

3.1 MULLINGAR TOWN PLAN

3.1.1 Population, Workforce & Employment

The population projections for the County indicate that there will be an increase in population of in excess of 7,000 persons in Mullingar urban area by 2014 (22,621 total 2014) and this will involve approximately an additional 2,966 houses.

The 2002 Census gives a breakdown of the population aged 15 years and over, classified in terms of economic status. For Mullingar 53.8% of the population was at work, 0.8% looking for first regular job, 5.5% unemployed having lost or given up previous job, 9.3% student, 13.6% looking after home/family, 10.2% retired, 5.8% unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability and 1.0% other. State figures for at work were 53.1%, 0.7% looking for first regular job, 4.5% unemployed having lost or given up previous job, 11.4% student, 14.2% looking after home/family, 10.8% retired, 4.2% unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability and 1.2% other. Persons aged 15 and older comprised approximately 67% of the population.

The nature of population change forecast for the county over the period of the Plan, which is significantly dependent on in-migration from the east and overseas, suggests that there may be a higher proportion of the population in the working age groups.

The context in which the planning of Mullingar takes place has changed fundamentally since the adoption of the last Plan. Mullingar, together with Athlone and Tullamore, is part of a linked 'gateway' for the Midlands Region under the National Spatial Strategy. This 'linked gateway' has been incorporated into the Regional Planning Guidelines and the implementation of a linked gateway strategy is a task to be undertaken cooperatively by all the local authorities involved and the priorities for this are set out in Section 2.1.2 on Gateways.

The lands, which have been identified for residential, enterprise and other uses are capable of accommodating growth to 2014. Having regard to the scale of development envisaged over the Plan period and beyond, it is vitally important that this takes place in a plan led manner which involves carrying out detailed framework plans, in particular, for new areas identified for development. This scale of population growth will generate demand for a range of services and facilities including education, community and recreational facilities, open space etc.

3.1.2 Housing

There were 3,741 households (both permanent and non-permanent, private and non-private) in Mullingar and environs in 1996, 5,135 in 2002, an increase of 1,394 households or 27% over the 1996 figure and this is expected to grow to 8,000 by 2014 (an increase of 2,966 or approx 371 per annum). It is anticipated that in excess of 20% of households will not be able to afford to satisfy their housing requirements and that Part V provisions should be used for these households. The Council intends to implement the provisions of the Housing Strategy.

Housing Need

The Council will ensure that space is available for residential development. The extent of zoning proposed in the current Plan that can facilitate residential development, should accommodate the expansion of the town in an orderly fashion to its full potential over the Plan period, and for the longer term. Over 217ha remain undeveloped within the currently zoned residential lands, using an approximate figure of 35 units per hectare and less 10% for open space, these lands could accommodate an additional 6,835 housing units.

The lands within Robinstown Local Area Plan are included within the above lands, the LAP envisages a total of 1,712 units (4,108 persons average 2.4 person household), and current estimates of the number of housing units, which will be provided, as part of the Ardmore/Marlinstown Area is 2,155 new units. Other significant undeveloped residentially zoned lands are located to the west and south of the town.

P-MG1 To ensure housing of a high standard is provided in Mullingar to meet projected needs. It is the policy of the Council that every household has a dwelling suitable to its needs, located in an acceptable environment, at a price or rent it can afford.

P-MG2 To ensure that a sufficient amount of serviced land, for residential use, is available for house building in Mullingar.

P-MG3 To promote higher residential densities at suitable locations, such as close to existing or proposed transport corridors and nodes and in proximity to town and neighbourhood centres.

P-MG4 To promote a variety of house types and sizes in individual schemes, particularly in any infill developments, to induce variety, interest and social integration within residential developments.

P-MG5 To promote quality design in residential environments, design that recognises the vulnerability of other road users such as pedestrians and cyclists and are designed around core principles of legibility, permeability and safety for all road users will be favoured to designs dominated by requirements to accommodate motor vehicles.

P-MG6 To ensure those areas, which are suitable for in-depth residential development, should only be developed in accordance with an overall plan for the comprehensive development of the area based on the neighbourhood concept and to integrate public transport provision.

P-MG7 To encourage the incorporation of suitable residential accommodation in urban renewal areas and town centre developments that will enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre.

P-MG8 To facilitate development based on the principle that people should be able to find as many of their requirements for daily living within easy reach of their homes, preferably within walking distance. The concept is centred on the principles of sustainable development, promote a high quality of design and layout in new residential development. A central function of land-use planning is to ensure that new residential development presents a high quality living environment for its residents, both in terms of the standard of individual dwelling units and in terms of the overall layout and appearance of the scheme. In implementing this policy the Council will evaluate proposals for new residential development in accordance with the criteria set out in Part 7 of the Plan (Development Management Standards).

P-MG9 It is the policy of the Council to conserve the existing housing stock wherever possible and to protect and improve residential amenities in existing residential areas, resisting the encroachment of inappropriate commercial activity in established residential areas.

P-MG10 To ensure that the naming of new residential development should reflect the local and historical context of the site, wherever practical, and should include the use of the Irish language.

P-MG11 To promote and encourage the provision of housing accommodation in accordance with the proposals outlined in the document "Social Housing - The Way Ahead".

