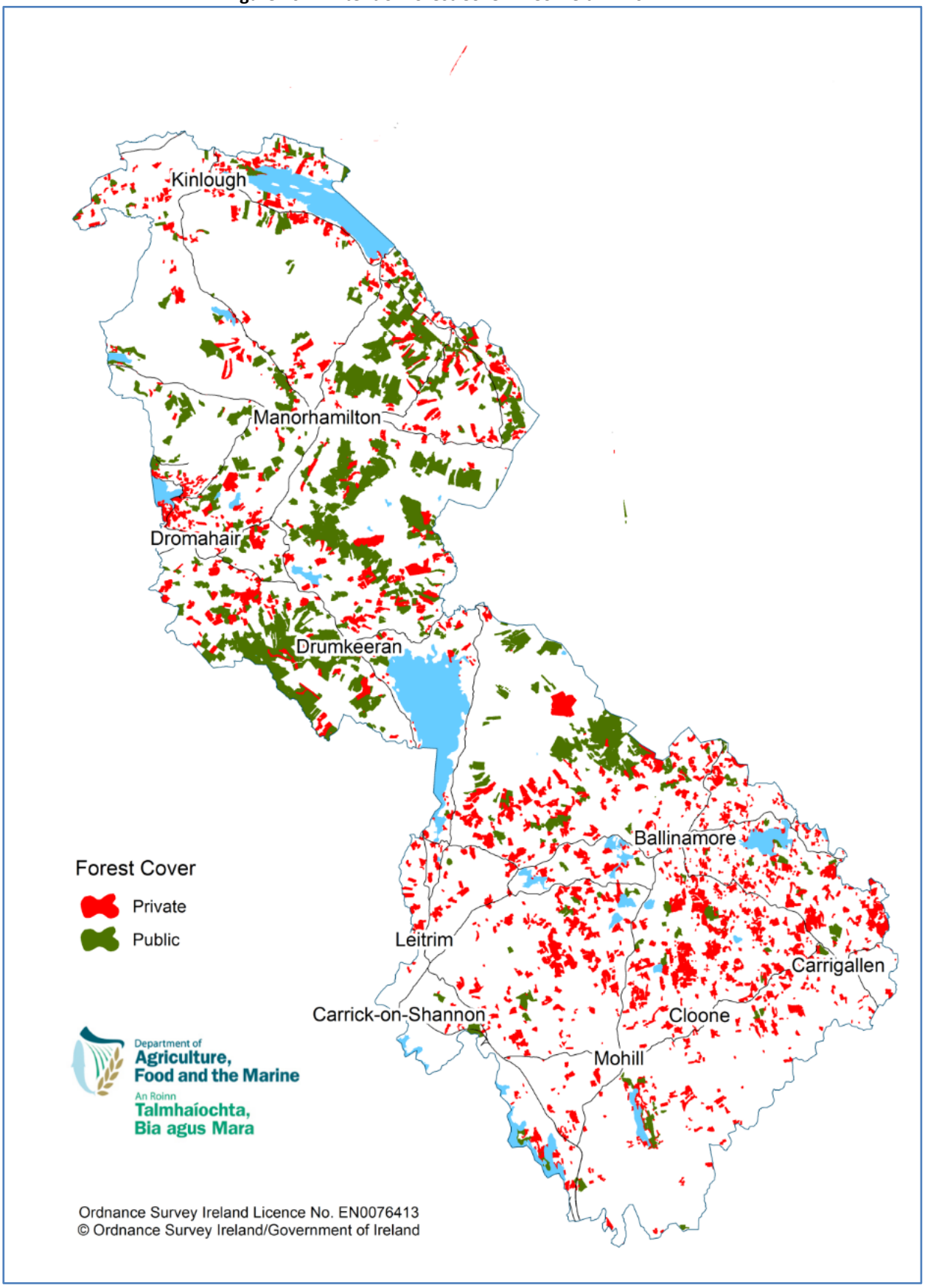
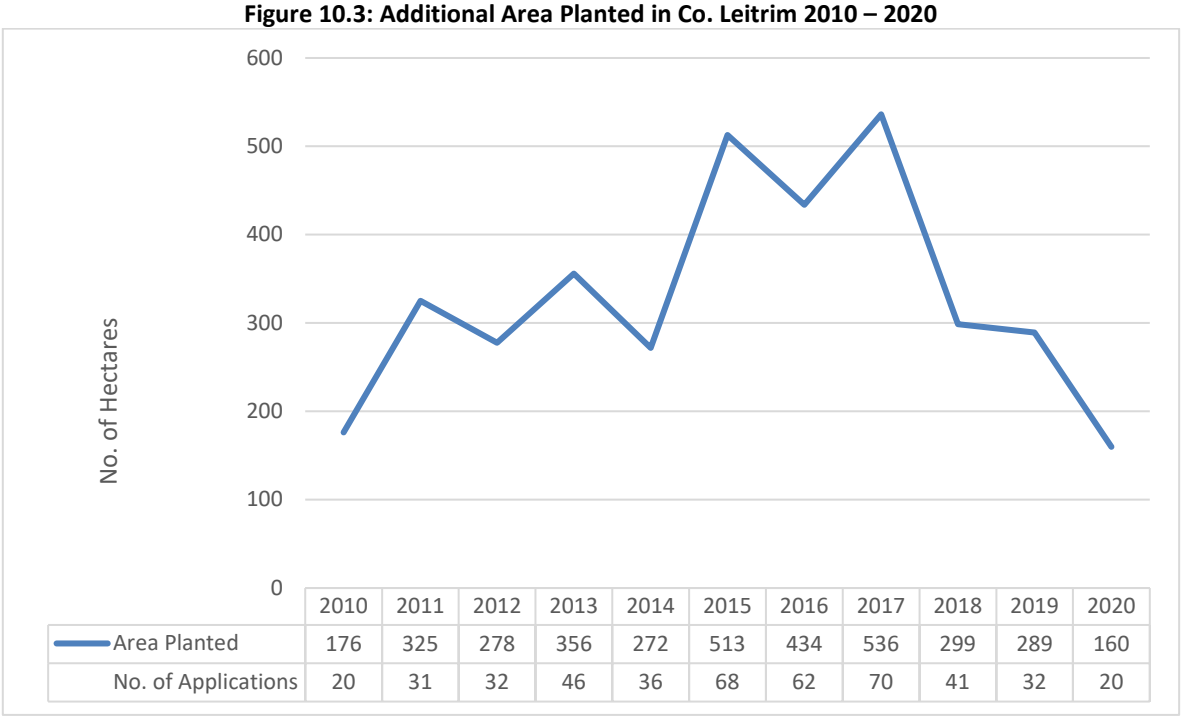


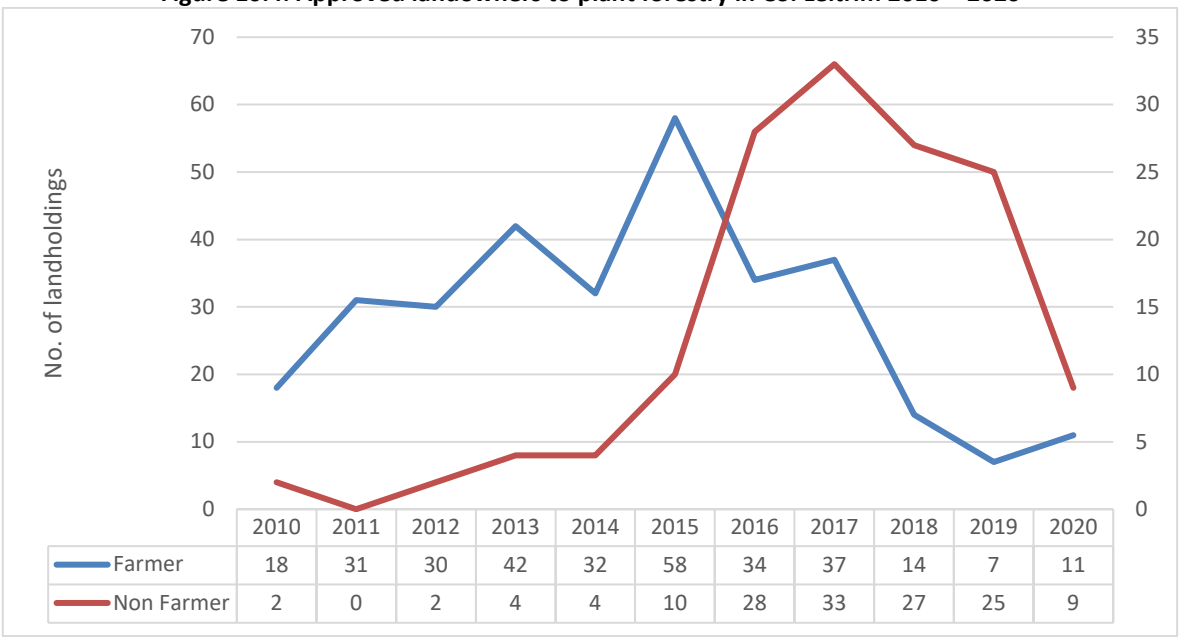
Figure 10.3: Additional Area Planted in Co. Leitrim 2010 – 2020



	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Area Planted	176	325	278	356	272	513	434	536	299	289	160
No. of Applications	20	31	32	46	36	68	62	70	41	32	20

Source: Forest Service, Department of Agriculture

Figure 10.4: Approved landowners to plant forestry in Co. Leitrim 2010 – 2020



	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Farmer	18	31	30	42	32	58	34	37	14	7	11
Non Farmer	2	0	2	4	4	10	28	33	27	25	9

Source: Forest Service, Department of Agriculture

In terms of species, conifers account for 70% of the total forest area in the county. Sitka spruce is the dominant species accounting for 61.3% of the total forest area which is higher than the national figure of 51%. The growth rates of trees in the county for conifers is high – for Sitka spruce in private stands, growth rates are estimated to be 20% higher than the national average. Native species account for 30.7% of the forest area in the county which is slightly higher than the national figure of 26.6%. Birch is the dominant native species accounting for 10.7% with alder accounting for 4.8%. The figures in this paragraph are extracted from the report 'The Socio-Economic Impact of Forestry in Co. Leitrim', Dr. Áine Ní Dhubháin *et al*, (2019) School of Agriculture and Food Science, University College Dublin.

Figure 10.3 indicates a steady rise in the extent of land planted in Co. Leitrim from 176 hectares of land in 2010 to 536 hectares in 2017. The number of landholdings in 2017 was 70 and the average holding planted was 7.7 hectares/19 acres (Figure 10.4). It is also noted that there has been a marked reduction in the number of applications approved for planting since 2018. It should be qualified that Figure 10.3 relates to lands actually planted and should not be confused with the extent of lands licensed for afforestation by the Forest Service. For instance, in 2021, 98 hectares of lands were planted for commercial forestry whilst 236 hectares of lands was licensed for planting. The license holder has 3 years from the date of a license to plant.

Of particular note from Figure 10.4 is that in 2015 the number of investors or non farmers who were approved to plant forestry in Co. Leitrim exceeded the number of farmers who were approved to plant part of their own lands. This resulted from changes in the grant aid provided by the Department of Agriculture which now encouraged investors into the sector to assist in reaching the national target set out in the Forestry Programme. In each subsequent year since 2015, the number of investors or non farmers approved for planting has exceeded the number of farmers approved to plant their own lands. This may have included farmers from outside the county who have acquired lands in this county as an investment or as a means of offsetting carbon from their main farming activities. This level of information was not available to the Local Authority.

Notwithstanding the thrust of Government policy, the extensive volume of afforestation in Co. Leitrim raises some concerns. Once planted for forestry, land is unlikely ever to revert to alternative agricultural use, reducing the possibility of expanding or consolidating neighbouring farms. Extensive and dense tree planting can lead to an oppressive and featureless landscape, increasing the sense of isolation of remaining residents, while clear-felled forests leave an ugly scar on the landscape. The harvesting of timber which often necessitates the construction of extensive lengths of forest access roads can put great stress on the road network, with minor roads bearing loads far beyond their design capacity. It is argued by the haulage sector that the creation of forest access roads can have a far greater impact on the surface of local roads than the extraction of timber. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine have indicated in their Forest Statistics Report (July 2022) that between 2011 -2021, the construction of 42.8km of private forest roads were grant aided in Co. Leitrim[30]. The Local Authority is left to rely on the provisions of the Roads Act 1993, as amended, to seek to recover the cost of damage to local roads but with very limited success.

However, it is important to recognise the value of forestry related employment with 560 jobs[31] associated directly and indirectly with forestry/wood processing in Leitrim (2018). All elements of the commercial plantation forestry value chain are present in Co. Leitrim – forestry contractors and management companies, forest harvesting and haulage (McMorrows Haulage Ltd., Dowra), saw mills and manufacturing (Crowes, Mohill), firewood (McMorrows, Dowra) and manufacturing (Masonite, Drumsna and Merenda, Manorhamilton). It is also acknowledged that the lands planted with commercial plantations often replaces land that was previously farmed and that there is a potential displacement employment effect as a result of lands being planted. In addition to the socio-economic costs, the impact of the loss of agricultural land on sustaining a rural farming population does need careful consideration at a national policy level. The results of the Census of Agriculture 2020 were not available to inform the preparation of the Plan.

Of the total amount of commercial forestry that is clear felled each year (979 hectares licensed to be clear felled in 2021), the CO^2 captured during the tree life remains locked in the wood until the product decays or is burnt. This excludes consideration of the CO^2 expended in the clear felling and thinning of commercial forestry, transporting and processing the timber product and the burning of wood

[30] '*Forest Statistics Ireland 2022'*, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (2022)

[31] This figure was provided to the Local Authority by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

products for energy all of which causes emissions of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere whilst clear felling may potentially result in significant carbon losses from the soil.

The nature of commercial plantation forestry in Co. Leitrim is such that until a more detailed study is undertaken of the previous use of the lands planted / licensed to be planted regarding their former carbon sequestration function to include peatlands and the environmental cost of harvesting to include creation of extensive forest access roads that the true climate change mitigation impact is unquantified. Equally, there has to be an acknowledgement of the addition of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere from the burning of wood products.

10.6.3 Afforestation and the Planning System

Afforestation, as a land use, is outside the control of the Planning Authority with the exception of the creation and material widening of accesses onto the national road system. Initial afforestation of lands is classified as exempted development which does not require planning permission. When an Environmental Impact Assessment Report is required for planting of more than 50 hectares, planning permission is required. To date, no planning application has been lodged to this Authority for the planting of trees. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is the authority responsible for consent applications dealing with planting and felling of forestry, creation and widening of access to forestry on non-national roads and creation of forest roads. Certain categories of consent applications to the Forest Service, being part of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, for planting or felling, along with forest access roads and accesses to forestry, are referred to the Planning Authority for its observations but it is the Forest Service, as competent authority, who ultimately decides upon the submitted consent application and how much weight to attribute to the Planning Authority's comments. This Council would welcome a revision of the Planning legislative provision that would bring forestry plantations under the control of the planning system.

10.6.4 Afforestation and the Landscape

The Landscape Character Assessment (refer to Section 11.15) has identified forestry along with wind turbines as the greatest forces of change in altering the character of our landscape. Commercial forestry plantations tend to be a dominating landcover and have an eroding impact in scenic areas of the county including Lough Melvin. The original lakeside landscape character is much eroded as a result. The review of the Landscape Character Assessment noted an increase in commercial coniferous forestry especially apparent in the farmed lowlands south of Slieve Anierin and similar plantations of smaller scale occurring in the uplands in particular the lower slopes of Dough Mountain. The Landscape Character Assessment states that the extent of additional forestry land use "*is controversial due to the resultant change and negative impact on the County's landscapes*". In Landscape Character Type 3 '*Wooded Lakeside Farmland'*, the extent of the woody vegetation cover is such that the landscape is quite visually enclosed in many places. In Landscape Character Type 5 '*Moorland Plateaus'*, patches of commercial coniferous forestry feature in this landscape and in some locations, these plantations dominate and have eroded the moorland landscape character. The plantation of commercial coniferous forestry also tends to be highly visible at higher elevations. In Landscape Character Type 9 '*Drumlin Farmland'*, patches of commercial coniferous forestry are dispersed throughout this landscape, some areas being fairly extensive in size. The plantation of coniferous forest is indicated as being a frequent feature and has become influential in the local landscape character.

It is noted that there is an area of deciduous woodland at O'Donnell's Rock which is one of only a few naturally developing woodlands on the Leitrim limestone mountains. This is of particular interest as it demonstrates the natural succession of this woodland type on steep ground.

In relation to landscape quality, condition and sensitivity, the Landscape Character Assessment indicates that the condition of the landscape is adversely affected in places by commercial coniferous forestry. Extensive areas of commercial coniferous forestry have resulted in the loss of hedgerows, pasture and field patterns and thus, key landscape characteristics have become eroded. Plantation of coniferous forestry also obscures stretches of the Black Pig's Dyke and tree roots may threaten delicate archaeological remains. Where large forestry blocks exist on undulating landform, large scale felling, leaves significant areas of the landscape scarred. In comparison, in areas where commercial coniferous forestry is absent, the landscape is in relatively good condition as evidenced by the strong field patterns defined by a dense hedgerow structure.

Following the completion of the review of the Landscape Character Assessment, of designated landscapes and of protected views and prospects, Leitrim County Council commissioned RPS to then undertake a landscape capacity assessment for future commercial forestry planting in Co. Leitrim. The purpose of the landscape capacity assessment is to inform the policy framework for forestry which will be contained in the County Development Plan 2023-2029. The objective of the study is to determine the suitably or capacity of landscapes to accommodate further commercial forestry plantations. The assessment has been undertaken in order to provide clear guidance in the light of recent debate on the issue of commercial forestry in Co. Leitrim and the need to achieve a balance between the national policy arena, the demands for commercial forestry plantations and conservation of landscape character and visual amenity including residential visual amenity. This report titled '*Landscape Capacity Study for Commercial Forestry - Co. Leitrim*' (March 2022) will form Appendix VI of the final Plan when adopted.

The report primarily outlines a baseline for each Landscape Character Type (LCT) followed by a sensitivity assessment of each to commercial forestry. The capacity of each LCT to accommodate commercial forestry is outlined, along with design guidance.

The following table is extracted from the report and is considered the conclusion of the Capacity Study.

Table 30.2: Landscape Sensitivity - Study Findings

ID	LCT Name	Sensitivity	Capacity
LCT 1	Coastal Plain	Very High	None
LCT 2	Coastal Drumlin Farmland	High	Limited
LCT 3	Wooded Lakeside Farmland	High	Limited
LCT 4	Cliffed Uplands and Landslips	Very High	None
LCT 5	Moorland Plateau	Very High	None
LCT 6	Moorland Hills	High	Very limited capacity at higher elevations and on steep sided mountain slopes.
LCT 7	Upland Farmland and Foothills	Medium to High	Yes
LCT 8	Valley Farmland	Low	Yes
LCT 9	Drumlin Farmland	Low	Yes
LCT 10	Major Loughs	N/A	N/A
LCT 11	Drumlin Loughs and Stream Margins	Very High	None
LCT 12	River Floodplain	Very High	None
LCT 13	Low Limestone Outcrops	Very High	None

LCT 14	Drumlin Farmland with Peat Bogs	Low	Yes
LCT 15	Undulating Hill Farmland	Low	Yes
LCT 16	Steep Mountain Peaks	Very High	None
LCT 17	Tabular Hills	Very High	None

At the time of making this Plan, a further review of the base mapping which is informed the *'Landscape Capacity Assessment for Commercial Forestry – Co. Leitrim'* is underway in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and with Coillte whose assistance is acknowledged. This may alter the capacity of certain Landscape Character Types to accommodate commercial forestry planting as summarised in Table 10.2. The definitive capacity will be that stated in the most recent update of the *'Landscape Capacity Assessment for Commercial Forestry – Co. Leitrim'*.

10.6.5 Forestry Policy Framework

Leitrim County Council supports a transition away from the current monoculture coniferous forestry model dependent on clear felling to one that is consistent with climate change, biodiversity, enhances community life and supports the local economy. The Plan aims to support the sustainable growth of forestry as an economic activity and acknowledges its potential role as a climate mitigation measure whilst affording maximum protection to the rural environment, residential amenity and to the receiving landscape. The Plan will seek to maximise the employment creation potential of timber grown locally and also recognise the importance of the forestry value chain to our local economy. The development of woodchip production from thinnings, for alternative energy provision, will be encouraged as an on-farm scale activity.

The Council also recognises that forests and woodlands can have a significant recreational and amenity value in the local community such as Coillte's Glenfarne Demesne and Derrycarne forests. While walking is the most popular activity, forest recreation embraces other specialised activities including orienteering, mountain biking, horse riding and fishing. The Council are keen to further exploit opportunities in this area. In line with Forest Service Guidelines, the Council will support the development of roads, tracks, and purpose built trail and cycle tracks in selected locations. The Council will also support and encourage the carbon neutral harvesting of forestry.

Equally, the protection of rural communities is also an integral part of the policy framework of this Plan including the protection of agriculture and of farming practices and livelihoods. The introduction of forestry into an area can have potentially negative impacts on visual, social and environmental grounds and thus must be appropriate in terms of their scale and location.

This Plan cannot seek to remove a statutory entitlement, i.e. exempted development status of afforestation as it is beyond the ability of a development plan to do so. The Plan can however provide the evidential basis for the Planning Authority to contribute to the forest consent process of the Forest Service through comment on forest consent applications that are referred by the Forest Service to the Council for comment and also give a commitment that the Local Authority intends to take a more proactive role over the life of the Plan where a proposed forestry plantation is at variance with the policy framework contained therein.

Landscape capacity to accommodate further commercial plantations is a key consideration for Leitrim County Council in deciding whether or where forestry expansion occurs. The Council generally favours deciduous over coniferous planting on the basis that native species of deciduous trees sit more comfortably in the Co. Leitrim landscape and also have more benefits for biodiversity.

The Local Authority position will be informed by the recommendations contained in the Landscape Capacity Study for Commercial Forestry (March 2022), or as updated during the life of this Development Plan, in our responses to all applications for Tree Planting and Tree Felling referred to the Local Authority by the Forest Service.

Responses from Leitrim County Council on Applications Submitted to the Forest Service for Tree Planting Applications

The following stated responses to consent applications to the Forest Service for Tree Planting by the Local Authority is qualified on the basis of such commercial plantations comprising primarily of coniferous plantations although it should not be assumed that no such concerns would arise for an exclusive broadleaf plantation.

In the Landscape Character Types which have been determined as having a very high or high sensitivity to further commercial forestry plantations and no capacity or very limited capacity for further plantations, the Local Authority will object to all further Tree Planting applications on the basis of potential adverse and cumulative impacts to the sensitive receiving landscape.

In the Landscape Character Types which have been determined as having a 'high' or 'medium to high' sensitivity to further commercial forestry plantations and very limited or limited capacity for further plantations, the Local Authority will object to such applications where the siting of such plantations is recommended for exclusion in the *Landscape Capacity Study for Commercial Forestry* on the basis of the determinantal impact to the sensitive receiving landscape.

For the remaining Landscape Character Types which have been determined as having a medium to low sensitivity to further commercial forestry plantations and capacity for further plantations, the Local Authority will object only to those limited areas therein where the siting of such plantations is recommended for avoidance in the *Landscape Capacity Study for Commercial Forestry*.

In all instances, regard will be given to the siting and design guidance for each Landscape Character Type which have been determined as having some level of capacity for further commercial plantations. Furthermore, any proposed commercial forestry plantation must not have a detrimental impact on a designated Protected View or Prospect identified in this Plan.

Afforestation should be avoided on lands containing deep peat soils and where the land slope is steep, especially where the latter slopes towards a water body. Moreover, the Local Authority discourages and is opposed to the planting and replanting of commercial forestry on peat lands.

Policy **AGR POL 4** seeks to identify and protect from inappropriate forms of development areas of High Nature Value agricultural land in the county to include consideration of future climate scenarios and water quality and availability for agricultural purposes. The impact of forestry plantations on such identified areas of High Nature Value farmlands needs to be carefully considered.

The Council will also give consideration to the designation of North Leitrim, Sliabh an Iarainn and its hinterland as a Landscape Conservation Area in conjunction with **TOUR OBJ 3** which seeks to investigate the feasibility and potential of this area as a National Park/Recreational Area designation. The designation of this area as a Landscape Conservation Area may allow for exempted development to be brought under the control of the Local Authority subject to the prescription of the Minister of such development.

Policies

FOR POL 1 To seek the sustainable development of the forestry sector in Co. Leitrim in a manner which maximises its contribution to, and does not detract from, the economic and social wellbeing of the county and which is compatible with the protection of the environment including the avoidance of likely significant effects on European Sites (SACs and SPAs) and other designated and non- designated habitats and sensitive landscapes.

FOR POL 2 To encourage sustainable forestry development, which is established, managed and harvested in accordance with national and European law and standards set by the Forest Service and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and in particular by the *'Environmental Requirements for Afforestation, Felling and Reforestation Standards'*.

FOR POL 3 To have regard to the recommendations contained in the *Landscape Capacity Study for Commercial Forestry (March 2022)* or as updated during the life of this Development Plan which forms Appendix VI to this Plan in informing the responses submitted by the Local Authority to all relevant applications for Tree Planting and Tree Felling licenses to the Forest Service or subsequent appeals to the Forestry Appeals Committee. This will be line with the content of Section 10.6.5.

FOR POL 4 To encourage the provision of public access in conjunction with relevant stakeholders to new and existing forests through walking and bridle paths, recreational areas and other similar facilities.

FOR POL 5 To actively participate in the consenting process by the Forest Service on applications seeking to plant additional land for afforestation or tree felling which mandates replanting in landscapes sensitive to commercial plantations or other environmental grounds to ensure that the policies and objectives contained in this Plan are secured.

Objectives

FOR OBJ 1 To work in conjunction with the relevant key stakeholders to develop and expand suitable industries dependent on the considerable timber resource of the county such as fuel-wood production, sawmills and stake producing facilities.

FOR OBJ 2 To co-operate with the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to encourage and promote the preparation and implementation of an Indicative Forest Strategy for the county consistent with the policy framework of this Plan.

FOR OBJ 3 To give consideration to the designation of North Leitrim, Sliabh an Iarainn and its hinterland as a Landscape Conservation Area in conjunction with TOUR OBJ 3 which seeks to investigate the feasibility and potential of this area as a National Park/Recreational Area designation.

FOR OBJ 4 To actively participate in any Regional Fora established by the North West Regional Assembly to ensure sustainable land management of the forested area of the region.

FOR OBJ 5 To actively make representations to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in the review of the Irish Forestry regime and the any subsequent development of a new national Forestry Strategy.

10.6.6 Trees and Hedgerows

Trees, woodlands and hedgerows are an important natural and landscape asset within the county and provide a biodiversity function in the provision of food, habitat and shelter in exposed areas, and also act as pollution filters and carbon sinks. Trees are valuable natural resources that improve the quality of life in our communities and make our neighbourhoods greener and more livable, while providing many other social and ecological benefits. With an increasing need for greener and more sustainable urban communities, there is also a growing awareness of the value of trees in settlements. There are only 2 no. Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) adopted in the county. The Council will consult with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine advisors regarding its recommendations on Tree Felling Licence applications.

Ash Dieback disease is caused by the *Chalara fraxinea* fungus. The disease causes leaf loss and crown dieback in affected trees, and it can lead to tree death. The disease was first identified in Ireland in a plantation in Co. Leitrim in Autumn 2012 on plants imported from continental Europe. The disease is now prevalent throughout most of the island of Ireland and is likely to cause the death of the majority of the ash trees over the next two decades. The decline poses a risk to landowners and others for both public safety and deterioration of woodland cover and the ecological, social and economic benefits these woodlands provide. Leitrim County Council supports the measures underway by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Teagasc and Council for Forest Research and Development in the development of an ash breeding programme identifying and planting species of ash that are tolerant to the disease.

Hedgerows are a characteristic feature of the rural landscape and provide an important habitat for many species and act as a wildlife corridor for small mammals, birds and bat species. The removal of existing roadside boundaries, except to the extent that this is needed for a new entrance and traffic safety purposes, shall be resisted where at all possible. Where disruption is unavoidable the replacement with '*like for like*' boundary hedges and trees will be required. Elaborate walls and gates in rural areas will be discouraged. The Council encourages the augmentation of existing hedgerows and stands of trees and the planting of new trees and hedgerows, using native broad leaf species, where possible of local provenance, at the boundaries of new housing developments and around new housing, to create shelter and help absorb/assimilate the new development into the receiving landscape.

Policies

TREE POL 1 To require the submission of landscape plans, where appropriate, to accompany planning applications for rural development proposals prepared by competent professionals and to promote the use of native trees for boundary treatment and shelter belts.

TREE POL 2 To retain and protect significant stands / lengths of existing trees/hedgerows/woodlands, and seek increased planting of native trees, where appropriate, in new developments.

TREE POL 3 To protect and preserve existing hedgerows in new developments and where their removal is necessary to seek their replacement with new hedgerows of native species and of native provenance indigenous to the area.

Objectives

TREE OBJ 1 To consider the use of Tree Preservation Orders for the preservation of any tree, trees or group of trees or woodland of special amenity or environmental value.

TREE OBJ 2 To support the measures being undertaken by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Teagasc, Council for Forest Research and Development (COFORD) dealing with the effects of Ash Dieback disease and in the development of an ash breeding programme identifying and planting species of ash that are tolerant to disease.

10.7 Extractive Industry and Building Materials Production

The county contains a variety of raw materials critical to the construction industry in the form of sand, gravel and stone reserves. The potential of these resources to underpin construction output and provide employment and economic growth in the local and regional economy is recognised as is the need to exploit such resources in an environmentally sound and sustainable manner. The Council recognises that the aggregates (stone, sand and gravel) and concrete products industry contribute to significantly to the economic development of the county. The Council accepts the need for extractive industries in terms of the supply of aggregate materials, essential building materials for future development by the construction sector, delivering transport infrastructure projects, and for the export market. By their nature, aggregates can only be worked where they occur. The cost of haulage affects economic competitiveness in this sector. It is equally accepted that extractive industries by their nature can give rise to detrimental environmental and residential amenity effects including traffic generation, vibration, dust, noise, water pollution, visual intrusion and loss of ground water supplies. The impact on the road network of the county can be significant. There is therefore an acknowledgment of the importance of these industries to the economic growth strategy of this Plan but equally an acknowledgement for the potential for conflict in the operation of these industries with wider environmental issues. As a result, such proposed developments and intensifications of existing developments requires careful consideration.

The Council recognises therefore that the aggregates and concrete products industries have a particularly sensitive role in relation to the environment and as such any development of aggregate extraction, processing, delivery and associated concrete production must be carried out in a manner which minimises adverse effects on the environment and the local community. Applications for planning permission will require to demonstrate their commitment to good environmental management through the implementation of a recognised environmental code of practice. Transportation of extracted material from the source must be carried out without causing nuisance to other road users. Developers must ensure that on completion of operations that the site of the former quarry is left in a satisfactory state and be of beneficial use.

In the assessment of planning applications relating to the extractive industry, including related buildings and restoration/rehabilitation of existing quarries, the Council will have regard to the policies/objectives for the specific landscape character of the area. (Appendix VI Landscape Character Assessment refers.)

The wide distribution of resources is recognised and known deposits and sites were mapped by The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) in 2004 and updated in 2014. The GSI Aggregate Potential Mapping illustrates potential crushed rock and sand and gravel deposits and assesses the interactions between the development of these resources and certain land uses such as bore holes and events such as landslides. Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Quarries and Ancillary Activities were published by the former Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) in 2004.

The Council has undertaken an examination of quarries within its administrative area in accordance with section 261A of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended to determine whether development was carried out which would have required Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) or Appropriate Assessment (AA) having regard to the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive and the Habitats Directive.

13 no. quarries sought registration under the Section 261 Registration of Quarries process in Co. Leitrim. At present, there are 7 no. quarries active in Co. Leitrim, all of which were registered and 3 no. of which are operating with the benefit of planning permission whilst also having additional conditions imposed as part of the Section 261 registration process. The remaining 4 no. active quarries were operational pre October 1st 1964 and did not require planning permission but are subject to operating conditions that were imposed as part of the Section 261 registration process. 5 no. quarries were declared as having been abandoned. The subsequent Section 261A Review of Quarries required 4 no. of the registered active quarries to obtain Substitute Consent. 3 no. of these subsequently obtained Substitute Consent and 1 no. choose to cease operations due to been worked out.

Policies

AGG RES POL 1 To facilitate adequate supplies of aggregate resources to meet the future growth needs of the county and the wider region while addressing key environmental, traffic and social impacts and details of rehabilitation.

AGG RES POL 2 To facilitate the further development of the extractive industry by permitting the continuation and extension of existing quarries and the development of new quarries, where such development does not adversely impact on human health, the receiving environment including the visual quality of the landscape, existing infrastructure, adjoining land uses and the amenity value of neighbouring lands and of adjoining residential development.

AGG RES POL 3 To facilitate the exploitation of the county's natural resources and to exercise appropriate control over the types of development, including rural housing, taking place in areas containing proven deposits, whilst also ensuring that such developments are carried out in a manner which would not unduly impinge on the visual amenity or environmental quality in the area.

AGG RES POL 4 To ensure that projects associated with the extractive industry carry out screening for Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) of the E.U. Habitats Directive and comply with all relevant environmental legislation as required.

AGG RES POL 5 To ensure that the extractive industry and associated development minimises adverse impacts on the road network in the area and that the full cost of road improvements, including during operations and at time of closure, which are necessary to facilitate those industries are borne by the industry itself.

AGG RES POL 6 To ensure that all existing workings are rehabilitated to suitable land uses and that all future extraction activities allow for the rehabilitation of pits and proper land use management. The biodiversity value of the site should be considered in the first instance when preparing restoration plans. Where land filling is proposed, inert material is the preferred method. Each planning application shall be considered on a case by case basis and where relevant will be dealt with under the relevant regional Waste Management Plan.

AGG RES POL 7 To ensure that development for aggregates/mineral extraction, processing and associated processes does not significantly impact in the following areas:

a) Special Areas of Conservation and/or Special Protection Area
b) Natural Heritage Areas and Proposed Natural Heritage Areas
c) other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna
d) areas of significant archaeological potential
e) in the vicinity of a recorded National Monument
f) sensitive landscapes
g) County Geological Sites and/or sites of geological importance.

AGG RES POL 8 To ensure that the extraction of minerals and aggregates protects to the maximum practicable extent the visual quality of the receiving landscape and do not adversely affect the environment or adjoining existing land uses.

AGG RES POL 9 The use of the following chemicals as a processing agent shall not be permitted as part of any proposed processing operation located above or adjacent to surface or ground waters, or which could potentially impact such waters regardless of their location - mercury, cyanide or cyanide compounds, breakdown products of cyanide, or sulfuric acid. These present an unreasonable risk of environmental harm due to the toxicity of such chemicals and their demonstrated potential to cause damage to the environment.

10.7.1 Unconventional Gas Exploration and Extraction

The then County Development Plan 2015-2021 was prepared and adopted at a time when proposals for unconventional oil/gas exploration and extraction projects/operations within Co. Leitrim and its surrounds were under consideration. It was a strategic goal of the then County Development Plan to adopt the '*precautionary principle*' in respect of development where significant environmental implications are involved. Further to this, the Council wished to safeguard and nurture the unspoilt/green image and reputation of Co. Leitrim and the health of its present and future communities, centred on the rural characteristics of the county, agricultural activity, the landscape and its environmentally sensitive lands and water bodies – both surface and groundwater. A policy framework was developed around these principles which prohibited the development of unconventional oil/gas exploration and extraction projects/operations within Co. Leitrim.

Since the existing Development Plan was adopted and came into effect in early 2015, the Petroleum and Other Minerals Development (Prohibition of Onshore Hydraulic Fracturing) Act, 2017 (Number 15 of 2017) was enacted. This Act prohibits the exploration for and extraction of onshore petroleum by means of hydraulic fracturing. The Act was commenced on its date of enactment (6th July 2017). It is no longer considered necessary to include a policy framework within this Plan dealing with proposals for unconventional oil/gas exploration and extraction projects/operations within Co. Leitrim when

such proposals cannot be approved within the regulatory system now in place in Ireland which policy this Council fully supports.

11 HERITAGE & BIODIVERSITY

11.1 Introduction

The unique and diverse built, natural and cultural heritage of the county is key to Leitrim's identity and sense of place. Heritage is a key component of quality of life in our towns, villages and rural communities. Our unique heritage is also an intrinsic part of the character and attractiveness of the county and is a catalyst in attracting tourism and investment. Landscapes, drumlins, rivers, woodlands, hedgerows, geology, plants and animals are all part of our natural heritage. Archaeological sites and many other buildings and structures such as houses, shops, churches, bridges and mills are features of our built heritage. Within this great variety of building types and uses are structures of significance and distinctive character that are deemed worthy of protection. Our cultural heritage includes aspects of heritage such as traditions, practices, knowledge and skills, which are an expression of our distinctive culture.

The Council, in its capacity as Planning Authority and through the mechanism of the Development Plan, is one of the key agencies responsible for the protection of the natural and built environment. At a time of rapid social, economic and cultural change, the management of changing land uses is critically important. The Council recognises that attempting to simply resist change is futile. It aims to manage that change with the following strategic goal in mind:

> *"To seek the protection and sustainable management of Leitrim's heritage for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations; to encourage the collection of knowledge to inform its protection; and to promote access to, awareness of and enjoyment of heritage".*

The protection and enhancement of our heritage is vital to the health, well-being and quality of life of our communities. Co. Leitrim's heritage also plays a key role in planning for climate change in the county. It will be affected by changes in climate, and it also has the capacity to be part of our climate adaptation and resilience strategies.

The *National Heritage Plan - Heritage Ireland 2030* and the *National Biodiversity Action Plan* recognise the key role that Local Authorities, and locally-led action, plays in heritage awareness and management. A key element of both plans is an enhanced role for Local Authorities in heritage management, to be given effect through the preparation and implementation of County Heritage Plans and Biodiversity Action Plans. The Co. Leitrim Heritage Plan 2020-2025 and Co. Leitrim Biodiversity Action Plan (when completed) are both incorporated into this Plan

Under this remit, the Council will support the implementation of the *National Heritage Plan* and the *National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021* (and subsequent plans). It will seek the protection and sustainable management of the heritage of Co. Leitrim for the benefit of current and future generations. Through its policies and actions, the Council will promote increased awareness of the heritage of the county.

11.2 Leitrim Heritage Plan 2020-2025

The unique built, natural and cultural heritage of the county is key to Leitrim's identity. As outlined above, the catalyst for heritage management and awareness is through the preparation and

implementation of a County Heritage Plan. The Leitrim Heritage Plan 2020-2025 reflects the ongoing commitment of Leitrim County Council to protecting and promoting the heritage of the county.

The Leitrim Heritage Plan 2020 – 2025 sets out objectives and actions to help understand, promote and conserve the heritage of the county for future generations. The Heritage Plan comprises a five-year work plan which involves the consultation and collaboration of a local partnership with a range of individuals and organisations. The Heritage Council are a key national partner in this relationship, as they provide technical and financial support to develop and deliver the heritage plans but also to give effect to the actions contained therein.



The aim of the *Leitrim Heritage Plan 2020 – 2025 is to:*

> '*To connect all Leitrim residents with their shared heritage and to work together to conserve and celebrate Leitrim's unique heritage, for the benefit of both present and future generations*'.

The Leitrim Heritage Plan seeks to:

- support the conservation and recording of Leitrim's heritage
- raise awareness of Co. Leitrim's heritage
- engage communities with their heritage
- support sustainable heritage tourism in Co. Leitrim

Objective

LHP OBJ 1 To support the implementation of the actions contained in the Co. Leitrim Heritage Plan 2020-2025 or any successor plan, in partnership with all relevant stakeholders and subject to the availability of the necessary funding sources.

11.3 Natural Heritage and Biodiversity

Natural heritage, also referred to as biodiversity, includes the variety of life around us. It comprises all plants and animals (including humans), fungi, algae and micro-organisms, the habitat where they live and their genetic diversity. It also includes the physical and geological foundation that forms landscapes.

Biodiversity is important because all of life depends on biodiversity for survival. Our biodiversity underpins important economic sectors such as agriculture, tourism and recreation and is a core component of the county's '*Green Infrastructure*'. Protection and wise use of the county's natural resources is necessary to achieve sustainable development.

It is the aim of the Council to conserve, sustainably manage and enhance the county's natural heritage and biodiversity and to promote understanding of and sustainable access to it.

A number of areas in Co. Leitrim have been identified as being of exceptional importance for biodiversity at a national and/or international level (See Tables 11.1 to 11.4 which follow and Map Nos. 5-8 of Volume III - Book of Maps). These areas are protected through national and European

legislation. In addition, certain plant, animal and bird species found in the county are considered rare or vulnerable and are protected by Irish law.

The Goals which this Plan seeks to realise in relation to natural heritage and biodiversity are:

- The protection of fragile ecosystems and species and habitats so as to ensure that biodiversity is maintained, and vulnerable habitats protected.
- The protection and conservation of non-renewable resources and their settings, where settings are considered important.
- The enhancement of opportunities for the enjoyment of the natural heritage.

11.3.1 European, National and Other Environmentally Sensitive Sites

The principal legal framework for the conservation of wildlife includes the *European Birds Directive (2009/147/EC)*, the *European Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)*, the *Wildlife Acts 1976*, the *Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000* and Part XIII of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended. The objectives of this European and national legislation are to provide for the protection and conservation of the flora and fauna in the habitats in which they occur. The categories of designated sites in Co. Leitrim follow in subsequent sub sections.

It is considered that certain developments within areas adjoining and in the vicinity of environmentally sensitive areas may impact on the integrity of such sensitive areas. Accordingly, areas adjoining environmentally sensitive sites, including Natura 2000 sites, Natural Heritage Areas, proposed Natural Heritage Areas, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Areas of High Visual Amenity, and other features such as lakes, rivers, waterways, wetlands, peatlands and deciduous woodlands, shall be protected from inappropriate development through the Development Management process. It is not proposed to map the extent of all these areas; determination shall be based on the potential impact of the development concerned (taken in conjunction with other developments in the area), mitigation, as relevant, and the requirement to conserve and protect the environmental integrity of the habitat concerned. Targeted surveys of sensitive habitat types may be carried out, such as the Co. Leitrim Wetland Survey.

11.3.2 Natura Sites

The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) provide for the conservation and protection of breeding and resting sites for rare and threatened species, and rare habitat types in a European context considered to be most in need of conservation. Such sites form part of an EU network of ecologically important and protected sites known as Natura 2000 sites and comprise:

- **Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)** - these sites are selected for the conservation and protection of plant and animal species (other than birds) and habitats listed in Annex I and Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) respectively.

- **Special Protection Areas (SPAs)** - these sites are selected for the conservation and protection of birds and their habitats designated under the EU Birds Directive 2009 (2009/147/EC) (first adopted in 1979) and transposed into Irish law by the Conservation of Wild Birds Regulations (SI 291 of 1985).

The Council shall take appropriate steps to avoid, in these areas, the deterioration of natural habitats and the habitats of species, as well as disturbance of the species for which the areas have been designated, in so far as such disturbance could be significant in relation to the objectives of the *EU Habitats Directive* and *EU Birds Directive*.

Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site, but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to an '*Appropriate Assessment*' by the Local Authority of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. Considering the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site, and subject to the provisions of Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, the Council shall agree to the plan or project proceeding only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the qualifying interests and conservation objectives of the site concerned. This includes considering submissions made by the general public and other stakeholders through the participation provisions of legislation.

11.3.2.1 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

The *EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)* was transposed into Irish domestic law on 26th February 1997 with the enactment of the *European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 (Statutory Instrument No. 94 of 1997)*.

In accordance with the above Regulations, habitats of European ecological importance have been designated Special Areas of Conservation by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Under these regulations, Member States are required to maintain the quality of the habitats and species for which they have been designated. Special Areas of Conservation are prime wildlife conservation areas in the county which are considered to be important on a European level, as well as at a national level. There are 8 no. SAC's contained wholly or partially in Co. Leitrim which are identified in Map 5 in Volume III (Book of Maps).

Table 11.1: List of Special Areas of Conservation

Ref No.	Name of Area
000623	Benbulben, Gleniff and Glenade Complex
000625	Bunduff Lough and Machair/Trawalua/Mullaghmore
001919	Glenade Lough
001403	Aroo Mountain
000428	Lough Melvin
001976	Lough Gill
000584	Cuilcagh-Anierin Uplands
002032	Boleybrack Mountain

11.3.2.2 Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

The *EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC)* requires the designation of sites as SPAs under the following criteria:

- a site holding 20,000 waterbirds or 10,000 pairs of seabirds
- a site holding 1% or more of the all-Ireland population of an Annex I species
- a site holding 1% or more of the biogeographical population of a migratory species
- a site is one of the 'n' most suitable sites in Ireland for an Annex I species or a migratory species, (where 'n' is a variable which is related to the proportion of the total biogeographic population of a species held by Ireland)

Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are designated by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. These sites are areas of importance for wild birds and relate to their breeding, feeding, roosting and wintering areas. There is one designated SPA in Co. Leitrim and Map No. 6 in Volume III (Book of Maps) identifies the location of this SPA in the county.

Table 11.2: Overview of Special Protection Area

Ref. No	Name of SPA	Species
004187	Sligo/Leitrim Uplands	Peregrinne (*Falco peregrinus*) Chough (*Phyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*)

11.3.3 Natural Heritage Areas

There are a number of areas designated as Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) or proposed NHAs (pNHAs) in Co. Leitrim. NHAs are designated by the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Under the provisions of the *Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000*, these sites are important semi-natural and natural habitats for the conservation of wildlife, landforms and geomorphological features of national significance. Map No. 7 in Volume III (Book of Maps) identifies NHAs in the county whilst Map No. 8 identifies the pNHAs in the county.

Table 11.3: List of Natural Heritage Areas

Ref. No.	Name of Natural Heritage Areas	Type
002430	Aghavogil Bog	Blanket Bog
00422	Aghnamona Bog	Raised Bog
001405	Cashel Bog (Leitrim)	Raised Bog
001423	Cloonageeher Bog	Raised Bog
001420	Corracramph Bog	Raised Bog
002321	Corry Mountain Bog	Blanket Bog
002435	Crockauns/Keelogyboy Bogs	Blanket Bog
002384	Dough /Thur Mountains	Blanket Bog
000691	Rinn River	Raised Bog

Table 11.4: List of proposed Natural Heritage Areas

Ref. No.	Name of Proposed Natural Heritage Areas
001402	Annaghhearly Lough
001403	Arrow Mountain
000623	Ben Bulben, Gleniff and Glenade Complex
002032	Boleybrack Mountain
Ref. No.	**Name of Proposed Natural Heritage Areas**
000625	Bunduff Lough and Machair/Trawalua/Mullaghmore
001920	Carrickaport Lough
000424	Clooncoe Wood and Lough
001407	Corduff Wood and Lough
001409	Cromlin Bridge Woods
000584	Cuilcagh Anierin Uplands
001412	Drumhierney Wood
001413	Garadice Lough Wood
000983	Glasshouse Lake
001919	Glenade Lough
000426	Kilgarriff Marsh
001415	Kinlough Wood
000427	Lough Allen, South End and Parts
001642	Lough Boderg and Lough Bofin
001643	Lough Drumharlow
001807	Lough Errew
001976	Lough Gill
000428	Lough Melvin
001417	Lough Rinn
001808	Lough Sallagh
001418	O'Donnell's Rock Wood
001419	Owengar Wood
001421	Sheemore Wood

11.3.4 Protected Plant and Animal Species

Certain plant, animal and bird species are protected by law. These includes plant species listed in the Flora Protection Order, 1999 (or other such Orders) and animals and birds listed in the Wildlife Act, 1976 and subsequent statutory instruments, those listed in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), and those listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive.

The Council will protect and, where possible, enhance the natural heritage sites designated under EU Legislation and National Legislation (Habitats Directive, Birds Directive, European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 and Wildlife Acts). This protection will extend to any additions

or alterations to sites that may arise during the lifetime of this Plan. The Council will also protect and, where possible, enhance the plant and animal species and their habitats that have been identified under European legislation (Habitats and Birds Directive) and protected under national Legislation (European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI 477 of 2011), Wildlife Acts 1976-2010 and the Flora Protection Order (SI94 of 1999).

Policies

NH POL 1 To protect and conserve Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas.

NH POL 2 To implement Article 6(3) and where necessary Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, to ensure that Appropriate Assessment is carried out in relation to works, plans and projects with the potential to impact European sites (SACs and SPAs), whether directly or indirectly or in combination with any other plan(s) or project(s). All assessments must be in compliance with the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended, and the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended as relevant.

NH POL 3 To protect designated Natural Heritage Area (NHA) sites, including proposed Natural Heritage Area sites (pNHA) and seek to develop linkages between designated sites and other non-designated sites of ecological importance, where feasible and as resources permit.

NH POL 4 To consult with relevant prescribed bodies, such as the National Parks and Wildlife Service (DoHLGH), and take account of any licensing requirements when undertaking, approving and authorising development which is likely to affect plant, animal or bird species or habitats protected by law.

NH POL 5 To ensure that development does not have a significant adverse impact on plant, animal or bird species or habitats protected by law, subject to satisfactory mitigation measures.

Objectives

NH OBJ 1 To ensure that no project or programme giving rise to significant adverse, direct, indirect, secondary or cumulative impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 site(s), having regard to their qualifying interests and conservation objectives, arising from their size, scale, area or land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) [32].

NH OBJ 2 To protect and conserve those sites designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) during the lifetime of this Plan. The list of current SACs is contained in Table 11.1 of this Chapter.

NH OBJ 3 To protect and conserve those sites designated as Special Protection Areas during the lifetime of this Plan. There is current one SPA in Co. Leitrim which is contained in Table 11.2 of this Chapter.

[32] Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive which states that there must be: a) no alternative solution available, b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the project to proceed; and c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.

NH OBJ 4 To protect and conserve Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) that become designated and notified to the Local Authority during the lifetime of this Plan. The list of current NHAs and proposed NHAs are contained in Table 11.3 and 11.4 of this Chapter.

NH OBJ 5 To protect the character, appearance and quality of the habitats and semi-natural features in Co. Leitrim such as woodlands, hedgerows, peatlands, wetlands and artificial waterways of historic or ecological importance.

NH OBJ 6 To promote, in partnership with the relevant agencies, the development and implementation of codes of best practice through initiatives such as the Local Floral Pride initiatives, Community Environmental Action and the Green Schools projects.

11.4 Development Management Guidance on Ecologically Sensitive Sites

Developments in or near ecologically sensitive sites will need to satisfy the Planning Authority that the development proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the area concerned. This applies to all development proposals likely to have a significant impact on the area of ecological importance, irrespective of whether they are actually located within the area or not, i.e., through hydrological linkage to designated sites of ecological importance.

The Council will ensure that an adequate level of assessment of the implications of development proposals is undertaken when development is proposed that has the potential to have a significant impact on designated sites of ecological importance and ecologically sensitive areas, including designated or proposed designated areas.

The Planning Authority will consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service in respect of any proposed development where there is a possibility that such development may have an impact on a protected area of international or national importance, and shall take account of any licensing requirements, when undertaking, or approving development which is likely to affect plant, animal or bird species protected by national or European legislation. The Council will generally be guided by their comments in reaching a decision on such applications.

11.5 Biodiversity Outside of Habitats Designated for Nature Conservation

The full extent of Leitrim's natural heritage of wild species, geological features and landforms, and natural and semi-natural habitats, extend to more than just those sites which benefit from statutory protection. Protected natural areas cannot thrive in isolation. Maintaining and re-establishing connectivity between these natural areas is needed to restore the health of ecosystems and allow species to thrive across their entire natural habitat. Under Article 10 of the *EU Habitats Directive,* it states that Member States shall endeavour, where they consider it necessary, in their land-use planning and development policies to encourage the management of features of the landscape, which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora. Such features are those, which by virtue of their linear and continuous structures such as rivers, or their functions as stepping stones such as ponds and small woods, are essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species. Connectivity can be achieved through '*Green Infrastructure*' which seeks to harness biodiversity as a natural infrastructure for the benefit of both people and nature.

'*Green Infrastructure*' can be defined as strategically planned and interconnected networks of green space and water capable of delivering ecosystem services and quality of life benefits. Green

Infrastructure can include parks, open spaces, rivers, farmland, playing fields, woodlands, allotments and private gardens which surround and intersperse our towns and villages. The NPF highlights the importance of the interrelationships between biodiversity, natural heritage, landscape and our green spaces. The NPF states that integrated planning for '*Green Infrastructure*' and ecosystem services will be incorporated into the preparation of statutory land use plans. It should be designed and managed as a multifunctional resource capable of delivering a wide range of economic, environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities including:

- adaptation to the impacts of climate change and flooding
- high-quality environment which can attract investment and new business
- places for people to access nature, outdoor recreation and for social interaction
- local food production - in allotments, gardens and through agriculture
- space for nature and wildlife to flourish
- a sense of place and local distinctiveness
- a resource for environmental education

Green Infrastructure planning has a significant role to play in assisting in the protection of Natura 2000 sites, biodiversity in the wider countryside and climate resilience. The Council's land use plans will protect, manage and provide, where possible, '*Green Infrastructure*' in an integrated and coherent manner.

Similarly, water bodies (including their tributaries and lakes where relevant) form important ecological corridors within the county include the following, and their inclusion is not an indication that they fall within the remit of Article 10 of the *Habitats Directive*:

- River Shannon System
- Shannon-Erne Waterway (Ballyconnell-Ballinamore Canal)
- Lough Allen System
- Bonet River System
- Duff River
- The Drumcliff River (including Diffreen River)
- Drowes River/Lough Melvin System
- Bradoge River
- River Erne

Policies

NH POL 6 To protect and where possible enhance wildlife habitats and landscape features which act as ecological corridors/networks and stepping stones, such as river corridors, hedgerows and road verges, and to minimise the loss of habitats and features of the wider countryside (such as ponds, wetlands and trees) which are not within designated sites.

NH POL 7 To treat the uplands of North Leitrim located above the 160 metre contour, as an ecologically-sensitive entity, where these uplands are not already designated as such.

NH POL 8 To protect ecological networks linking protected and designated important sites within the county, in accordance with Article 10 of the *Habitats Directive*.

NH POL 9 To ensure that appropriate mitigation and/or compensation measures to conserve biodiversity, landscape character and '*Green Infrastructure*' networks are required in developments where habitats are at risk or lost as part of a development.

Objectives

NH OBJ 7 To encourage appropriate management of landscape features, particularly through the development management process and using planning agreements with landowners and developers, where appropriate.

NH OBJ 8 To identify and map over the lifetime of the Plan habitats and '*Green Infrastructure*'/sites of local biodiversity value of county importance and to raise awareness and understanding of the county's natural heritage and biodiversity.

11.6 Leitrim Biodiversity Action Plan 2022-2027

The National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021 captures the objectives, targets and actions for biodiversity that will be undertaken by a wide range of government, civil society and the private sector to achieve Ireland's '*Vision for Biodiversity*' and follows on from the work of the first and second National Biodiversity Action Plans. The National Biodiversity Action Plans provides a framework to track and assess progress towards Ireland's Vision for Biodiversity over a six-year timeframe.

Planning Authorities play a key role in supporting biodiversity initiatives, including implementing Local Biodiversity Action Plans. The Council fully recognises the National Biodiversity Action Plan and the need to protect the county's biodiversity. The Leitrim Development Company, in partnership with Leitrim County Council, has prepared the first Leitrim Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) to coincide with the period 2022-2027. The Leitrim BAP 2022-2027 has been informed by a series of consultation processes with local, county and national stakeholders, experts and the public to ensure that it reflects current priorities, concerns and opportunities for the conservation of biodiversity in Co. Leitrim. The BAP also takes cognisance of the Leitrim Heritage Plan 2020-2025 and other relevant ecological surveys undertaken in Co. Leitrim, aiming to build upon objectives and actions in these plans and reports. The BAP adopts a cross-sectoral approach to promote actions for biodiversity at an individual, community and county level to ensure the benefits of biodiversity for our local environment and society are experienced by as many as possible. The BAP identifies 23 no. actions across five themes for biodiversity specific to Co. Leitrim ranging from raising awareness of biodiversity amongst individuals and communities in Co. Leitrim to identifying support structures to further engage with biodiversity through education and practical conservation participation.

Policy

NH POL 10 To ensure the protection, conservation and enhancement of the biodiversity of the county.

Objectives

NH OBJ 9 To support the implementation of the relevant recommendations contained in the National Biodiversity Action Plan and the All Ireland Pollinator Plan.

NH OBJ 10 To support the implementation of the actions contained in the Co. Leitrim Biodiversity Action Plan 2022-2027 when finalised, or any successor plan, in partnership with all relevant stakeholders and subject to the availability of the necessary funding sources.

11.7 Areas of Geological Interest

Geological heritage is part of Leitrim's natural heritage, and its uniqueness reflects the county's geological makeup. For its relatively modest size, Co. Leitrim has an extensive and diverse range of geological heritage sites. Many of them represent the primary geological foundation of uplands composed of Carboniferous age limestone and sandstone rocks. Associated with the upland areas are coal and iron deposits and extensive development of caves and other karstic landscape features.

Geology is recognised as a fundamental component of natural heritage and as such the conservation of geological heritage features is considered an important aspect of conserving our natural heritage. In 1998, the Geological Survey of Ireland established the Irish Geological Heritage (IGH) Programme which is a partnership between The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) and the NPWS. Under the IGH Programme, important sites that are capable of being conserved as Natural Heritage Areas (NHA) are being identified. Those not selected for NHA designation are being promoted as County Geological Sites (CGS). An Audit of Leitrim's Geological Heritage Sites was carried out in 2020 and the audit report documents what are currently understood by the Geo-heritage Programme of the Geological Survey Ireland to be the most important geological sites within the county. 32 no. CGS sites have been identified for inclusion within the County Development Plan, details of which are listed in Appendix XI of this Plan.

Policies

AGI POL 1 To recognise the need to identify sites of geological interest in the county and to protect these sites in the interest of protecting our geological heritage.

AGI POL 2 To protect County Geological Sites from inappropriate development, as outlined in Appendix XI of this Plan.

11.8 Wetlands

Co. Leitrim contains a wide range of wetlands which provide a habitat for a range of species of national and international importance. These wetlands include water courses, water bodies, marshes, fens, reed beds, raised bogs, blanket bogs, cutover bogs, heath and wet woodlands. Wetlands tend to have high biodiversity value for a broad range of flora and fauna, protect water quality and reduce flood risk. Wetlands are important assets that deliver a range of economic benefits for water supplies, fisheries, the maintenance of water tables, pollution control, timber and agricultural production, carbon sequestration, and a recreation and tourism asset.

The ecological importance of wetland habitats has been recognised by the European Union, with several wetland types listed under Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive (CEC, 1992). These wetland habitats include "*priority*" habitats, such as lagoons, turloughs, active raised bogs and calcareous fens.

Increased drainage or flooding can cause significant change in habitat value and species diversity. The Water Framework Directive and Ramsar Convention provide for the protection and wise use of wetlands. The Council will work to manage, enhance and protect wetlands throughout the lifetime of this Plan through specific policy objectives.

Leitrim County Council has undertaken surveying and mapping of wetland habitats in the county and will continue to survey and monitor wetland habitats to improve wildlife knowledge and conservation of biodiversity.

Policies

WET POL 1 To have regard to the Co. Leitrim Wetlands Survey 2019 and subsequent wetland surveys that may be published during the lifetime of this Plan in assessing individual development management proposals. This will include the protection of surveyed wetland sites that have been rated as A (International), B (National) and C+ (County) importance.

WET POL 2 To implement the relevant parts of the Planning and Development (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2011 and the European Communities (Amendment to Planning and Development) Regulations 2011 which require planning permission has to be applied for where the area impacted by works relating to the drainage or reclamation of a wetland exceeds 0.1 hectares or where such works may have a significant effect on the environment. Such planning applications may also require the undertaking of an Appropriate Assessment where considered necessary.

WET POL 3 To ensure that all proposed land zonings take cognisance of appropriate riparian setback distances that support the attainment of high ecological status for water bodies, the conservation of biodiversity and good ecosystem health, and buffer zones from flood plains.

11.9 Peatlands

The Council is aware of the importance of several peatlands in the county and recognise that they are an irreplaceable resource that act as a carbon sink, play an important role in water regulation and are of significant ecological value. Peatlands are protected under the *EU Habitats Directive* and 9 bogs have been designated as Natural Heritage Areas in the county (Listed in Table 11.3).

The National Peatlands Strategy, published in 2016, contains a comprehensive list of actions, necessary to ensure that Ireland's peatlands are preserved, nurtured and become living assets within the communities that live beside them. The National Raised Bog Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) Management Plan 2017-2022 has been developed taking account of the various viewpoints and offers a way forward by outlining how a representative network of raised bogs will be conserved, restored and managed.

The Council recognises the importance of peatlands as a major natural, archaeological and non-renewable resource in addition to recognising the important historical traditions and peat management skills associated with cutting turf for domestic use. In their natural state, peatlands act as long-term sinks for atmospheric carbon dioxide. Peatlands are the most important long-term carbon store in the terrestrial biosphere. They sequester and store atmospheric carbon for thousands of years. Given the extent of intact and relatively intact bogs in Co. Leitrim, considerable potential exists to use this valuable resource to mitigate against the impacts of climate change. Leitrim County Council will work in conjunction with interested parties including landowners, the National Parks & Wildlife Service, the Irish Peatland Conservation Council, The Irish Wildlife Trust and BirdWatch Ireland, in the management of these ecologically important sites.

Policies

PEAT POL 1 To conserve peatlands and protect peatland landscapes within the county.

PEAT POL 2 To seek hydrological reports for significant developments within and close to peatlands, to assess potential impacts on the integrity of the peatland ecosystems.

11.10 Trees, Woodlands & Hedgerows

Trees, woodlands and hedgerows make a significant contribution to the county, in terms of their positive impact on the landscape, their visual attractiveness and in terms of their biodiversity value as wildlife habitats. They are a vital part of a network of habitats, ecological '*corridors*' and 'stepping stones' essential for wildlife to flourish and move between and within habitats. They also have a vital role to play in climate adaptation. They filter out noise, dust and pollutants and help minimise flooding by retaining moisture.

The Council considers the wooded nature of much of the county to be one of its most attractive features and is anxious to protect existing mature deciduous trees and woodlands that contribute to the high visual amenity of the county. The Council will consider the preparation of further Tree Preservation Orders for individual trees/groups of trees and woodlands as and when necessary. The Council also recognises the recreational potential of woodlands in the county.

The Council will landscape new roadworks, housing schemes and other works for which the Council is directly responsible with deciduous trees and other native species, of local provenance where possible. Other agencies and private-sector developers will be encouraged to do likewise. New development will be required to integrate existing mature trees of amenity value into the new schemes, where this is appropriate and practical in the opinion of the Planning Authority.

Hedgerows constitute an important natural and historic resource given both their role as wildlife corridors between habitats, their value in terms of visual amenity and their historic significance as townland and field boundaries. The Council will seek to ensure that hedgerows and verges are maintained and trimmed in the interests of ensuring road safety. The Council will avoid the cutting of hedgerows during the bird nesting season, as defined in the *Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000*, from March 1 to August 31.

The Council will also seek to enhance the county hedgerows by increasing coverage using locally native species, taking opportunities provided by the consideration of new development proposals.

The Council will protect and preserve existing hedgerows where possible and seek their replacement with new hedgerows, consisting of appropriate native species, where their removal is necessary during roadworks or other works. The Council have, in association with the Heritage Council, previously carried out a Hedgerow Survey. The Council will be informed by the results of the survey in terms of their role in the protection and preservation of hedgerows.

Table 11.5: Sample Native Wood Species found in Leitrim Hedgerows

Latin Name	Common Name	Frequency of Occurrence
Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn	99%
Fraxinus excelsior	Ash	68%
Ilex aquifolium	Holly	63%
Prunus spinosa	Blackthorn	61%
Salix spp	Willow	52%

Latin Name	Common Name	Frequency of Occurrence
Ulex europaeus	Gorse	22%
Corylus avellana	Hazel	17%
Alnus Glutinosa	Alder	15%
Sorbus Aucuparia	Rowan	13%
Sambucus nigra	Elder	8%
Viburnum opulus	Guelder Rose	8%
Euonymus europaeus	Spindle	5%
Malus sylvestris	Crab Apple	5%
Ulmus spp	Elm	3%
Betula spp.	Birch	3%
Quercus spp	Oak	1%
Prunus Avium	Wild Cherry	1%

Source: Leitrim County Hedgerow Survey 2006

Policies

TWH POL 1 To discourage the felling of healthy mature trees to facilitate development and to encourage the retention of healthy mature trees within developments to the maximum extent practicable.

TWH POL 2 To require the planting of native broadleaved species, and species of local provenance, in new developments as appropriate. (See Table 11.5 in this regard).

TWH POL 3 To support the Native Woodland and Neighbourwood schemes and other initiatives that aim to establish and enhance woodlands for recreational and wildlife benefits, in partnership with local communities.

TWH POL 4 To protect and preserve existing hedgerows and minimise their removal. Where their removal is necessary, to seek their replacement with new hedgerow material native to the area (See Table 11.5 in this regard).

TWH POL 5 To retain distinctive boundary treatment such as stone walls, when undertaking, authorising or approving development. Where the loss of the existing boundary is unavoidable as part of development, to ensure that the wall is re-built using local stone and local vernacular design.

Objective

TWH OBJ 1 To use Tree Preservation Orders to protect important trees, groups of trees or woodlands, as appropriate which may be at risk or have an amenity, biodiversity or historic value during the lifetime of this Plan.

11.11 Pollinators

One third of our bee species are threatened with extinction from Ireland. Habitat loss, loss of food sources, pests and disease, pesticide and climate change all contribute. In addition to their intrinsic value, they are vital to our agricultural and horticultural industries, contribute to our health and wellbeing, and also pollinate up to 78% of flowering plants.

Leitrim County Council has adopted the All Ireland Pollinator Plan (www.pollinator.ie), a national framework which aims to make Ireland a place where pollinators thrive. The National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021 supports the implementation of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan (NBAP Action 4.1.8). The Council will continue to support the implementation of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan and is committed to undertaking actions to support pollinators in the county.

Objective

POLL OBJ 1 To manage and restore semi-natural habitats and their native plants on Council land in as far as is practicable and affordable**.**

11.12 Invasive Species

Invasive non-native plant and animal species (animals and plants that are introduced accidently or deliberately into a natural environment where they are not normally found) are a significant threat to biodiversity. They can negatively impact on native species, can transform habitats and threaten ecosystems causing serious problems to the environment, buildings and the economy.

Irish legislation makes it an offence to plant, breed, disperse, allow dispersal or cause to grow a range of plant and animal species, or to import or transport these or vector material such as soil or spoil from which they can grow (Articles 49 and 50 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011). The Council will seek to prevent the spread of invasive non-native species.

Policy

IS POL 1 To require relevant development proposals to address the presence or absence of invasive alien species on proposed development sites and (if necessary) require applicants to prepare and submit an Invasive Species Management Plan where such a species exists to comply with the provisions of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2015 and the EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species 1143/2014.

11.13 Landscape

11.13.1 Introduction

Co. Leitrim has an exceptional landscape of unspoilt natural beauty which must be protected for the enjoyment of the people who live here, tourists who visit and for future generations. Landscape contributes to overall wellbeing and a greener, healthier lifestyle. The protection of landscape is recognised as a priority at European, national, regional and local level.

11.13.2 Policy Context

The Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended, requires that Planning Authorities, make provision in their Development Plans for the protection of landscape character including the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty and interest.

11.13.3 The European Landscape Convention and National Landscape Strategy

The European Landscape Convention (ELC) is dedicated to the protection, management and planning of all landscapes in Europe. The ELC encourages member states to introduce a national landscape policy that is not restricted to the protection of exceptional landscapes but also takes everyday landscapes into consideration. The ELC defines landscape as '*an area as perceived by people whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors*', and this definition has been incorporated into the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended. The ELC requires landscape to be integrated into planning policies and promotes interaction between local and central authorities and trans-frontier co-operation to protect landscapes. The Convention recognises the cultural, environmental and economic value of landscape and how it contributes to our quality of life and sense of place.

11.13.4 National Landscape Strategy (NLS) 2015-2025

The National Landscape Strategy (NLS) seeks to ensure compliance with the ELC above in Ireland. The objective is to provide a high-level policy framework to achieve balance between the protection, management and planning of the landscape by way of supporting actions. The strategy vision states '*our landscape reflects and embodies our cultural values and our shared natural heritage and contributes to the well-being of our society, environment and economy. We have an obligation to ourselves and to future generations to promote its sustainable protection, management and planning*'. The NLS recognises the importance of landscape protection and its interconnectivity with biodiversity and climate change. A core objective seeks to develop a national Landscape Character Assessment, to provide a framework for greater consistency in the approach to landscape classification and assessment to ensure the conservation of special landscape areas, which by their nature often extend across administrative boundaries. It sets out specific measures to integrate and embed landscape considerations in all sectors which influence the landscape and improve and enhance the quality of decision-making by those who have an impact on it.

11.13.5 National Planning Framework (NPF) – Project Ireland 2040

The NPF acknowledges the value of landscape which offers a wealth of natural and cultural assets supporting our quality of life and our visitor economy. It aims to facilitate landscape protection, management and change through the preparation of a National Landscape Character Map and development of guidance on local landscape character assessments, to ensure a consistent approach to landscape character assessment, particularly across planning and administrative boundaries. The NPF also seeks to protect and promote the sense of place and culture and the quality, character and distinctiveness of the Irish rural landscape that make Ireland's rural areas authentic and attractive as places to live, work and visit.

11.13.6 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020- 2032 (NWRA RSES)

The RSES recognises the need to protect the regions unique sense of place, culture and the quality, character and distinctiveness of the landscape. The RSES seeks to protect, conserve and manage the landscape and its natural, built and cultural assets so that its potential is fully realised for the benefit

of all. Specifically, it contains a policy objective to protect manage and conserve the quality, character and distinctiveness of the landscapes and seascapes. The Regional Assembly has committed to preparing a regional Landscape Character Assessment to promote improved landscape management and designation (RPO 5.2 refers).

11.14 Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is a process which describes, maps and classifies landscapes. Landscape character is defined as a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse. It is the process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape. Defining landscape character enables an understanding to be formed of the inherent value and importance of individual elements and the processes that may alter landscape character. The cultural and ecological aspects of the landscape cannot be subtracted from its physical and visual characteristics so all of these elements are considered.

To inform the preparation of this Plan, Leitrim County Council commissioned RPS Group to undertake a review of the Landscape Character Assessment of Co. Leitrim, published in 2002. The purpose of the review was to ground truth and verify the original study undertaken, documenting any changes and including these changes in an updated Landscape Character Assessment for Co. Leitrim.

The new Landscape Character Assessment forms Appendix VI of the Plan. It provides guidance for a detailed understanding of the landscapes of our county. The assessment classifies 17 different Landscape Character Types across the county and defines 14 distinct Landscape Character Areas. The new LCA assessment will be used as a tool to guide development to be sympathetic to local variations in landscape character and to inform land management activity so as to conserve and enhance landscape character. The new LCA creates a baseline to inform decision making by the Local Authority.

11.14.1 Landscape Character Types

Landscape Character Types (LCTs) are as "*distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but wherever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, historical land use, and settlement pattern*"[33] The LCTs identified in the LCA review broadly align with those published in the 2002 report although some differences are noted as a result of the review as follows:

- The new assessment identifies LCT 8 '*Valley Farmland*' located within the glens or U-shaped valleys in the northern half of the county and LCT 9 '*Drumlin Farmland*' covering a large area in the southern part of the county. These two LCTs replace the '*Drumlin Farmland*' identified in the 2002 report which covered both LCT 8 '*Valley Farmland*' and LCT 9 '*Drumlin Farmland*'. This change recognises that the drumlin farmland in the 2002 report is in fact comprised of two LCTs, namely that contained within the glens and that comprised of lowland drumlin areas.
- The new assessment identifies LCT 1 '*Coastal Plain*' as a distinct landscape character type associated with the coast. This differs from the 2002 report which identifies coastal fringe farmland along the coast and associated with Lough Melvin.

[33] An approach to Landscape Character Assessment, 2014 Natural England.

- The new assessment identifies LCT 2 '*Coastal Drumlin Farmland*'. This replaces the '*Coastal Lowlands*' LCT in the 2002 report in recognition of the drumlin topography present in this landscape.
- The new assessment identifies LCT 3 '*Wooded Lakeside Farmland*' as a distinct landscape character type associated with the wooded landscape around Lough Melvin. This, along with the landscape at the coastline was previously identified as '*Coastal Fringe Farmland*' in the 2002 report.
- The new assessment identifies LCT 14 '*Drumlin Farmland with Peat Bogs*' in the southern part of the county instead of the '*Eskers and Raised Peat Bogs*' LCT identified in the 2002 report. This change recognises the drumlin topography present in this landscape.
- A written description is provided for '*The Major Loughs LCT*', identified in the 2002 report but on the mapped landscape character types figure and not in the written text.
- The order in which the LCTs are presented in both mapped and written outputs is changed from the 2002 report reflecting the changes to the landscape character types overall as outlined.

The identified Landscape Character Types in Co. Leitrim are as follows:

1. Coastal Plain	2. Coastal Drumlin Farmland
3. Wooded Lakeside Farmland	4. Cliffed Uplands and Landslips
5. Moorland Plateau	6. Moorland Hills
7. Upland Farmland and Foothills	8. Valley Farmland
9. Drumlin Farmland	10. Major Loughs
11. Drumlin Loughs and Stream Margins	12. River Floodplain
13. Low Limestone Outcrops	14. Drumlin Farmland with Peat Bogs
15. Undulating Hill Farmland	16. Steep Mountain Peaks
17. Tabular Hills	

The 17 no. Landscape Character Types are illustrated in Figure 11.1 overleaf and in greater detail in Map No. 9 of Volume III (Book of Maps).

11.14.2 Landscape Character Areas

Co. Leitrim is subdivided into 14 no. Landscape Character Areas as illustrated in Figure 11.2 and in greater detail in Map No. 10 of Volume III (Book of Maps). For each of the Landscape Character Areas, a summary description and key characteristics are outlined together with a map of the area. Further detail is presented regarding valued landscape attributes, current landscape designations, landscape condition and forces for change. Recommendations for landscape conservation are then presented for each Landscape Character Area. These recommendations relate to the safeguarding of the valued and sensitive attributes identified in each area along with a range of measures to be considered regarding land-based activities and to manage future change.

Figure 11.1: Landscape Character Types

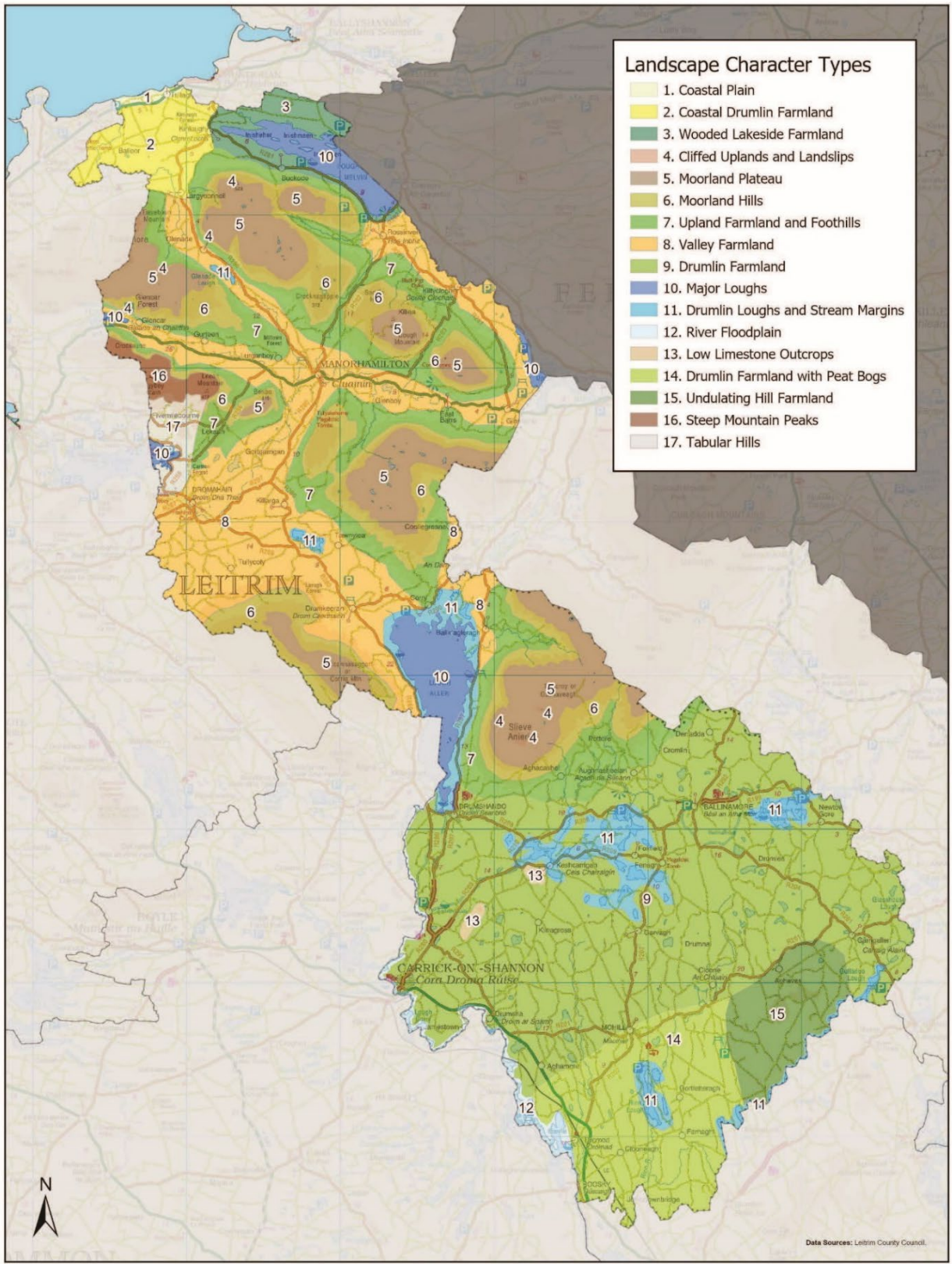
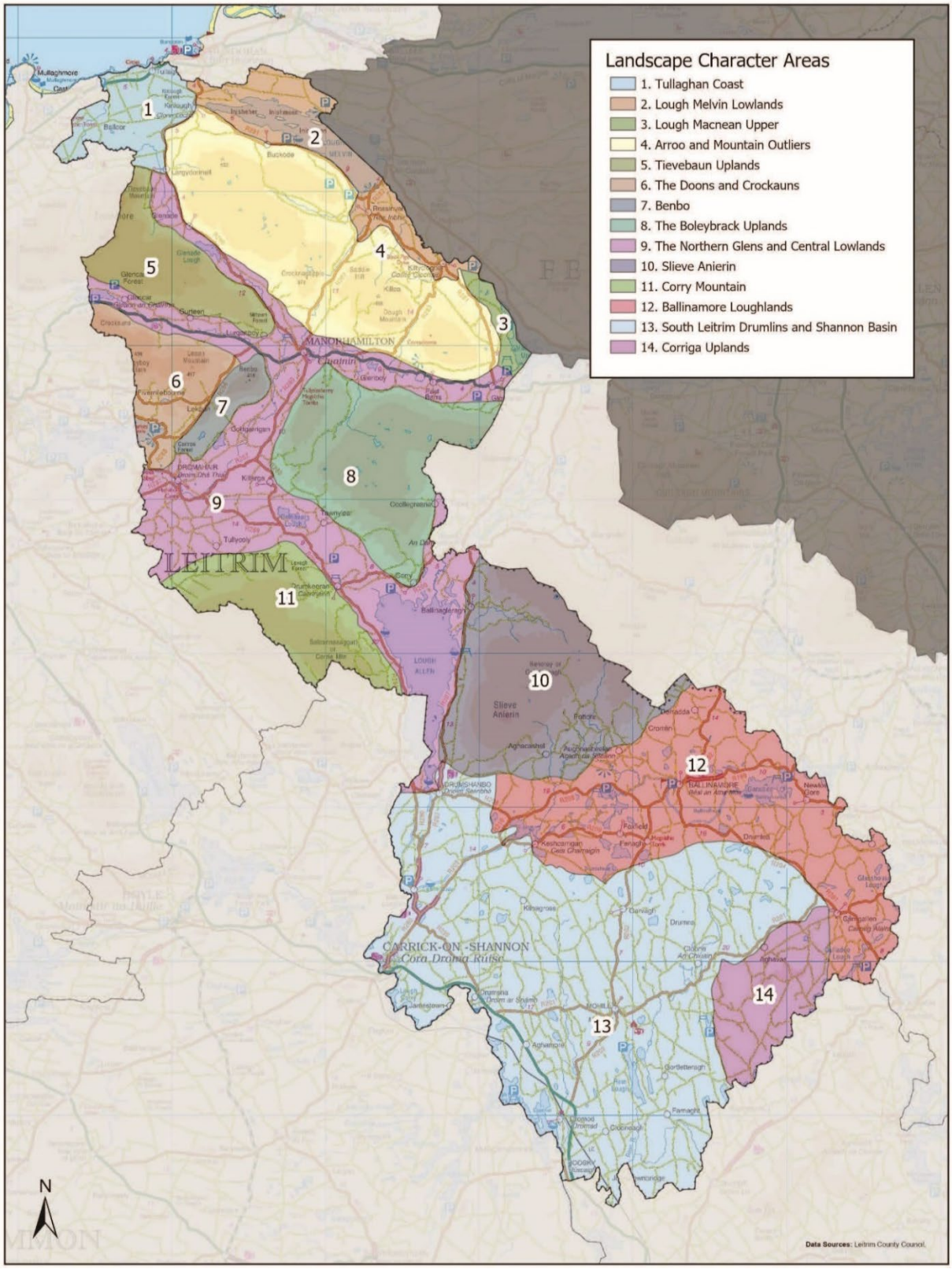


Figure 11.2: Landscape Character Areas



Unlike the amendments to the names and boundaries of the Landscape Character Types outlined in the preceding section, the naming and boundaries of the Landscape Character Areas were not altered in any meaningful manner. The identified Landscape Character Types in Co. Leitrim remain as follows:

LCA 1: Tullaghan Coast	LCA 2: Lough Melvin Lowlands
LCA 3: Lough Macnean Upper	LCA 4: Arroo and Mountain Outliers
LCA 5: Tievebaun Uplands	LCA 6: The Doons and Crockauns
LCA 7: Benbo	LCA 8: The Boleybrack Uplands
LCA 9: The Northern Glens, Central Lowlands and Lough Allen	LCA 10: Slieve Anierin
LCA 11: Corry Mountain	LCA 12: Ballinamore Loughlands
LCA 13: South Leitrim Drumlins and Shannon Basin	LCA 14: Corriga Uplands

Policies

LCA POL 1 To conserve and enhance the high nature conservation value of the Landscape Character Areas in order to create/protect ecologically resilient and varied landscapes.

LCA POL 2 To protect, enhance and contribute to the physical, visual and scenic character of Co. Leitrim and to preserve its unique landscape character.

LCA POL 3 To ensure that landscape sensitivity and the preservation of the uniqueness of a landscape character area (where appropriate) is an important consideration in determining the appropriateness of development uses and proposals in areas of landscape sensitivity, (scenery, nature conservation or archaeology) in conjunction with the siting, design and materials proposed.

LCA POL 4 To seek to ensure that local landscape features, including historic features and buildings, hedgerows, shelter belts and stone walls, are retained, protected and enhanced where appropriate, so as to preserve the local landscape and character of an area, whilst providing for future development

LCA POL 5 To require that landscape and visual impact assessments prepared by suitably qualified professionals be submitted with planning applications for development which may have significant impact on landscape character areas of medium or high sensitivity.

Objectives

LCA OBJ 1 To protect and enhance the quality, character, and distinctiveness of the physical, visual and scenic character of landscapes of the county in accordance with national policy and guidelines and the recommendations of the *Leitrim Landscape Character Assessment (2020)* which forms Appendix VI of this Plan.

LCA OBJ 2 To ensure that the management of development will have regard to the value of the landscape, its character, importance, sensitivity and capacity to absorb change as outlined in Appendix VI of this Plan - *Leitrim Landscape Character Assessment (2020)* and its recommendations.

11.15 Landscape Designations

The previous County Development Plan 2015-2023 contained designated landscapes in the form of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Areas of High Visual Amenity. In June 2020, Leitrim County Council commissioned RPS Group to undertake a review of the designated landscapes published in the County Development Plan 2015-2023. This commission followed the review of the County Landscape Character Assessment outlined in the previous section of this Plan. The resulting report is entitled '*Leitrim Review of Landscape Designations*' (May 2021) and focuses on the designated landscapes and presents the findings of a comprehensive review of these landscapes in Co. Leitrim. Section 4 of the report presents an analysis of each of the designated landscapes in turn followed by recommendations which include changes to the boundaries of a designated area and/or changes to the designation name to better reflect the special qualities therein. Table 21 of the report provides a summary of the recommendations regarding the County Development Plan 2015-2023 designated landscapes in Co. Leitrim including the abandonment of 2 no. previous designations. The designated landscapes are each documented in map and written format including short statement of importance and an account of their special qualities. The *Leitrim Review of Landscape Designations* (May 2021) forms Appendix X to the Plan.

Capacity or sensitivity is the ability that a landscape has to absorb specific types of development. It is only possible to define actual capacity on a case-by-case basis because it will vary according to the type and form of development, its specific location in relation to the landscape character area in question, and its visibility from it. The sensitivity of a landscape is its overall resilience to sustain its character in the face of change and its ability to recover from loss or damage to its components. Sensitivity is evaluated using criteria ranging from '*High*' to '*Low*'. A highly sensitive landscape is likely to be vulnerable, fragile and susceptible to change whereas a landscape with low sensitivity is likely to be more robust and/or tolerant of change. The individual landscape designations seek to conserve the special qualities of the individual landscapes and assist in guiding future management and change in these landscapes.

Landscape designations are assigned to particular areas for the purpose of managing change whilst having regard for the full range of special qualities and natural and cultural values attached to these areas. Designation can help safeguard important and sensitive landscapes and landscape features which are particularly valued and may have limited capacity for change. The designation process can contribute to wider policies for guiding development, by specifically identifying and safeguarding areas of landscape which are of particular importance and sensitivity.

11.15.1 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

A landscape is designated as being of outstanding natural beauty attributed largely to natural characteristics such as landform, vegetation cover and habitat, geological features, scarcity or absence of development or man-made built elements and areas of wilderness.

Table 11.6 overleaf contains the identified Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Co. Leitrim.

Table 11.6: Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Co. Leitrim

Map Ref.	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
A1	Leitrim Coast
A2	Lough Melvin
A3	Mountains and Glens of North Leitrim
A4	Lough Gill, Leean Mountain and Environs
A5	Benbo
A6	The Boleybrack Mountains
A7	Lough Allen
A8	Slieve Anierin and Bencroy

11.15.2 Areas of High Visual Amenity

A landscape is designated as high visual amenity due to a range of factors including natural, cultural and man-made influences. Table 11.7 identifies the Areas of High Visual Amenity in Co. Leitrim.

Table 11.7: Areas of High Visual Amenity in Co. Leitrim

Map Ref.	Area of High Visual Amenity
B1	Farmed hinterland of Arroo and Tievebaun
B2	Gulladoo Lake and Environs
B3	Dough Mountain
B4	Thur Mountain
B5	Lough Macnean Upper and Environs
B6	Sheemore
B7	Corry Mountain
B8	Laheen Lough, Kilnamar Lough and Environs
B9	Lough Scur, St. John's Lough and Environs
B10	Lough Garadice and Environs
B11	River Shannon and Lakes
B12	Lough Rynn, Lough Errew and Environs

The designated Areas of High Visual Amenity and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are shown on Figure 11.3. A larger map is depicted in Map No. 11 in the Book of Maps contained in Volume III.

11.15.3 Development Management

The Council will seek to preserve and enhance the landscape character of Areas of and Areas of High Visual Amenity, as far as is practicable, by careful management and by the operation of special controls over development in these areas. While the Council is committed to the protection of the character of these areas, it recognises that this character has evolved over centuries through traditional farming practices and that continuing human involvement is necessary to maintain that character. The Council is anxious to support the evolution of existing communities in these areas, while at the same time

protecting the landscape from the pressures of speculative development. The capacity of the landscape to absorb development will depend, amongst other things, on the local topography, vegetation and the nature and extent of existing development. In assessing development proposals, the Council will seek to minimise negative impacts on the heritage and the environment and maximise economic and social gain for the local community. The Council will seek to ensure the provision of adequate access to features of particular interest or quality by the creation of rights of way, lay-bys, viewing areas and signage, as appropriate and as funding allows.

11.16 Views and Prospects

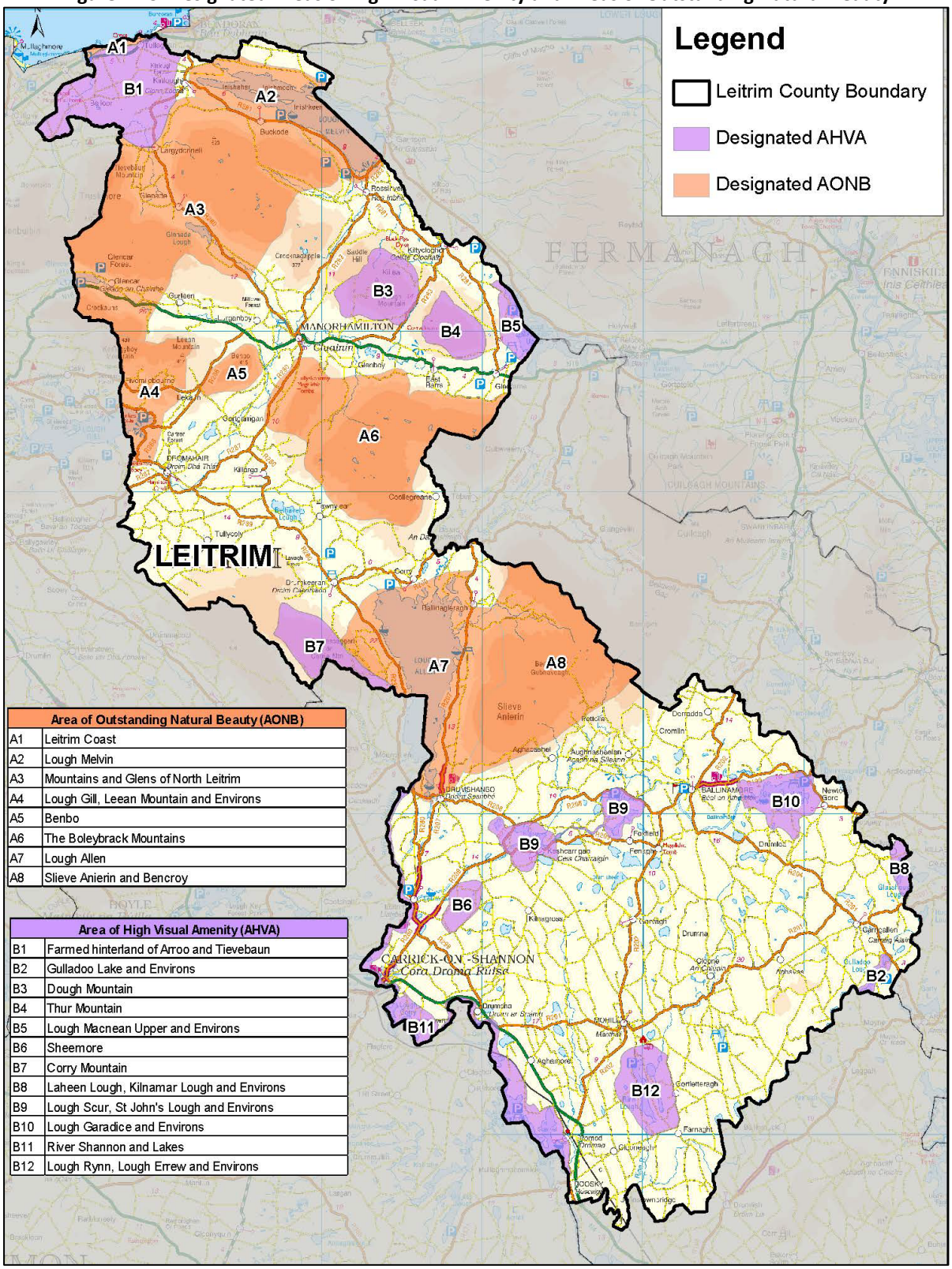
The previous County Development Plan 2015-2023 contained a series of protected views and prospects. These protected views and prospects were continued from previous Development Plans. In June 2020, Leitrim County Council commissioned RPS Group to undertake a review of the designated landscapes and views and prospects published in the County Development Plan 2015-2023. This commission followed the review of the County Landscape Character Assessment outlined in Section 11.4 of this Plan. The report entitled '*Leitrim Review of Views and Prospects*' (June 2021) presents the findings of a comprehensive review of the designated views in the county. The *Leitrim Review of Views and Prospects*' (June 2021) forms Appendix VIII to the Plan.

Each existing view identified in the previous County Development Plan 2015-2023 was evaluated and a reasoned recommendation on adjustments, extensions or omissions were presented in Section 3 of the final report. Recommended adjustments applied throughout included the following:

- views were renamed to exclude local road references from the title and include the subject and or location of the view
- a small number of views were recommended to be removed from the County Development Plan as they did not meet the criteria set out in the agreed methodology - the subject of the view was not actually visible or the scenic quality of the available view was such that it did not merit inclusion in the list of proposed views to be contained in the Plan
- a small number of proposed additional views for inclusion on the list are set out in Section 4 of the report along with the proposed revised locations.

The designated views and prospects are listed below in Table 11.8 and illustrated on Figure 11.4 and in greater detail in Map No. 12 of Volume III (Book of Maps). The naming of views references national or regional roads where applicable as these are clearly legible on the OS base maps.

Figure 11.3: Designated Areas of High Visual Amenity and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	
A1	Leitrim Coast
A2	Lough Melvin
A3	Mountains and Glens of North Leitrim
A4	Lough Gill, Leean Mountain and Environs
A5	Benbo
A6	The Boleybrack Mountains
A7	Lough Allen
A8	Slieve Anierin and Bencroy

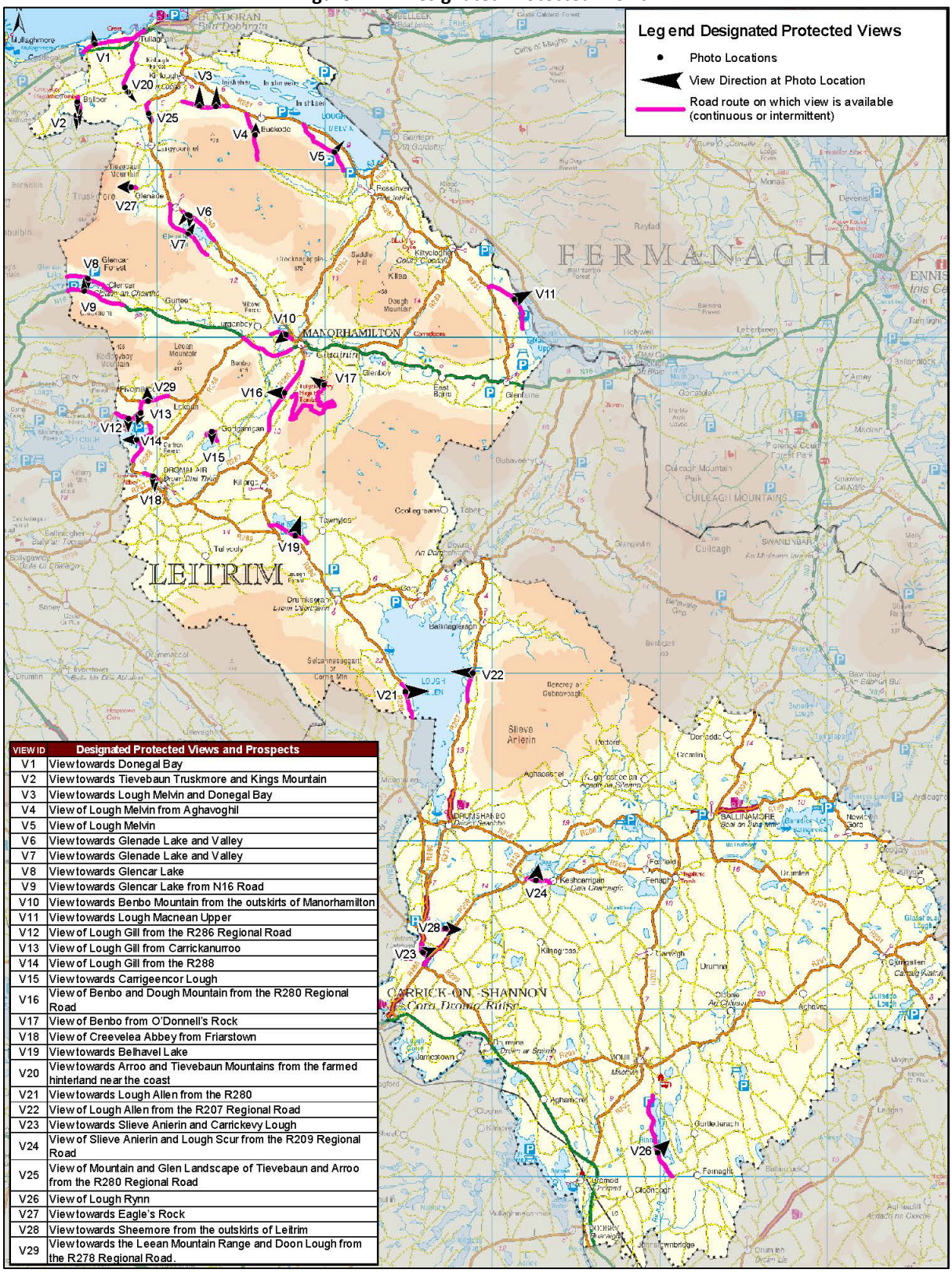
Area of High Visual Amenity (AHVA)	
B1	Farmed hinterland of Arroo and Tievebaun
B2	Gulladoo Lake and Environs
B3	Dough Mountain
B4	Thur Mountain
B5	Lough Macnean Upper and Environs
B6	Sheemore
B7	Corry Mountain
B8	Laheen Lough, Kilnamar Lough and Environs
B9	Lough Scur, St John's Lough and Environs
B10	Lough Garadice and Environs
B11	River Shannon and Lakes
B12	Lough Rynn, Lough Errew and Environs

Table 11.8: Views and Prospects in Co. Leitrim

View Ref.	View Title
V1	View towards Donegal Bay
V2	View towards Tievebaun Truskmore & Kings Mountain
V3	View towards Lough Melvin & Donegal Bay
V4	View of Lough Melvin from Aghavoghil
V5	View of Lough Melvin
V6	View towards Glenade Lake & Valley
V7	View towards Glenade Lake & Valley
V8	View towards Glencar Lake
V9	View towards Glencar Lake from N16 Road
V10	View towards Benbo Mountain from the outskirts of Manorhamilton
V11	View towards Lough Macnean Upper
V12	View of Lough Gill from the R286 Regional Road
V13	View of Loygh Gill from Carrickanurroo
V14	View of Lough Gill from the R288 Regional Road
V15	View towards Carrigeencor Lough
V16	View of Benbo from the R280 Regional Road
V17	View of Benbo and mountains further north from O'Donnell's Rock
V18	View of Creevelea Abbey from the R288 Regional Road
V19	View towards Belhavel Lake
V20	View towards Arroo & Tievebaun Mountains from the farmed hinterland near the coast
V21	View towards Lough Allen from the R280
V22	View of Lough Allen from the R207 Regional Road
V23	View towards Slieve Anierin and Carrickevy Lough
V24	View of Slieve Anierin & Lough Scur from the R209 Regional Road
V25	View of Mountain & Glen Landscape of Tievebaun & Arroo from the R280 Regional Road
V26	View of Lough Rynn
V27	View towards Eagle's Rock
V28	View towards Sheemore from the outskirts of Leitrim village
V29	View towards the Leean Mountain Range & Doon Lough from the R278 Regional Road

The statement on the special qualities associated with each of the proposed views is documented along with a photograph of the view in Section 5 of '*Leitrim Review of Views and Prospects*' (June 2021). The map locations are depicted in Figure 11.4.

Figure 11.4: Designated Protected Views



VIEW ID	Designated Protected Views and Prospects
V1	View towards Donegal Bay
V2	View towards Tievebaun Truskmore and Kings Mountain
V3	View towards Lough Melvin and Donegal Bay
V4	View of Lough Melvin from Aghavoghil
V5	View of Lough Melvin
V6	View towards Glenade Lake and Valley
V7	View towards Glenade Lake and Valley
V8	View towards Glencar Lake
V9	View towards Glencar Lake from N16 Road
V10	View towards Benbo Mountain from the outskirts of Manorhamilton
V11	View towards Lough Macnean Upper
V12	View of Lough Gill from the R286 Regional Road
V13	View of Lough Gill from Carrickanurroo
V14	View of Lough Gill from the R288
V15	View towards Carrigeencor Lough
V16	View of Benbo and Dough Mountain from the R280 Regional Road
V17	View of Benbo from O'Donnell's Rock
V18	View of Creevelea Abbey from Friarstown
V19	View towards Belhavel Lake
V20	View towards Arroo and Tievebaun Mountains from the farmed hinterland near the coast
V21	View towards Lough Allen from the R280
V22	View of Lough Allen from the R207 Regional Road
V23	View towards Slieve Anierin and Carrickevy Lough
V24	View of Slieve Anierin and Lough Scur from the R209 Regional Road
V25	View of Mountain and Glen Landscape of Tievebaun and Arroo from the R280 Regional Road
V26	View of Lough Rynn
V27	View towards Eagle's Rock
V28	View towards Sheemore from the outskirts of Leitrim
V29	View towards the Leean Mountain Range and Doon Lough from the R278 Regional Road.

Note:
The following Views & Prospects, designated under the 2015-2023 County Development Plan, are now removed from this Plan:

V12 View of Fivemilebourne and Carrickanurroo
V20 View from Gleaghnafarnagh from Local Road LT42533
V25 View of River Shannon from the N4 Faulties to Aughamore
V27 View of River Shannon from Local Road LS07426
V28 View of River Shannon from the N4 in the townlands of Munkil and Tully.

The rationale for removing each of the above Views and Prospects is outlined in the accompanying report. The Views and Prospects contained in this section and labelled V12, V20, V25, V27 and V28 are new Views and Prospects now included in the Plan in their place.

11.16.1 Development Management

The landscape of the county has many vantage points which offer attractive panoramic views of high-quality landscapes. These scenic views are of amenity and tourism value and contribute to our quality of life. It is not envisaged that the designation of a protected view would prohibit all development within the view, rather that any development proposed within the view should be designed and located so as not to obstruct the view or be unduly intrusive in the landscape as seen from these vantage points.

Policies

LD POL 1 To safeguard the protected views and prospects contained in Table 11.8 and identified on Map No. 12 (Volume III - Book of Maps) from intrusive development which would interfere unduly with the character and visual amenity of the landscape.

LD POL 2 To protect Areas of Outstanding Beauty and Areas of High Visual Amenity from inappropriate development and reinforce their character, distinctiveness and sense of place.

LD POL 3 To permit development in an Area of High Visual Amenity only where the applicant has demonstrated a very high standard of site selection, site layout and design and where the Planning Authority is satisfied that the development could not be accommodated in a less-sensitive location.

LD POL 4 To require that a landscape and visual impact assessment, prepared by a suitably qualified professional, be submitted with planning applications for development which may have an impact on the landscape character of the area.

LD POL 5 To ensure that development proposals have regard to the Landscape Character Assessment, the value of the landscape, its character, importance, sensitivity and capacity to absorb change.

LD POL 6 To protect lakeshores from inappropriate development which would detract from the natural amenity of the area.

LD POL 7 To permit development in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty where the applicant can satisfy the Planning Authority that it is not practicable to develop in a less-

sensitive location and where it is demonstrated that the development will not impinge in any significant way on the character, integrity or uniformity of the landscape.

Objectives

LD OBJ 1 To protect the quality, character and distinctiveness of the landscapes of the county.

LD OBJ 2 To provide and maintain facilities, including viewing areas, lay-bys, safe pedestrian access and/or car parking, and where appropriate, associated seats and signs in the immediate vicinity of views that are identified in this Plan and as funds allow.

LD OBJ 3 To undertake and adopt a landscape capacity assessment of the county for commercial afforestation.

LD OBJ 4 To protect Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Areas of High Visual Amenity from inappropriate forms of development. These areas are identified in Table 11.6 and Table 11.7 of this Plan and shown graphically on Map No. 11 '*Landscape Designations*' in Volume III (Book of Maps).

11.17 Protection of the Built Environment

The built environment refers to all features built by man including buildings and other structures such as bridges, archaeological sites and certain field boundaries. These structures have been influenced by the physical, climactic, technological, cultural and socio-economic circumstances of their creators and are a record of our continuous interaction with our environment. While not every structure is of sufficient importance to warrant protection, the conservation of special examples of the built heritage is vital if a sense of continuity with the past is to be maintained.

Leitrim has a rich and diverse heritage and brings benefits to all that live in the county and those who visit. Along with forming our identity, heritage teaches us lessons from the past and brings economic benefits to the county by providing scenic landscapes, vernacular architecture and historic monuments for the tourist to enjoy. Retaining a wide diversity and quality of heritage resource may also be seen as a measure of success and competitiveness. The Shannon-Erne Waterway, Parke's Castle, sweathouses, Creevelea Ironworks, the Black Pig's Dyke, Lough Rynn Estate, Sliabh an Iarainn, Glenade Lough, Kingfisher Trail, pattern days and mumming festivals, landscapes, architecture, archaeology, nature, wildlife and cultural festivals all combine to make up a unique sense of Leitrim.

Caring for our heritage helps fulfil the need for sustainable development by maintaining the quality of our landscapes, historic and cultural resources and the heritage of the manmade environment. There are many individuals and groups who are interested in and have responsibility for our heritage. The Council will seek to promote environmental awareness and good practices, together with high standards of design in all development proposals. The Council are generally favourably disposed towards developments/projects, in appropriate locations, which would enhance understanding of our county's built, natural and cultural heritage.

11.17.1 Legislation

Under Section 10 (2)(f) of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended, it is a requirement of all Development Plans to include objectives for:

> *"the protection of structures, or parts of structures, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest".*

Under Section 10 (2)(g), it is a requirement of all Development Plans to include objectives for:

> *"the preservation of the character of architectural conservation areas".*

With regard to Protected Structures, Section 51 (1) states:

> "*For the purpose of protecting structures, or parts of structures, which form part of the architectural heritage, and which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest, every Development Plan shall include a record of protected structures, which is, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, of such interest within its functional area*".

11.18 Record of Protected Structures

11.18.1 Background

The term '*architectural heritage*' is defined in the *Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) & Historic Monuments Act, 1999,* as '*all (a) structures and buildings together with their settings and attendant grounds, fixtures and fittings, (b) groups of such structures, and (c) sites*', which are of architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest.

A Protected Structure is a structure that Leitrim County Council considers to be worthy of protection from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical point of view. The built heritage is an important element in the character of Co. Leitrim and every Planning Authority is required to have a Record of Protected Structures for its functional area.

The '*Inventory of Appropriate Buildings/Structures for Inclusion in the New Record of Protected Structures*' prepared by CAAS in November 2000, the '*National Inventory for Architectural Heritage in Co. Leitrim*' (Dúchas, the Heritage Service), the '*Carrick-on-Shannon Architectural Heritage Study*' (Dúchas, the Heritage Service) and the Urban Framework Plans for Drumkeeran, Drumshanbo, Ballinamore, Mohill, Manorhamilton and Dromahair are stated as the basis for the preparation of the Record of Protected Structures contained in the previous County Development Plan 2015-2023. The findings of the on-going architectural research and field work to inform *The Buildings of Ireland, North Connect* authoritative guide to the architecture of Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo when completed will also be considered to inform subsequent reviews of the Record of Protected Structures. All structures of local, regional and national importance will be considered for protection.

Under the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended, if included in the Record of Protected Structures, the entire building is listed for protection. The protection afforded to a Protected Structure automatically includes all parts of the structure within the curtilage of the property and any other structures within its attendant grounds (including the interior and exterior of all structures, walls, gates and boundaries, etc.). Where a structure is a Protected Structure, all works (including those normally exempt) that affect the character of the structure or any element of the structure that

contributes to its special interest require planning permission. The owner or occupier is entitled to a declaration from the Council, under Section 57 of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended, which will identify the works which may be undertaken to the Protected Structure without requiring planning permission.

Particular attention will be paid to the alteration/addition of buildings or structures listed in the Record of Protected Structures and these should reflect the setting, form, scale, mass, material and colouring of the original building.

Development or redevelopment in close proximity to any building or structure listed in the Record of Protected Structures, must respect the setting and character of the Protected Structure. In this regard, the Council will offer advice on conservation. Any such applications should be accompanied by an assessment undertaken by an architect with recognised conservation expertise.

There are also many historic structures of distinctive traditional styles found throughout Co. Leitrim which are not included in the Record of Protected Structures. Whilst these may not be included, they reflect the unique local history and character of place. Vernacular structures are very vulnerable due to the modern demands and changing needs. The re-use and adaption of existing buildings is preferable to their demolition.

The owners and occupiers of a Protected Structure can avail of certain grant initiatives such as the Historic Structures Fund or the Built Heritage Investment Scheme to carry out certain works to repair and conserve historic structures. These schemes are administered by the Planning Authority on behalf of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

11.18.2 Record of Protected Structures

A total of 272 no. structures were included in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) contained in the previous County Development Plan 2015-2023. A review of this previous RPS was undertaken in the preparation of this Plan which assessed the condition of several structures. Arising from this review, 9 no. structures were removed from the RPS with 11 no. structures subsequently added to the RPS as now contained in this Plan. The number of structures contained within the RPS is 274 no. structures.

Each structure within the RPS of the County Development Plan 2015-2023 had a unique identifying number from no. 1 to no. 302. The sequencing of the numbering omitted a total of 30 numbers.[34] It is understood that the numbers omitted related to structures which were previously included in the RPS but have been deleted at some stage in the past. The RPS contained in this Plan has renumbered the structures contained in the register. In the review, the townland is which each structure is located has been verified and corrected, and ITM co-ordinates included to reflect the location of the structure more accurately. [35] The Plan proposes a total of 274 no. structures each numbered sequentially from 1 to 274 accordingly.

[34] The following numbers are omitted in the current Record of Protected Structures: 4, 78, 88, 99, 104, 113, 130, 132, 133, 134, 144, 169, 177, 194, 197, 198, 207, 211, 212, 218, 222, 226, 242, 251, 252, 269, 273, 275, 290 and 296.

[35] Irish Transverse Mercator (ITM) is the geographic co-ordinate system for Ireland. It was implemented jointly by the Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSi) and the Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland (OSNI) in 2001. An ITM co-ordinate is generally given as a pair of two six-digit numbers where the first number is always the easting and the second is the northing.

11.19 Streetscapes and Areas of Good Urban Design

In addition to protecting individual buildings and structures, the Council is aware that many other buildings, while not of sufficient merit to warrant individual listing, are nevertheless important in the context of their contribution to the streetscape and the character of the towns and villages within which they are located.

The demolition of any building in a defined streetscape area will not normally be permitted unless in exceptional circumstances, such as:

a) the building or structure is beyond reasonable repair
b) demolition would be a positive benefit to the areas' enhancement
c) permission has been granted and an agreement entered into for the erection of an appropriate replacement building appropriate to the design and character of the area

Generally, in town and village centres new development will be expected to respect established building lines, eaves and ridge heights, roof pitches and fenestration patterns. New development can be more successfully absorbed into established streetscapes when attention is paid to details such as chimneys, eaves overhangs and shop fronts.

The Council does however welcome high-quality modern architectural designs which demonstrate an affinity with these settings. Ideally new buildings should reflect both the era in which they are built and respect the context in which they are located.

Policies

BH POL 1 To protect all structures in the Record of Protected Structures (Volume IV of this Plan).

BH POL 2 To promote best conservation principles and practice with regard to protecting Leitrim's considerable architectural heritage.

BH POL 3 To encourage the sympathetic retention, reuse and rehabilitation of Protected Structures and their setting.

BH POL 4 To ensure that proposed development within the curtilage or attendant grounds of a Protected Structure respects the Protected Structure and its setting.

BH POL 5 To have regard to the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (October 2011) or replacement Section 28 Guidelines as may be issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage when assessing proposals for development affecting a Protected Structure and buildings listed in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.

BH POL 6 To require the preparation of an Architectural Impact Assessment undertaken by an architect or other suitably qualified professional with conservation expertise, where appropriate, for developments which include or relate to a Protected Structure or their curtilage and attendant grounds.

BH POL 7 To promote the principles of best practice in conservation in terms of use of appropriate materials, repair techniques, and thermal upgrades by adhering to the guidelines as set

out in Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht's Advice Series publications or their replacement.

BH POL 8 To promote awareness and the appropriate adaptation of the county's architectural and archaeological heritage to deal with the effects of climate change.

Objectives

BH OBJ 1 To seek the protection of all structures within the county that are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest as contained in the Record of Protected Structures (Volume IV of this Plan).

BH OBJ 2 To maximise funding opportunities for the conservation and restoration of Protected Structures.

BH OBJ 3 To administer grant schemes which provide funding opportunities for the conservation and restoration of Protected Structures.

BH OBJ 4 To support and implement the actions listed in the County Heritage Plan 2020 – 2025, and subsequent heritage plans, during the lifetime of this Plan, subject to the availability of specific funding and resources.

BH OBJ 5 To seek the appointment of a Conservation Officer to improve the level of expertise available to the Council and to support the protection and conservation of the rich built and cultural heritage within the county. However, the Council will seek to develop in-house expertise in the interim in the absence of this appointment.

11.20 Architectural Conservation Areas

An Architectural Conservation Area is '*a place, area, group of structures or townscape, taking account of building lines and heights, that is of architectural, historical, artistic, archaeological, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or that contributes to the appreciation of a Protected Structure, and whose character it is an objective of a Development Plan to preserve. A Planning Authority recognises, by making provision in the Development Plan for the protection of these areas, that in many cases the protection of the architectural heritage is best achieved by controlling and guiding change on a wider scale than the individual structure, in order to retain the overall architectural or historic character of an area*' (*Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities*, DoECLG, 2004).

Each Development Plan must include a policy objective to preserve the character of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) within its functional area.

The purpose of designating an area as an ACA is to manage change, affording greater control over the form of development and reducing instances of inappropriate development and demolition. The character of an ACA is often derived from the collective value of an area's buildings, their setting, landscape and other locally important features developed gradually over time. Within these areas the priority will be to preserve and/or enhance those buildings, structures, trees, open spaces, archaeological remains, views and other elements, which contribute to the unique character of the area.

The purpose of an ACA is to ensure the following:

a) high standard of civic amenity and civic design
b) preservation and protection of the environment, including architectural, archaeological and natural heritage
c) streetscape improvement
d) control of layout of areas, density, building lines and treatment of spaces
e) control of design, colours and materials
f) promotion of maintenance, repair or cleaning of structures
g) promotion of mixed uses
h) control of changes in use
i) promotion of the development or redevelopment of derelict or vacant sites
j) control of advertisements

Where appropriate, the Council will encourage the retention and restoration of the external fabric of these buildings. Particular attention will be paid to the retention (and repair if necessary) of original natural slate roofs, chimneys, cast iron rainwater goods and railings, external renders, original timber sash windows and shop fronts (including the use of appropriate colours). The Council will pursue such grant aid as may be made available in support of this policy.

In recognition of the importance of such areas, the Council has designated a portion of some of the towns and villages in the county as Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). The extent of these areas has been reviewed as part of the preparation of this Plan and the extent of these areas has been reduced to ensure that the importance of the fabric of these areas is not diluted. The Architectural Conservation Areas are provided at the end of this chapter.

Table 11.9: Architectural Conservation Areas in Co. Leitrim

1. Ballinamore	2. Carrick-on-Shannon
3. Dromahair	4. Drumshanbo
5. Drumkeeran	6. Jamestown
7. Manorhamilton	8. Mohill

There may be other Architectural Conservation Areas designated within the lifetime of this Development Plan.

A general set of policies for all ACAs within the county is set out below. A Statement of Character will be developed for each of these ACAs in order to identify the character that is worthy of protection within 2 years of the Plan coming into effect. Any works proposed to the exterior of a building within an ACA which would affect the special character of the area would not be considered exempted development. For example, replacement of timber sash windows with inappropriate alternatives (e.g. uPVC) would not be exempted development within an ACA. Where applications are made for works outside an ACA which would have the potential to impact on the character of the ACA, these applications will be assessed using the criteria set out in the *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines.*

Policies

ACA POL 1 To ensure the preservation of the special character of each Architectural Conservation Area listed in this Plan (See Table 11.9) by exercising specific design control with particular regard to building scale, proportions, historical plot sizes, building lines, height, general

land use, fenestration, signage, and other appendages such as electrical wiring, building materials, historic street furniture, paving and shop fronts.

ACA POL 2 To have regard to the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (October 2011) or replacement Section 28 Guidelines as may be issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage during the life of this Plan when assessing proposals for development affecting the character of an Architectural Conservation Area.

ACA POL 3 To ensure the retention, repair and the regular maintenance, rather than replacement, of original/early features in buildings which contribute to the character of an Architectural Conservation Area such as chimney stacks, roof coverings, roof profiles, external wall treatments, doors and windows, shop fronts and pub fronts, while ensuring appropriate materials and repair techniques are used when repairs are being carried out.

ACA POL 4 To ensure that inappropriate materials for windows, doors and rainwater goods constructed in aluminium or uPVC are not introduced to buildings within Architectural Conservation Areas.

ACA POL 5 To encourage high quality, contemporary design and materials where appropriate when new buildings are being introduced into an Architectural Conservation Area and the retention of the historic scale and plot size. Such buildings should contribute to the visual enhancement of the area and respect the character of the Architectural Conservation Area as set out in the statement of character (when prepared).

ACA POL 6 To ensure that new fascia boards inserted in the shopfront entablature are seamless without visible vertical joints or fixing materials. Hand painted fascia are encouraged and will be favoured over glossy, reflective signage.

ACA POL 7 To retain historic items of street furniture where they contribute to the character of the Architectural Conservation Area, such as, post boxes, benchmarks, gates, plaques, milestones, railings, etc.

ACA POL 8 To facilitate the removal of overhead cables throughout the Architectural Conservation Areas.

ACA POL 9 To ensure the embodied energy of the current building stock within Architectural Conservation Area are acknowledged when considering proposed developments, and to encourage the reuse of these building over demolition.

Objectives

ACA OBJ 1 To prepare a Statement of Character for each of the listed Architectural Conservation Areas in Table 11.9 within 2 years of the County Development Plan having come into effect in order to identify the character that is worthy of protection for each.

ACA OBJ 2 To designate additional Architectural Conservation Areas where appropriate and provide a local policy framework for the preservation of the character of these areas. Consideration will be given to Lough Rynn and Drumsna in the first instance.

ACA OBJ 3 To review the Co. Leitrim Shopfront Guidelines within the life of the County Development Plan.

11.21 Archaeological Heritage

Archaeology is the scientific study of past societies, their cultures and their relationship with the environment through an examination of the material remains of our predecessors. All remains and objects and any other traces of humankind from past times are considered elements of the archaeological heritage. The archaeological heritage is a resource, which can be used to gain knowledge and understanding of the past. The archaeological heritage is therefore of great cultural and scientific importance.

Table 11.10: List of National Monuments in Co. Leitrim

RMP No.	Townland	Description	Status	National Mon. No.
LE002-019	Aghaderrard West	Druid's Alter Passage Grave	Ownership	477
LE008-013	Corracloona	Megalithic Tomb	Guardianship	405
LE014-004001	Creevelea	Franciscan Friary	Ownership	69
LE025-09601	Fenagh (Commons)	Fenagh Abbey	Ownership	68
LE005-014	Lattone/Gortnaderrary	Worm Ditch or Black Pigs Race	Ownership	653
LE010-037001	Kilmore (Drum. By) Sramore E.D.	Parke's Castle	Ownership	390
LE008-032	Laghty Barr	Teach Mhic Dhiarmada	Ownership	508

Table 11.11: List of Preservation Orders (PO) on Monuments in the County

RMP No.	Townland	Description	No. of PO
LE025-096001, LE025-096002, LE025-096003, LE025-096004, LE025-096005, LE025-096008	Commons	Monastic Enclosure	3/1994
LE0008-013	Corracloona	Corracloona Cairn	45/1936
LE027-054001, LE027-054002, LE027-054003	Sheemore	Sheemore Passage Grave Cemetery	10/1978

Sites and monuments of archaeological significance are recorded in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP). The RMP is compiled by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland and is a statutory inventory of sites and areas with accompanying maps on which sites and monuments are marked and numbered. The Record includes all identified monuments such as megalithic tombs, ring forts and castles in Co. Leitrim, dating to before 1700 A.D. and some sites post-dating 1700 A.D. There are approximately 1,400 sites and monuments identified in the RMP for Co. Leitrim. Each monument is encircled by a zone of archaeological potential. The duties of the owner of a recorded monument are detailed in the *National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994*. The RMP is available for viewing on the National Monuments Service website using the Historic Environment Viewer. It should be noted that

any direct impacts on national monuments in State or Local Authority care or subject to a preservation order will require the consent of the Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage and under Section 14 of the *National Monuments Act 1930* as amended by Section 5 of the *National Monuments (Amendment) Act 2004*.

The archaeological heritage of Co. Leitrim includes, according to the *European Convention for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage, 1992 (Valetta Convention)* structures, constructions, groups of buildings, developed sites, all recorded monuments as well as their contexts, and moveable objects; situated both on land and under water. This means that the archaeological heritage is not confined to the archaeological sites within the Record of Monuments and Places, but also includes any archaeological site that may not have been recorded yet, as well as archaeology beneath the ground surface, underwater archaeological heritage, as well as the context of any site. Co. Leitrim has a rich underwater archaeological heritage that includes protected wrecks that lie off the coast of the county, log boats and artefacts that have been recorded from the county's lakes and inland waterways, crannóga, fish-traps, riverine and lacustrine built heritage and many other forms of underwater archaeological heritage. One underwater heritage order in the county (UHO 1/90), which refers to Lough Donogher, located to the north east of Cloone.

Table 11.12: List of Underwater Heritage Orders (UHO) in the County:

Location	Townland	Date of Order	UHO No.
Lough Donogher – LE 29	N/A	14/09/1990	1/90

11.22 Archaeological Assessment

The Council will protect all such sites and monuments and their settings from inappropriate development. All planning applications likely to interfere with such a recorded site, protected wreck or underwater archaeological heritage site, monument or zone of archaeological interest will be referred to the Development Applications Unit of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, An Taisce and the Heritage Council. Regard will be given to the advice and recommendations of these bodies in respect of whether planning permission should be granted and the nature of conditions to be attached to any grant of planning permission.

All aspects of archaeological heritage and underwater cultural heritage, in all environments, shall be considered in the development process, including impacts on unidentified elements of the archaeological and underwater cultural heritage. Areas that have developed around watercourses, including rivers and lakes may contain known and/or previously unknown underwater archaeological sites, structures, features or artefacts, and this should be considered when reviewing the existing Development Plan and developing policies for the new plan. Likewise, reclaimed areas may also contain previously unknown, buried archaeology that could be revealed during development impacts. Any plan should include this in its policy and objectives section. Sites such as slipways, historic quays, quay furniture, fixtures and fittings, fish traps, harbours with associated marine infrastructure, including causeways, as well as specific sites such as shipwrecks, log boats, etc., singular sites such as rock cut platforms and steps, and of course artefactual material associated with sites or as individual depositions in underwater environments, etc. can all be retained and preserved in intertidal/foreshore and underwater contexts or on land previously covered by water (e.g. reclaimed areas).

The Council will also have regard to the guidance document *Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage*, as published by the National Monument Service in 1999.

Proposed development on, or in close proximity to, a site and monument of archaeological significance will only be allowed where development does not adversely affect their character and setting. Where allowed, the Council will use planning conditions and agreements to enable an archaeological assessment, on site monitoring, testing and/or excavation by a licensed archaeologist.

11.23 Industrial Archaeology and Canals

The Council is aware of the cultural importance of the county's industrial heritage and in particular of the canal and waterway systems that traverse the county. Canals, lough gates and associated structures are fine examples of 19th century industrial engineering, which have mellowed over time to form an intrinsic part of the county's landscape. The importance of protecting these structures is all the greater given the increased importance of the canal and navigation network as a tourism and recreational resource.

Policies

ARCH POL 1 To secure the preservation (i.e. preservation in-situ or in particular circumstances where the Council is satisfied that this is not possible, preservation by record as a minimum) of all archaeological remains and sites of importance such as National Monuments, Recorded Monuments, protected wrecks and underwater archaeological heritage, to include their setting and context.

ARCH POL 2 To promote public awareness of the rich archaeological heritage that exists in Co. Leitrim.

ARCH POL 3 To protect and enhance public accessibility to the county's industrial heritage.

ARCH POL 4 To protect, preserve and promote the archaeological value of underwater archaeological sites and objects in rivers, lakes, intertidal and subtidal environments. In assessing proposals for development, the Council will take account of the archaeological potential of rivers, lakes, intertidal and sub-tidal environments. Where flood relief schemes are being undertaken, the Council will have regard to the '*Archaeological Guidelines for Flood Relief Schemes*' (DHLGH and OPW 2021).

ARCH POL 5 To support community initiatives and projects regarding preservation, presentation, publication of and access to archaeological heritage and underwater cultural heritage, provided such are compatible with appropriate conservation policies and standards, having regard to the guidance and advice of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Objectives

ARCH OBJ 1 To promote the county's archaeological heritage as a tourism resource, in partnership with tourism organisations and stakeholders.

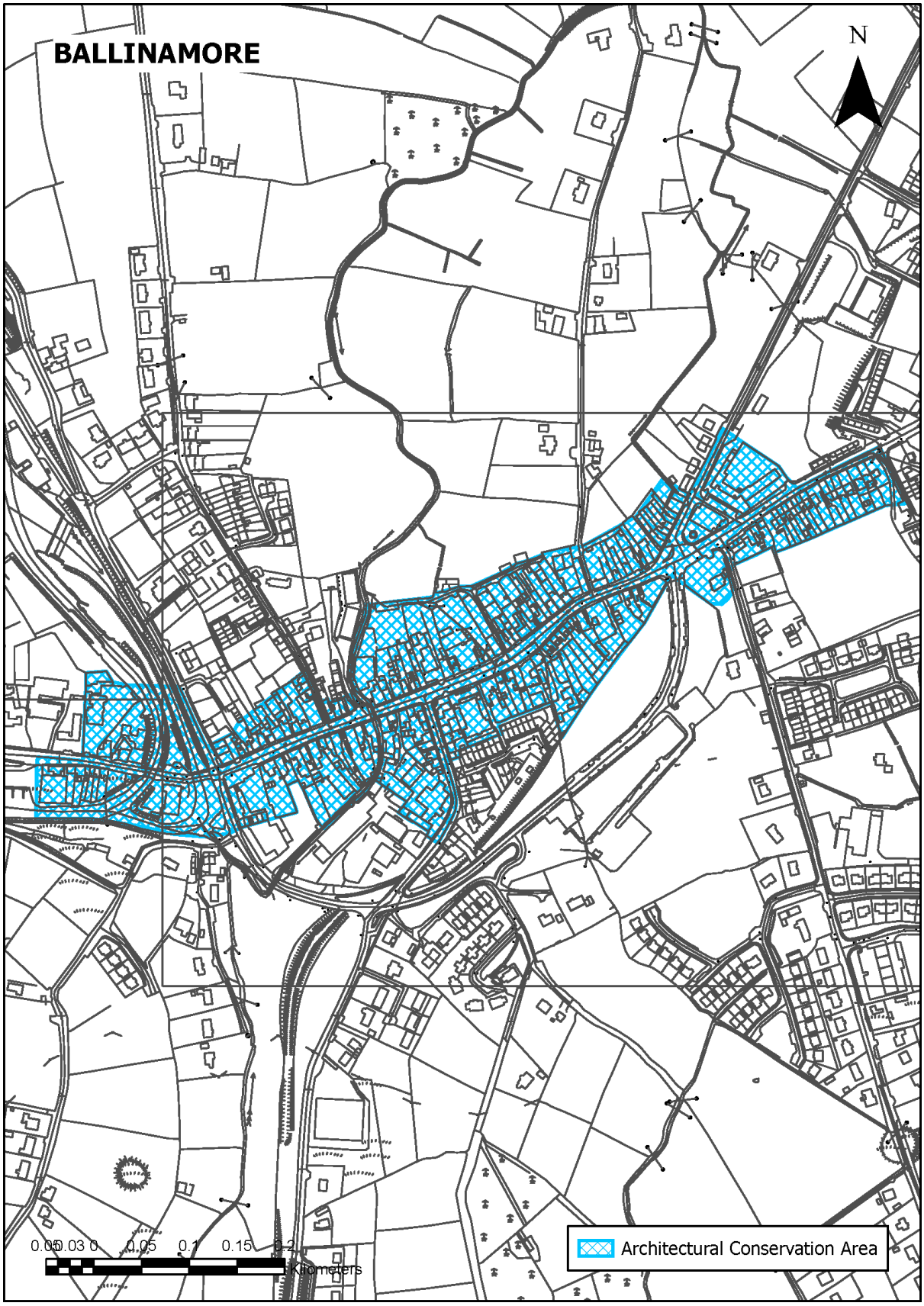
ARCH OBJ 2 To ensure that any development (above or below ground or underwater), within the vicinity of a site of archaeological interest or protected wreck or area of underwater archaeological heritage shall not be detrimental to the archaeological remains, character of the site or its setting.

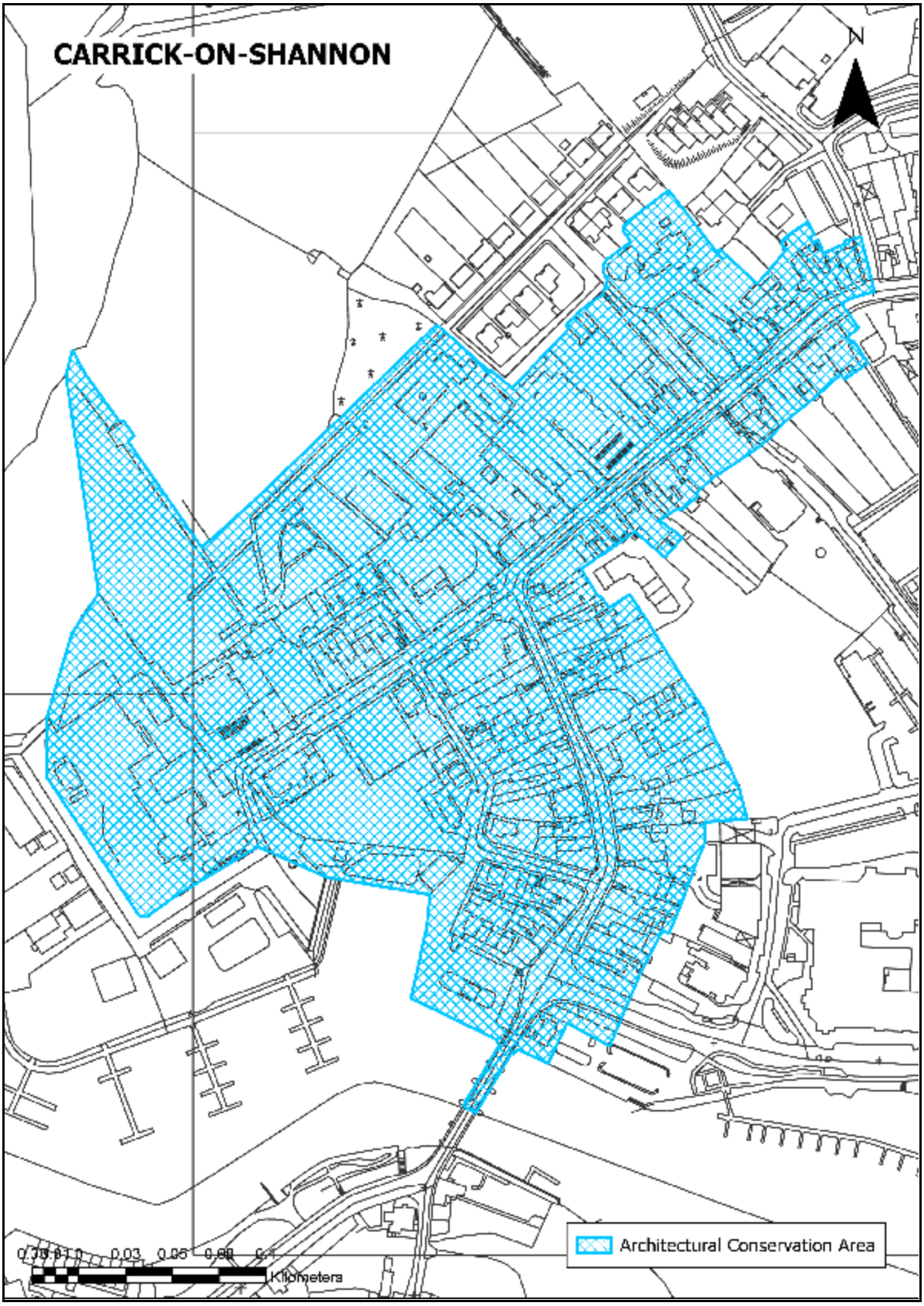
ARCH OBJ 3 To require, where appropriate, that an archaeological assessment or underwater archaeological impact assessment be carried out by a suitably qualified person prior to the commencement of any activity that may impact upon archaeological heritage, including underwater archaeological heritage.

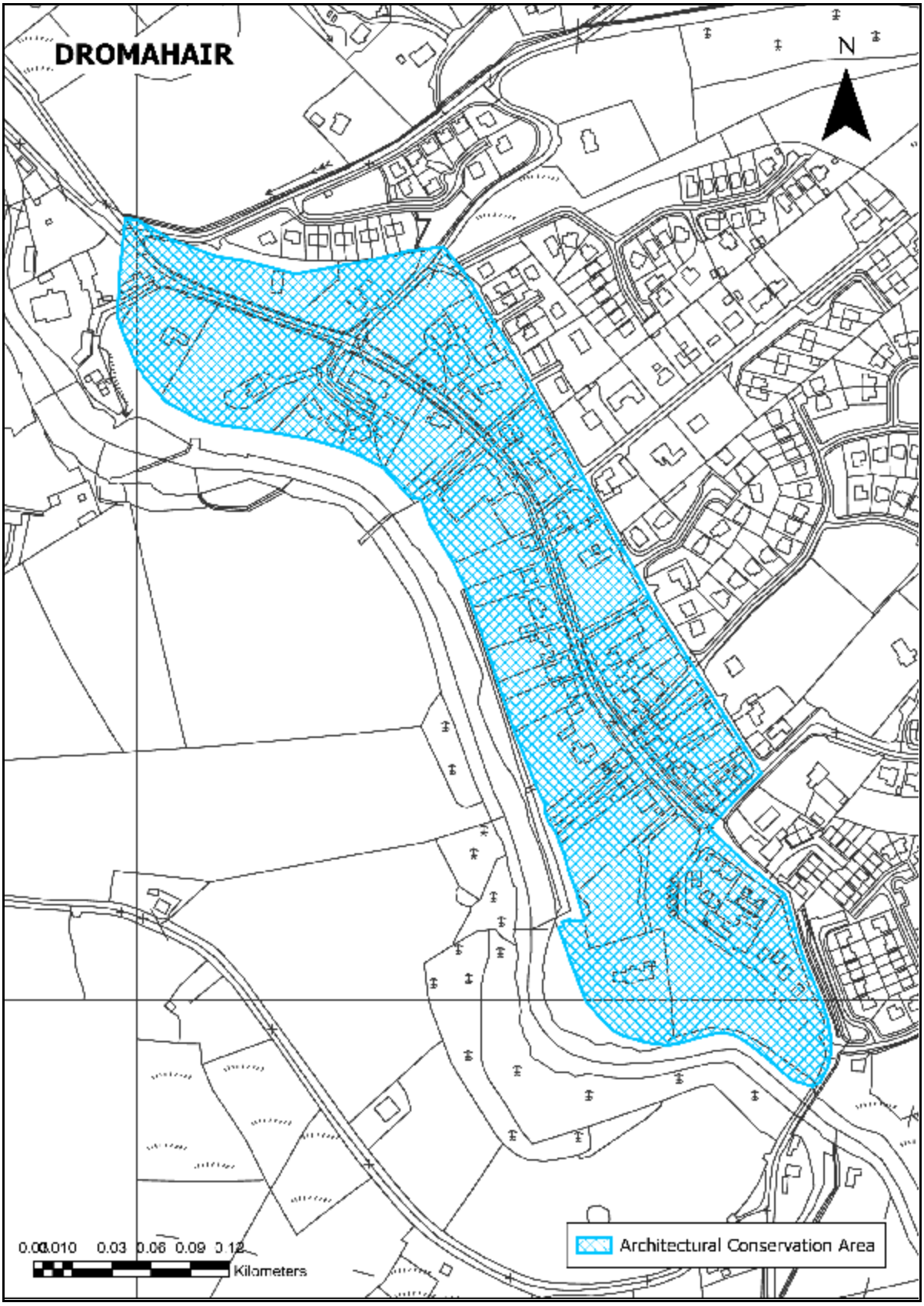
ARCH OBJ 4 To protect the zones of archaeological potential, as identified in the Record of Monuments and Places, protected recks and underwater archaeological heritage.

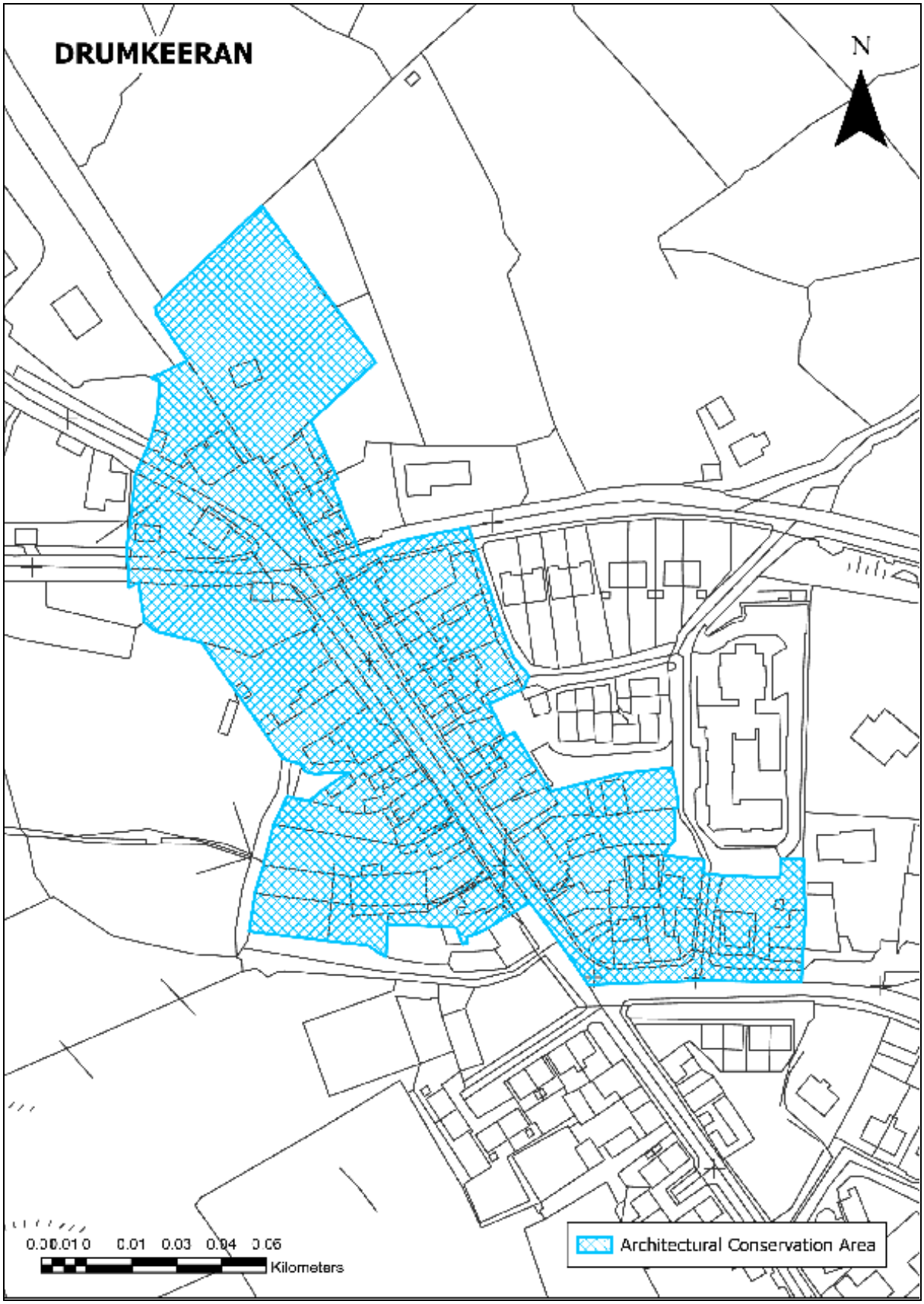
ARCH OBJ 5 To protect archaeological sites, protected wrecks and underwater archaeological heritage discovered since the publication of the Record of Monuments and Places, which are recorded in the Sites and Monuments Record.

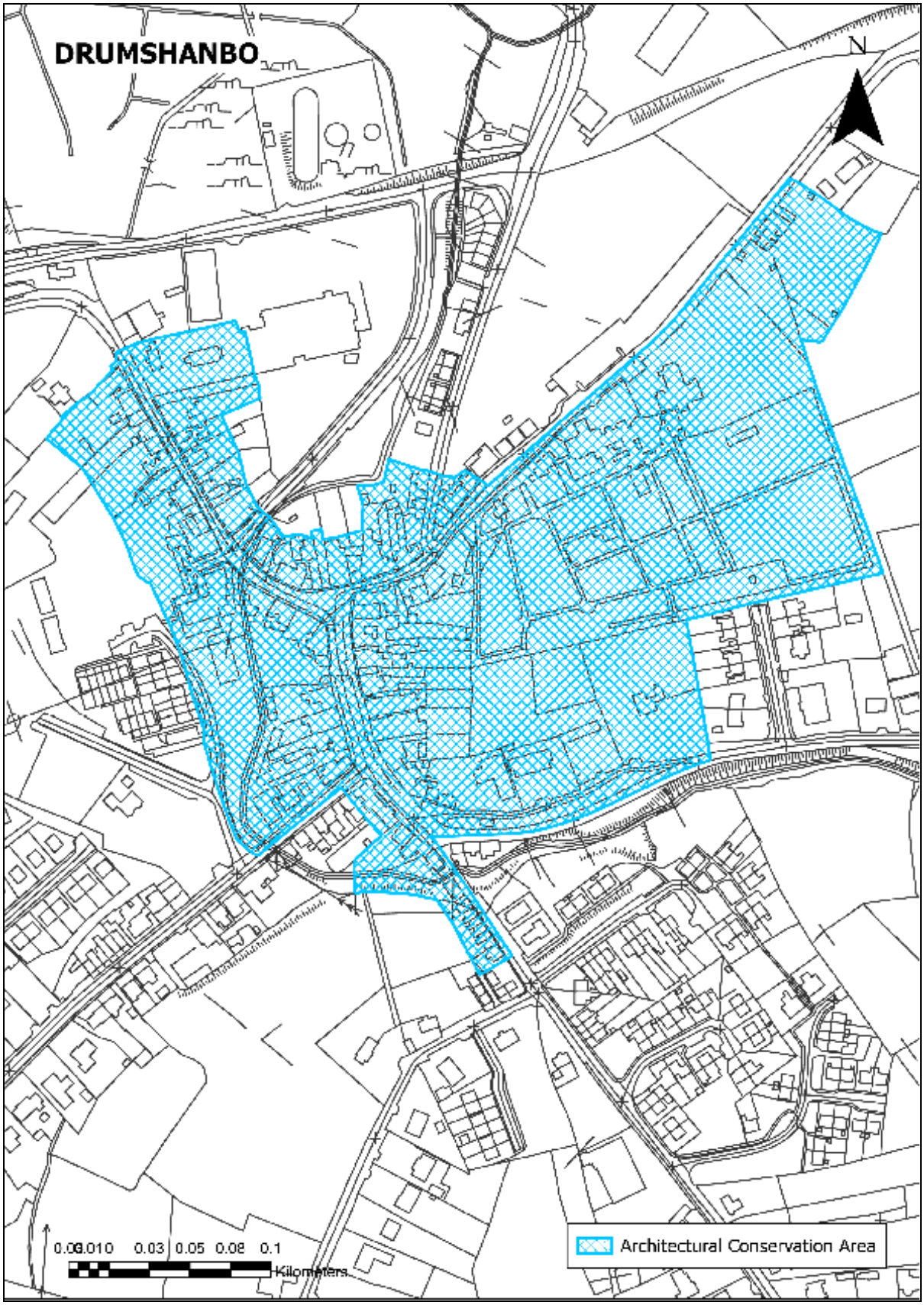
ARCH OBJ 6 To support research and the production of a Conservation Management Plan for the Black Pig's Dyke in Co. Leitrim.

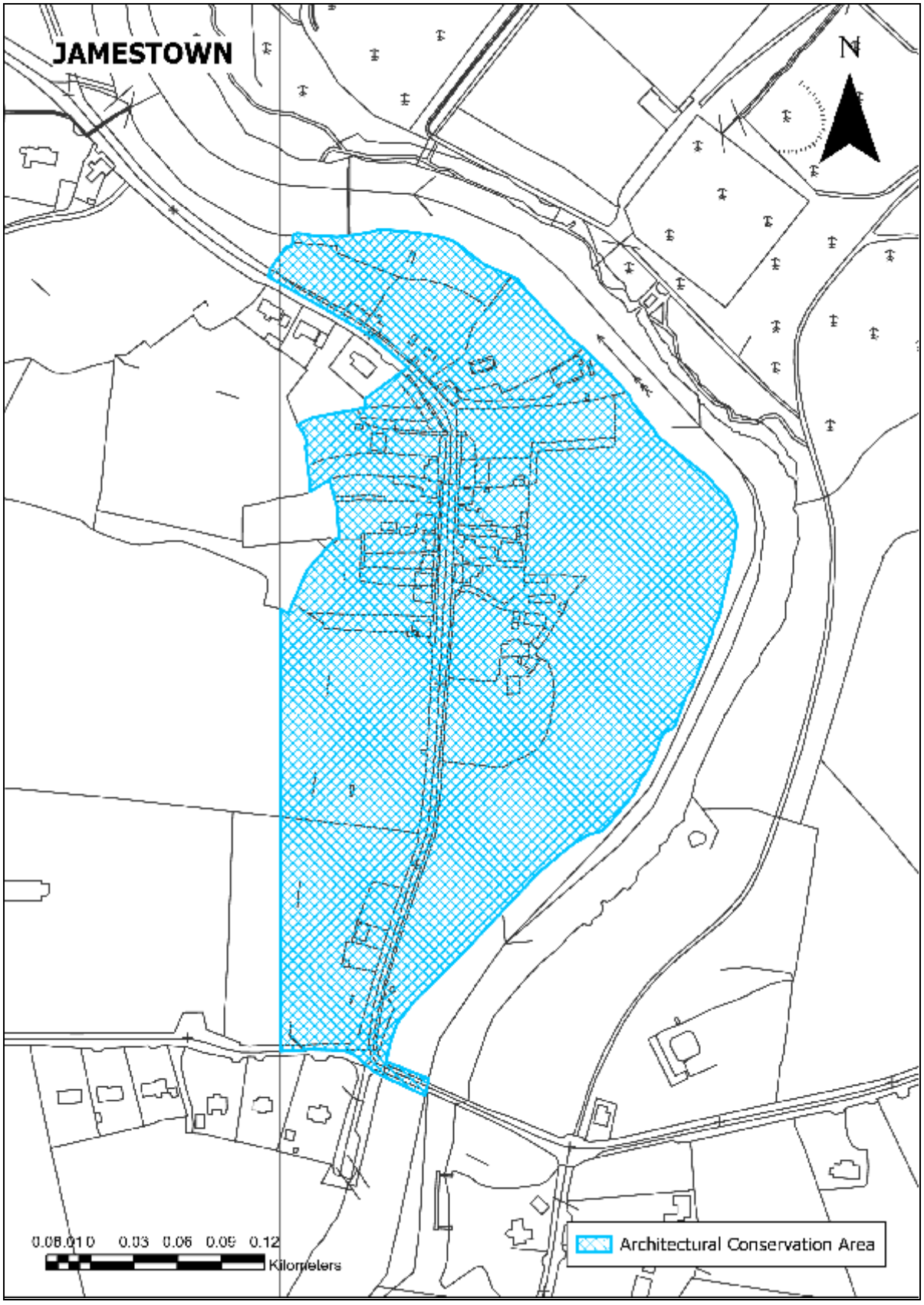

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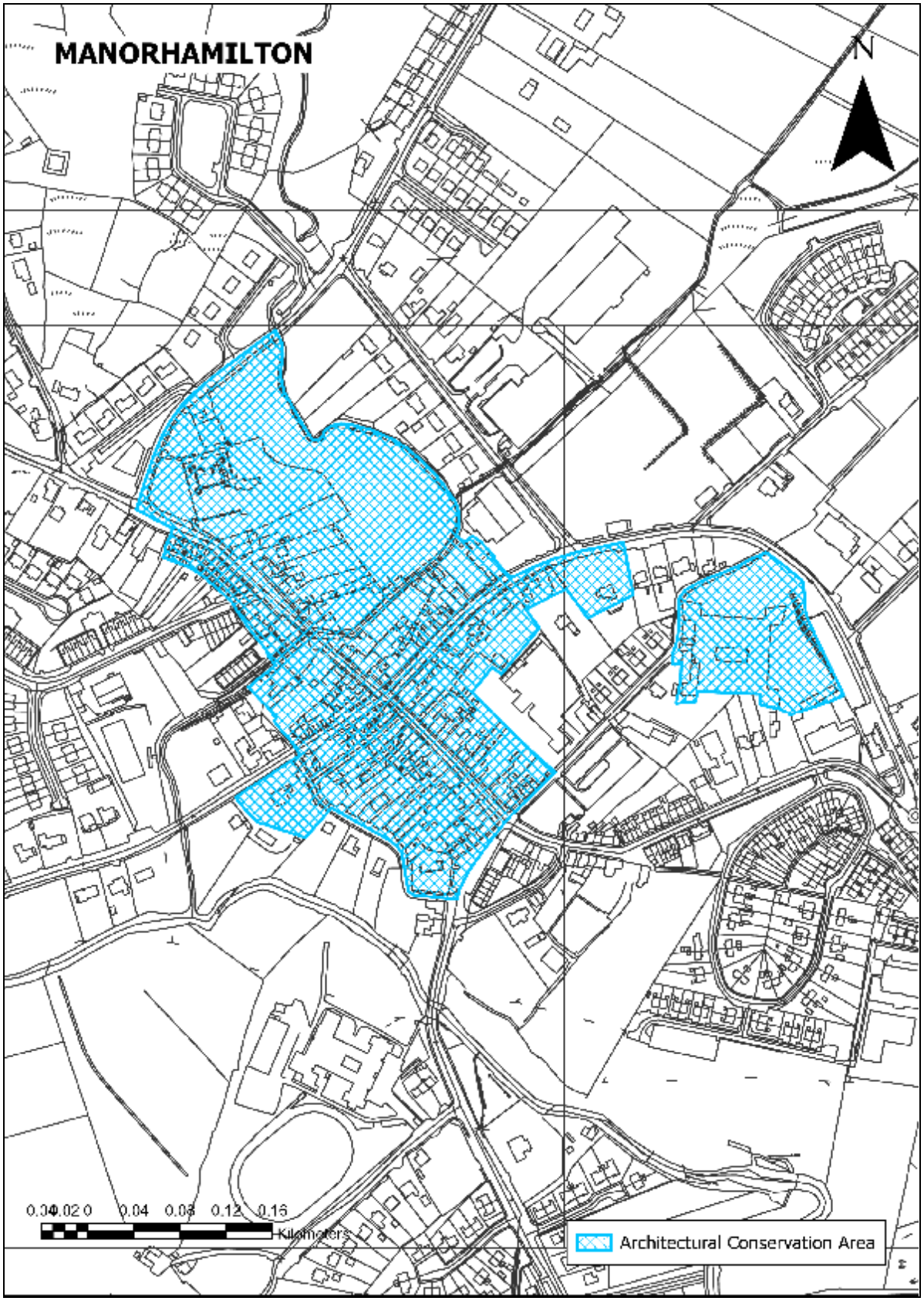

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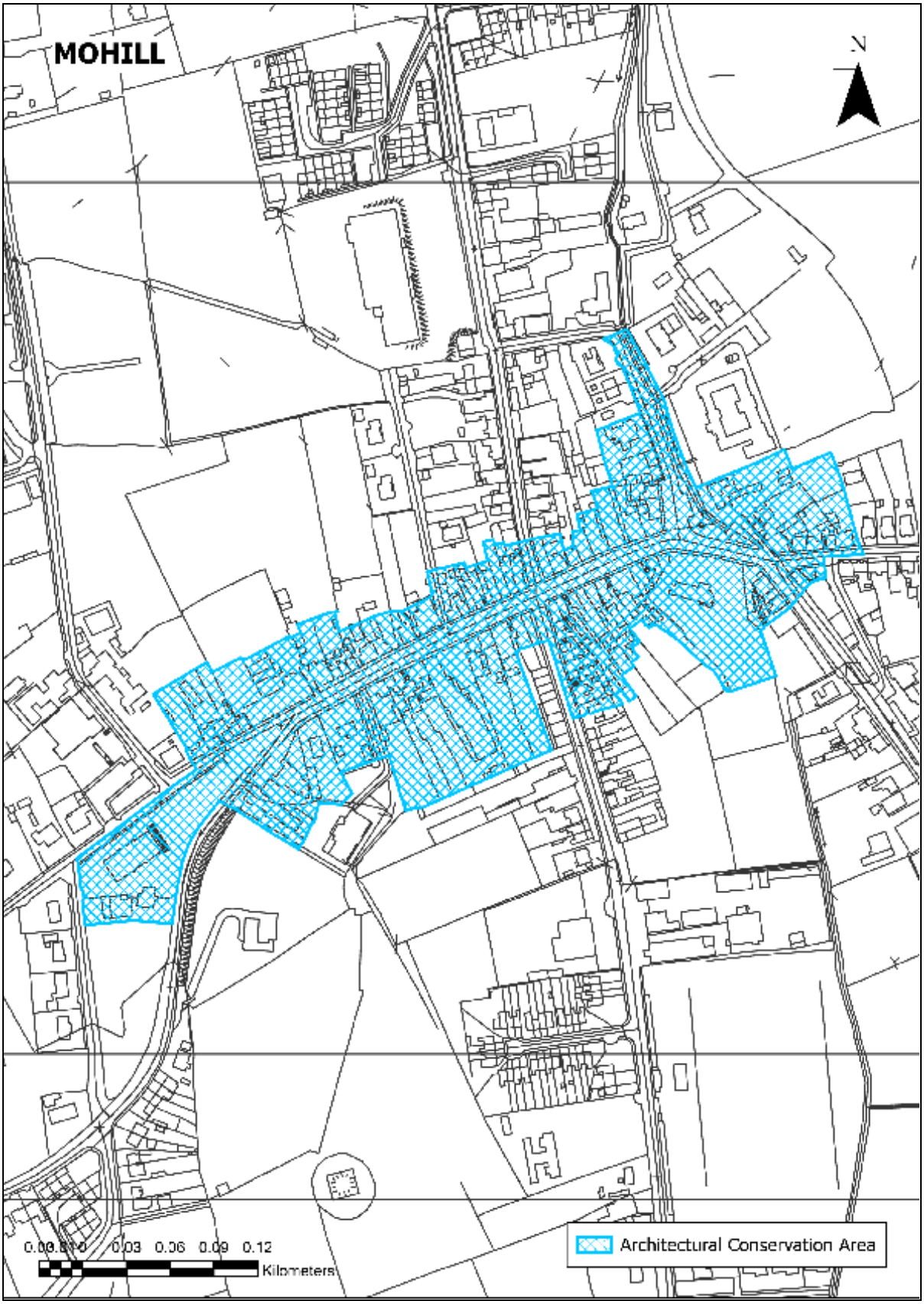

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12 CLIMATE ACTION & RENEWABLE ENERGY

12.1 Introduction

Mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change is now largely accepted as the greatest societal challenge of our time and will remain the case for future generations to come. It is experienced across a range of occurrences such as increasing global temperatures, extreme weather events, rising sea levels, impact on air quality and air pollution, flooding, changes in the distribution and lifecycle of plant and animal species and the emergence of new pathogens and diseases. Longstanding, objective scientific evidence for the warming of the climate system is indisputable, with the contribution of human activity in increasing greenhouse gases (GHGs) such as methane and nitrous oxide the prevalent cause of observed warming since the mid-20th century. Scientific evidence is also unequivocal in highlighting the limited window available to the international community to undertake real action to stem the future rate of climate change in order to ensure that current and future generations can live sustainably in a low carbon and climate resilient world. Critical to combating the effects of climate change is the need to reduce GHG emissions to meet climate change commitments at international and national levels.

Land use planning continues to play a critical role in balancing development with the protection of the environment. Land use planning is becoming increasingly prominent in mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change, principally in influencing the reduction in GHG emissions. It achieves this by providing for more compact forms of growth, mixed development uses, greater connectivity and more sustainable development.

This Plan incorporates a series of policies and objectives across a number of development themes in which mitigation and adaptation of the effects of climate change are a key focus. This is central in Chapter 2 – *Core Strategy* of this Plan which sets out the overall development strategy of the county with a focus on accommodating the future development of the settlements primarily within their existing built-up footprint in order to achieve more compact forms of growth. In Chapter 9 – *Infrastructure and Energy,* a number of policies and objectives are included aimed at promoting and facilitating more sustainable forms of transport and energy generation within Co. Leitrim. In Chapter 11 – *Heritage,* a number of measures are outlined seeking to protect and enhance the levels of biodiversity within the county. These are just some examples of the various development themes addressed in this Plan with the overarching aim of facilitating a reduction in GHG emissions, encouraging more sustainable forms of development and protecting and enhancing critical natural resources and assets.

Leitrim County Council is committed to playing its role in transitioning towards a climate resilient low carbon county and this commitment is documented in its Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (CCAS) 2019-2024. Included in the range of actions set out in the CCAS is the requirement to identify and integrate climate change as a critical consideration and guiding principle informing the Core Strategy of the County Development Plan. This has been achieved. Rising to the challenge of climate change is a theme that runs through the County Development Plan and is central to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

The aim of this chapter is to enable the transition of Co. Leitrim to a low carbon and climate resilient county, with an emphasis on reduction in energy demand and GHG emissions, through a combination of effective mitigation and adaptation in responses to climate change.

The Plan seeks to ensure that it:

1. supports the implementation of international and national objectives on climate change
2. works closely with the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA), Climate Action Regional Office (CARO) and other stakeholders to promote climate action policies and objectives
3. promote spatial planning policies that are consistent with climate mitigation and adaption objectives

This chapter outlines the approach to climate change adaptation and GHG emissions mitigation, as required by the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended. The chapter firstly defines climate change and the known associated risks, which are expected to impact Ireland in both the short and long term. It then outlines the statutory context in which climate change is managed from an international, national, regional and local perspective. The chapter then examines how mitigation and adaptation strategies have been integrated into the main body of the Plan.

12.2 Legislative and Policy Context

12.2.1 Statutory Context

Section 10 (2)(n) of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended requires Development Plans to include various objectives to address climate change. It is a statutory requirement for Local Authorities to incorporate the promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in both urban and rural areas in their plans. This includes requirements to:

i. reduce energy demand in response to the likelihood of increases in energy and other costs due to long-term decline in non-renewable resources
ii. reduce anthropogenic (manmade) greenhouse gas emissions
iii. address the necessity of adaptation to climate change; in particular, having regard to location, layout and design of new development

12.2.2 International Legislative and Policy Context

Ireland has committed to addressing climate change through a series of international agreements to limit global temperature rise, reduce GHG emissions, improve energy efficiency, and increase energy consumption from renewable sources. These include:

- **2030 Climate and Energy Framework (2014)** – represents the existing ambition of the EU to move towards a carbon neutral economy, with key targets for 2030 to include:
  - At least 40% cuts in greenhouse gas emissions (from 1990 levels);
  - At least 32% share for renewable energy; and
  - At least 32.5% improvement in energy efficiency.

- **The Conference of the Parties (COP21) Paris Agreement (2015)** – agreed by over 200 nations with a stated aim of limiting global temperature increases to no more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels with efforts to limit this rise to 1.5°C.

- **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2015) –** the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by all United Nations member states at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The stated aim is addressing the environmental, economic, and

social challenges that all countries need to tackle by 2030 to achieve inclusive, people-centered, and sustainable development with no one left behind. They recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests. SDG 13 refers to the need to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

- **The European Green Deal (2019)** – provider for a growth strategy that aims to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient, and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050. In so doing, economic growth is decoupled from resource use through financial support and technical assistance in the form of the Just Transition Mechanism. The European Green Deal also includes:

  - a Circular Economy Action Plan
  - review and revision of climate-related policy instruments;
  - a 'Farm to Fork' strategy with a policy focus shift from compliance to performance (financial inducements for farmers for managing and storing carbon in the soil, improved nutrient management and reducing emissions)
  - revision to Energy Taxation Directive;
  - a sustainable and smart Mobility Strategy
  - an EU Forestry Strategy with key objectives focusing on afforestation and forest preservation and restoration in Europe

- **2030 Climate Target Plan (2020)** – proposal by the European Commission (EC) to cut GHG emissions by at least 55% below 1990 levels by 2030 which sets out a substantial increase compared to the existing target upwards from the previous target of at least 40% provided for in the 2030 Climate and Energy Framework (2014). This includes EU-wide targets and policy objectives for the period from 2021 to 2030.

12.2.3 National, Regional and Local Legislative and Policy Context

At a national level, significant progress has been made in the evolution of climate change policy in Ireland, in line with international agreement and policies referenced previously, through a number of national legislative and policy instruments which are outlined as follows.

Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act (2015)
The Act provides the statutory basis for the establishment of a national framework with the aim of achieving a low-carbon, climate-resilient, and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050 and represents the first overarching piece of climate change legislation by the State. Key features of the Act which will aid the transition towards a low carbon economy include:

- The establishment of an independent national expert advisory Council on climate change (Climate Change Advisory Council).
- The requirement to produce a series of successive National Mitigation Plans and National Adaptation Frameworks to respectively lower Ireland's level of GHG emissions and provide for responses to changes caused by climate change.
- The requirement to provide tailored sectoral plans to specify the adaptation measures to be undertaken by each Government department.

National Adaptation Framework 2018 (NAF)
Ireland's first statutory National Adaptation Framework (NAF) was published in January 2018 and sets out the national strategy to reduce the vulnerability of the country to the negative effects of climate change and to avail of positive impacts arising from overall transition to a low carbon economy. The NAF, which was developed under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, identifies the critical role to be played by Local Authorities in addressing climate change adaptation and mandates all Local Authorities to adopt a Climate Adaptation Strategy supported by the relevant Climate Action Regional Office (CARO).

Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework (2018)
The NPF sets out the role of the planning system in facilitating mitigation of, and adaptation to, the effects of climate change while ensuring that sustainable infrastructure networks build resilience to climate change. National Strategic Outcome (NSO) 8 outlines the commitment to achieving transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society:

NSO 8 *The National Climate Policy Position establishes the national objective of achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. This objective will shape investment choices over the coming decades in line with the National Mitigation Plan and the National Adaptation Framework. New energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary for a more distributed, renewables-focused energy generation system, harnessing both the considerable on-shore and offshore potential from energy sources such as wind, wave and solar and connecting the richest sources of that energy to the major sources of demand.*

Moreover, the NPF contains a number of National Policy Objectives (NPOs) relevant to the role of land use planning in mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change. These NPOs include:

NPO 3c *Deliver at least 30% of all new homes that are targeted in settlements, other than the five Cities and their suburbs, within their existing built-up footprints.*

NPO 21 *Enhance the competitiveness of rural areas by supporting innovation in rural economic development and enterprise through the diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and services, including ICT based industries and those addressing climate change and sustainability.*

NPO 41b *In line with the collective aims of national policy regarding climate adaptation, to address the effects of sea level changes and coastal flooding and erosion and to support the implementation of adaptation responses in vulnerable areas.*

NPO 53 *Support the circular and bio economy including in particular through greater efficiency in land management, greater use of renewable resources and by reducing the rate of land use change from urban sprawl and new development.*

NPO 54 *Reduce our carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives, as well as targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions.*

Climate Action Fund (2018)
The Climate Action Fund was established under the National Development Plan 2018- 2027 as part of Project Ireland 2040. The fund (totalling €500 million over the period to 2027) will support initiatives

that contribute to the achievement of Ireland's climate and energy targets in a cost-effective manner. It offers the potential for innovative interventions which, in the absence of support from the Fund, would not otherwise be developed. The Fund will also seek to facilitate projects that contribute to other Government policy priorities including:

- Supporting innovation and capacity building towards the development of climate change solutions capable of being scaled and delivering benefits beyond a once - off impact; and
- Generating wider socio-economic benefits such as job creation, air quality improvements, reduction in fuel poverty, bio-diversity and community resilience and development.

Climate Action Regional Office (2018)
Leitrim County Council is one of 17 Local Authorities located within the Eastern and Midlands Climate Action Region (CARO). The Eastern and Midland CARO is one of four regional Climate Action Offices set up in 2018 in response to Action 8 of the 2018 National Adaptation Framework (NAF) – Planning for a Climate Resilient Ireland to drive climate action at both regional and local levels. The composition of the Climate Action Regions has been determined by the geographical and topographical characteristics, vulnerabilities and shared climate risks experienced across Local Authority areas. The climatic risks associated with the Eastern and Midlands Climate Action Region include fluvial flooding, pluvial flooding, groundwater flooding and coastal flooding.

In recognition of the significant obligation to develop and implement climate action measures, the four regional offices are mandated to co-ordinate engagement across the varying levels of government and help build on experience and expertise that exists in the area of climate change and climate action.

Under the NAF, sectoral adaptation plans are to be developed and implemented that will affect the work of the Local Authorities. As such, the Midlands and Eastern CARO will liaise with respective Government Departments to align actions undertaken by the Local Authorities with sectoral adaptation plans.

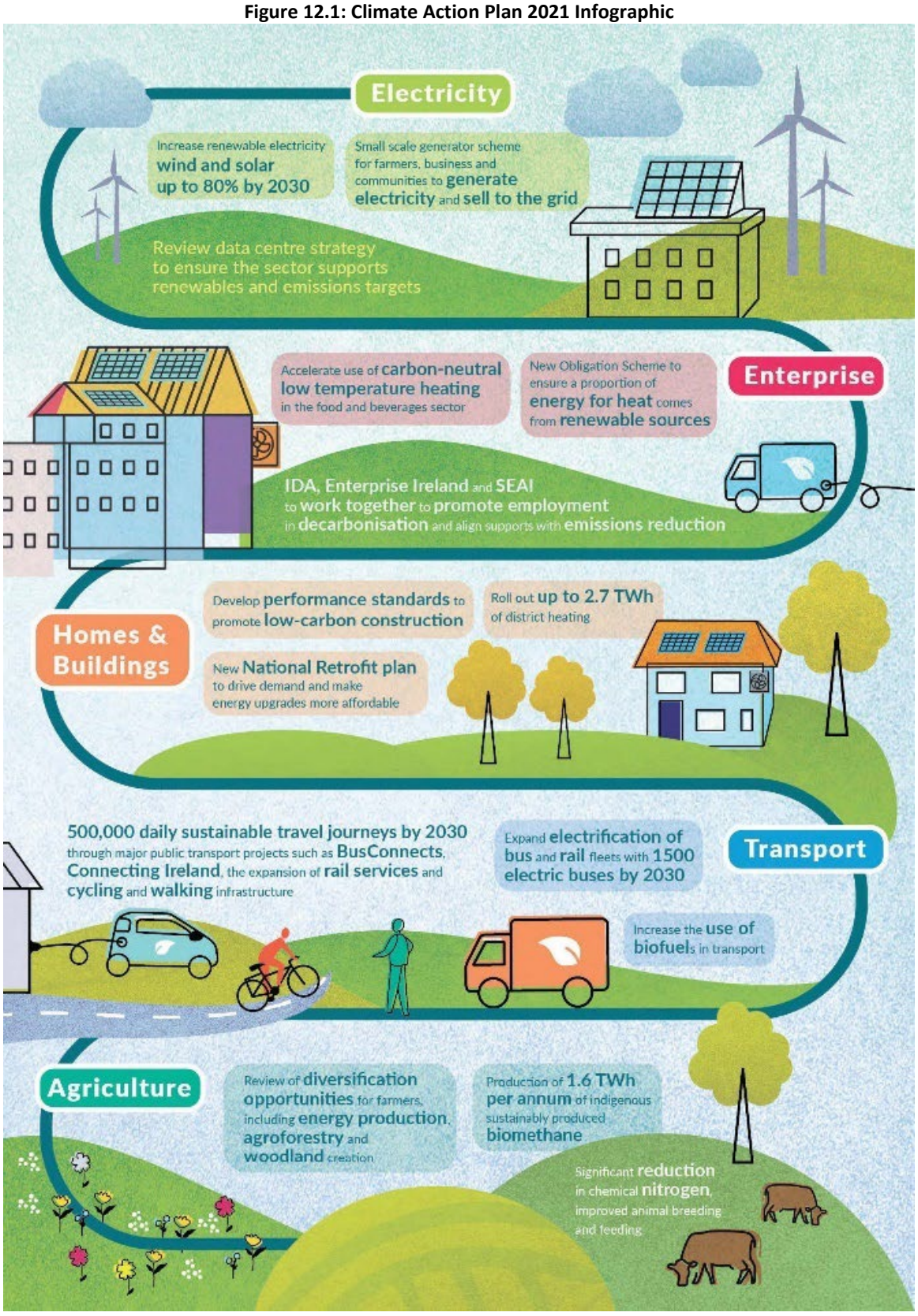
Climate Action Plan – Securing Our Future (2021)
The Climate Action Plan provides a statement of Government policies relevant to decarbonisation and adapting to a changing climate, with 493 no. specific actions over a number of sectors and charts an ambitious course towards halving our GHG emissions by 2030 and reaching net zero by 2050. Figure 13.1 provides an infographic of some of the actions contained in the Plan. The Plan also reflects Ireland's commitment to achieving the 17 no. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed by the United Nations in 2015. The SDGs address the environmental, economic, and social challenges that the world needs to tackle by 2030 to ensure a sustainable future.

It reflects the central priority that climate change will have in Ireland's political and administrative systems into the future, setting out governance arrangements including the carbon-proofing of government policies, the establishment of carbon budgets, the strengthening of the Climate Change Advisory Council and providing greater accountability to the Oireachtas.

The Climate Action Plan contains a series of actions where Local Authorities are identified as key stakeholders in their respective delivery. This includes Action 165 which requires each Local Authority to identify and develop plans for one "*Decarbonising Zone*" within their functional area in collaboration with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). In respect of this action, Leitrim County Council has identified Carrick-on-Shannon as its designated '*Decarbonising Zone*' (DZ) with a series of implementation plans for developing the Carrick-on-Shannon DZ to be included in the Leitrim County

Council Climate Action Plan, as required by the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill (2021).

Figure 12.1: Climate Action Plan 2021 Infographic



Source: Climate Action Plan 2021

National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) 2021-2030 (2019)

In accordance with the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action Regulation, the State was required to prepare a National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) which sets out the energy and climate policies of the Government in accordance with EU legislation. It builds on the existing national energy and climate policy framework documents, which aim to diversify and decarbonise Ireland's electricity generation sector, with the long-term objective of decarbonising the energy sector and achieving an economic transformation with a carbon neutral agriculture and land use sector by 2050.

The NECP envisages a target of at least 55% renewable energy in electricity by 2030. However, as of June 2020, under the new Programme for Government, *Our Shared Future*, Ireland is committed to achieving a 7% annual average reduction in greenhouse gas emissions between 2021 and 2030. As the NECP was drafted in line with the current EU effort-sharing approach, before the Government committed to this higher level of ambition, the Plan does not reflect this higher commitment. Ireland is currently developing those policies and measures to be contained within the forthcoming updated Climate Action Plan 2021.

Leitrim County Council Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024

The National Adaptation Framework (NAF) requires Local Authorities to develop their own adaptation plans.

Table 12.1: Identified Thematic Areas and associated High-Level Goals

Theme 1: Local Adaptation Governance and Business Operations: **Goal: Climate Change adaptation considerations are mainstreamed and integrated successfully into all functions and activities of the Local Authority, ensuring operational protocols, procedures and policies, implement an appropriate response in addressing the diversity of impacts associated with climate change.**
Theme 2: Infrastructure and Built Environment: **Goal: Increased capacity for climate resilient structural infrastructure is centred around the effective management of climate risk, informed investment decisions and positive contribution towards a low carbon society.**
Theme 3: Land-use and Development: **Goal: Sustainable policies and measures are devised influencing positive behavioural changes, supporting climate adaptation actions and endorsing approaches for successful transition to low carbon and climate resilient society.**
Theme 4: Drainage and Flood Management: **Goal: Greater understanding of risks and consequences of flooding and successful management of a co-ordinated approach to drainage and flooding.**
Theme 5: Natural Resources and Cultural Infrastructure: **Goal: Fostering meaningful approaches to protecting natural and key cultural assets through an appreciation for the adaptive capacity of the natural environment to absorb the impacts of climate change.**

Theme 6: Community Health and Wellbeing: **Goal: Empowered and cohesive communities with strong understanding of climate risks, increased resilience to impacts of climate change with capacity to champion climate action at local level.**
Theme 7: Economic Development: **Goal: Promote projects and business opportunities that will contribute economically towards a climate resilient community in Co. Leitrim.**

Source: Leitrim County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024

The Leitrim County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 forms part of Ireland's national strategy for climate adaptation. The Strategy represents a proactive approach by the Council to ensure that climate change resilience is built into all functions of the Council. The Strategy is also to ensure the Council fulfils its role in contributing to and meeting the national targets on climate change.

Within the Strategy, adaptation goals and objectives were developed focussing on seven thematic areas following an assessment of local climate change risks, using baseline information and climate change projections. A Climate Risk Register was also established for the county and is contained within the Strategy. Adaptation actions, guided by the relevant theme and associated goals and objectives, were then developed to address the priority risks and vulnerabilities identified. Further commitments are made in the Strategy to establish a Climate Action Steering Group, reflecting representatives of all service delivery sections in the Council, to implement, monitor and evaluate the identified actions and high-level goals of the Strategy.

Climate Action Charter (2019)

Leitrim County Council is a signatory to the Climate Action Charter (CAC) for Local Authorities, signed in 2019. The CAC sets out a common understanding in relation to climate change, acknowledging the need for a whole of government approach to address climate change, and acknowledges specific Local Government supports of Central Government in relation to climate change. This charter acknowledges that Local Authorities will, with the support of Central Government, *'exercise our planning and regulatory roles to help improve climate outcomes in the wider community and beyond the public sector, by developing and implementing robust evidenced based policy and standards on climate action, through appropriate and relevant adaptation and mitigation measures'*. The CAC requires proactive climate action and ensures that climate change is a key consideration of every aspect of Local Authority policy and operations.

Northern & Western Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (2020)

The Northern and Western Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) provides regional expression to the National Strategic Outcomes and National Policy Objectives of the NPF and identifies climate change as a key issue for the RSES. In this regard, the RSES provides policy support addressing climate change, renewable energy development, flood mitigation and adaptation and '*Green Infrastructure*' through a number of Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) which, in turn, have been given local policy expression within this Plan. Appendix X contains the relevant RPOs in this regard.

Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill (2021)

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2021 seeks to amend the principal Act of 2015 (outlined below) by reinforcing Ireland's transition to Net Zero and achieve its commitment to a climate neutral economy by no later than 2050. It establishes a legally binding

framework with clear targets and commitments set in law and will ensure the necessary structures and processes are embedded on a statutory basis to ensure Ireland achieves its national, EU and international climate goals and obligations in the near and long term.

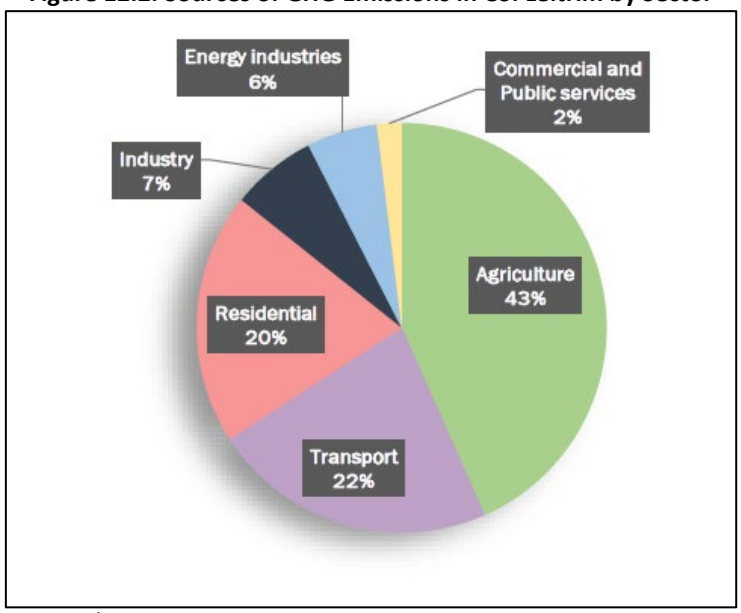
The Bill includes the following key elements:

- Places on a statutory basis a 'national climate objective', which commits to pursue and achieve no later than 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity-rich, environmentally sustainable and climate-neutral economy.
- Embeds the process of carbon budgeting into law, through the adoption of a series of economy-wide 5-year carbon budgets, including sectoral targets for each relevant sector, on a rolling 15-year basis, starting in 2021.
- Actions for each sector will be detailed in the Climate Action Plan, updated annually.
- A National Long Term Climate Action Strategy will be prepared every 5 years.
- Provides that the first two 5-year carbon budgets proposed by the Climate Change Advisory Council should equate to a total reduction of 51% emissions over the period to 2030, in line with the Programme for Government commitment.
- Introduces a requirement for each Local Authority to prepare a Climate Action Plan, which will include both mitigation and adaptation measures and be updated every 5 years. Local Authority Development Plans will also align with their Climate Action Plan.
- Public Bodies will be obliged to perform their functions in a manner consistent with national climate plans and strategies and furthering the achievement of the national climate objective.

12.3 GHG Emissions Sources in Co. Leitrim

In order to develop and provide context for key actions, policies and objectives designed to mitigate and adapt to climate change effects relevant to Co. Leitrim, an appraisal of the key sources of GHG emission within the county is required. In this regard, the Climate Resilient Opportunities for Generations Ahead (CRÓGA) Project, developed by Good Energies Alliance Ireland (GEAI) with support from the EU Erasmus + Programme and the Irish Environmental Network, has provided an invaluable source of baseline information on GHG emissions in Co. Leitrim.

Figure 12.2: Sources of GHG Emissions in Co. Leitrim by Sector



Source: CRÓGA Leitrim Greenhouse Gas Emissions Baseline Report, 2019

The report, published in December 2019, represented the first Irish county-based carbon inventory report of its kind, and identifies 6 no. sectors of activity in Co. Leitrim which are responsible for the vast majority of GHG emissions in the county. These are:

1. Transport
2. Energy Industries
3. Residential
4. Industry
5. Commercial and Public Services
6. Agriculture

The report also identified two land use categories or habitats (forest land and wetland) capable of absorbing carbon and therefore vital to countering emissions produced by the aforementioned sources in the county.

The following provides an overview of the identified sector sources of GHG emissions in Co. Leitrim.

12.3.1 Agriculture

Agriculture is identified as the biggest producer of greenhouse gas emissions in the county, owing to a high proportion of both arable and livestock farming occurring. It accounts for almost 43% of Co. Leitrim's total emissions with emissions per farm amount to 51.3 tons CO_2 equivalent. The sectoral carbon load is 3.5 tons CO_2 equivalent per €1,000 of farm produce. 70% of Leitrim farms specialise in beef production and livestock farming accounts for about 90% of all farming activities in the county.

12.3.2 Transport

Co. Leitrim's dispersed rural population and lack of public transport options have led to high levels of private car ownership. In Co. Leitrim, there is 1 private car for every 2.3 persons, similar to the national average. Emissions from transport amount to 22% of the total greenhouse gas emissions for Co. Leitrim, of which 55% are emitted by private transport, 41% by goods vehicles and tractors and 4% by public transport.

The Plan promotes an integrated approach to land-use and transportation which aligns with the Core Strategy and directs the majority of future development into existing towns and settlements within Co. Leitrim, which will assist in reducing car dependency. The Plan strongly supports the principles of creating compact urban growth, consolidation of existing settlements and seeking to prioritise the development of brownfield lands across the settlement hierarchy. Achieving these principles will encourage a greater use of public transport where such options may become more viable and maximising the use of cycling and walking as viable alternatives to the private car. This pattern of development will reduce the need to travel.

12.3.3 Residential

This sector includes emissions from combustion for residential space and water heating. It emits approximately 86,406 tons CO_2 equivalent per annum in Co. Leitrim. It represents 20% of total emissions. The principal findings were stated as:

- the main fuels used for space heating in Leitrim are oil (66%) and electricity (17%).
- the level of GHG emissions from fossil fuels depends a lot on the age of the house.

- average emissions are 6.9 tons CO_2 equivalent per house, higher than the national value (around 5.4 tons CO_2 equivalent), explained by a higher (+18%) energy consumption per m², and the use of oil and solid fuels in Co. Leitrim instead of gas.

12.3.4 Industry

This sector includes emissions from combustion for industries. Industry in Leitrim emits around 29,399 tons CO_2 equivalent per year, 7% of total county emissions, reflecting the low level of industrial activity in the county. The main emitting activity is manufacturing accounting for 92% of the total industrial sector emissions.

12.3.5 Commercial and Public Services

This sector describes emissions from building space and hot water heating (Transport and Electricity are not included.) In Co. Leitrim, the Commercial and Public Services sector includes retailers, public administration and services. It emits around 8,406 tons CO_2 equivalent per year in Co. Leitrim. It represents 2% of the total county emissions. The biggest employer in this sector is Public Administration, Education and Healthcare, employing 4,557 no. people, as many as the other enterprises combined.

12.3.6 Energy Industries

This sector includes emissions from electricity generation (produced by local renewable energy and by national electricity mix from the national electricity grid), petrol refining and other (national waste to energy incineration, briquetting manufacture and fugitive emissions). The Energy industries sector emits around 24,243 tons CO_2 equivalent per annum, or 6% of total county emissions.

12.3.7 Sequestered Carbon

The CRÓGA Project also analysed the role of carbon sinks within the county in sequestering carbon emissions with forestland, wetland and grassland the three predominant natural assets facilitating this within Co. Leitrim. The following provides an overview of CRÓGA Project evaluation of these land cover types in the county and its calculations of respective levels of carbon sequestration associated with each land cover type.

12.3.7.1 Forestland

Trees play an important part in the carbon cycle, absorbing and storing significant quantities of carbon. Forestland acts as carbon sinks if the amount of CO_2 that the plant removes from the atmosphere while it grows exceeds the amount of carbon dioxide released, on an annual basis. The carbon absorbed from the atmosphere is mostly stored in the forest soil. The proportion of forestland to total land area in Leitrim is 18.9%, well above the national average of 11%. Deforesting an area for agricultural purposes removes this benefit, but also releases all of the previously stored carbon back into the atmosphere. The CRÓGA Project Report estimates that the current area devoted to forestland in Co. Leitrim has the ability to sequester 190,174 tons CO_2 equivalent from the atmosphere per year. This equates to 6.3 tons CO_2 equivalent removed per hectare of forestland per year. In addition to the above, the total carbon stored in Co. Leitrim forestland is deemed to be 12.6 million tons CO_2 equivalent.

The scale of commercial forest cover within the county has been well documented elsewhere in this Plan and remains a controversial subject in terms of its potential adverse impacts on residential

amenity, visual amenity, biodiversity and ecological value and on soils and geological integrity. The third National Forestry Inventory, conducted in 2017, identified Co. Leitrim as being the county with the highest percentage of forest cover (18.9%), well in excess of the national equivalent (11%)[36]. Ireland has one of the lowest forest covers of all European countries (11%) compared to the European average of over 40%. Under current national forestry policy[37], a target of 18% national forest cover by 2046 has been identified. Given that the forest cover in Co. Leitrim exceeds this national target already, in the context of its own boundaries, the justification for extensive additional commercial forestry planting in the county would appear to be limited within this policy context. Moreover, a review of national forestry policy is currently underway, including a review of consent procedure for the granting of planting and felling licences (currently administered by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine), with a focus on improving species diversity through enhanced native broadleaf planting.

Notwithstanding, the significant carbon sequestration properties of forest cover, as documented in the CRÓGA Project report, forestry development will remain a vital feature in the overall suite of actions for mitigating the effects of climate change.

12.3.7.2 Wetland

A wetland is a natural ecosystem that is flooded by water permanently or seasonally. There are four main types of wetlands, namely swamp, marsh, bog and fen. The last two types are also described as mire environments. Wetlands have soils with high water content that welcome aquatic or hydrophile vegetation. Wetlands provides a wide range of ecosystem services such as water purification, water storage, processing of carbon and other nutrients, stabilisation of shoreline, and support to flora and fauna. Wetland is also the most biologically diverse of all ecosystems.

Concerning the carbon cycle, wetlands globally store more than two thirds of the world carbon, accumulated over thousands of years. Irish wetlands include undisturbed wetlands (16.4% of total land-use in 2017) and managed peatlands (0.8%). Peat soils or bogs cover 20.6% of the national land area and contain more than 75% of the national soil organic carbon. Co. Leitrim wetlands cover more than 20.5% of total land area, with 35,513 hectares of blanket bog and 5,876 hectares of raised bog. 8,153 hectares (c. 20%) of bogland within the county comprise of designated sites owing to the importance of their habitat (including those sites at Aghavogill, Doagh/Thur Mountains and Corry Mountain).

Whilst the CRÓGA report does not detail the estimated sequestered CO_2 from the atmosphere, given that the wetlands in Co. Leitrim are broadly undisturbed or marginally disturbed by small scale turf cutting, it is considered that they provide a vital source of carbon sequestration for the county.

12.3.7.3 Grassland

Grassland is the prevailing use of land in Co. Leitrim, accounting for 58% of total land area (92,097 ha). At national level, grassland emits 6,9 million tons CO_2 equivalent per year. Due to the low-intensity of livestock farming in Leitrim, grassland in the county has characteristics that are more closely defined as semi-natural grassland. Among other ecosystem services that semi-natural grassland provides, it shows very low GHG emissions compared to intensive grassland, and under particular restoration activities, it can turn into a carbon sink.

[36] *Forest Statistics Ireland 2021*, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (2021).
[37] *Forests, Products and People*, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (2014).

All the tree and non-tree sparse woody patches that are not included in our definition of forestland are classified as hedgerows, scrub and woodland (HSW). Co. Leitrim has around 11,000 hectares HWS cover accounting for almost 7% of total land area. HSWs are critical features of the Irish rural landscape due to the key role they play in land management and ecosystems (e.g. niche for biodiversity and carbon sequestration). Carbon sequestration by Co. Leitrim HSW area is most likely some 36,300 tons CO_2 equivalent per year. With supports for increase of hedgerows biomass, HSWs could provide an even larger contribution as carbon sinks.

12.4 Delivering Climate Change Action

The development of a climate resilient county transitioning towards low carbon use across a multitude of sectors of society is an overarching strategic outcome of this Plan. Whilst this chapter addresses climate change specifically, this theme permeates throughout the Plan with a range of policies and objectives addressing this issue within their respective development themes. Land use planning is one of the most effective processes to facilitate local adaptation to climate change. Tools such as land use zoning, policies in relation to compact growth and sustainable transport all can assist in minimising the development risks from increasing greenhouse gas emissions, development occurring in inappropriate locations, such as flood risk or other natural hazards, or risk due to the adverse impacts of changing climate.

The land use planning framework set out in this Plan provides opportunities that can assist climate resilience and achieving the long-term goal of low carbon communities. However, it requires a fundamental shift from previous business as usual practices, towards more sustainable ways of living and working. Key measures include:

- Facilitating population and employment growth to deliver more compact growth in appropriate locations.
- Reduced car dependency and transitioning to more sustainable modes of transport, including increased walking and cycling and providing for the enhanced roll-out of electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure such as charging bays in appropriate locations.
- Enhanced energy efficiency and security through developments in renewable energy including re-energising existing renewable energy developments, enhanced energy conservation and storage technologies and micro-generation.
- Protection of our natural resources, including water supply and utilising blue – green infrastructure measures, urban greening and nature-based solutions to minimise the risk of flooding and address surface water disposal.

12.5 Climate Action – Mitigation and Adaptation

Measures to address climate change can be defined as either mitigation measures or adaptation measures, with some measures incorporating elements of both.

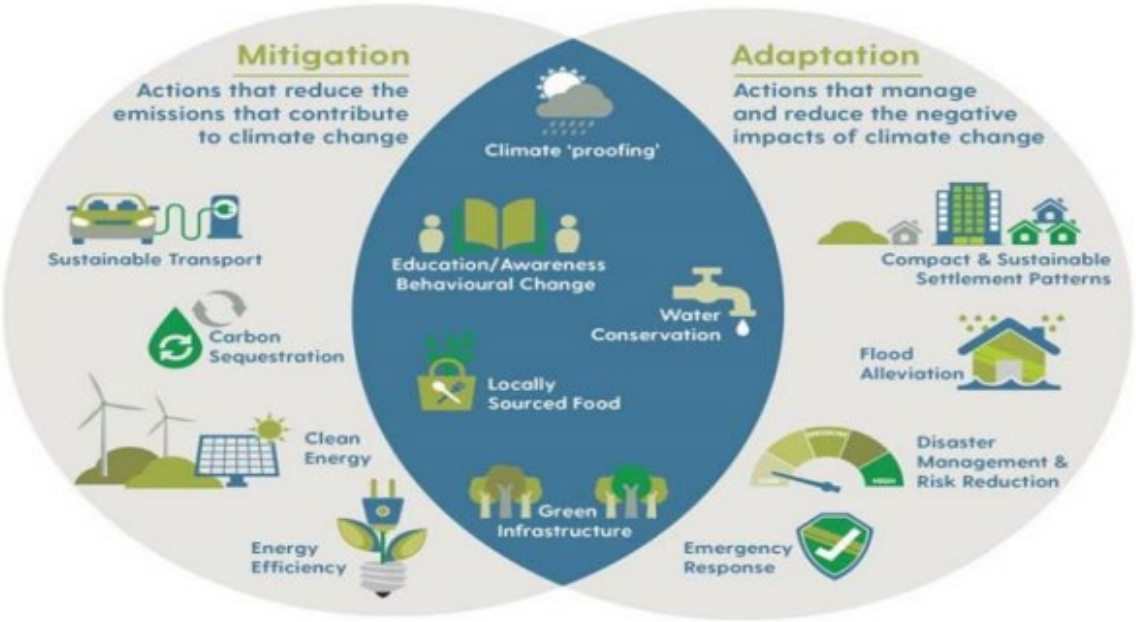
Climate mitigation consists of actions to reduce the likelihood of climate change occurring or reduce the impact if it does occur. This can include reducing the causes of climate change such as current and future greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions. Examples of these include reductions in energy use, switching to renewable energy sources and enhancement of carbon sinks, as well as reducing future risks associated with climate change.

Climate adaptation is the principle of dealing with the negative effects arising from climate change. The aim is therefore to reduce the vulnerability of our environment, society and economy and increase

resilience to such effects. Adaptation involves taking steps to adjust human and natural systems in response to existing and anticipated impacts and to take advantage of new opportunities that may arise.

Climate adaptation brings opportunity through green growth, innovation, jobs, and ecosystem enhancement as well as improvements in areas such as water and air quality. One of the key issues for land-use planning in the context of climate adaptation is the consideration of flood risk. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) undertaken to inform the Plan facilitates the appropriate zoning of areas that are at an elevated risk of flooding and the integration of flood risk management provisions into this Plan.

Figure 12.2: Mitigation and Adaptation Measures



Source: Eastern and Midland Climate Action Regional Office (CARO)

Policies

CA POL 1 To support the implementation of the European, national, regional and local objectives for climate adaptation and mitigation detailed in Section 12.2.2 and Section 12.2.3 of this Plan.

CA POL 2 To support the transition of the county towards a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050 by providing for consolidated development forms which facilitate the reduction of energy demand and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and which supports sustainable travel patterns in line with the Core Strategy.

CA POL 3 To co-operate with and support the role of the Eastern and Midlands Climate Action Regional Office (CARO).

CA POL 4 To provide for a reduction in energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions by providing for consolidated development forms in settlements in Co. Leitrim.

CA POL 5 To promote and encourage positive community and/co-operative led climate action initiatives and projects that seek to reduce emissions, improve energy efficiency, enhance '*Green Infrastructure*' and encourage awareness on climate change issues.

CA POL 6 To encourage innovation and facilitate the development of pilot schemes that support climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.

Objectives

CA OBJ 1 To work in collaboration with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and relevant stakeholders to deliver and support a number of Sustainable Energy Communities (SECs) throughout the county.

CA OBJ 2 To develop a Decarbonisation Zone in Carrick-on-Shannon in accordance with Action 165 of the Climate Action Plan 2019. (see also **CS OBJ 10** in Chapter 2 - Core Strategy for further detail in this regard).

CA OBJ 3 To review the outcomes of the forthcoming update to the Development Plan Guidelines when finalised and to consider reasonable steps to align with the approach to climate change advocated in the Guidelines over the lifetime of the Plan.

CA OBJ 4 To support the development of both climate mitigation and climate adaptation initiatives and seek funding for the implementation of these initiatives from available sources including the Climate Action Fund administered by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC).

12.6 Climate Action – Mitigation Measures for Leitrim

12.6.1 Leitrim County Renewable Energy Strategy

With forecasted increases in population and economic growth, the demand for energy is set to increase in the coming years. Ireland, however, remains heavily reliant on energy generation from fossil fuels and there is currently a need to import two thirds of the country's energy requirements at a significant financial cost to the economy and to the environment. This is wholly incompatible with international and national energy and climate change policy. In order to accommodate and facilitate the growth forecasted for the State over the coming years, a secure and resilient supply of energy is critical in terms of heating, cooling, fuelling transport systems, powering industry, and generating electricity.

It is clear that we are in the midst of a paradigm shift in how we generate energy in this country, with traditional fossil fuelled power plants, such as those at Lough Ree and Shannonbridge, being replaced by a catalogue of renewable energy technologies. Renewable energy comes from natural sources that are continuously replenished by nature and is, therefore, a more sustainable alternative to our dependency on non-renewable fossil fuels.

Co. Leitrim has an abundance of natural resources that can be harnessed in a sustainable manner, without negatively impacting on the environment. There is potential for a range of renewable energy technologies, including:

- Wind energy
- Solar energy

- Bioenergy (biomass, biogas, biofuel)
- Geothermal energy
- Hydropower
- Waste-to-energy

The potential for each renewable energy type in Co. Leitrim is dependent on the abundance of the natural resource available, along with environmental and infrastructural constraints and facilitators. The scale of developments can range from micro to large-scale, providing energy for a single dwelling, a commercial property, or being exported to the electricity grid for distribution. Renewable energies will play an increasing role in the future in the drive to reduce GHG emissions and transition to a low carbon society. Moreover, the Programme for Government (2020) commits to the rapid decarbonisation of the energy sector and seeks to deliver at least 70% renewable electricity by 2030.

Co. Leitrim has a longstanding record of promoting and accommodating the development of renewable energy technologies, principally wind energy, with the county containing excellent wind resources and grid infrastructure. This has been to the benefit of the local economy in terms of jobs sustained by the industry, either in construction or operational terms, but also in fostering the sustainable credentials of Co. Leitrim as a forward-looking, progressive and environmentally conscious county. This in turn will appeal to enterprises and industries as a location to establish their own operations.

To facilitate the sustainable growth of renewable energy technologies within the county, the Leitrim County Renewable Energy Strategy (RES) has been prepared as part of the Plan and is included in Appendix IX. The RES has been prepared by RPS Group with the overall aim of the strategy to provide a plan-led approach to renewable energy development in Co. Leitrim.

The RES is underpinned by an agreed vision as follows:

> *"To encourage and support the transition of Leitrim to a carbon neutral county through community engagement, energy efficiency and the sustainable development of renewable energy, whilst providing environmental and economic benefit at a local and national level and preserving the cultural heritage and visual amenity of the county".*

The RES contains a comprehensive assessment and spatial evaluation of the county to identify the most suitable locations for renewable energy technologies, taking account of available natural resources, grid infrastructure, environmental considerations, impacts on local communities and quality of life. It identifies the energy potential from different renewable resources to investors and communities which can be harnessed subject to detailed assessment at planning application stage.

The RES contains an up to date policy context for the consideration of renewable energy development proposals and provides the spatial framework to enable the county to maximise its contribution to achieving EU and national targets through the optimum use of natural resources.

Policies

RE POL 1 To encourage and facilitate the production of energy from renewable sources, such as from wind, solar, bioenergy, hydroelectricity, and geothermal, subject to compliance with proper planning and environmental considerations.

RE POL 2 To promote and support developments and actions that assist in achieving the national targets for energy from renewable resources and reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with energy production.

RE POL 3 To ensure environmental assessments for new energy developments should address reasonable alternatives for location. Where existing infrastructural assets such as sub-stations, powerlines and roads already exist within proposed development areas, then such assets should be considered for sustainable use by the proposed development where the assets have capacity to absorb the new development.

Objective

RE OBJ 1 To seek to achieve a minimum of 200 MW of renewable electricity in the county by 2030, by facilitating renewable energy developments, including micro-generation renewable technologies incorporating solar, wind, hydro-electric and bioenergy.

12.6.2 Wind Energy

Site suitability is an important factor in determining the suitability of wind farms, having regard to possible adverse impacts associated with, for example, residential amenities, landscape, including views and scenic routes, wildlife, habitats, designated sites, protected structures or bird migration paths, and compatibility with adjoining land uses. The Council is required to achieve a reasonable balance between responding to overall positive Government policy on renewable energy and enabling the wind energy resources of the county to be harnessed in a manner that is consistent with proper planning and sustainable development.

Wind energy remains the largest source of renewable energy in Ireland, contributing 57% of the contribution towards Ireland's overall renewable energy target in 2019 and 85% of electricity generated by renewable means in the same year[38]. Onshore wind energy is the largest contributor to total renewable energy generation in Co. Leitrim, which reflects the national status of wind energy contribution. There is currently an installed capacity of c. 92 MW of onshore wind power in the county, which represents approximately 2.15% of the installed national capacity[39]. A further 18 MW of onshore wind power has been granted permission but as yet unbuilt as the time of preparing this Plan.

The challenges to the development of further onshore wind include the local wind speed resource, noise limits, specifications for shadow flicker and spatial requirements relating to setback distances and environmental constraints. The 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines are in the process of being updated, with the publication of the Draft Wind Energy Development Guidelines (DCCAE, December 2019). The draft guidelines require a setback distance from residential properties of four times the turbine tip height, with a minimum requirement of 500 metres distance. The RES includes a calculation of the available wind resource having regard to the Draft Wind Energy Development Guidelines (DCCAE, December 2019) and its Specific Planning Policy Requirements (SPPRs) contained therein. This calculation was informed by sieve analysis mapping, as illustrated in wind potential area mapping reproduced as Figure 12.4, which takes account of:

- wind speed and resource.
- environmental, ecological, heritage and amenity constraints by applying an exclusion zone around key biodiversity and physical attributes. Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) sites were excluded, however Natural Heritage Area (NHA) and

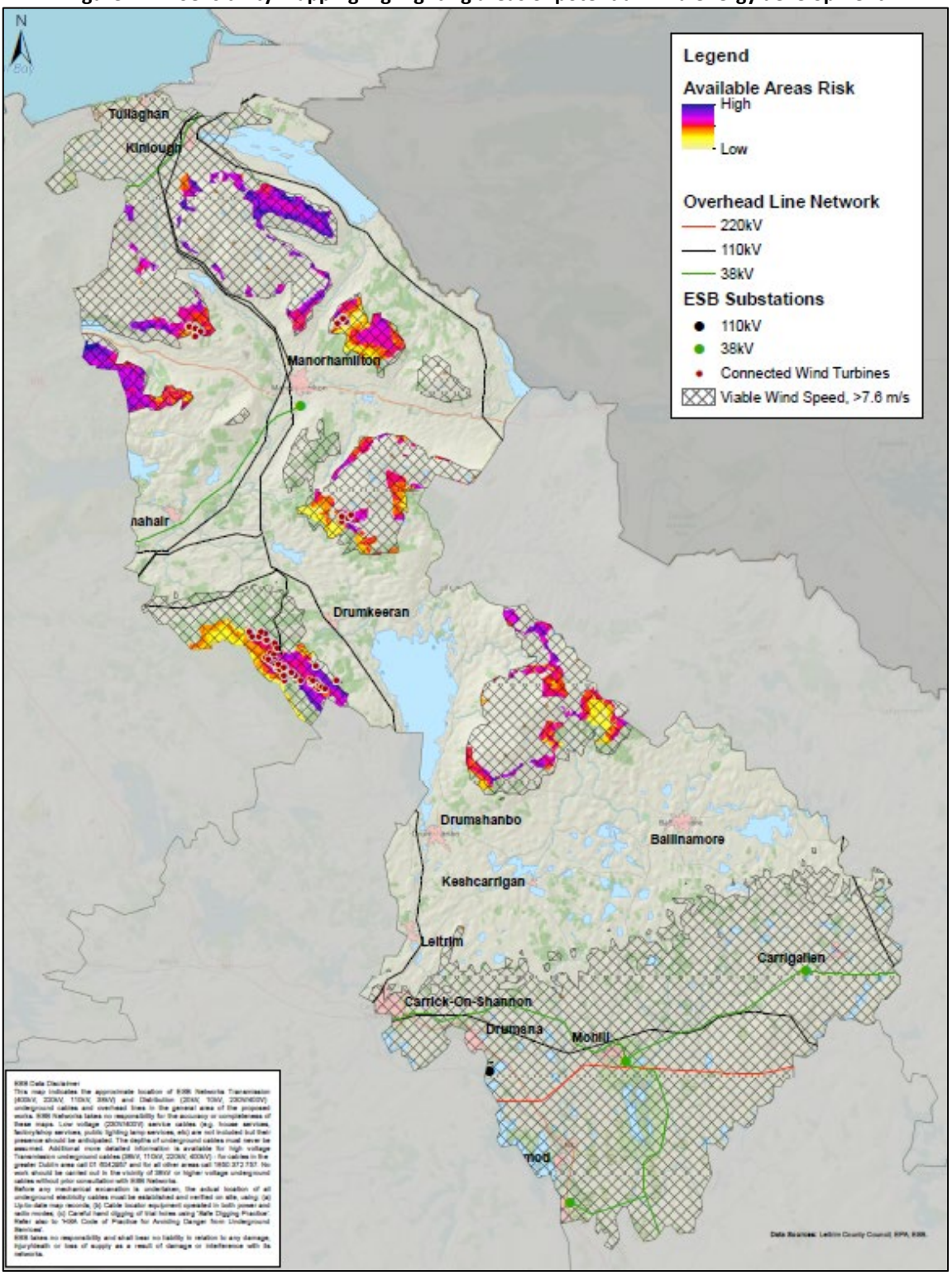
[38] Energy in Ireland 2020 Report, SEAI (2020)

[39] Installed capacity in Republic of Ireland is estimated to be 4,309 MW (Wind Energy Ireland, August 2021)

proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) sites were not excluded. Watercourses and physical constraints were also excluded using buffer distances related to construction activities and safety.

- land take being > 5 km^2 to take into account the spatial requirements generally for commercially scaled wind farm developments.
- set-back distances from housing using the minimum separation distance of 500m from all sensitive receptors as identified in the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines (WEDG) and the 2019 Draft WEDG and as a means of identifying sites of strategic scale for the purposes of determining, more practically, the renewable energy target for the county as required under item (2) of the Specific Planning Policy Requirement (SPPR) prescribed in the *Interim Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Statutory Plans, Renewable Energy and Climate Change* (2017).
- availability of grid infrastructure.

Figure 12.4: Sensitivity mapping highlighting areas of potential wind energy development



The central aim of the sieve mapping and technical analysis undertaken is to highlight areas of the county with the potential to accommodate wind energy development identified as '*Available Areas*' in Figures 6.3 and 6.3b of the *County Leitrim Renewable Energy Strategy*, subject to significant landscape/visual constraints amongst other environmental considerations. Notwithstanding the areas identified in Figures 6.3 and 6.3b of the RES, this does not preclude projects, typically of smaller-scale, from being brought forward in other areas including land adjacent to '*Available Areas*', subject to other project-specific environmental considerations and assessments.

Moreover, it is accepted that that minimum setback distances from sensitive receptors (i.e. dwellings) can be relaxed where wind energy project developers can demonstrate the written consent of affected landowners and householders and which can be taken into consideration in the assessment of any planning application for wind energy development where this arises.

A further technical assessment was carried out of potentially available areas using a search criterion for land parcels of greater than 100 hectares in area. This would potentially be suitable for smaller wind farm configurations of 3 to 5 turbines.

In addition, to supplement and inform the RES, a robust Landscape and Visual Capacity Study was undertaken to specifically evaluate the respective capacities of various landscapes in the county to potentially accommodate larger scale wind energy development proposals.

The capacity study concludes that there is very limited capacity to absorb future large scale proposed developments in the form of multiple wind turbines and wind farms. This is due to a number of factors relating to landscape quality and scenic quality as follows:

- Scenic quality and expansive nature of these landscapes;
- Remote, tranquil and wild quality where the absence of man-made influences is a key characteristic;
- Intervisibility and relationship with adjacent landscapes for which the uplands are important to setting and present as a distinctive skyline or mountain backdrop;
- Presence of complex, distinctive and rugged landform;
- Landscape scale, at locations where field patterns defined by hedgerows convey a sense of a small-scale landscape in which the presence or visibility of wind turbines would dominate; and
- Proximity of settlements for which upland moorland and mountain areas are an important setting, which would be adversely affected by future wind turbines or wind farms.

The capacity study concludes that although scope for future wind energy development would be limited, each planning application for proposed development of this kind would have to be judged individually on its own merits with reference to a landscape and visual impact assessment report undertaken in line with current good practice guidance by an appropriately qualified landscape architect. Such assessments would also have to demonstrate that the design of the proposed development, in terms of turbine number, hub height, tip height and siting of individual wind turbines has regard for the baseline landscape character and visual amenity of the study area in which the development would be located.

The '*Interim Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Statutory Plans, Renewable Energy and Climate Change*' (July 2017) contain a Specific Planning Policy Requirement (SPPR) requiring that Development Plans indicate how it will contribute to realising overall national targets on renewable energy and climate change mitigation, and in particular wind energy production and the potential wind energy resource (in megawatts).

The *Climate Action Plan* (2019) includes a target to expand onshore wind energy generation to 8,200 MW by 2030 (approximately doubling current installed capacity which sits at around 4,000 MW). An assessment of Leitrim's potential contribution to this target (up to 2030) is set out in Table 12.2 and corresponds with the estimated wind capacity/potential presented in the accompanying RES.

As summarised in Table 12.3 overleaf, the RES has identified the potential for Leitrim to increase its wind energy operational capacity by 90% in the period up to 2030, through a combination of

repowering and extending existing windfarms and new wind farms. This aligns well with the national target for growth in onshore wind energy.

Table 12.2: Co. Leitrim Potential Wind Energy Capacity up to 2030

Repowering of Existing Wind Turbines	By the year 2025, the existing wind farms in Leitrim will be in their '*middle age*': 14 MW capacity will be > 20 years old, and a further 26 MW will be >15 years old. Using a ratio of 65% increased capacity when repowering takes place (IWEA, 2019), this 40MW might be repowered to yield a further **26MW** by 2030.
Extensions of Existing Wind Farms	Extensions of existing wind farms may prove viable (possibly in tandem with repowering proposals). Total operational capacity in Leitrim stands at 92MW in 2021. If extensions were to deliver an addition 30% capacity, this would equate to a further **27 MW** by 2030.
New Turbines/ Wind Farms	A theoretical capacity of 594 MW has been identified for Leitrim following the SEAI Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategies (LARES) methodology. Industry experience suggests that a delivery rate of 10% of the theoretical capacity is a realistic benchmark, equating to 59 MW for Leitrim. A Landscape and Visual Capacity Assessment of the available areas found that opportunities for new wind farms are constrained by the need to protect the natural amenities of the county. A conservative estimate of **30 MW** is therefore assigned for new wind farms for the purpose of this Plan, as informed by the RES.

Notwithstanding the targets provided above in Table 12.3, it should be noted that the figures provided do not represent a '*ceiling*' or '*cap*' on the potential of renewable energy that can be generated in the county up to 2030. The figures provided are seen as practicable and achievable targets for the county over this period. Moreover, the Plan notes the provisions of Action 102 of the Climate Action Plan 2021 which includes an objective to develop a new spatial policy for large scale wind and solar development, in support of the target to increase the share of electricity demand generated from renewable sources to up to 80% and that this will be implemented through a regional planning initiative. When implemented, this will give counties like Leitrim the platform to review and if necessary, revise upward the renewable electricity targets contained in this Plan.

Table 12.3: Co. Leitrim Wind Energy Target Potential to 2030

Existing Connected Wind Energy (2021)	**92 MW**
Additional indicative/ potential capacity included in the RES up to 2030.	**83 MW** (90% increase of existing)
Total 2030 Operational	**175 MW**

Policies

WE POL 1 To acknowledge the importance of wind energy in Co. Leitrim as a renewable energy source which can play a vital role in achieving national targets in relation to reductions in fossil fuel dependency and therefore greenhouse gas emissions

WE POL 2 To encourage the development of wind energy in suitable locations and in an environmentally sustainable manner to ensure the security of energy supply, in

accordance with Government policy and the Leitrim County Renewable Energy Strategy (2021).

WE POL 3 To ensure that the assessment of wind energy development proposals will have regard to the following:

- sensitivities of the county's landscapes
- visual impact on protected views, prospects, designated landscapes, as well as local visual impacts
- impacts on nature conservation designations, archaeological areas, county geological sites, historic structures, public rights of way and walking routes
- local environmental impacts, including those on residential properties, such as noise and shadow flicker
- visual and environmental impacts of associated development, such as access roads, plant and grid connections from the proposed wind farm to the electricity transmission network
- scale, size and layout of the project and any cumulative effects due to other projects
- the impact of the proposed development on protected bird and mammal species

WE POL 4 To support the re-powering of existing wind energy development when they reach the end of their operational life.

WE POL 5 To encourage and support the development of small-scale wind energy development proposals and single turbines in urban, rural and industrial areas, provided they do not negatively impact upon environmental quality, landscape, wildlife and habitats or residential amenity or other relevant planning consideration.

WE POL 6 To have regard to the principles and planning guidance set out in Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government publications relating to '*Wind Energy Development*' and the DCCAE Code of Practice for Wind Energy Development in Ireland and any other relevant guidance which may be issued.

WE POL 7 To support the investigation of the potential for, and subsequent development of (where considered feasible), relatively small-scale wind energy developments within urban and industrial areas, and for small community-based proposals outside the key areas that are identified as being appropriate for wind energy development in the Renewable Energy Strategy. Such proposals are subject to the consideration of environmental assessments as part of the application consent process and of demonstration of compliance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Objective

WE OBJ 1 To secure the maximum potential from the wind energy resources of Co. Leitrim commensurate with supporting development that is consistent with proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

12.6.3 Solar Energy

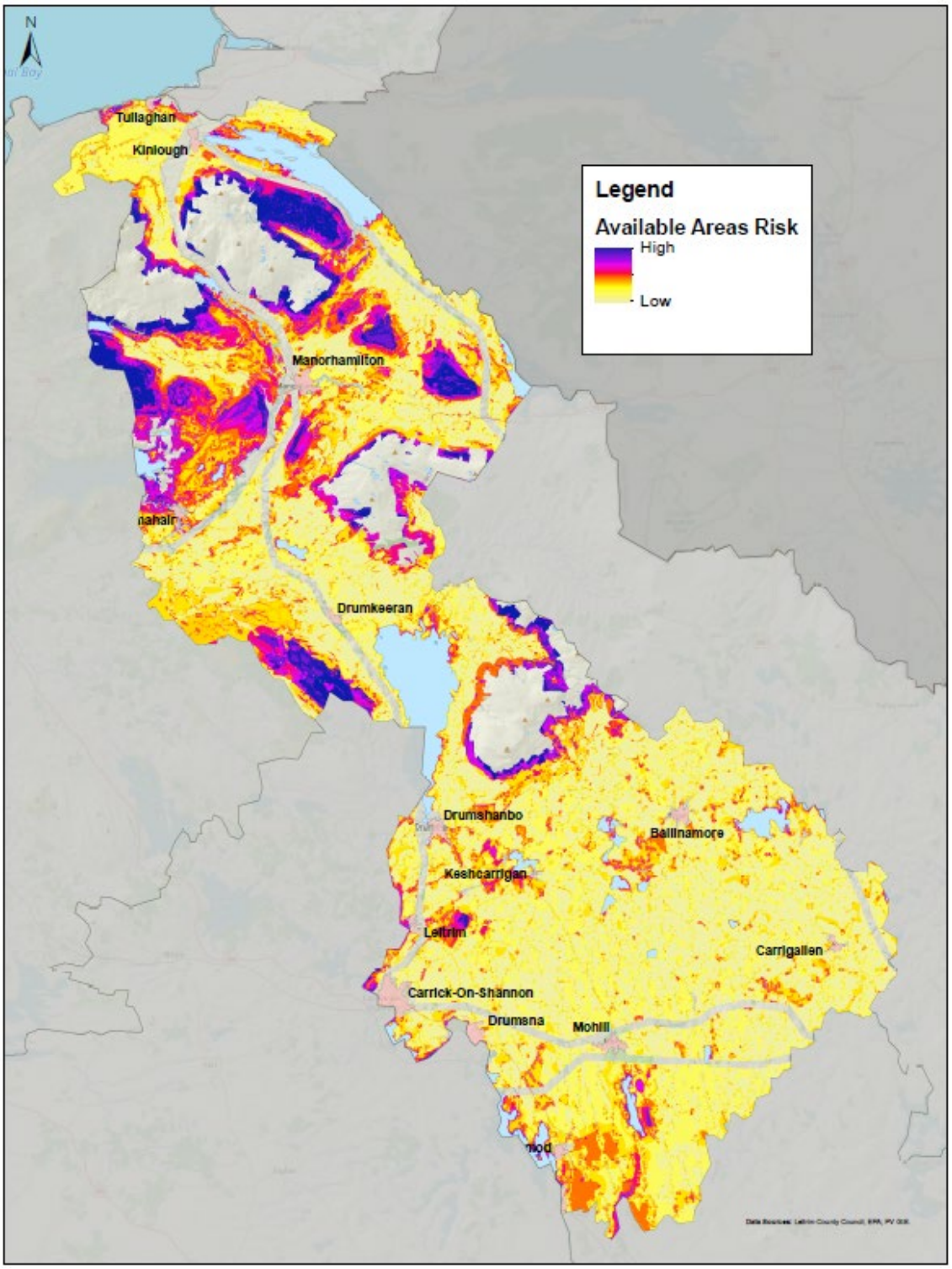
Solar energy technology harnesses the energy radiated from the sun that reaches the earth as visible light. This light can be categorised as direct and indirect depending on cloud cover and location. Solar energy can be used to produce electricity, heat or hot water. There are two main categories of technologies that are suitable for installation in Ireland, solar thermal and solar photovoltaic (PV). In 2019, solar PV energy provided 0.07% of Ireland's electricity generated, producing 21 GWh[40]. In Ireland, solar thermal is generally considered to be suitable for smaller scale applications such as domestic hot water or to meet part of the demand in larger buildings.

Solar photovoltaic (PV) technology exploits solar energy to produce electricity. This technology is typically deployed as panels made from a semiconductor, such as crystalline silicon, which absorb the light energy and produce electricity. The panels can work with both direct and indirect light, meaning that they will continue to generate electricity on overcast days. Solar PV panels can be rooftop-mounted for building applications or ground-mounted, such as those in solar farms.

Ground-mounted solar arrays, or solar farms, can deploy solar PV technology on a small, medium or large scale. Solar farms export the generated electricity to the grid and therefore the proximity to such infrastructure must be considered. Other factors contributing to the suitability of a site include the solar resource, slope of the land, accessibility and the potential for over shading. There are currently no connected solar farms in Ireland although some do exist in Northern Ireland.

[40] *Energy in Ireland 2020 Report*, SEAI (2020)

Figure 12.5: Sensitivity mapping highlighting areas of potential solar energy development



As of September 2021, no commercial-scale solar farms are in operation within Co. Leitrim. One solar scheme has the benefit of a grid connection offer with a Maximum Export Capacity (MEC) of 4 MW to the Carrick-on-Shannon 110kV substation node, however no planning application has been forthcoming for this proposed scheme at the time of writing. Additionally, a feasibility study is currently being undertaken for North Leitrim SEC for a 5MW and 15MW solar farm to provide energy to the local community.

There are currently no national guidelines in place to guide the location or scale of solar array/farm developments. Constraints may arise in relation to landscape impacts, protection of natural heritage or archaeology, or in relation to protecting high value agricultural land.

The RES maps the potential availability of solar resources. The mapping exercise was carried out applying a sensitivity analysis approach to the suitability of areas to accommodate solar farms. The sensitivity level is defined by adding up the sensitivity levels at certain distances from material assets, sensitive receptors, European Sites and from natural physical attributes (such as groundwater vulnerability, geological heritage sites, soil drainage, landslide, and flooding susceptibility). The tallied sensitivity levels are displayed on a scale ranging from High (maximum sensitivity) to Low (minimum sensitivity). However, the presence of a sensitivity category in and of itself does not support nor preclude solar development; it is a tool which flags areas of having a higher or lower concentration/distance from various sensitive receptors.

A proposed solar development would be subject to detailed siting and environmental considerations, and the outcomes of the planning consent process. The sensitivity mapping (Figure 12.5 overleaf) suggests that the southern part of the county has higher potential for solar farms on the basis of lower risk generally.

Policies

SE POL 1 To promote commercial scale solar energy development in appropriate locations and in accordance with Government policy and the Leitrim County Renewable Energy Strategy and subject to environmental safeguards and the protection of natural or built heritage features, biodiversity, views and prospects, and other relevant planning considerations.

SE POL 2 To favourably consider the redevelopment of brownfield sites in predominantly industrial/commercial areas for large-scale solar PV projects.

SE POL 3 To favourably consider the development of solar farms on agricultural lands which allow for farm diversification and multipurpose land use.

SE POL 4 To consider the impacts of overshadowing on the efficiency of existing solar technologies when assessing planning applications.

SE POL 5 To promote the integration of solar energy into existing and planned developments.

SE POL 6 To support and facilitate the development of passive solar design proposals for the development of residential accommodation in urban and rural areas.

12.6.4 Bioenergy

Bioenergy forms part of a wider bioeconomy framework which comprises those parts of the economy that use biological resources from land and sea to produce food, feed and bio-based materials and energy. The National Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy (Government of Ireland, 2018) sets out the ambition for Ireland to be a global leader for the bio-economy, through a co-ordinated approach that harnesses Ireland's natural resources, and competitive advantage. It seeks to promote greater coherence between the sectors of the bio-economy, to strengthen the development of bio-based products and grow the relevant markets for them, and to access funding available at EU level as well as leveraging private investment. Moreover, the NPF and the RSES highlight the potential of the

bioeconomy in promoting more efficient use of renewable resources and in supporting rural economic development and employment.

Bioenergy is energy derived from biological sources, typically organic matter from plants and animals and their by-products. It can be categorised as biomass, biogas and biofuels. Biomass refers to land and aquatic vegetation, organic waste and photosynthetic organisms. Depending on the conversion technology employed, biomass can be converted directly to heat and electricity, or used to make biogas or biofuel. Solid biomass tends to be converted directly to heat and electricity by combustion, while wet biomass is digested to form biogas or fermented to produce biofuel. The main types of solid biomass used in Ireland for direct combustion are forest thinnings, sawmill residues, waste wood, willow, miscanthus, straw, residual municipal solid waste (MSW) and tallow.

Biogas, formed from biomass, can be combusted in boilers to produce heat, or in combined heat and power plants, typically gas engines, to provide both heat and electricity. Anaerobic Digestion is the process used to produce biogas. Grass silage, domestic and industrial food waste, and pig and cattle slurry provide the feedstock for the process. The biomass is broken down anaerobically in biodigester plants to produce the biogas which can be combusted to create heat or used to generate electricity.

Biofuels can be produced from biomass which can be used as a renewable alternative to fossil fuels for transport. The success of bioenergy projects is heavily dependent on the availability of the resources. Co. Leitrim's agricultural industry may also present some opportunities for the provision of animal manure and silage. A common failure factor for bioenergy plans is competition for land use, particularly food crop production although not considered a significant factor in our county. Therefore, success is more likely when harnessing residue from existing industries, such as forest materials and animal by-products.

Policies

BE POL 1 To support and encourage the development of bioenergy opportunities, facilities and associated enterprises in Co. Leitrim.

BE POL 2 To favourably consider proposals for commercial bioenergy plants on brownfield sites adjacent to industrial/enterprise areas or on lands which are in industrial/enterprise use or zoned for such purposes.

BE POL 3 To promote the installation of district heating schemes powered by biomass fuel sources.

BE POL 4 To ensure that any commercial bioenergy plant is close to the point of demand and is served by public roads with sufficient capacity.

BE POL 5 To support the National Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy (Government of Ireland, 2018) and any review thereof, having consideration to the strategic importance of the bio-economy to rural Co. Leitrim and support the NWRA in its preparation of a feasibility study for the Northern and Western Region to identify (and map) areas of potential growth to inform the National Transition Agenda, enabling a Low Carbon, resilient nation.

BE POL 6 To support, in principle, the development of appropriately scaled local multi-feedstock bio-refining hubs across the region as well as the potential creation of bio-districts/clusters.

12.6.5 Micro Hydroelectric Power

Hydroelectric power is the generation of electricity through harnessing the energy in the flowing water of a stream or river. A turbine is used to convert the kinetic energy in falling water to mechanical energy, which is further converted to electrical energy by a generator. The amount of electricity produced depends on the amount of water (the flow), and how far the water falls to reach the turbine (the head). The greater the flow and the head, the more power that can be produced. In 2019, hydropower accounted for 2.8% of Ireland's electricity generation, producing 889 GWh. Micro hydroelectric power refers to hydropower installations below 100 kW. Installations of this size are typically run-of-river systems, which exploit the natural flow and slope of a river or stream to generate electricity.

The key determinant for the viability of micro hydroelectric power is site selection. Site selection must consider the environmental impact, the resource availability, and the proximity to the required infrastructure. One of the key failure factors for hydropower development plans is the environmental and landscape impact during construction and operation. Hydropower installations operate by disrupting the flow of the watercourse, which may impact on biodiversity in the area. The visual amenity of the area is also impacted during construction, and to a lesser extent during operation.

Potential locations within Co. Leitrim were identified by the SEAI for micro hydroelectric power installations. There is theoretical potential for a total installed capacity of approximately 1.178 MW throughout the county. This resource was mapped by the SEAI from comprehensive information identified in the then Department of Energy's 1985 report *"Small Scale Hydro Electric Potential of Ireland".* As such, the identified sites in Co. Leitrim outlined in the report are indicative of micro hydroelectric power potential only. Any proposal for hydro-power development would, however, need to be subject to a feasibility or technical study, as well as detailed environmental assessment and subject to the outcomes of the planning process.

Policies

MH POL 1 To promote and support hydroelectric power at unexploited sites identified in the Leitrim County Renewable Energy Strategy.

MH POL 2 To favourably consider micro hydro developments which minimise impact on biodiversity and fisheries.

MH POL 3 To favourably consider community-led micro hydro developments and off-grid developments.

12.6.6 Micro Energy Generation and Community Energy

Micro energy generation is the domestic and community use of small-scale solar PV and solar thermal, wind, Combined Heat and Power (CHP) and Ground and Air Source Heat Pump (GSHP and ASHP) technologies to generate heat and electric power in a domestic, commercial, or agricultural setting. Micro energy generation can be used to meet all the energy needs of a home, business, or community, or can be a supplement to grid connected energy. Micro generation allows homes, business, and communities to lower their carbon footprint and to reduce the cost of energy imported from the grid. Micro generation technologies can be combined to form a hybrid power solution that can offer superior performance and lower cost than a system based on one generator. Energy storage can be combined with micro generation technologies to allow for the supply of energy during periods of low generation.

Policies

MG POL 1 To promote and facilitate micro-renewable energy installations subject to environmental safeguards and the protection of natural or built heritage features, biodiversity, views and prospects, and other relevant planning considerations.

MG POL 2 To encourage the retrofitting of domestic and commercial buildings with micro generation technologies throughout the county for all redevelopment, extension or expansion projects.

MG POL 3 To promote the uptake of incentives, schemes, grants and other available funding to improve energy efficiency.

12.6.7 Renewable Heat

20.14 ktoe of energy were consumed as heat energy in Leitrim in 2016, accounting for 24.26% of total energy consumption in the county. 71.5% of this consumption took place in the residential sector, with the rest occurring in industry and services. Co. Leitrim's residential sector is highly dependent on oil, with 66% of dwellings using oil for heating of both space and water in 2016. 12% of dwellings used solid fuels for their heating. The heating of energy in Co. Leitrim is influenced by a dispersed rural population, lack of natural gas infrastructure, and reluctance to depart from the traditional use of turf and peat.

Ireland was obliged to achieve a minimum target of 12% of heat to come from renewable sources by 2020 under the EU Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC. As of 2019, this figure stood at 6.3%. Nationally, renewable heat from biomass made up the largest proportion, representing 62% while 17% came from ambient sources (ground source heat pumps and air source heat pumps). Other renewable heat technologies include solar thermal for water heating and biogas.

Renewable heat technologies have also proven effective in upscaling, with District Heating (DH) considered one of the most efficient and cost-effective ways to heat apartments, homes and mixed-use developments. DH networks can be based on a variety of technologies and renewable energy sources, such as combined heat and power (CHP), bioenergy, geothermal or energy from waste. Such schemes work particularly well in built-up urban areas where there is a near constant demand. The use of a renewable energy solution to provide heating and hot water to houses and businesses contributes to sustainability as it reduces demand for and consumption of energy while using a renewable form of fuel.

The extent of the biomass resource within Co. Leitrim makes the provision of DH networks viable in settlements where higher heat densities are available, such as Carrick-on-Shannon and possibly Manorhamilton. Biomass can also be harvested close to DH systems, resulting in low transport costs. Moreover, large industries in Co. Leitrim, potentially have waste heat from industry that could be used in individual DH systems or incorporated into a larger DH system.

Policies

RH POL 1 To promote and support developments that give rise to a reduction in dependency on fossil fuels for domestic and commercial heating.

RH POL 2 To support and facilitate the installation of District Heat technologies in new developments.

RH POL 3 To support and facilitate the development of Combined Heat and Power plants for District Heat Scheme in industrially zoned areas (enterprise and employment land use zoning objective).

12.6.8 Energy Storage

The renewable energy industry is developing at a rapid rate due to the urgent need to address climate change and to transition to a low carbon economy, and it is likely that other technologies not specifically discussed in this Plan will emerge over time. One such renewable energy technology which is becoming more widely used in recent times relates to battery storage systems.

The lack of energy storage capacity has long been a barrier to the efficient use of renewable energy. For example, if generation from renewables is low during a period of higher demand, fossil fuel plants must be scaled up to compensate. In contrast, during times of high renewable energy production, there may be insufficient demand to allow for full exploitation of the resource, leading to a wasted opportunity to generate more clean energy. However, technology in this field has now advanced to the point that utility-scale battery storage systems are being utilised in order to enable more efficient use of renewable energy.

Utility-scale batteries can enable a greater feed-in of renewables into the grid by storing excess generation and more efficiently utilising renewable energy output. It is currently estimated that utility-scale batteries dominate the global energy storage market, but it is predicted that by 2030 small-scale battery storage will significantly increase to the point where it complements utility scale storage. Small-scale battery storage systems are generally suited for incorporation within individual or residential developments.

Battery Storage, also known as thermal stores, comprises development which allows for the capture of heat or electricity when it is readily available, typically from a renewables system, and save it until a time when it is required to be used. Future energy storage on a national and regional scale is an integral aspect of the renewable energy industry and therefore must be considered in the overall context of planning frameworks for energy. Typical renewable energy storage technologies include:

- Pumped Hydroelectric Energy Storage - consists of two large reservoirs located at different elevations and a number of pump/ turbine units. During off-peak electrical demand, water is pumped from the lower reservoir to the higher reservoir where it is stored until it is needed. Once required (i.e. during peak electrical demand) the water in the upper reservoir is released through the turbines, which are connected to generators that produce electricity.
- Battery Energy Storage (BES) - can be integrated with renewable energy generation systems in either grid connected or stand-alone applications. There are three important types of large-scale BES; These are Lead-Acid (LA), Nickel-Cadmium (NiCd) and Sodium Sulphur (NaS). These operate in the same way as conventional batteries, except on a larger scale.
- Heat/Thermal Energy Storage - involves storing energy in a thermal reservoir so that it can be recovered at a later time. This is a common means to store domestic hot water for later use.

Battery storage has increased in Ireland in part by intermittent energy sources such as solar and wind. ESB offer an opportunity for large businesses to install battery storage on-site, a method of demand-side storage. This provides a back-up power supply and reduces costs by charging the battery during periods of low electricity prices. Batteries can also be employed on the generation side of the network, creating hybrid systems with renewable energy technologies to store excess generation.

Policy

ES POL 1 To promote the use of efficient energy storage systems and infrastructure that support energy efficiency and reusable energy system optimisation, subject to compliance with proper planning and environmental considerations.

12.6.9 Energy Efficiency and Conservation

Generating energy through renewable energy sources must be complemented by efforts to reduce energy demand and waste. Energy efficiency and conservation are therefore of vital importance if Co. Leitrim is to achieve a carbon neutral future. Energy efficiency involves using less energy to perform the same task. Although less energy is consumed, the same standard of product or service is achieved, thus it is the energy waste that is reduced. Ireland has a target of 20% energy savings through efficiency by 2030 and a more ambitious target of 33% in the public sector alone[41]. The sector with the greatest potential for energy efficiency savings is the residential buildings sector, followed by transport, commercial buildings, and industry.

The main opportunities for energy efficiency in buildings are LED lighting, roof and solid wall insulation, efficient glazing, efficient appliances, and heating systems such as heat pumps or efficient boilers with heating controls. Industry can benefit in the long term from investing in the installation of Combined Heat and Power technology. Energy efficiency in the transport sector is driven by EU regulations and modal shifts.

Energy conservation is behaviour that results in the use of less energy. Conservation is usually reliant on changes in human behaviour and increased awareness or smart monitoring and control technology. Although retrofit and energy efficient installations are vital if targets are to be achieved, it has been reported that to date, most of the savings have come from lower cost energy conservation measures.

The Council will, in conjunction with key stakeholders, continue to participate in initiatives to contribute to the energy efficiency and conservation goals of the county.

Policies

EE POL 1 To promote the environmental, financial, societal and practical benefits of energy efficiency.

EE POL 2 To encourage the consideration of energy efficiency and low-carbon design solutions, such as optimising solar gain and geothermal or air source heating, in large-scale residential, commercial, and industrial development proposals.

EE POL 3 To support energy efficiency and conservation education programmes in partnership with local, regional, and national organisations.

EE POL 4 To support the implementation of national energy efficiency standards and to support and facilitate energy conservation and efficiency, including through improved building design; promoting smarter travel; and, raising awareness/benefits of energy conservation.

[41] https://www.seai.ie/about/irelands-energy-targets/ and DCCAE *National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for Ireland 2017- 2020*

Objective

EEOBJ 1 To reduce CO_2 emissions by 30% by 2030 from the 2020 baseline figures for the public sector in the county, by building awareness and motivating behavioural change, engaging with SEAI and government programmes for energy efficiency, investing in energy efficiency improvements, and by switching to low-carbon transport modes such as walking, cycling and public transport.

12.6.10 Agriculture and Forestry

In 2019, the agricultural sector in Ireland was identified as been responsible for the highest level of GHG emissions, at 35.3% nationally, with 83% of GHG emissions in the sector coming from animals. Ongoing efforts within the sector to reduce GHG emissions include improvements to animal feedstuffs and agricultural practices to reduce methane emissions and the provision of active carbon sequestration through the provision of semi-natural and managed ecosystems on farm holdings.

Moreover, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) released a 'Climate & Air Roadmap' for the Agriculture Sector entitled '*Ag Climatise*' in December 2020 which seeks to develop a climate neutral food system compatible with the Paris temperature goals by 2050 whereby the climate impact of biogenic methane is reduced to zero and remaining agricultural emissions are balanced by removals, along with a significant uptake of renewable energy on farm enterprises.

Notwithstanding the scale of commercial forestry cover within the county and the extent of local opposition to such land use, forests play a vital role in mitigating the effects of climate change in terms of their carbon sequestration properties and abilities to act as carbon sinks. In international and national policy terms, afforestation, avoided deforestation (of natural forests) and improved forestation management are recognised as the most feasible and effective land use related climate mitigation options currently available to Ireland.

This is particularly apparent when considered that Ireland has one of the lowest forest covers of all European countries (11%) compared to the European average of over 40%. Under current national forestry policy, a target of 18% national forest cover by 2046 has been identified. Given that the forest cover in Co. Leitrim exceeds this national target already, in the context of its own boundaries, it remains to be seen what specific implications this national target has in the context of Co. Leitrim in the absence of more updated national forestry policy which is forthcoming.

Notwithstanding, the Council accepts that forestry related initiatives, namely afforestation and preservation of natural forests, collectively serve to reduce CO_2 levels and have a positive impact on climate change.

Policies

AFCM POL 1 To support agri-sector enterprises and development which facilitates reductions in levels of GHG emissions associated with agricultural practices and which protect or enhance natural, semi-natural or managed eco-systems.

AFCM POL 2 To facilitate forestry related proposals which can support reduction in CO_2 emissions, where it can be demonstrated that such proposals will not give rise to any significant adverse impacts on landscape and residential amenity and sites of ecological importance and accord with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

AFCM POL 3 To promote sustainable forestry development of appropriate scale and at appropriate locations within the county in order to address climate action directly through carbon sequestration and indirectly through the displacement of fossil fuel in accordance with the National Climate Action Plan 2019 (or any subsequent Plan).

12.7 Climate Action – Adaptation Measures for Leitrim

12.7.1 Integrated Land Use and Transport

Notwithstanding the identified infrastructure deficiencies to develop more sustainable transport solutions discussed in Section 8.7, there is also a need to reverse (to a level practicable in a rural county with a dispersed rural population) the current unsustainable patterns of car travel between homes and work/services, and the significant dependency on private cars and a decline in active modes of travel, such as walking and cycling. To this end, the Plan promotes an integrated approach to land-use and transportation which aligns with the Core Strategy, with an emphasis on facilitating future development into existing towns and settlements within Co. Leitrim, in order to reduce car dependency.

The Plan supports the principle of compact urban growth, the consolidation of existing settlements and prioritisation of the development of brownfield lands across the Settlement Hierarchy which in turn will encourage the use of public transport, cycling and walking as viable alternatives to the private car. The Core Strategy encourages higher densities of development close to public transport routes in Carrick-on-Shannon (which can sustain/facilitate public transport). This supports the sustainable zoning of lands through the concentration of future infill and brownfield development using existing lands and serviceable settlements based on the projected population growth and needs.

This approach accords with the overall objectives of the NPF and the RSES, by supporting compact urban growth, the consolidation of existing settlements, and the prioritisation of the development of brownfield lands across the Settlement Hierarchy in the county.

Promoting compact growth and greater integration of policies for land use and transport planning will help reduce the demand for commuter travel and support more efficient development patterns and travel. The Plan acknowledges that as we strive to adapt to climate change, it is important that future development patterns reduce our carbon footprint, protect our environment, and promote more sustainable ways of living.

Policies

LUT POL 1 To support and facilitate the integration of land use with transportation infrastructure, through the development of sustainable compact settlements within the hierarchy of settlements as identified within the Core Strategy with particular emphasis on those which are well served by public transport such as Carrick-on-Shannon and Manorhamilton.

LUT POL 2 To encourage the consideration of energy efficiency and low-carbon design solutions when carrying out pre-planning discussions for major residential, commercial, and industrial development proposals.

LUT POL 3 To promote sustainable land use planning measures which facilitate transportation efficiency, economic returns on transport investment, minimisation of environmental

impacts and a general shift towards the greater use of public transportation throughout the county.

LUT POL 4 To integrate the county's transport and tourism strategies to promote increasingly sustainable travel patterns and improved linkages between the towns and villages within the county, with the aim of developing a coherent network dedicated to sustainable transport modes across the county and to the wider Northern and Western region.

12.7.2 Sustainable Transport

Transport accounts for 55% of total energy consumption in Co. Leitrim, more than both electricity and heat combined. Co. Leitrim's dispersed rural population and lack of public transport options have led to high levels of private car ownership. According to the 2016 Census, 86.2% of households in Leitrim were in possession of one or more motor cars, compared to 81.95% nationally. It is estimated that private car energy consumption accounted for 43.5% of total energy consumed in the transport sector in Co. Leitrim in 2016, compared to 41% nationally. A total of 285 million kilometres were driven by private cars in Co. Leitrim in 2016, accounting for 0.78% of the total kilometres driven nationally.

Under the EU Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC, Ireland was obliged to achieve a minimum target of 10% renewable energy in the transport sector by 2020. In 2019, renewable transport in Ireland stood at 8.9%, 99% of which came from bioenergy, including biodiesel and biomethane. Reducing reliance on traditional fossil fuels is of utmost importance for Co. Leitrim to meet the 10% Renewable Energy Share in Transport (RES-T) target and to move towards carbon neutrality. This can be achieved through the adoption of electric vehicles and the use of alternative transport fuels, primarily biofuels.

The Government has set a target of 950,000 electric vehicle (EVs) on the road by 2030 under the Climate Action Plan 2019. ESB is responsible for the rollout of EV charging points across the country, with its e-cars Charge Point Map (available at www.esb.ie) displaying the locations of these charging points. Of a total of 1,350 public, standard, and fast charging points in the country, only 4 no. are currently located in the county (2 points in Carrick-on-Shannon and 2 points in Mohill).

In Co. Leitrim, 96% of dwellings are detached, semi-detached and terraced houses, making them suitable for EV ownership as the majority them would be capable of charging an EV from the home. However, more public charging points are required to allow for the widespread uptake of EVs. Nationally there is an average of one charge point for every 4,000 people, while in Leitrim there is one charge point for every 8,000 people. An additional four no. public charge points are needed to bring Co. Leitrim on par with the national average. These public charge points should be located in Manorhamilton, Kinlough, Ballinamore and Drumshanbo as these are the largest towns in Co. Leitrim that do not have existing public charging points.

In 2022, the government published *National Sustainable Mobility Policy* (2022) which includes an overall vision, principles, goals and targets which take account of mandatory greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of 51% for 2030 under the Climate and Low Carbon Development Act 2021 and the actions of the Climate Action Plan 2021. This policy document is supplemented by an action plan running from 2022 to 2025, which sets out a range of actions to deliver overarching policy goals of national policy that can be adopted in Co. Leitrim to reduce the transport energy use in the county. Such measures include the use and improvement of rural/urban public transport services, promotion and prioritisation of walking and cycling, promotion of car sharing, and reduction in overall travel demand. Due to the high level of private car use, there is potential to reduce transport energy

consumption in Leitrim by switching from conventional internal combustion engine vehicles to electric vehicles.

Policies

ST POL 1 To promote alternative sustainable transport options in Co. Leitrim.

ST POL 2 To facilitate the installation of charging points for Electric Vehicles at suitable public locations and support the prioritisation of parking for Electric Vehicles in town centre locations. (See also **EV POL 2** in Chapter 8 - Transport in this regard).

ST POL 3 To liaise and collaborate with relevant agencies to support the growth of Electric Vehicles with support facilities and infrastructure through a roll-out of additional electrical charging infrastructure at appropriate locations. (See also **EV POL 2** in Chapter 8 - Transport in this regard).

ST POL 4 To support the provision of electrical charging infrastructure both on street and in off street car parks and in new developments in accordance with car parking standards prescribed in Chapter 13 - Development Management Standards of this Plan.

ST POL 5 To continue to work with the relevant transport providers, agencies and stakeholders to facilitate the integration of active travel (walking, cycling) with public transport. (See also **MSSM POL 3** in Chapter 8 - Transport in this regard).

Objective

ST OBJ 1 To liaise and co-ordinate with the National Transport Authority to undertake analysis in relation to modal shift between settlements and derive a realistic modal change target for the county.

12.7.3 Urban and Rural Regeneration

Urban and rural regeneration has the potential to greatly enhance the climate resilience of towns and villages. Regeneration projects can help to inject new life into declining urban and rural areas, stimulating both social and economic regeneration. Urban regeneration in particular focuses on reorganising and upgrading the existing built environment instead of planning new greenfield development. The valuable contribution made by urban and rural regeneration projects is reflected in the Rural & Urban Regeneration and Development Funds. A key requirement for eligibility under both schemes is the contribution a project will make in assisting the transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy.

Considerable emphasis is placed in the plan on the regeneration of vacant buildings and under-utilised sites in order to rejuvenate our towns and villages. Since 2019, Leitrim County Council has successfully secured funding under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund for a public realm improvement scheme in Carrick-on-Shannon. In addition, further funding was successfully secured under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund for five individual projects in Manorhamilton, Ballinamore, Mohill, Dromahair and most recently in Drumshanbo. The Council acknowledges the value of such schemes which provide for climate resilient development and the potential to positively transform our town and village centres.

Policies

REG POL 1 To enable infill and appropriate brownfield redevelopment in order to maximise the efficient use of existing infrastructure and services and promote a positive modal shift towards sustainable transport use.

REG POL 2 To actively implement policies presented in this Plan that support and encourage urban and rural regeneration, so as to secure climate resilience and reduce GHG emissions.

REG POL 3 To actively pursue all available funding streams in a bid to support and deliver urban and rural regeneration outcomes and more compact development forms in settlements which seek to enhance climate resilience and reduce GHG emissions.

12.7.4 Nature-Based Approaches and Green Infrastructure

Concerns regarding climate change have highlighted the importance of nature-based approaches such as '*Green Infrastructure*'. The term '*Green Infrastructure*' gives greater recognition to the natural environment as an asset that provides a range of benefits, including protecting us against climate change, for example by alleviating floods and storing carbon. '*Green Infrastructure*' can include a number of facets such as uplands, wetlands, woodlands, rivers, lakes, and coastal areas, all of which have a pivotal role in terms of climate adaptation. This subject has also been included in Section 11.5 – Biodiversity Outside of Habitats designated for Nature Conservation.

There is a need to proactively develop '*Green Infrastructure*' and ecological connectivity and address fragmentation, which will have the dual function of enhancing biodiversity and improving resilience and adaptation to climate change. The Council's '*Climate Change Adaptation Strategy*' 2019-2024 identifies objectives and actions for which '*Green Infrastructure*' and nature-based solutions have a role to play. Such objectives include the incorporation of '*Green Infrastructure*', as a mechanism for carbon offset, into the design, planning and construction of all roads, footpaths, bridges, public realm and other construction projects.

The Council will actively seek to expand and strengthen nature-based solutions such as the '*Green Infrastructure*' network and to further explore its integration into both public and private developments in the future.

Policy

NBGI POL 1 To actively promote and encourage nature-based approaches and '*Green Infrastructure*' solutions as viable mitigation and adaptation measures to reduce GHG emissions, increase the adaptive capacity of ecosystems and optimise the multifaceted benefits through:

- Conservation, promotion, and restoration of the natural environment;
- Integrating an ecosystem services approach and promote healthy living environments through enhanced connection with nature and recreation/amenity;
- Enhancing biodiversity in urban and rural settings;
- Assist with water and flood risk management; and
- Carbon storage or sequestration.

13 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

13.1 Introduction

Development Management is the statutory process for assessing planning applications. The purpose of this chapter is to set out the development standards and criteria that will be applied, as relevant, in the assessment of planning applications for development in Co. Leitrim. This chapter should be read in conjunction with other relevant chapters in this Plan and Guidelines issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended. This chapter sets out the general Development Management principles and standards that will be applied by the Council to ensure that future development is in accordance with the policies and objectives set out elsewhere in this Plan. Specific Planning Policy Requirements set out in Section 28 Guidelines apply, notwithstanding the policy framework and requirements of this Development Plan, Carrick-on-Shannon/Cortober Local Area Plan or future variations. Future planning guidelines or amendments to existing guidelines will be considered in the assessment of planning applications.

The fundamental aim of this chapter is to achieve high standards in design and to build sustainable, healthy communities where people can enjoy a good quality of life.

13.2 General Advice Relevant to All Prospective Developments

13.2.1 Pre-Planning Consultation

Pre-planning consultations are facilitated and encouraged by the Planning Authority prior to the making of a formal planning application in accordance with Section 247 of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended. Meetings, where necessary, are facilitated by appointment following receipt of a pre-planning application form and accompanying details. Following such meeting, a minute of the advice provided will be made available to the applicant/agent. There is currently no statutory fee for pre-planning meetings (Note: this may change subject to future amendments of relevant planning legislation).

13.2.2 Universal Access and Inclusive Design

The importance of universal equality of access and inclusive design within all aspects of the built environment is recognised by the Council. The Council encourages that all new development proposals be designed in accordance with the standards outlined in the '*National Disability Authority - Building for Everyone; A Universal Design Approach 2012*' and Technical Guidance Document M - Access and Use of the Building Regulations 2010 or any subsequent update to these standards.

13.2.3 Sustainable Design

Sustainable design elements should be considered at the initial design stage of the process as these elements will determine siting, orientation of building(s), height, form, materials, density and overall functionality and aesthetics of the development proposed.

Energy efficient buildings minimise the consumption of non-renewable resources and waste and create healthy and comfortable buildings and places. New development should employ considered and high-quality sustainable design measures that serve to mitigate and adapt to seasonal and climate change.

Green infrastructure should also be identified at the initial design stage, with proposals incorporated into planning applications that allow for opportunities in delivering natural amenity areas, permeability and linkages with open spaces provided. This will assist in protecting and valuing our important and vulnerable habitats, landscapes, natural heritage and green spaces throughout Co. Leitrim.

13.2.4 Environmental Assessments

There are a number of environmental assessments which may be required to be undertaken by the Planning Authority in the making of an informed decision on an individual development proposal. In all instances, the applicant is required to provide the required information to the Planning Authority to enable the making of an informed decision. The range of such environmental assessments which may be considered necessary include the following:

13.2.5 Appropriate Assessment

In accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (1992), there is a requirement placed on the competent authority (i.e. in the case of applications for planning permission, the Planning Authority) to consider and determine the possible nature conservation implications of any plan or project (and also the in-combination impacts with other plans and projects) on the Natura 2000 site network before any decision is made to allow that plan or project to proceed. If the conclusion by the applicant having undertaken a Screening for Appropriate Assessment exercise is that Appropriate Assessment is required, the applicant will be required to prepare a Natura Impact Statement for the development proposed. The determination on Appropriate Assessment is made by the Planning Authority.

A proposed development will only be approved where it can be determined by the Planning Authority that, based on best scientific evidence, the project or plan proposed will not give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary effects on the integrity of any European site(s) (Natura 2000 site), either individually or in combination with other plans or projects.

(Note: The Habitats Directive provides for imperative reasons of overriding public interest where a plan or project may proceed notwithstanding that the proposal will have significant adverse effect on the integrity of the Natura 2000 network and there are no alternative solutions available).

13.2.6 Environmental Impact Assessment

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a key instrument of EU environmental policy. The primary purpose of the EIA Directive (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU) is to ensure that public and private projects, which are likely to have significant effects on the environment are granted permission only after an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of those projects has been carried out. Annex I and Annex II of the EIA Directive sets out the list of projects for which EIA is required.

The Annex I and Annex II projects have been transposed into Section 5 (Parts 1 and 2) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended. Projects listed in Part 1 require EIA if the stated threshold has been met or exceeded or if no thresholds are set. Part 1 sub-threshold developments require screening in cases where the same class of development is not listed in Part 2 with a lower mandatory threshold. Projects listed in Part 2 also require EIA if the stated threshold has been met or exceeded or if no thresholds are set. Subthreshold developments listed in Part 2 require screening for EIA.

The EIA process involves the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) by the applicant, consultations with the public, relevant prescribed bodies and any other affected Member States, and an examination and analysis of the EIAR and other relevant information leading to a reasoned conclusion by the competent authority, on the likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment.

Further guidance on EIA is set out in the '*Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment*'. The DoHLGH published '*Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on Carrying Out Environmental Impact Assessment*' and the draft publication, '*Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports*' by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (2017).

13.2.7 Flood Risk Assessment

Where a risk of flooding may be an issue for a development the Planning Authority will require the submission of a site specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). The assessment, carried out by a suitably qualified and indemnified professional, shall be appropriate to the scale and nature of the risk to the proposed development and shall consider all sources of flooding.

The FRA shall be prepared in accordance with the '*Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities*' (DEHLG and OPW, 2009) and shall address climate change, residual risk, avoidance of contamination of water sources and any proposed site specific flood management measures.

Any proposal that is considered acceptable in principle shall demonstrate the use of the sequential approach to inform the site layout and design of development. Proposals shall also demonstrate that mitigation and management measures can be put in place and that the development will not increase flood risk elsewhere.

13.2.8 Ecological Impact Assessment

An Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) may be required to be submitted for any development proposal likely to have a significant impact on existing flora, fauna and wildlife habitats, including rare and threatened plant, animal and bird species. The requirement for an ecological impact assessment will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Reference should be made to *'Guidance for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland, Terrestrial, Freshwater and Coastal' (*CIEEM, 2019) and any Council Guidance document on EcIA approved during the life of this Plan.

13.2.9 Other Assessments

Other assessments that may be required as part of planning proposals, in certain instances, include but are not limited to the following:

- Traffic and Transport Assessment
- Landscape Character Impact Assessment
- Visual Impact Assessment
- Archaeological Assessment, and
- Architectural Heritage Assessment.

13.3 Non-Conforming Uses

Throughout the county there are uses that do not conform to the land use zoning objectives for that area. These are uses which:

1. Were in existence on 1st October 1964
2. Have valid permissions or
3. Have no permission and which may or may not be the subject of enforcement proceedings.

Extensions to and improvement of premises referred to in categories 1 and 2 above may be permitted. This would apply where proposed development would not be seriously injurious to the amenities of the area and would not prejudice the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

13.4 Material Contravention

The Council has a statutory obligation to take such steps as may be necessary to secure the objectives of the County Development Plan. In appropriate circumstances, the Council may permit a material contravention of the County Development Plan. The granting of a permission that materially contravenes the County Development Plan is a reserved function of the Elected Members of the Council, or the Municipal District as appropriate, exercisable following a public consultation process and consideration of a report prepared by the Chief Executive.

13.5 Development Contributions

The Council, taking into consideration the capital expenditure necessary for the provision of infrastructure, will require the payment of financial contributions in accordance with the Development Contributions Scheme in force at the time of granting planning permission. Developers may also be required to carry out works at their own expense to facilitate their development and these will be specified as a condition of their planning permission.

13.6 Bonds

To ensure that developments undertaken by private developers are satisfactorily completed, developers will be required to give cash deposits or submit a bond from an insurance company or other financial institution acceptable to the Council, for the satisfactory completion of developments and their ancillary services. In determining the method of security, previous records of compliance by the applicant(s) and construction standards may be taken into account. This bond or security must be adequate to secure the completion of the development and must be in place before development is commenced.

13.7 Failure to Comply with Previous Permission

The Council may refuse permission for a development arising from past failures to comply with any previous permission, where they are deemed to be of a substantial nature, and where it is appropriate to do so, having regard to the provisions of Section 35 of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended.

13.8 Enforcement

To ensure that the integrity of the planning system is maintained and that it operates for the benefit of the whole community, the Council will take enforcement action in cases of unauthorised development, where it is appropriate to do so, consistent with the provisions of Part VIII of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended.

Under planning legislation, any development which is not specifically exempt development requires planning permission and development which does not have that permission is unauthorised development. This equally applies to development which has been, or is being, carried out in breach of conditions specified in a planning permission. In carrying out its enforcement functions, the Council may issue Warning Letters and/or Enforcement Notices or take injunctive proceedings pursuant to Section 160 of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended.

13.9 General Development Standards

13.9.1 Building Heights

In general, heights should respect the local context to include streetscape as appropriate. In towns and villages, varied building heights are supported across residential, mixed use and central areas to support consolidation and to create a sense of place, urban legibility and visual diversity. Development proposals that include building heights that are greater than the prevailing building height in the area should be supported by a strong urban design rationale (as part of a Design Statement).

The appropriate maximum or minimum height of any building will be determined by:

- The prevailing building height in the surrounding area
- The proximity of existing housing
- The formation of a cohesive streetscape pattern, including height and scale of proposed development relative to width of street or area of open space, and
- The impact on any Protected Structures, Architectural Conservation Areas and/or other sensitive sites.

The Planning Authority may consider buildings of increased height in accordance with *'The Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines'* (DoHPLG, 2018) in circumstances where the site/development:

- Is appropriately located in central areas of larger towns close to public transport or on strategic lands proximate to the town centre.
- Comprises high quality design making a positive contribution in the streetscape, strengthening the sense of place while respecting and responding to the character of the area.
- Is designed to protect and enhance the existing streetscape and heritage characteristics of an area. Proposals should not disrupt or negatively impact on the historic areas of towns or intrude on important views.

Elsewhere, other than Carrick-on-Shannon, the extent of any increased building height shall be limited to 3-4 storeys high. Any increase in building height above this will be carefully considered due to the potential to give rise to considerable adverse impacts on the character, scale and form of such settlements as well as adverse impacts on residential amenity.

In accordance with SPPR 1 of the guidelines, the Planning Authority will indicate specific locations within the Carrick-on-Shannon/Cortober Local Area Plan where increased building height will be actively pursued for both redevelopment, regeneration, and infill development. Such locations will be

informed by their ability to support increased building height and density and proximity to public transport without giving rise to unacceptable adverse impacts on the overall character and residential amenity of the settlement.

13.9.2 Site Coverage

Site coverage standards are intended to avoid the adverse effects of over-development. Site coverage is expressed as the total area of ground covered by buildings divided by the total ground area within the overall site. The maximum site coverage shall be 50% for residential development, 75% for industrial uses, 60% for other employment uses and 66% for retail and commercial development. Within town centre locations, the maximum site coverage shall in general be 80% for all development although exceptions may be considered on the basis of design rationale presented.

These particular site coverage standards shall be acceptable only where consistent with other standards such as open space requirements, car parking requirements, plot ratio, building lines and building heights, fire safety and building regulations together with the amenity of adjoining dwellings/properties.

In considering applications for redevelopment of existing sites, due regard will be given to the established site coverage.

13.9.3 Plot Ratio

The purpose of plot ratio standards is to prevent the adverse effects of over-development on the layout and amenity of buildings and also to ensure an adequate sense of enclosure and the efficient and sustainable use of serviced land.

Plot ratio is expressed as the gross building floor area divided by the gross site area, with the gross floor area comprising of the sum all floorspace within the external walls of the buildings, excluding plant, tank rooms and car parking areas. The gross site area comprises all land within the curtilage of the site. Plot ratio standards shall be as follows:

Table 13.1: Plot Ratio Standards

Plot Ratio Standards	
Location	**Plot Ratio**
Town Centre/Brownfield	1.0-2.0
Suburban/Edge of Town Centre	0.5-1.0
Outer Edge of Town	0.35-0.5

In considering applications for redevelopment of existing sites, due regard will be given to the established plot ratio.

13.9.4 Overlooking

In general, a minimum distance of 22 metres between opposing above-ground floor level windows is required for habitable rooms. In cases of innovative design, where overlooking into habitable rooms does not occur, this figure may be reduced. Adequate separation distances will be required for buildings overlooking school playgrounds or other sensitive uses. These will be determined at planning application stage. Innovative design solutions to avoid undue overlooking will be encouraged.

13.9.5 Overshadowing

Where development of a significant height is located close to existing development, the Planning Authority may require daylight and shadow projection diagrams to be submitted. The recommendations of '*Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice*' (BRE 1991) or '*Lighting for Buildings Part 2 1992: Code of Practice for Day Lighting B.S. 8206*' and any updates to these documents should be followed as a minimum in this regard.

13.9.6 Soft Landscaping

Planting and landscaping should be used to incorporate new buildings into their surroundings and provide privacy between dwellings. New planting should consist of local native plant types indigenous to the area and be incorporated into the site to enhance the overall appearance and biodiversity (Refer to Table 13.2) and contribute to the '*Green Infrastructure*' of the area.

In landscaping plans as part of planning applications, the Planning Authority will seek to ensure the planting of semi-mature trees depending on location and circumstances. Planning applications on lands containing mature trees and/or substantial hedgerows shall include a detailed tree/hedgerow survey of the site. All trees with stem girth of 75mm and height above 1.5m from ground level should be included.

Trees should be surveyed by reference to species, branch canopy, spread, shape, height and condition. Existing trees (particularly mature trees) shall be protected during site development works and shall be sensitively incorporated into the design of development layouts, e.g. in public/private open space and at boundaries. Measures to protect the trees with secure fencing (prior to any site or engineering works commencing) shall be indicated on a Site Management Plan.

Where the removal of hedges/trees during development is proposed, those to be removed shall be identified clearly on drawings. A detailed replanting proposal shall be submitted. This proposal should provide for the replacement of, at minimum, an equal amount of similar indigenous hedgerows and the planting of a minimum of five no. mature/established trees per tree felled. These shall be incorporated into the overall design of the scheme. The replacement of hedgerows/trees shall have due regard to the ecological function of hedgerows as a wildlife corridor and shall not work in isolation from the remaining hedgerow network.

To ensure that trees and hedgerows are protected on a site and that all agreed landscaping is carried out, a bond or cash lodgement may be required as part of a grant of planning permission, the amount of which shall be determined by the Council. Soft landscaping proposals for public areas shall also be assessed with regard to the principles of the '*Urban Design Manual Best Practice Guide*' (DEHLG, 2009), as appropriate.

Table 13.2: Native Trees and Shrubs

Common Name	Height (max)	Suitable for Public Open Spaces	Suitable for Streets and Confined Spaces	Suitable for Tubs, Containers and Raised Beds etc.
Alder	22m	Yes	No	Yes
Alder Buckthorn	6m	Yes	No	Yes
Ash	28m	Yes	No	No
Aspen	24m	Yes	No	No
Arbutus (strawberry tree)	8m	Yes	No	Yes
Bramble	2m	No	No	No
Broom	2m	Yes	No	Yes
Burnet Rose	2m	Yes	No	Yes, but vigorous
Common (or European) Gorse	2.5m	Yes	No	In a rural setting
Crab Apple	6m	Yes	No	No
Dog Rose	2m	Yes	No	Yes. Vigorous
Downy Birch	18m	Yes	Yes	Yes
Elder	6m	In hedge	No	No
Guelder Rose	4.5m	Yes	No	No
Hawthorn	9m	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hazel	6m	Yes	No	No
Holly	15m	Yes	Yes	Yes
Honeysuckle	climber	Yes	On walls	No
Ivy	climber	Yes	Yes	Yes
Juniper	6m	Yes	No	No
Pedunculate Oak	30m	Yes	No	No
Rowan or Mountain Ash	9m	Yes	Yes	Yes
Scots Pine	24m	Yes	No	No
Sessile Oak	30m	Yes	No	No
Sliver Birch	18m	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sloe, Blackthorn	3m	Yes	No	No
Spindle	7.5m	Yes	No	No
Whitebeam spp.	12	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wild Cherry	15m	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wild Privet	3m	Yes	Yes	Yes
Willow spp.	6m	Some	No	No
Wych Elm	30m	Yes		No
Yew	14m	Yes	No	Yes

13.9.7 Hard Landscaping

Hard landscaping design, including paving and street furniture, is an important element in defining the character of streets and public open spaces. Hard landscaping can help to provide a visual link to the surroundings; define and enclose spaces and delineate public from private space; provide security to private areas; distinguish between pedestrian, cycle and vehicle movement; and provide suitable play space for children.

Hard-landscaping proposals for public areas shall also be assessed with regard to the principles of the '*Urban Design Manual Best Practice Guide*' (DEHLG, 2009), as appropriate. Materials must be appropriate, durable and of good quality. Careful consideration must be given to the design of hard surfaces such as streets, squares, open spaces, paved areas, footpaths and driveways. Hard landscaping design shall have regard to the use of Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) to minimise runoff and maximise efficient management of surface water.

Walls, fences, metal railings and gates used to define spaces and their usage have a major impact on the visual character of a development. These should be carefully selected with local distinctiveness in mind and will need to be an integral part of the overall design concept. The siting of street furniture should not provide obstacles for people with disabilities or parents with buggies. The integration of art into the public domain can contribute positively to the urban form, creating local distinctiveness and enhancing a public space. Where possible and practicable, existing stone walls should be retained as part of new developments.

13.9.8 Design Statements

Design Statements will be required to be submitted with applications for:

- Residential developments in excess of 10 no. units
- Commercial, retail or community developments of 1,000 m^2 and above and
- Opportunity Sites identified in relevant Settlement Plans contained within this Plan or sensitive sites in settlements as may be identified at planning application stage.

The level of detail to be included in Design Statements will be proportionate to the scale and complexity of the development and relevant to the site context. This should be decided in consultation with the Planning Authority at pre-application stage.

Where a Design Statement is a requirement for a particular development it shall outline how the particular design addresses Development Plan and/or Local Area Plan policies, objectives and guidance, in particular those relating to urban design as well as national guidance. The Design Statement should clearly describe how the proposal relates to the site and contextual analysis. The following requirements must be included in a Design Statement:

- Desire lines to local centres, public transport and other facilities
- A discernible focus of the scheme or a demonstration that the development reinforces an existing local centre
- Retention and successful exploitation of local views into and out of the scheme and highlighting of selected focal points
- Response to local character without necessarily repeating adjacent forms and details
- Existing buildings, landform and ecological features should be noted on drawings
- Creative use of local materials and locally found details
- Demonstration of contemporary and innovative architecture and design that ensures the creation of a unique sense of place and
- The drawings and statements should illustrate why a particular design solution was arrived at for that particular site and how the design responds to the ecology, topography and features (both natural and manmade) existing on site and immediately adjacent to the site.

13.10 Residential Development – Towns and Villages

Development proposals in the towns and villages of the county should be designed to respect the scale, character and finishes of the local built environment. Proposals located on the edges of built-up

areas should be designed to integrate with the existing urban fabric and not create sprawling boundaries to the towns and villages. Infill proposals will be evaluated to ensure that detailed design elements harmonise with adjoining buildings and that overdevelopment of restricted sites does not result.

The following guidance documents should be consulted (unless otherwise updated) when designing a residential development:

(i) *'The Guidelines on Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities'*, DEHLG, (2007);
(ii) *'The Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas'*, DEHLG, (2009);
(iii) *'Urban Design Manual: A Best Practice Guide'*, DEHLG, (2009);
(iv) *'Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments'*, DHPLG, (2018);
(v) *'Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines'*, DHPLG, (2018);
(vi) *'The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets'*, DTTAS and DECLG, (2013 and updated in 2019);
(vii) *'Permeability Best Practice Guide'*, NTA, (2015); and
(viii) *'Recommendations for Site Development Works for Housing Areas'* (1998).

13.10.1 Density

Indicative density levels are set out in Table 2.6 of Chapter 2. Section 6.9 of Chapter 6 Urban Settlements also provides guidance on density. The Carrick-on-Shannon/Cortober Local Area Plan will identify density targets for particular sites as appropriate. Higher residential densities will be encouraged at appropriate locations. Such development must ensure a balance between reasonable protection of existing residential amenities and the established character of these areas.

13.10.2 Layout

The layout of new residential development should be designed to achieve the following:

(i) A strong sense of identity and a sense of place
(ii) Permeable layouts, with multiple connections to adjoining sites/estates for pedestrians and cyclists
(iii) Priority in the order of pedestrian > cyclist > public transport > car
(iv) A suitable mix and typology of residential units
(v) Delivery of high quality, accessible and useable open space, public realm with detailed landscaping features
(vi) Active frontage and supervised spaces, and
(vii) High quality materials and planting.

New developments should take full account of the characteristics of the natural and built environment of the site, the views and vistas to and from the site, and the surrounding areas. The detailed requirements set out in Section 13.9.6 *Soft Landscaping* in relation to the retention of trees and hedgerows, and their incorporation into proposed public and private open space and boundaries, shall apply.

Particular attention shall be given to boundaries with adjoining developments to ensure that natural boundaries are incorporated as an integral part of the design and that gaps between boundaries are avoided.

13.10.3 Residential Amenity

In terms of residential amenity proposed residential schemes shall be designed having regard to the following:

- The need to protect amenities of existing residents in the locality of the subject development
- A minimum 22m separation between directly opposing first floor habitable rooms in residential properties shall generally be observed
- A minimum of 2.0-2.5m distance between detached and semi-detached dwellings shall generally be provided
- Generally, windows in the gable/side walls of dwellings will not be permitted where the window would closely overlook the curtilage of the adjoining dwelling
- Adequate provision shall be made for the storage (3 wheelie bins) and collection of waste materials
- Terraced/townhouses shall provide appropriately located screened bin storage locations which shall be identified in the planning application. Where communal bin facilities are being provided, they shall be conveniently located, screened, and well ventilated
- Minimise overshadowing by applying the recommendations of '*Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice'* – Second Edition (B.R.E.), and
- Car parking for detached and semi-detached housing should be within the curtilage of the house and not on the roadway. Car parking for apartments and terraced housing should be arranged in informal groups overlooked by housing units. The visual impact of large areas of car parking should be reduced by the use of screen planting, low walls and the use of textured or coloured paving for parking bays.

13.10.4 Boundary Treatments

High quality boundary treatments are generally required to enclose private open space. A 1.8m – 2m high wall of solid block, capped and plastered on both sides, is generally acceptable. The Council will consider alternative boundary treatments on their merits. All boundaries shall be of high-quality solid construction with no gaps.

Concrete post and base with timber panel fencing will be considered for the side boundaries between rear gardens, provided a 2m length of 1.8-2m high block wall, capped and plastered, is provided for the initial 2m from the rear building line of the house.

Two metre high screen walls should be provided between all areas of public space and rear gardens. Where concrete screen walls along the edge of public areas are proposed (e.g. open space or footpaths) they should be suitably rendered and capped. Proposals for planting along the public side of the wall shall be included on a landscaping plan. An additional inner grass verge shall be provided at the footpath to facilitate this if necessary.

In the interest of passive surveillance, where side boundary walls adjoin the public footpath, the walls shall be a maximum of 1.2 metre in height as far as the front building line of the dwelling (beyond which a 2m wall shall be provided).

Special consideration should be given to boundary treatments particularly where these adjoin existing dwellings. Boundaries between the rear of existing and proposed dwellings shall be a minimum of 1.8m high and shall be constructed as capped, rendered concrete block or brick walls, to ensure privacy, security and permanency.

13.10.5 Private Open Space Requirements for Dwelling Houses

New housing developments should have an appropriate and useable area of private open space to the rear of the dwelling, with the minimum private open space requirements set out in Table 13.3:

Table 13.3: Minimum Private Open Space Requirements for Dwelling House Types

Unit Type (Dwelling House)	Minimum Area of Private Open Space Required
One/Two Bedroom	55 m^2
Three Bedroom	60 m^2
Four Bedroom or more	75 m^2

Exceptions to the above minimum private open space requirements may be only considered in relation to the redevelopment of inner urban infill sites where there is a need to protect the established pattern of streets and spaces and the redevelopment of brownfield/regeneration sites where a focus should be on design led and performance-based outcomes rather than specific absolute requirements in all cases. Flexibility will only be permissible in response to well-designed development proposals.

13.10.6 Apartment Developments

The design and layout of new apartments should provide satisfactory accommodation for a variety of household types and sizes, including families with children, over the medium to long term. The provision of apartment schemes shall only be considered in appropriate locations, at a suitable scale and extent. Primarily this will be in town centre locations and proximate to public transport. Outside of the central areas of towns, apartments may form a smaller element of a residential scheme.

Applications for apartment developments will be assessed having regard to *'The Design Standards for New Apartments'* (DoHPLG, 2018). All applications for apartments are required to demonstrate at a minimum compliance with these Guidelines and the Specific Planning Policy Requirements (SPPRs) contained therein (unless otherwise updated). Details of the following design criteria are set out in the Guidelines:

- Location
- Apartment mix
- Internal space and floor areas
- Dual aspect ratios
- Floor to ceiling height
- Apartments to stair/lift core ratios
- Storage spaces
- Amenity spaces and
- Car Parking.

Further requirements of the Guidelines include:

- Apartment developments may include up to 50% one-bedroom or studio type units (with no more than 20-25% of the total proposed development as studios) and there shall be no minimum requirement for apartments with three or more bedrooms (in accordance with SPPR 1 of the Guidelines).

- For all building refurbishment schemes on sites of any size, or urban infill schemes on sites of up to 0.25ha:

- Where up to 9 residential units are proposed, notwithstanding SPPR 1 of the guidelines, there shall be no restriction on dwelling mix, provided that no more than 50% of the development (i.e. up to 4 units) comprises studio-type units.
- Where between 10 to 49 residential units are proposed, the flexible dwelling mix provision for the first 9 units may be carried forward and the parameters set out in SPPR 1, shall apply from the 10th residential unit to the 49th.
- For schemes of 50 or more units, SPPR 1 shall apply to the entire development. (Ref: SPPR 2).

- Minimum floor areas, private open space and storage provision are outlined in Table 13.4. For apartment schemes of 10 or more units, the majority of apartments must exceed the minimum floor area standard for any combination of the relevant 1, 2 or 3-bedroom unit types, by a minimum of 10% (in accordance with SPPR 3).

- In terms of dual aspect provisions (in accordance with SPPR 4):
  - A minimum of 33% of dual aspect units will be required in more central and accessible urban locations, where it is necessary to achieve a quality design in response to the site characteristics and ensure good street frontage where appropriate.
  - In suburban or intermediate locations it is an objective that there shall generally be a minimum of 50% dual aspect apartments in a single scheme.
  - For building refurbishment schemes on sites of any size or urban infill schemes on sites of up to 0.25ha, further discretion may be exercised to consider dual aspect unit provision at a level lower than the 33% minimum outlined above on a case-by-case basis, but subject to the achievement of overall high design quality in other aspects.

- Ground level apartment floor to ceiling heights shall be a minimum of 2.7m and shall be increased in certain circumstances, particularly where necessary to facilitate a future change of use to a commercial use. For building refurbishment schemes on sites of any size or urban infill schemes on sites of up to 0.25ha, the Planning Authority may exercise discretion on a case-by-case basis, subject to overall design quality (in accordance with SPPR 5).

- A maximum of 12 apartments per floor per core may be provided in apartment schemes. This maximum provision may be increased for building refurbishment schemes on sites of any size or urban infill schemes on sites of up to 0.25ha, subject to overall design quality and compliance with building regulations (in accordance with SPPR 6).

- Communal amenity space should be provided, suitable for passive recreation and including play spaces for smaller children.

Table 13.4: Minimum Area Standards for Apartments

Apartment Unit Type	Floor Area	Storage Area	Private Open Space
Studio	37 m^2	3 m^2	4 m^2
One Bedroom	45 m^2	3 m^2	5 m^2
Two Bedroom (3 persons)	63 m^2	5 m^2	6 m^2
Two Bedroom (4 persons)	73 m^2	6 m^2	7 m^2
Three Bedroom	90 m^2	9 m^2	9 m^2

All applications for apartment(s) shall include a schedule that provides the following information:

- The number and type of apartments and associated individual unit floor areas
- Details of apartment aspect (dual or single) and orientation
- Principal dimensions of each room as well as the aggregate floor areas

- Details of internal and external storage space
- Quantum of proposed private amenity space
- Communal open space, and
- Storage and collection of waste materials.

Normal planning and urban design considerations shall continue to be applied to proposed apartment schemes, e.g. external design, height, overlooking and the need to present a live edge to the street.

13.10.7 Public Open Spaces for Residential Development

The provision of accessible open space is a key part of the provision of high-quality '*Green Infrastructure*' for communities. Public open space must be carefully designed as an integral part of the layout of all residential schemes/mixed schemes and should be addressed at the initial design stages. All applications for residential developments shall include a detailed landscaping plan.

Open space shall be provided within the development site as follows:

- Public open space on greenfield sites equating to a minimum of 15% of the total site area, a minimum 10% on large infill sites/brownfield sites and 20% on institutional lands. The areas of public open space shall be clearly identified on the site layout/landscaping plan.

- The landscaping plan shall illustrate how existing '*Green Infrastructure*' and opportunities to create more linkages have informed and been incorporated into the development layout.

- Natural features e.g. trees, hedgerows and wetlands shall be retained, protected and incorporated into public open space areas.

- Public open spaces should be appropriately located, passively overlooked by as many dwellings as possible and easily accessible to all residents, providing for both passive and active uses. Narrow tracts of land (less than 10 metres in width) are not acceptable.

- Areas of public open space should be generally flat. While some undulation may be incorporated as a design feature, areas with high gradients, containing swales or attenuation ponds, or otherwise impractical to function effectively as amenity/play areas, will not be acceptable as open space.

- Public and semi-private open space in all residential developments will be required to incorporate natural features that promote children's play. Opportunities for children's play should be addressed as part of the landscaping plan.

- On large sites, areas should be identified for a hierarchy of uses e.g. casual '*pocket parks*' for smaller children to play, informal kick about areas, areas for passive amenity. etc.

- Appropriate pedestrian and cycle linkages between open spaces should be clearly indicated on the site layout plan.

- SuDS are not generally acceptable as a form of public open space provision, except where they contribute in a significant and positive way to the design and quality of open space. Where the Council considers that this is the case, in general a maximum of 10% of the open space provision shall be taken up by SuDS.

- Care should be taken during the design process to connect existing and proposed areas of open space, thus providing green linkages for wildlife habitats.

- The design of lanes connecting housing estates or within housing estates should be of sufficient width to allow for the safe movement of pedestrians and cyclists. Laneways should be adequately overlooked and lit and not be excessive in length.

13.10.8 Naming of Residential Developments

Names of residential and other developments shall reflect local heritage by incorporating local place names or names of geographical, historical or cultural significance to the site location. Names of developments shall include the use of the Irish language. In order to ensure the above and to avoid confusion and duplication, the naming of developments will require the prior agreement of the Planning Authority. Proposed names shall be submitted to the Planning Authority and agreed prior to launching any advertising campaign for the development. This shall be required as a condition of planning permission.

13.10.9 Taking in Charge and Bonds

To ensure the satisfactory completion of development works (roads, footpaths, surface water drainage, car parks, public lighting, open space, landscaping, including the protection of trees) undertaken by private developers a cash deposit or a bond from an insurance company or other financial institution acceptable to the Planning Authority will be required. This bond or cash lodgement may be sequestered in part or in its entirety at the discretion of the Planning Authority where the development has not been satisfactorily completed. The amount of such bond or cash lodgement will be determined by the Planning Authority.

Residential developments completed to a standard that is compliant with the planning permission granted and to the satisfaction of the Council will be taken in charge in accordance with Leitrim County Council's Taking in Charge Policy and the provisions of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended and the Roads Act 1993 upon receipt of a formal request for same.

Where Management Companies are required for apartment schemes, a properly constituted Management Company shall be established for the purposes of maintaining public lighting, roads, parking areas, services, open spaces and public areas in apartment schemes.

13.10.10 Extensions to Dwellings

Proposals, which involve the alteration, improvement, or extension of an existing dwelling should reflect and enhance the existing building, adjoining properties, and the setting in terms of scale, design and materials. The following principles shall be applied:

- The extension should be sensitive to the existing dwelling in its form, scale and appearance and should not adversely distort the scale or mass of the structure or of adjoining properties
- The extension should complement the area in which it is located, and its design and scale should have regard to adjoining properties. However, a flexible approach will be taken to the assessment of alternative design concepts and contemporary designs will be encouraged
- In rural areas, the design of extensions should have regard to the Key Principles set out in Section 3.17.6 of Chapter 3
- The extension should not provide for new overlooking of the private area of an adjacent residence where no such overlooking previously existed

- In an existing developed area, where a degree of overlooking is already present, the new extension must not significantly increase overlooking possibilities
- New extensions should not overshadow adjacent dwellings to the degree that there is a significant decrease in daylight or sunlight entering the house, and
- The physical extensions to the floor area of a dwelling should not erode its other amenities. In all cases a minimum private rear garden area must be retained in accordance with Table 13.3.

13.10.11 Family Flat

Family flat or *'granny*' flat accommodation represents a temporary arrangement to accommodate an immediate family member or carer within an existing dwelling unit in a semi-independent capacity. Applications for such developments shall have regard to the following:

- Applicants shall submit documentary evidence at application stage to demonstrate the need for a family flat
- The proposed unit should be linked directly to the main dwelling by a connecting door
- Accommodation must be subsidiary to the main dwelling in scale and only in exceptional cases will more than one bedroom be permitted
- Any external doors permitted (to provide access to private/shared open space or for escape from fire) shall be limited to the side or rear of the house
- The design shall ensure that the flat can easily fully revert to being part of the original house when no longer occupied by family member(s), and
- If the property is serviced by an individual on-site wastewater treatment system, this system must have the capacity to accommodate any additional loading in accordance with the EPA Code of Practice for Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses 2021. This may result in the requirement for existing systems to be upgraded to the current standards.

It shall be normal procedure to include a condition or conditions in any grant of permission that the family flat cannot be sold, conveyed or leased separately from the main residence, and that when the need for the family flat no longer exists that the dwelling must be returned to a single dwelling unit.

13.10.12 Upper Floor/'Living Over the Shop' Accommodation

Proposals for the residential conversion of upper floors of retail and commercial premises in town/village centres will be favourably considered where such proposals protect the historic fabric (if relevant) and promote and contribute to the vibrancy and vitality of the town/village centre.

Notwithstanding, the Council acknowledges that it is not always possible or practical to fully achieve current residential standards where there is a need to protect the historic fabric of town and village centres. In this regard, at the discretion of the Planning Authority and subject to protecting residential amenity, a reduction in open space and car parking standards may be considered for '*living over the shop*' accommodation proposals in central locations.

Minimum standards in relation to overall floor areas, storage space and natural light must be complied with to protect residential amenity. In the case of residential accommodation over non-residential uses, a separate access should be provided for the upper floor accommodation, proper sound proofing, ventilation and storage must be built into the design of the building.

13.11 Residential Development Rural Areas

Notwithstanding an applicant's demonstration of compliance with the rural housing criteria as set out at Chapter 3, it is important to note that applicants are also required to meet overriding sustainable planning practices in terms of visual impact, design standards, environmental and traffic safety issues.

The design of rural housing development requires careful design consideration to ensure that all new development sensitively integrates into the landscape. This requires specific focus on site selection, design, scale and form of the proposed development. The most successful designs subtly integrate with the receiving landscape by selecting naturally sheltered and screened sites and the development of a simple built form complemented with the use of materials that are reflective of traditional vernacular.

Residential development in rural areas will be required to conform to the principles detailed in the *'Design Guide for the Siting and Design of Single Houses within the Leitrim Countryside'* published by Leitrim County Council Planning Department and any replacement guidance.

In assessing planning applications for rural housing, the Council shall apply the following guidance:

Site Selection and Design

- The scale, form, design and siting of the development should be sensitive to its surroundings and visually integrate with the receiving landscape
- Simple design forms and materials reflective of traditional vernacular should be used
- The design, siting and orientation of a new dwelling should be site specific responding to the natural features and topography of the site to best integrate development with the landscape and to optimise solar gain to maximise energy efficiency
- The siting of new development shall visually integrate with the landscape, utilising natural features including existing contours and established field boundaries and shall not visually dominates the landscape (cutting and filling of sites is not desirable)
- New buildings should respect the landscape context and not impinge scenic views or skylines as seen from vantage points or public roads
- Larger houses (e.g. in excess of 200 m^2) should incorporate design solutions to minimise visual mass and scale e.g. sub-divided into smaller elements of traditional form to avoid overly bulky structures
- Use of a simple plan form to give a clean roof shape – a long plan in preference to a deep plan and avoiding the creation of a bulky or square box-like massing
- Where existing vernacular structures exist on site, consideration should be given to their reuse, adaptation and extension in preference to new build
- Clustering with existing rural buildings is generally preferable to stand-alone locations, and
- Log Cabins and Pods or similarly designed structures are not vernacular typologies of the Leitrim countryside and will only be considered in limited cases where a unique siting and landscape situation allows (i.e. log cabins may have potential in a woodland setting).

Materials and Detailing

- The detail, texture, colour, pattern, and durability of materials of the proposed development should be sustainable and of a high quality, and sensitive to its proposed location
- Local stone (sandstone/limestone-area specific) and render such as stucco, traditional lime render or lime wash, rough cast render or napped render finish and glass is encouraged. Metal cladding such as copper, timber shingle, self-finished modern renders, and painted timber finish may be acceptable in certain instances or in cases where the design solution calls for an accent material. Brick and stone cladding which clearly reads as non-structural and non-Local

Stone or dashes and cladding and other metal or timber finishes which give an engineered or artificial appearance will generally not be permitted
- Where contemporary materials are proposed they should complement and harmonise with traditional materials
- Simple design forms and roof designs with narrow spans (gable-widths) and pitches/profiles are preferable
- Particular attention should be paid to the solid to void ratio of windows and doors. Openings should be proportionate to complement the style of the building, and
- Decorative fascia and box end soffits should be avoided.

Water and Wastewater Services and Surface Water Disposal

- Where piped water services in the form of water supply and sewerage mains are available (or likely to be), the developer will be required to connect to them
- For individual on-site wastewater treatment systems, the standards and guidance on design, operation and maintenance of on-site wastewater treatment systems as set out in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) *'Code of Practice for Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (Population Equivalent ≤ 10)'* (2021), or any later version that may be issued by the EPA, shall be complied with
- Where a site is served by mains water, a connection shall be made and a bored well is not permitted
- If water is supplied by a Group Water Scheme, any planning application must be accompanied by a letter of consent to connection from the secretary of the scheme and in certain circumstances the developer may be required to extend the main to the site
- Where a bored well is necessary, details of separation distances from treatment systems can be obtained from the EPA Manual referred to above. Private bore holes should comply with the Guidelines from the Institute of Geologist of Ireland publication '*Water Well Construction*' (www.igi.ie), and
- Surface water shall not be permitted to flow on to the public road from any rural residential site. Accesses and road frontage should be designed in such a manner as to deal with surface water and ensure that it does not impact on the public road. Existing roadside drainage shall be maintained by the incorporation of a suitably sized drainage pipe. Each application shall be accompanied by design calculations or appropriate evidence to support the size of the pipe selected.

Boundary Treatments

- Application sites should ideally be flanked with a minimum of two established natural boundaries to aid visual integration and help soften the visual impact of the development in the landscape
- Existing hedgerows and landscape features on site should be retained and augmented on site. Where hedgerow removal is required to achieve sight lines, new hedgerow(s) of a native species must be planted inside the line of visibility
- New roadside frontage should be incorporated into existing roadside treatment using compatible hedgerow planting, walls, timber fencing and/or drystone work
- Boundary treatment should reflect local traditions. Traditional dry-stone wall construction or limestone walls with lime mortar, and/or post and wire/timber fencing back planted with indigenous hedging are considered appropriate at entrances. Over-scaled and elaborate designs should be avoided
- The design of entrance gates should be in keeping with the rural setting. Entrances, wing walls and piers which are not considered to be in character with the rural location of the proposed development will generally not be permitted. All planning applications must include detailed drawings and specifications for vehicular entrance arrangements

- Driveways, and surfaced areas should be located so as to minimise the visual impacts of these proposed structures for example by following existing contour lines, and
- Landscaping proposals should be submitted with all planning applications for development and shall include a schedule of native tree and shrub species, in accordance with those identified in Table 13.2, as well as a planting schedule/implementation timeline.

13.11.1 Domestic Garage/Shed/ Store Development

The guidance prescribed below for this class of development is applicable in both urban and rural settings:

- The design, form and materials should be ancillary to, and consistent with the main dwelling on site
- Structures should generally be detached and sited to the side or rear of the dwelling house and be visually subservient in terms of size, scale, and bulk, and
- Storage facilities should be used solely for purposes incidental to the enjoyment of the dwelling and not for any commercial, manufacturing, industrial use, or habitable space in the absence of prior planning consent for such use.

13.12 Economic Development

All employment related developments are required to be developed to a high standard. This will assist in creating an attractive environment for people to work in and businesses to invest in.

13.12.1 Employment Uses – General Standards

Notwithstanding the broad range of enterprises and sectors which collectively take the form of economic development, the following information should be submitted as part of any application for a proposed industrial/commercial/business development:

- Details of the nature and scale of the proposed operation, to include opening hours and anticipated traffic levels
- Availability of adequate services to serve the development, or the ability of the applicant to provide these services in a manner which does not adversely impact on surrounding properties or the broader environment
- Proposals for the safe storage and disposal of waste in a manner which is visually and environmentally acceptable
- Storage of materials including raw materials should generally be confined to the rear of the premises; height should be such that the materials stored are adequately screened either by the building unit or an alternative screening method
- Demonstration of compatibility of the proposed use with existing adjacent land uses, and mitigation measures to preserve and protect the amenity of the adjacent uses, should this be necessary
- Availability of adequate sight lines (or ability of applicant to provide same) from the proposed access to serve the development
- Adequate parking and circulation areas should be provided within the curtilage of the proposed development, unless otherwise agreed with the Planning Authority
- Advertising signage shall be detailed at planning application stage and shall be sympathetic in size, scale, design, materials, and colour with the surrounding landscape/streetscape, and
- Lighting should be unobtrusive and should not adversely affect traffic safety on adjacent roads.

13.12.2 Industrial and Warehousing Development

Industrial and warehousing development schemes will be required to present a good quality appearance, helped by landscaping and careful placing of advertisement structures. There shall be a presumption that only industrial processes of appropriate size and whose nature will not cause nuisance or injury to the predominant residential environment of towns and villages, shall be permitted adjoining or adjacent to such sensitive uses. Industrial development shall be subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, specifically the following requirements:

- Individual buildings should exhibit a high quality of modern architectural design and finish (including the use of colour)
- In the case of two or more industrial/warehouse units, a uniform design is required for boundary treatments, roof profiles and building lines
- Areas between the building and road boundary may include car parking spaces provided adequate screen planting is incorporated into the design proposal
- Adequate provision shall be made on the site for parking of vehicles, storage and stacking space. Storage and stacking areas shall be located to the rear of the building or, where such facilities are located at the side, provision for screening shall be made
- The front building line shall be as determined in consultation with the Planning Authority and, where required, the existing roadside boundary shall be set back
- Any industrial or commercial development shall not be injurious to the residential amenity of adjoining properties
- A landscaped buffer zone (minimum 5-10 metres) will be a requirement of planning permissions for any industrial/warehousing development where it adjoins an area with another land use zoning objective or where it would impact on the amenities of adjoining land uses
- Proposals shall be submitted to incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in developments
- The hours of industrial operation will be controlled where they are likely to result in harm to environmental amenities including residential amenity, and
- Noise levels shall generally not exceed 55 dB (a) Leq when measured at the boundary of the site where such noise would result in an adverse impact on amenity to an adjoining sensitive land use such as residential development.

13.12.3 Business Park and Enterprise Hub Development

Business parks shall be laid out in open parkland setting with a high level of landscaping, and provision shall be made for pedestrian and cycle paths throughout. The following design issues should be taken into consideration:

- High Quality Design shall be provided incorporating where appropriate a suitable mix of finishes and architectural treatment. Landmark buildings of notable design will be encouraged at strategic locations in business parks. For all significant employment developments comprising schemes with a gross floor area of 1,000 m^2 and above (or otherwise as required by the Planning Authority), a Design Statement will be required
- Car parking shall be provided in a discreet, landscaped and well-screened environment with a view to minimising its visual impact, particularly when viewed from approach roads
- Proposals shall be submitted to incorporate Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and other measures that address adaptation to climate change including the creation of integrated wetlands, the construction of green/living roofs whereby opportunities for existing solar energy and wind energy are taken
- The layout shall be of a high quality that includes design principles including connectivity and permeability with high quality landscaping. Building lines shall generally respect the existing

established pattern. Undeveloped areas shall provide a minimum of 15 m setback along principal road frontages with appropriate (minimum 5 m depth) landscaping to the front of the buildings

- Retention and enhancement, where possible, of existing natural features such as hedgerows and associated ditches and streams offers the potential to incorporate sustainable drainage measures and retain wildlife corridors. The addition of surface water attenuation ponds, green roofs and living walls offers significant opportunities for wildlife while providing a high-quality environment for employees
- Proposals to protect residential amenity of any adjoining properties. Reduced heights and/or significant landscaping proposals may be required together with measures to mitigate noise and lighting emissions
- Energy efficiency and overall sustainability of the development
- Workplace Travel Plan will be required for a large-scale employment generating development that gives rise to significant demand in trips. The necessity of such a requirement shall be determined at pre application consultation stage in consultation with the Planning Authority. Where such a requirement is not adhered to, the Planning Authority may use the provisions of Further Information to request such a plan
- Adequate parking, circulation and access arrangements shall be provided using permeable materials to the maximum extent practicable. Preparation of an '*auto-track*' analysis may be required to demonstrate adequate areas for delivery vehicles
- Loading and open storage areas shall be visually unobtrusive from public roadways and screened or preferably located behind the building line, and
- Multiple unit developments shall implement an ordered naming and signage scheme to avoid visual clutter.

13.12.4 Home-Based Economic Activity

Home-based economic activity is defined as small scale commercial activity carried out by a resident of a house which is subordinate to the use of the dwelling as a place of residence. In dealing with applications for such developments the Planning Authority will have regard to the following:

- The nature and extent of the work
- The effects on the amenities of adjoining properties particularly as regards hours of operation, availability of car parking, noise and general disturbance
- The anticipated levels of traffic generation, and
- The generation, storage and collection of waste.

Permissions for home-based economic activity will generally be restricted to use by the applicant only in a rural area and access by visiting members of the public may also be restricted. Applications may be subject to a temporary permission, in order to enable the Planning Authority to monitor the impact of the development.

13.13 Retail Development

The provision of new retail development shall be in accordance with Chapter 4 of this Plan, the *'Retail Planning Guidelines'* and the accompanying '*Retail Design Manual'* (DoECLG, 2012) or any subsequent revisions or updates to these Guidelines thereafter. Retail development should be in accordance with the fundamental objective to support the vitality and viability of the retail centre. All applications for retail developments at edge-of-centre or out-of-centre locations will be subject to the sequential test. In the assessment of retail planning applications, the following considerations will apply:

- High quality design making a positive contribution to the area in which it is located. Design statements may be required for larger scale proposals.
- Retail impact assessment may be required for significant retail development which due to their scale and/or location may impact on the vitality and viability of town centres.
- The Retail Impact Assessment shall include, at minimum, the criteria set out in the *'Retail Planning Guidelines'* and should demonstrate how the proposed development:
    a) Supports the overall strategy for town centres as set out in the Development Plan
    b) Does not materially diminish the prospect of attracting private sector investment into one or more town centres
    c) Does not cause an adverse impact on one or more town centres, either singly or cumulatively with recent developments or other outstanding planning permissions, sufficient to undermine the quality of the centre or its role in the economic and social life of the community
    d) Does not diminish the range of activities and services that a town centre can support
    e) Does not cause an increase in the number of vacant properties in the primary retail area that is likely to persist in the long term and,
    f) Ensures a high standard of access both by public transport, foot, and private car so that the proposal is easily accessible by all sections of society.

  The onus will be on any applicant to demonstrate in a Retail Impact Assessment that the proposed floorspace is appropriate, having regard to the quantum of floorspace required within that specific urban centre or settlement, in addition to evidencing all other relevant variables as specified within the *'Retail Planning Guidelines'*.

- All retail proposals exceeding 1,000 m^2 shall provide a Transport Impact Assessment (TIA) in addition to any other information deemed necessary by the Planning Authority.
- All planning applications should contain a design statement prepared in accordance with the *'Key Principles of Urban Design'* as laid out in the *'Retail Design Manual*', explaining why the design solution is considered the most suitable for the site.
- Incorporation of measures to mitigate impacts on the residential amenity of adjoining properties, e.g. air quality, excessive noise and lighting.
- The Planning Authority will advise at pre application consultation stage whether it is required to submit a Design Statement, Retail Impact Assessment and Traffic Impact Assessment with a planning application for a retail development. Where such a requirement is not adhered to, the Planning Authority may use the provisions of Further Information to request such a plan.

13.13.1 Service Stations

The role of service stations has expanded from the provision of fuel to also providing convenience goods and services. Further expansion of the level of goods and services available at service stations is anticipated due to the increased demand for EV charging facilities and more on-site retail and food catering. Proposals for new and extended service stations will be carefully considered and will not generally be encouraged within the core retail area of urban centres or in the open countryside outside of towns and villages. The proposed location should also be compatible with surrounding land uses, where safe access can be achieved and there would be no adverse impact created on the amenities of surrounding properties. Applications for service stations shall comply with the following:

- Detailed proposals for the service station will be required, including method of disposal of wastewater from car wash areas, traffic management, surface water outlet and provision of adequately sized oil interceptors, etc. The development shall be designed and operated to avoid adverse effects on existing road drainage in the area.

- A high standard of overall design, architectural layout and material content to ensure an attractive development that integrates with and complements or enhances its surroundings. The forecourt canopy should be integrated into the overall design and sited so that it does not dominate the surrounding buildings.
- Advertising material should be kept to a minimum and no lighting shall be installed so as to cause glare or interference to any user of an adjacent public road.
- The modification of standard corporate designs may be required by the Planning Authority in order to reduce the visual impact of the development in sensitive environments. In such instances, standard petrol station canopies can be replaced with more sympathetic canopies designed to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.
- Strident and multiple colouring should be avoided and will be discouraged. The size and colour should be such as to take cognisance of its setting and location in the landscape.
- The retail floor space of the shop shall not exceed 100 m^2 net; where permission is sought for a floor space in excess of 100 m^2net, the sequential approach to retail development shall apply in accordance with the *'Retail Planning Guidelines'*, DECLG (2012) i.e. the retail element of the proposal shall be assessed by the Planning Authority in the same way as would an application for retail development (without petrol/diesel filling facilities) in the same location.
- The layout of the station forecourt should be arranged to allow dedicated parking for customers shopping rather than purchasing fuel.
- Ancillary services e.g. car wash services, etc. should be sited so as not to result in queueing onto the public road network or negatively impact on neighbouring residential properties. Particular care is required with regard to alarms sounding between car wash cycles.
- EV charging point(s) should be provided and clearly demarcated.
- Proposals for new on-line or off-line motorway service facilities will be assessed in accordance with the guidance set out in the *Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities*, DECLG (2012).

13.13.2 Fast Food Outlets/Take-Aways

In order to maintain the appropriate mix of uses and protect the amenities in a particular area, it is the policy of the Council to prevent the excessive concentration of fast food outlets and take-aways. The provision of such outlets will be assessed having regard to the following:

- The number and frequency of such facilities in an area and their cumulative impact in association with the proposed development.
- The need to safeguard the vitality and viability of shopping areas in the town centre and to maintain a suitable mix of retail uses.
- The proximity of such uses to other vulnerable uses, e.g. residences, schools, open space.
- The likely impact on general and residential amenity in terms of noise/disturbance, traffic, parking, litter, and fumes.
- Proposed façade design, the type and degree of any advertising/signage and lighting, and the visual appearance of vents/extractors.
- Proposed opening hours must be specified and these will be controlled by the Planning Authority.

The design shall be required to respect the character of the street and the buildings. Noise insulation measures will be required at the time of the submission of the planning application and ongoing noise monitoring may be required. Adequate provision for refuse disposal, storage and collection must be indicated in both new and existing buildings. Fast food facilities should include proposals for on-street bins (with appropriate design for boxes/packaging) and a plan for their maintenance.

13.13.3 Secondary Retail Outlets

In assessing planning applications for Secondary Retail Type Outlets (Including Betting Office/Amusement Arcades/Casino/Tattoo Parlour/Vaping Shops), the following considerations will be taken into account:

- The need to safeguard the vitality and viability of the defined retail area and to maintain a suitable mix of retail uses.
- The number/frequency of such facilities in the area.
- The effect on the amenities in the area arising from noise, hours of operation and litter.
- The treatment of shop front advertising and window display.

13.13.4 Markets and Casual Trading

In assessing planning applications for markets/casual trading, the following considerations will be taken into account:

- Arrangements for customers/traders parking, servicing, storage, disposal and recycling of refuse and storage of stalls.
- The Casual Trading Act of 1995 and specifically any bye-laws made by Leitrim County Council under Section 6 of the Act.
- The likely impact on town centre vitality and viability, residential amenity, conservation area(s), the general environment or existing shops.
- The capacity of the road network and parking requirements.

13.13.5 Shop Fronts, Advertising and Signage

Shop fronts are one of the most important elements in determining the character, quality and image of retail streets in Co. Leitrim. In order to increase the attractiveness of the streetscape, the Council promotes a dual approach to shopfront design:

- Protecting traditional and original shop fronts and
- Encouraging good contemporary shopfront design.

The design of shop fronts should reflect the scale and proportions of the existing streetscape. The Council will seek to retain the remaining traditional shop fronts of townscape importance. It should be noted that the replacement of an existing shopfront, or the insertion of a new shopfront requires planning permission and is not considered to constitute exempted development.

Historic shop fronts should be retained and refurbished, where feasible. Such features as existing arches, stringcourses, plaster detailing or existing fascia and brackets should be considered in the new design and new internal alterations, and proposed advertising should generally not interfere with such details. Wholesale removal of rendering along a streetscape is generally not encouraged.

Applications for new shop fronts or modifications to existing shop fronts shall have regard to the following:

- Detailed plans at a scale of 1:50. Such plans shall include details regarding the design, colour and detailing with regard to signage (including window adhesive signage), advertising and lighting.
- All signage must be compatible with the existing streetscape. Timber, stone, glass and steel are preferred materials.
- Contemporary shop fronts will be encouraged provided they are designed to traditional principles of scale, proportion and detailing.
- The appearance and proportions of the original shop front shall be retained.

- The twin elements of a fascia board (to carry names and advertising) and pilasters (to frame and delineate the shopfront boundary) shall be provided in all cases.
- The design must be approached in an integrated way (relate to the whole facade), including advertising, lighting and other features.
- Colour schemes should co-ordinate with adjoining buildings and shop fronts and should be chosen to enhance the proportions and detailing of the whole building.
- Vertical emphasis and proportions should be kept, and plot divisions should be expressed externally (even if the shop crosses them internally).
- The removal of service wires associated with existing facades will be actively promoted.

The Council will discourage, through its advice and guidelines and through the imposition of conditions in planning permissions, or refusal of permission in certain cases, the following:

- The removal of features or alterations to existing shop fronts where they are considered by the Council to be of historical or architectural interest, or of townscape value.
- The enlargement or remodelling to a horizontal emphasis of existing windows above ground floor level.
- The construction of fascia linking two or more buildings/plots which have different architectural identities.
- The use of large areas of undivided glass or the provision of new display windows with a horizontal emphasis.
- The permanent removal of the shopfront and the creation of an opening through which direct trading onto the pavement is carried out.
- The use of standardised brand names, logos, corporate designs as part of shopfront fascia advertising, where it conflicts with the existing streetscape.
- The use of external roller shutters and their boxes and projecting brand signs on the exterior of shop-fronts.

It is acknowledged that retail and other multiples, e.g. betting shops, banks and building societies tend to have their own corporate identity and standardised signage. In sensitive locations, standard shop fronts can weaken the special local identity of an area. This will not be permitted. Compromise proposals which maintain corporate image without eroding local character will be explored.

Signage on National Roads will be strictly controlled and will generally be only permitted in accordance with the provisions set out in Section 3.8 of the *Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines* (2012) and the TII *Policy on the Provision of Tourism and Leisure Signage on National Roads* (2011).

13.13.6 Roller/Security Shutters

Where security shutters are considered to be essential, e.g. because of the type of business transacted or goods stored, and where the location so indicates, the Council may permit them provided that they meet the following criteria:

- They must be of the open-grille type or timber panelled shutters painted to match the shop-front colour scheme. This will be more favourably considered in place of roller shutters in order to enhance the streetscape.
- Where roller shutters are proposed they must be internal and located behind the display window.

13.13.7 Outdoor Advertising Structures

Outdoor advertising structures, including trailer type structures, will not generally be permitted within the county, whether freestanding or attached to buildings. In particular, the use of gables or sides of buildings for the exhibition of advertising structures will not normally be permitted.

Billboards or similar types of advertisements may be permitted in limited circumstances for a specified time period, where it can be demonstrated that the development will enhance the area e.g. by screening an unsightly site or derelict structure. The use of freestanding signs/advertising boards on or over the public footpath will not be permitted.

13.13.8 Finger Post Signage

The siting of fingerpost signs over or along or above a public road is subject to a sign licence under Section 254 of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended. Such signs will not normally be permitted along national routes. Proposed signage will be subject to the following:

- Directional signs for major tourist attractions and community purposes will be considered but product advertising will not be permitted.
- Only the primary route to the facility shall be signed. The sign should be located within 2km of the facility or relevant junction.
- Signs must have a standard size and colour.
- Signs which interfere with the Local Authority's directional signs, or which contribute to visual clutter will not be permitted.

13.14 Community Development

13.14.1 Community Facilities and Amenities

In assessing planning applications for leisure facilities, sports grounds, playing fields, play areas, community halls, organisational meeting facilities, medical facilities, childcare facilities and other community orientated developments, regard will be taken of considerations such as:

- Overall need in terms of necessity and opportunity to enhance or develop local facilities.
- Practicalities of site location in terms of relating to uses, impact on local amenities and ensuring safe access for pedestrians, cyclists, vehicles and safe public parking for cars and buses.
- The potential multifunctional use of community facilities, including daytime and night-time usage.
- Cater for all levels of disability.

13.14.2 Childcare Facilities

All childcare facilities shall be provided in accordance with the guidance, *'Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities'* (DoEHLG, 2001) and Circular Letter PL3 2016 or any superseding guidelines. In addition to the foregoing, in the assessment of individual planning applications for childcare facilities, the Planning Authority will have regard to the following criteria:

- The justification for proposed site location.
- Details on accessibility, including pedestrian, cycle and public transport provisions and linkages to the proposed development.
- Adequate and safe set-down and collection areas to facilitate peak traffic movements.
- Adequate on-site car parking for staff.
- Adequate play area(s) for children attending.

- New or expanded premises should have regard to traffic impact associated with the number of children and staff to be accommodated and should provide adequate set-down areas and car parking areas to prevent traffic congestion.
- Large scale proposals may be required to present a Mobility Management Plan to mitigate against traffic volumes by proposing staggered opening hours and drop off times to avoid congestion at peak times.

Applicants are recommended to seek the advice of the Leitrim County Childcare Committee, and the HSE in the design of childcare facilities prior to the submission of a planning application.

13.14.3 Education Facilities

Applications for educational provision shall comply with the requirements of technical guidance documents published by the Department of Education and Skills (see www.education.ie) including *'Provision of Schools and the Planning System: A Code of Practice for Planning Authorities'* (DoES, DoEHLG, 2008). In the design of education facilities, where appropriate, consideration should be given to provision of multi-campus and multi-use elements with a flexible approach demonstrated to allow for different users at different times of the day and throughout the calendar year.

In assessing individual planning applications for new schools and/or redevelopment/extensions of existing schools, the Council will have regard to the following:

- Site location, proximity of school to catchment area, size of site relative to outdoor space requirements and the future needs of the school (i.e. sufficient space provided for future expansion).
- Traffic and transport impact on the surrounding road network.
- Good, safe accessible pedestrian and cyclist routes to and from the school from nearby residential and commercial areas.
- Safe vehicular access and adequate car parking layout to facilitate drop off/pick up.
- Adequate signage, lighting and boundary treatments.
- Impact on local amenities and out of school hours uses/dual functioning of school facilities.

Extensions to schools will generally be accepted subject to scale, high quality design and satisfactory integration with the existing structure. Dual function of sports facilities and halls will be encouraged where the use is of benefit to the wider community and has due regard to the residential amenities of adjoining properties. Temporary school structures will generally be accepted subject to the development not impacting unduly on on-site car parking/cycle parking provision.

13.14.4 Medical Centres/Health Centres/Veterinary Centres

Planning applications should include details of proposed professional medical activities, proposed number of practitioners and support staff, parking provision and intended hours of operation.

The location of New Health Centres/Services, Primary Health Centres, Medical Consultants and Veterinary Surgeries is favoured in towns and villages with good accessibility. However new facilities in other locations or a change of use from residential to health facilities will be considered where the privacy and amenity of adjacent occupiers is preserved, and the proposal does not have a detrimental impact on local amenity by way of traffic congestion or noise. Adequate car parking/set down areas must be identified in such proposals.

13.14.5 Residential Care/Retirement/Nursing Homes

The location of residential care homes, retirement homes, nursing homes, retirement villages and sheltered accommodation is favoured in towns and villages for reasons of sustainability, accessibility, social inclusion, and proximity to the availability of services, except where a demonstrated need to locate in the open countryside because of the nature of the care required can be clearly established. Applications for residential care homes, retirement homes, nursing homes, retirement villages and sheltered accommodation shall consider and demonstrate the following:

- The potential impact on residential amenities of adjoining properties.
- Adequate provision of open space.
- Provision of adequate parking facilities.
- High standard of design and external finishes.
- The size and scale of the proposal must be appropriate to the area.
- A location proximate to high-quality public transport links and the site should be well served by good footpath links.
- Compliance with Standards no. 2-7 of *'National Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People in Ireland'* (Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA), 2016).

13.14.6 Places of Worship

In assessing planning applications for places of worship, the following considerations will be taken into account:

- Location on appropriately zoned lands.
- Details of the capacity of the facility (e.g. seating capacity), traffic assessment and intended hours of operation.

New or extended places of worship should not create unacceptable traffic congestion; comply with car parking standards; and not impact on amenities of neighbouring residents or businesses (arising from traffic, noise or other disturbance).

13.14.7 External Floodlighting for Sports/Recreational Facilities

The provision of external floodlighting will be carefully considered by the Council in order to protect residential amenity, nature and traffic safety. Floodlights shall have fully-shielded light fixtures and cowled to ensure that upward light levels are low. Planning applications shall include:

- Details of horizontal and vertical luminance levels (lux levels) of the lights; (Note: Reference should be made to BS EN 12193:2007 Light and Lighting – Sports Lighting).
- Proposed hours of use.

13.15 Natural and Built Heritage

13.15.1 Natural Heritage

The overall policies and objectives relating to natural heritage are set out in Chapter 11 of this Plan and all planning applications will be assessed having regard to same. Development proposals should consider potential ecological impacts on the natural heritage and '*Green Infrastructure*' present within or adjacent to the site and the following:

- Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas (including candidate areas).
- Salmonid Waters and Freshwater Pearl Mussel catchments.
- Green infrastructure including features of the landscape that provide linkages/connectivity to designated sites (e.g. watercourses, areas of seminatural habitat such as linear woodlands, etc.).

- Proposed Natural Heritage Areas.
- Areas likely to contain a habitat listed in Annex I of the Habitats Directive.

Where a development is of a significant scale or in close proximity to a pNHA, the Council will require an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcoIA) to determine the impact of the proposed development on the designated site or natural heritage.

Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive requires an Appropriate Assessment of any plan or project whether within or outside a designated Natura 2000 site, which does not directly relate to the management of the site but may impact upon its conservation objectives. All planning applications shall be screened for Appropriate Assessment and a Stage II Appropriate Assessment carried out if necessary.

Where full Appropriate Assessment is required, the assessment shall be based on best scientific knowledge and undertaken by a person with appropriate ecological expertise and qualifications. It shall address the potential impacts of the plan or project on the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 site. The impacts assessed must include the indirect and cumulative impacts of approving the plan or project, considered with any current or proposed activities, developments or policies impacting on the site. The potential impacts of policies outside Natura 2000 sites but potentially impacting upon them (known as '*ex situ*' impacts) must also be included in the assessment. (Refer to: *'Appropriate Assessment of Plans and projects in Ireland, Guidance for Planning Authorities'*, DoEHLG (2009)).

A project or plan may only proceed if it can be concluded on the basis of Appropriate Assessment that there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site. If adverse effects are likely, or in cases of doubt, then derogation under Article 6(4) shall apply, but only in cases of imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

13.15.2 Architectural Heritage – Protected Structures

In assessing proposals for development affecting a Protected Structure, the Council will require planning permission for works, both to the exterior and interior, which materially affects the character of a Protected Structure or any element of the structure which contributes to its special interest. Such works can include:

- Window replacement and fenestration changes
- Wholesale plastering/pointing/painting or painting of previously unpainted elements
- Modifications of brickwork and stonework
- The removal/alteration of architectural detailing including joinery and decorative plasterwork
- Inappropriate interior works including the removal of walls, the creation of openings and partitioning of rooms, and
- Works to roofs and railings involving the removal of original materials and replacement with inappropriate materials.

In considering applications for alterations and/or additions to a Protected Structure, the Council shall have regard to the various elements of the structure, which give the Protected Structure its special character, and how these would be impacted on by the proposed development.

When making a planning application for permission to restore, refurbish, demolish, develop or change of use of Protected Structures and other buildings of significant heritage interest, the Council will normally require the submission of an Architectural Assessment Report as described in Appendix B of

the *'Architectural Heritage Protection, Guidelines for Planning Authorities'* (DoEHLG, 2004). This report shall:

- Outline the significance of the building
- Include a detailed survey of the building, including a photographic survey
- Detail the proposed works it is intended to carry out, and
- Contain a full assessment on the materials and methodology proposed to carry out these works, their impact on the character of the structure and the reversibility of the proposed works.

The details required to be submitted will be dependent on the significance of the building and the nature of works proposed. All works to Protected Structures shall be carried out in accordance with best conservation practice.

13.15.3 Architectural Heritage – Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs)

The guiding principle of ACAs is to protect the special external expression of the buildings and the unique qualities of the area to ensure future development is carried out in a manner sympathetic to its distinctive character. Owners, occupiers or developers proposing to carry out works within an ACA should be aware that the normal exemptions from seeking planning permission will no longer apply if the Planning Authority considers the works will materially affect the character of the ACA.

In assessing planning applications for development in Architectural Conservation Areas, the Council will have regard to the following:

- The effect of the proposed development on buildings and the surrounding environment, both natural and man-made
- The impact of development on the immediate streetscape in terms of design, scale, height, plot, width, roof treatment, materials, landscaping, mix and intensity of use proposed
- New alterations and extensions should complement existing buildings/structures in terms of design, external finishes, colour, texture, windows/doors/roof/chimney/ design and other details, and
- In dealing with advertisements in Architectural Conservation Areas, the overriding consideration will be the enhancement and protection of the essential visual qualities of the area.

13.15.4 Development in Zones of Archaeological Potential

When considering development proposals within Zones of Archaeological Potential and on, or in close proximity to, sites of known archaeological significance, the Council will have regard to the provisions of Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994 (as amended). The Council will also have regard to the observations and recommendations of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage following referral of such applications.

When considering such proposals, regard will be given to the nature of sub-surface works that could impact on archaeological remains (e.g. foundation type and design, layout and location of services, road works, landscaping schemes, etc.). The Council may require the developer to submit a report prepared by a suitably qualified archaeologist on the archaeological implications of the proposed development. The submission of such a report may be requested by the Planning Authority through the provisions of Further Information. This report and the comments of the Department will allow the making of an informed decision by the Planning Authority.

In appropriate circumstances, the Council when granting permission for development may impose conditions requiring:

- Professional archaeological supervision of site excavations
- The funding by the applicant of further archaeological assessment, monitoring, testing or excavation of the site and the submission of a report thereon, prior to the commencement of development, and
- The preservation of all or part of any archaeological remains on the site.

13.16 Transport

The provision of a safe vehicular access is a prerequisite for all development proposals in the interest of traffic safety for all road users. Chapter 8 of this Plan provides the policy context in ensuring the provision of efficient and sustainable transportation network, whilst providing for the safety of all users. All planning applications will be assessed in accordance with the policy context set out in Chapter 8.

All development with potential impacts on public roads will be assessed on their merits having regard to the following issues:

- The protection and promotion of public safety
- The avoidance of unnecessary congestion and obstruction on the road network, and
- Safeguarding the function, carrying capacity, structural stability, and investment in the roads network.

In respect of road design issues within towns and villages, the Council will have regard to the *'Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets'* (DMURS) (DTTS and DECLG, 2013, updated 2020) and the TII publication, *The Treatment of Transition Zones to Towns and Villages on National Roads* (TII Publications DN-GEO-03084).

13.16.1 Traffic and Transport Assessments

Where a new development has significant car trip potential, a detailed assessment of (i) the transportation systems available, and (ii) the impact of the proposed development on the surrounding environment and transportation network should be appraised through the submission of a Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA). Traffic and Transport Assessment is a methodology used to assess the transport impacts of a proposed development, incorporating any subsequent measures necessary to ensure roads and junctions and other transport infrastructure in the vicinity of the development remains fit for purpose and encourages a shift towards sustainable travel modes. Traffic and transport assessments shall be carried out in accordance with the *'Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines'* (TII, 2014) and shall be applicable for all categories of road. Subthreshold developments will be considered on a case-by-case basis having regard to the relevant criteria contained in *the 'Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines'*.

13.16.2 Road Safety Audits/Road Safety Impact Assessments

Road Safety Audits (RSA) involve the evaluation of road schemes during design, construction and early operation to identify potential hazards to all road users. A RSA shall be carried out on all new national roads infrastructure projects and on any schemes/proposals which result in a permanent change to the layout of a national road. RSAs shall be carried out in accordance with the requirements of TII Publication, *Road Safety Audit* (GE-STY-01024) or any amendments thereto during the period of this Plan.

Road Safety Impact Assessment (RSIA) considers the safety impact of a scheme on the surrounding road network. It involves a strategic comparative analysis of the impact of a new road, or for substantial modifications to an existing road, on the safety performance of the road network. RSIA shall be carried out in accordance with the requirements of TII Publication, *Road Safety Impact Assessment* (PE-PMG-02001) or any amendments thereto during the period of this Plan.

13.16.3 Access onto Public Roads

Generally, where the capacity, width, alignment or surface condition of the road are inadequate, development will not be favoured. Where new development would adversely impact on road drainage, development will not be permitted unless applicants agree proposals with the Council to improve the road.

13.16.4 Entrances and Sightlines

Generally, it is the policy of the Council to discourage the proliferation of access points onto public roads, particularly in areas where the maximum speed limit applies or where road safety is of concern. The Council also encourages and promotes shared access points. Where the removal of hedgerow is required in order to achieve sight lines, the minimum amount of hedgerow shall be removed. The new boundary should be planted with suitable indigenous species as outlined in Section 13.9.6. All new entrances and junctions will require clear and unobstructed sight lines to be provided in accordance with the minimum sightline requirement set out in Table 13.5.

Table 13.5: Minimum Sightline Requirements

Road Status	100 km per hour	80 km per hour	60 km per hour (or less)
National Primary Roads & R280	215 m	215 m	80 m
Regionally & Locally Important Roads	215 m	160 m	80 m
Other Regional Roads	N/A	160 m	80 m
County Roads	N/A	120 m*	70 m

Note: *Except where operational speed is 60kph or less, 90m may be considered satisfactory. These sight distances are measured at a height of 1.05 m above ground level from a point 3.0 m back from the edge of the carriageway to a point on the road 260 mm over the surface level of the road.

Table 13.5 outlines the minimum standards considered acceptable, and the Council can request greater standards depending on the characteristic of the road, observed traffic speeds, volume and type of vehicles, etc. For significant and complex developments, suitably competent road designers should be used in the design layout. Within built up areas, sightlines may be reduced at the discretion of the Planning Authority and in accordance with the ''*Design Manual for Urban Roads and Street*' (DTTS and DECLG, 2013, updated 2019).

A relaxation of these sight distance requirements may be considered satisfactory in exceptional circumstances where it can be clearly demonstrated that no other suitable alternative proposal is available and where the proposal would be in accordance with the provisions as set out in the TII Publications.

13.16.5 Distance of Entrances from Road Junctions

New rural entrances should not be located within the following distances of junctions:

- National Primary Roads 150 metres
- National Secondary Roads 100 metres

- Regional Roads 100 metres
- Local Primary Roads 40 metres

The development by itself or combined with another or other development shall not give rise to a traffic hazard.

It is noted that there is no National Secondary Road presently in Co. Leitrim although the County Development Plan contains an objective to seek to reclassify the R280 to this standard over the life of the Plan.

13.16.6 Car Parking

The purpose and application of parking standards is to ensure that when assessing development proposals, consideration is given to the accommodation of vehicles that will potentially be generated by the development proposed in accordance with national and regional policy objectives and to facilitate a modal shift towards more sustainable forms of transport. In this regard, the car parking standards set out in Table 13.6 establish maximum car parking standards rather than minimum standards. It is generally required that residential, commercial, enterprise and employment developments or otherwise, comply with the parking standards detailed in Table 13.6.

Reduced car parking provision may be considered for commercial town centre sites. In dealing with planning applications for change of use or for replacement buildings, allowance will be made for the former site use in calculating the car parking requirements generated by the new development. Where the provision of on-site parking is not possible, the Council may, in exceptional circumstances, accept a financial contribution in respect of the shortfall in the number of spaces.

13.16.7 Cycle Parking

The Planning Authority requires the provision of a minimum level of secure cycle parking facilities in planning applications proposing a new development and in certain circumstances a proposed change of use. This is consistent with the objectives and policies of the Department of Transport's *'National Cycle Policy Framework'* (2009). Where the provision of cycle parking facilities is intended for use by the staff of that particular development, cycle stands should be covered and located within the curtilage of the development to ensure security and supervision.

Cycle stands for use by visitors should be located to maximise convenience to the entrance of buildings, and positioned so as to ensure safety, security and supervision. The cycle parking standards set out in Table 13.6 shall apply, and cycle parking provision should be in accordance with the *'National Cycle Manual'*, (NTA, 2011).

Along with cycle parking, sufficient shower and changing facilities should be made available in larger commercial developments/places of employment. The following standards shall apply:

Office developments:

- 250– 500 m^2 1 no. shower
- 500 to 1,000 m^2 2 no. showers
- 1 no. shower per additional 1,000 m^2 thereafter.

Non-office development:

- 1 no. shower for the first 5 no. cycle parking spaces and 1 no. shower per 10 no. cycle parking spaces thereafter, unless otherwise agreed with the Planning Authority.

Changing/drying areas, toilets and lockers should be provided in association with shower facilities. The Planning Authority will allow a degree of flexibility in town centre locations, where sites may be constrained. Where cycle parking would be better provided at communal, strategic locations around the town centre, a financial contribution in lieu of cycle parking may be considered. The Council may also request the provision of public cycle parking facilities, where possible at existing transport nodes, public buildings, retail centres and other locations not specified below.

Table 13.6: Car (max) and Cycle (min) Parking Standards

Land Use	Car Spaces (max)	Cycle Spaces (min)
Dwelling House	2 per unit	1 per unit
Apartment/Flat	1.5 per unit	1 per bedroom/ studio
Hotels, B&B, Guesthouse, Hostel	1 per bedroom	1 per 20 beds
Hostel	1 per bedroom or 1 per 10 bed dormitories	1 per 10 beds
Food Retail	1 per 20m^2 GFA	1 per 75m^2
Non-Food Retail	6 per 100m^2 GFA	1 per 100m^2
Retail Warehousing	1 per 35m^2 of net retail floorspace	1 per 500m^2
Banks and Financial Institutions	1 per 20m^2 GFA	1 per 50m^2
Conference Centre	1 per 25m^2	1 per 20 seats
Cash and Carry	1 per 100m^2	1 per 150m^2
Warehousing	1 per 100m^2	1 per 500m^2
Bars, Function Rooms, lounges	1 per 10m^2	1 per 75m^2
Restaurants	1 per 20m^2 GFA	1 per 75m^2
Café	1 per 10m^2 dining area	1 per 50m^2
Takeaway	1 per 18m^2 GFA	Nil
Garages/Service Stations Retail Areas within Service Stations	1 per fuel pump plus 1 per 10m^2 of net retail floor area	1 per 50m^2
Car Showrooms	1 per 50m^2 GFA	Nil
Garden Centres/Factory Outlets	2 per 100m^2 GFA	1 per 150m^2
Cinema	1 space per 10 seats	1 per 20 seats
Offices (Town Centre)	1 per 25m^2 of GFA	1 per 5 employees
Offices (Bus Park/other)	1 per 20m^2 of GFA	1 per 10 employees

Industry	**1 per 60m² of GFA and operational car parking to be determined by the Planning Authority**	**1 per 500m²**

13.16.8 Set-Down Requirements and Car-Parking Bay Sizes

In addition to car parking standards, sufficient space will be required within the curtilage of a site for all service vehicles involved in the operation of the business or building. Set down areas and/or bus circulation areas may also be required depending on the nature of the proposed development.

The minimum size for a car parking space shall be 2.5 m x 5 m with circulation aisles of minimum 6 m in width. In cases where the car parking is parallel to a kerb the space requirement will be 6 m x 2.5 m. Parking bay widths for disabled persons will be a minimum of 3 m in width. Loading bays shall be a minimum 3 m x 6 m for small vans and 15 m x 3 m for HGVs.

13.16.9 Parking for the Disabled

In accordance with the document *Building for Everyone* as published by the National Disabilities Authority the following number of disabled parking bays will be required for all buildings to which the public have access:

- 1 no. space for the first 25 no. standard car parking spaces being provided.
- A minimum of 3 no. spaces where up to 50 no. spaces are being provided.
- A minimum of 5 no. spaces where between 50-100 no. spaces are being provided.

13.16.10 EV Charging Points

All developments should provide facilities for the charging of battery-operated cars at a rate of up to 20% of the total car parking spaces. The remainder of the parking spaces should be constructed (wiring and ducting provided) so as to be capable of accommodating future charging points, as required. New residential development should accommodate at least one car parking space equipped with two EV charging points for every ten no. car parking spaces being provided for the associated development. The remainder of the car parking spaces should be constructed so as to be capable of accommodating future charging points, as required. EV charging spaces should be clearly demarcated with appropriate signage.

13.17 Infrastructure, Flooding and Environmental Management

13.17.1 Piped Water Supply and Wastewater Collection

All new developments will be required to utilise and connect to the piped water and wastewater network, operated by Irish Water, where practicable. Applicants who require a new or modified connection to the piped water supply or wastewater collection infrastructure must liaise with Irish Water. Where the applicant has concerns about the feasibility of connecting to the available network, they should make a pre-connection enquiry to Irish Water in order to establish the feasibility of a connection in advance of seeking planning permission. Development will only be permitted in instances where Irish Water confirm sufficient capacity is available or can be made available for appropriate collection, treatment and disposal of wastewater (in compliance with the Water Framework Directive and River Basin Management Plan).

Developments connecting to Irish Water networks shall comply with Irish Water standard details and codes of practice.

13.17.2 Group Water Schemes and Private Wells

The provision of a safe and reliable water supply is a requirement of most forms of development. If the water is supplied by a Group Water Scheme, any planning application must be accompanied by a letter of consent to connection from the secretary of the scheme and in certain circumstances, the developer may be required to extend the existing water main to the site.

Private bored wells used as a source of water supply to single dwellings are the responsibility of the householder. Such wells are not regulated under the *European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulations, 2014*. The Council and Irish Water have no regulatory function in this regard.

13.17.3 Domestic and Commercial Wastewater Treatment

For domestic dwellings, site assessment and the design of wastewater treatment systems and percolation areas shall conform with the '*Code of Practice for Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (Population Equivalent ≤ 10)'* (EPA, 2021). Commercial Wastewater Treatment systems, where deemed appropriate, must comply with the requirements of the *'Code of Practice Wastewater Treatment Manuals – Treatment Systems for Small Communities, Business, Leisure Centres and Hotels'* (EPA, 1999).

A detailed site investigation report, to include percolation and water table tests certified by a qualified person, should be provided with the planning application.

13.17.4 Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS)

All new developments (including amendments/extensions to existing developments) will be required to incorporate '*Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems*' (SuDS) as part of the development/design proposals, where feasible. SuDS are effective technologies, which aim to reduce flood risk, improve water quality and enhance biodiversity and amenity. The systems should aim to mimic the natural drainage of the application site to minimise the effect of a development on flooding and pollution of existing waterways.

SuDS include devices such as swales, permeable pavements, filter drains, storage ponds, constructed wetlands, soakways and green roofs. In some exceptional cases, and at the discretion of the Council, where it is demonstrated that SuDS devices are not feasible, approval may be given to install underground attenuation tanks or enlarged pipes in conjunction with other devices. Such alternative measures will only be considered as a last resort. Proposals for surface water attenuation systems should include maintenance proposals and procedures and demonstrate that the rate of discharge equates to the pre development greenfield run off rate

Development proposals will be required to be accompanied by a comprehensive SuDS assessment that addresses run-off rate, run-off quality and its impact on the existing habitat and water quality. This approach using SuDS offers a total solution to rainwater management and is applicable in both urban and rural situations. Current best practice guidance on SuDS is available from the Guidance Documents produced by the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GDSDS).

13.17.5 Flood Management

The issue of flood risk management has been dealt with comprehensively in Section 9.9, Flood Risk Management in Chapter 9 (Infrastructure and Energy) and in Section 6.10.4 Constrained Land Use in Chapter 6 (Urban Settlements). Where developments/land uses are proposed that are considered inappropriate to the Flood Zone, then a Development Management Justification Test and site-specific Flood Risk Assessment will be required in accordance with *'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines' 2009* (and as updated).

The Planning Authority shall have regard to the *'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines' 2009* and the *'Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029'* in its assessment of any relevant planning application.

13.17.6 Construction and Demolition Waste

Where significant construction and demolition waste is envisaged arising from a proposed development, the Council will seek the submission of a Waste Management Plan for the construction phase of the development for the written agreement of the Council. The Waste Management Plan shall be prepared in compliance with the *'Best Practice Guidelines on the Preparation of Waste Management Plans for Construction & Demolition Projects'* (DoEHLG, 2006). All waste materials generated during both the construction and operational phases of development must only be collected by appropriately licensed waste contractors and disposed of in licensed waste facilities.

A Construction and Demolition Waste Management Plan shall be required as part of any planning application in excess of the following thresholds:

- New residential development of 10 no. houses or more
- Developments including institutional, educational, health and other public facilities, with an aggregate floor area in excess of 1,250m²
- Demolition/renovation/refurbishment projects generating in excess of 100m³ in volume, of Construction and Demolition waste, and
- Civil engineering projects producing in excess of 500m³ of waste, excluding waste materials used for development works on the site.

A Construction and Demolition Waste Management Plan, as a minimum, should include provision for the management of all construction and demolition waste arising on site, and make provision for the reuse of said material and/or the recovery or disposal of this waste to authorised facilities by authorised collectors. Where appropriate, excavated material from development sites should be reused on the subject site.

13.17.7 Waste Disposal and Recovery

In assessing development proposals for, or including, waste recovery/disposal facilities, the Planning Authority will have regard to the provisions of the Connacht-Ulster Region Waste Management Plan 2015-2021 (and replacement Plan), planning legislation, the County Development Plan policies as set out in Chapter 9 and other relevant planning documents.

Larger proposals for waste recovery/disposal facilities are considered by An Bord Pleanála through the Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) process. The Planning Authority will contribute to the SID process on relevant proposals.

Planning applications for waste related facilities will be assessed with regard to:

- **The sensitivity of the site:** Facilities impacting upon Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs), areas protected for landscape character, visual amenity, geology, heritage or cultural value, or areas at risk of flooding, will not be permitted.
- **Nature of Operation and Materials:** The Council will consider the type, source and volume of waste material to be processed and its method of processing, including hours of operation and duration of permission sought.
- **Traffic and Transport:** A Traffic and Transportation Assessment will be required to be submitted in most cases. All proposals shall indicate details of road access, sightlines/visibility, vehicle turning manoeuvres, parking areas, pull-in areas, the number and types of vehicles which will frequent the site, the carrying loads of vehicles and proposed haul routes.
- **Surface Water Drainage:** A Sustainable Drainage system will be applied to proposed developments, and proposals shall have regard to the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive and associated River Basin Management Plan.
- **Emissions:** Details of potential noise, fumes, odours, dust, grit, vibration and lighting, along with controls and monitoring of same, will be required.
- **Landscaping and Restoration Proposals:** Boundary treatments, screening proposals and remediation measures, including a timeframe for implementation, shall be required.
- **Impact on Residential Amenity:** The Council will consider the proximity to residences and the impact on same (including through the considerations of traffic, emissions, etc. outlined above).
- **Environmental Impact Assessment:** Proposals shall be screened for the requirements of mandatory and sub-threshold Environmental Impact Assessment. An Environmental Impact Assessment Report shall be submitted as required.
- **Appropriate Assessment:** All developments will be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment. Development will not be permitted in the absence of the submission of a statement of screening, or a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment if required.

13.17.8 Bring Banks and Recycling Facilities

Bring bank facilities will generally be required in conjunction with significant new commercial developments or extensions to same, and in conjunction with large scale residential and mixed use developments. Bring bank facilities should include receptacles for glass, cans and textiles and, where practicable, receptacles for paper, cardboard, plastics, batteries, light bulbs and certain waste oils.

All applications for bring bank facilities will be assessed on a case by case basis having regard to the following:

- Proximity to residential areas.
- The provision of an area of at least 10 m by 4 m.
- Truck access and clearance heights.
- A hard standing area and safe pedestrian walkway.
- A vehicle set down area only with no permanent parking provision.
- Suitable lighting and CCTV monitoring.
- Noise mitigation, screening and/or landscaping as considered necessary by the Council.

13.18 Rural Development

13.18.1 Agriculture Buildings and Structures

Agricultural buildings, structures and associated works (walls, fences, gates, entrances, yards, etc.) should relate to the landscape and be sympathetic to their surroundings in scale, materials and finishes. Traditionally this was achieved by having the roof darker than the walls. The grouping of agricultural buildings is encouraged in order to reduce their overall impact in the interests of amenity.

In the construction and layout of agricultural buildings, the Council will require:

- That buildings are sited appropriately in order to minimise obtrusion on the landscape. The Council will generally seek to cluster agricultural buildings and structures together to assimilate effectively into the landscape and will encourage the reuse of any redundant farm buildings where viable
- Use of dark coloured cladding (dark browns, greys, greens and reds)
- Satisfactory treatment of effluents, including yard run-off within the confines of the site
- Compliance with the European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, and
- Traffic safety considerations. In the case of new farm enterprises, a clear evidence base must be provided which demonstrates the need for the proposal and details of how any buildings proposed form part of a comprehensive business plan for the farm holding supported by Teagasc.

The re-use of redundant farm buildings for small-scale rural enterprise will be considered where:

- The building was previously in agricultural use for a reasonable period
- It is no longer required for agricultural purposes, and
- The use proposed can be largely contained within the existing building.

13.18.2 Extractive Industries

The Planning Authority will not facilitate the development of the extractive industry and permit such workings unless it has been shown that the following criteria can be met; having taken into account the reduced demand for aggregates that will come about through improved recycling of construction and demolition waste:

- The environment and the landscape will be safeguarded to the greatest possible extent during all life cycle stages of the process,
- Such operations have good access to, or are within reasonable distance of, the national or regional road network and do not adversely affect the residential or tourism amenity of the area,
- Satisfactory provision will be made for a beneficial after use of the land that does not conflict with other planning objectives for the area,
- The working, landscaping, restoration and after care of the site will be carried out to the highest standards in accordance with the approved scheme.

The development, continuation of use or diversification of activities relating to the extractive industry will be assessed having regard to the *'Quarrying and Ancillary Activities Guidelines'* (DoEHLG, 2004) (or any superseding national policy document), *'Guidelines for Environmental Management in the Extractive Industry'* (EPA, 2006), *'Guidance on Biodiversity in the Extractive Industry* (NPWS), *'Geological Heritage Guidelines for the Extractive Industry'* (GSI, 2008), the *Archaeological Code of*

Practice (2009) and the *Irish Concrete Federation Environmental Code* (2005) and any other relevant superseding policy guidance.

Applicants should submit the following information at application stage:

- Map showing total site area, highlighting area to be excavated, and any ancillary proposed development, nearest dwellings, or any other development (within 1 km of the site)
- Description of the aggregate(s) to be extracted, method of extraction, any ancillary processes (such as crushing, concrete manufacture, etc.), equipment to be used, stockpiles, storage of soil and overburden, storage of waste materials and proposed/existing settling ponds
- Total and annual tonnage of extracted aggregates, expected life of the extraction, maximum extent and depth of working and proposed phasing programme
- Description of development works (buildings, fixed and mobile plant, roads, fuel tanks, water supply and drainage, earth mounds, etc.)
- Description of water courses and water table depth, natural and cultural heritage, traffic impact and waste management
- Description of cumulative impact when taken together with other quarries in the vicinity
- Likely environmental effects including the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report where relevant
- Proposed mitigation measures
- Phased restoration and after-care proposals, and
- Proposals for surface water management and flood risk minimisation.

Where proposals for the working out of minerals and aggregates are submitted in the *Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)* or an *Area of High Visual Amenity (AHVA)*, existing landscape quality shall remain the overriding priority and such proposals must illustrate that the benefits of the development will outweigh any adverse environmental consequences. The Planning Authority shall evaluate the need to conserve the environment, character and natural beauty of AONBs and AHVAs and the extent to which the proposed development would materially damage these qualities. It shall also examine the national need for that specific mineral or aggregate substance to be worked and the availability of the resource in less sensitive locations.

The Council may require the submission of an EIAR for sub-threshold development where it is considered that the development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment. The restoration of disused pits and quarries to productive agricultural use will be encouraged where appropriate having regard to all appropriate environmental considerations. Other possible post closure uses may be considered such as recreational facilities and natural habitat areas.

A condition requiring the lodgement of a financial bond will be included in any grant of permission to ensure the satisfactory reinstatement of the site following the completion of extraction. A Special Development Contribution in accordance with Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended), may be imposed for the upgrade or maintenance of the local road network to facilitate the proposed development.

13.19 Tourism Related Development

While seeking to ensure that most tourism development locate in or close to towns and villages, the Council recognises that by its nature, some tourism development may require other rural locations. Developments that may be open to consideration outside settlement centres include indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, golf courses, swimming, angling, sailing/boating, pier/marina

development, equestrian and pony trekking routes, adventure/interpretative centres and associated ancillary uses, tourist related leisure facilities including walking and cycling.

In these circumstances, the Council shall promote, where possible, the reuse of existing buildings outside of settlements for holiday homes/guest accommodation where it can be demonstrated that the redevelopment work replicates and/or is similar in scale and design to the existing building and will not have a significant adverse impact on the environment. Any application for such developments shall be accompanied by:

- A comprehensive justification of the need for the development by its nature and space requirements to be located outside of towns and villages
- Evidence that the proposed development will not have an adverse impact upon the scenic value, heritage value and the environmental, ecological or conservation quality of primary tourism asset(s) and their general environment, and
- Evidence that potential environmental effects of a likely increase in tourists/tourism-related traffic volumes in particular locations/along particular routes, have been considered and mitigation measures proposed. Such a consideration should include potential impacts on existing infrastructure (including drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) resulting from tourism proposals.

In general, standalone holiday orientated development schemes or new tourism facilities which cannot demonstrate connectivity to existing settlements shall not be permitted in the open countryside. In exceptional cases, where it can be demonstrated that the facility is dependent on physical or locational factors which are site specific, consideration may be given to such facilities.

13.19.1 Caravan, Glamping and Camping Developments

Caravan, camping/glamping sites shall generally be located within the development boundary of established towns, villages and graigs. Consideration will be given to small scale facilities in appropriate locations outside of such centres subject to a demand and need for the facility being demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority. Applications for caravan, glamping and camping developments shall address the following in addition to the information outlined in Section 13.9:

- A high standard integrated design and layout linking pitches to well-located communal areas and on-site facilities and amenities
- A detailed hard and soft landscaping plan for the overall site
- Mitigation plans for noise and litter, and
- Details of wastewater disposal for the site.

13.19.2 Self-Catering Developments

Applications for self-catering tourism accommodation shall address the following:

- The layout of the development shall be of a high standard, incorporating well laid out communal open spaces, significant and appropriate landscaping maintaining existing site features such as hedgerows and trees, car parking provision, segregated waste storage and public lighting.
- The design of units should be high quality and respect the character of the area in which they are located. Suburban type developments will not be favoured. Courtyard type developments will be particularly encouraged.

13.19.3 Marina Development

Marinas should be located in areas where boating activity is already present or where there is substantial demand for such a facility. Marinas should provide adequate water depth at all times, berthing arrangements for pleasure craft, direct access/walkway to boats, navigation aids, pontoon lighting, fire safety equipment, car parking, administration services, toilet facilities, and pump out facilities. Marina developers will be expected to enter into Section 47 agreements with the Planning Authority to facilitate a number of berths (generally 20%) remaining available for public use at a reasonable cost.

13.20 Energy, Telecommunications and Services

13.20.1 Wind Energy

The Council recognises the importance of wind energy as a renewable energy source and its potential in contributing to reductions in fossil fuel dependency and greenhouse gas emissions. Chapter 12 - *Climate Action and Renewable Energy* and Appendix IX–*Leitrim County Renewable Energy Strategy*, of this Plan detail policies and objectives for this sector over the period of this Plan.

When assessing planning applications for wind energy developments, the Council will have regard to the *'Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities'* (DoEHLG, 2006), and any updates to these Guidelines which may be made, and the *'Interim Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Statutory Plans, Renewable Energy and Climate Change'* (DoHPCLG, 2017).

Applications shall be accompanied by all relevant environmental assessments. Applications will also be required to ensure that development is in accordance with the guidance provided in Chapter 11: *Heritage* and Appendix VI- *Leitrim Landscape Character Assessment* and Appendix VII- *Leitrim Review of Landscape Designations* with regard to compatibility between the land use and the principal Landscape Character Areas of the county and the proximity to Landscape Sensitivity Factors.

In addition to the above, the following considerations will be taken into account by the Council in relation to any planning application for wind energy development:

- Impact on the visual amenities of the area
- Impact on the residential amenities of the area
- Scale and layout of the project, any cumulative effects due to other projects and the extent to which the impacts are visible across the local landscape
- Visual impact of the proposal with respect to protected views, scenic routes and designated scenic landscapes
- Impact on nature conservation, water quality, ecology, including an assessment of impacts on collision risk species (birds and bats), soil, hydrology, groundwater, air quality, archaeology, built heritage and public rights of way
- Impact on ground conditions and geology
- Impact on peat stability and robust geotechnical assessment of potential for peat slippage
- Consideration of falling distance plus an additional flashover distance from wind turbines to overhead transmission lines
- Impact of development on the road network in the area
- Impact on human health in relation to:
    - Noise disturbance (including consistency with the Word Health Organisations 2018 Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region),
    - Shadow flicker (for wind turbine developments, including detailed Shadow Flicker Study)

This list is not exhaustive, and the Council may consider other requirements contained in the chapter on a case-by-case basis with planning applications should the need arise.

13.20.2 Solar Energy

Chapter 12 - *Climate Action and Renewable Energy* and Appendix IX –*Leitrim County Renewable Energy* Strategy, of this Plan recognise the potential availability of potential solar resources in the county and detail policies and objectives for this sector over the period of this Plan.

The Council will consider applications for solar renewable energy development having regard to the following criteria:

- Any future Section 28 Ministerial Guidance
- Site suitability
- Any environmental sensitivities
- Landscape Character Areas of the county
- Visual impact, zones of influence including cumulative visual impact/zones of influence of existing/permitted solar farms and associated infrastructure such as road access
- Glint and Glare impacts on roads, dwellings, national monuments, Protected Structures and other sensitive receptors
- The need to protect the existing level of residential amenities enjoyed by adjoining properties
- Archaeological Impact Assessment and Heritage Impact Assessment
- Ecological Impact Assessment
- Landscaping plans to appropriately integrate the development into the landscape
- Security requirements such as CCTV, security lights, fencing, etc.
- Impacts from lighting
- Construction impacts
- Impacts on drainage patterns and water tables
- Suitability of and access to the electricity grid, and
- Decommissioning Statement.

13.20.3 Telecommunications and Supporting Infrastructure

Proposals for telecommunications antennae and support structures will be assessed in accordance with the *'Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures – Guidelines for Planning Authorities'* (DoELG, 1996), as revised by Circular Letter PL 07/12, and any other publications and material as may be relevant in the circumstances.
Planning applications for new facilities should include:

- A reasoned justification regarding the need for the particular development at the proposed location. This shall detail the significance of the proposed development to the telecommunications network, including a map of the area and existing coverage in the area. A technical explanation shall be provided of the reasons why coverage cannot be provided by existing antennae
- Details of efforts (i.e. written correspondence) made to share installations or co-locate/cluster with existing structures; this should reference a map showing the location of all existing structures within a minimum 2km radius of the proposed site
- Evidence of consideration of alternative sites and explanation of their unsuitability
- Visual impact assessment and mitigation measures (e.g. landscape screening, colour treatment of masts/antennae), and
- Any impacts on rights of way and walking.

13.20.4 Undergrounding of Cables

Where undergrounding of cables is being pursued, proposals should demonstrate that environmental impacts including the following are minimised:

- Habitat loss as a result of removal of field boundaries and hedgerows (right of way preparation) followed by topsoil stripping (to ensure machinery does not destroy soil structure and drainage properties)
- Short to medium term impacts on the landscape where, for example, hedgerows are encountered
- Impacts on underground archaeology
- Impacts on soil structure and drainage, and
- Impacts on surface waters as a result of sedimentation.

13.21 Seveso Sites

Planning Authorities are required to have regard to the potential effects of relevant development in terms of the risks or consequences of a major accident for public health and safety. Planning applications pertaining to or in proximity to Seveso sites are referred to the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) for their input.

In assessing such proposals, the Planning Authority will have regard to the technical advice of the HSA in relation to proposed development and proposed land use(s). The Planning Authority will consider the need to maintain an appropriate safe distance of such establishments from residential areas, areas of public use, and areas of particular natural sensitivity, and will also consider the need to minimise risk to strategic infrastructure. For some types of development, particularly those involving large numbers of people and vulnerable occupants, the Planning Authority will consider the societal risk, i.e. the risk of large numbers of people being affected in a single accident from such a facility. Developers of Seveso sites and any sites adjacent to Seveso sites are encouraged to consult with the HSA at the pre-planning stage to assess the impacts of their proposals.