P-MG12 To encourage the formation of Voluntary Housing Associations for the purposes of providing social housing for families and persons with special needs.

P-MG13 To encourage the formation of co-operatives on lands provided by the Council for housing purposes.

P-MG14 (i) The Housing Authority will take into account the demand and need for elderly person's dwellings in its annual housing programme. The possibility of providing Old Person's Dwellings in centrally located areas will be examined.

(ii) "Social Housing - The Way Ahead" (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 1995) sets out the broad aim of ensuring that every household has a dwelling suitable for its needs, located in an acceptable environment, at a price or rent it can afford. It embraces all sections of the housing market, owner - occupier, public

rented, private rented and voluntary housing. In addition, it recognises the importance of conserving and improving the existing housing stock in line with the concept of sustainable development.

(iii) In the furtherance of this policy the Council will, *inter alia* ensure the provision of a wide range of house types and sizes to cater for the differing needs of the population including the elderly, and will promote social integration within residential developments.

P-MG15 To provide for the accommodation needs of the travelling community in the Mullingar Area and to prohibit illegal parking in the vicinity of the established halting site.

P-MG16 To make provision for the accommodation needs of travellers in accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, and to implement the "Accommodation Programme".

P-MG17 (i) To permit home based economic activity where, by virtue of its nature and scale, it can be accommodated without detriment to the amenities of the residential area.

(ii) Home based economic activities are small scale commercial and professional businesses carried out by residents of the dwelling, and are subordinate to the main use of the property as residential accommodation. The Council accepts the need to accommodate such uses and recognises their importance in terms of employment creation and the achievement of sustainability. Such uses would include childcare provision, such as crèche, playschool etc.

(iii) Under the following circumstances planning permission for such uses may be granted; where such activity is not seriously injurious to the residential amenity of the area and will not cause any environmental problems arising from increased traffic, noise, fumes, vibration, smoke, dust, odour, hours of business, interference with television reception or for any other reason and where adequate parking is available.

(iv) Permission for home based economic activity will only be granted to the resident of the house. Consideration will be given to the granting of temporary permission for home based economic activity in certain circumstances, in order to enable the impact of the activity on residential amenity to be assessed.

(v) Applications for the provision of a crèche, playschool or other similar uses will be considered on the basis of local need, impact on the amenities of adjoining residents and traffic safety.

O-MG1	To facilitate orderly development to meet housing requirements of the town.
O-MG2	Provide public housing where suitable and serviced land is available.
O-MG3	Continue programme of refurbishment and upgrading of the Council's existing housing stock.
O-MG4	Select suitable sites for Old Person's Dwellings (preferably in central locations).
O-MG5	Make every effort in line with national housing policy to meet the housing requirements of the indigenous travelling community in Mullingar.
O-MG6	Maintain the present halting site at Ballyglass and enhance its surrounds.
O-MG7	Identify further infill sites for public housing.
O-MG8	To acquire a spread of land banks throughout the town.
O-MG9	To give greater promotion to upgrading "in lieu" of rehousing.
O-MG10	Develop neighbourhood centre, including community centre, primary school, playing pitch, local shopping and community facilities along Western Relief Road.

3.1.3 Retail/Commercial/Town Centre

As an important and growing population centre and a major Regional Centre, Mullingar's extensive range of retail and commercial services cater for a much larger population than is resident in the town and its environs. The designation of Mullingar as a 'linked Gateway' places increased emphasis on the regional importance of the town as an economic driver and an important commercial centre, it is important to retain a strong retail and commercial base in the town centre to consolidate and realise Mullingar's regional role.

The current Retail Strategy has supported the town centre and retail core and has directed development into that area. A number of large retail developments have taken place within or on the edge of the retail core and others are under consideration; in addition out of town retail development which would have detracted from the town centre has been avoided and the Retail Strategy has been important in this regard. The Review of Westmeath Retail Study and the Retail Strategy, which has been developed from the study, is incorporated into this Plan. The strategy re-states the role of Mullingar as one of the two primary retail centres in the County along with Athlone.

The preferred locations for new general retailing in Mullingar in the short-term period up to 2011 are the town centre, and edge-of-centre sites immediately adjoining the town centre, including Blackhall mixed use development scheme, the Fairgreen, Harbour Place Shopping Centre, and the Lynnpark retail warehousing development to the south.

Neighbourhood Centres are also provided for in relation to new housing growth in three new Action Area or Local Area Plan schemes at Robinstown, Ardmore/Marlinstown and Mullingar West. It is the intention to have each of these major new development areas served by a neighbourhood centre which will serve a local catchment population of some 5,000 – 10,000 with up to 2,500 – 5,000 square metres gross of total retail and services floor space.

The Strategy addresses the need for policies and action initiatives to encourage the improvement of town centres and one outcome is a policy to set up and maintain a database to report and capture relevant data, such as floor space and land uses for all individual properties across the town centres. Up-to-date data and correct information, on existing floor areas and changes permitted through planning applications, can inform development management decisions and signal the need for policy change.

Objectives to provide off streetcar parking and to manage on street car-parking, included in this section will also improve town centres.

Progress has been made in recent years in the environmental enhancement of the town centre in terms of the programme of tree planting and landscaping. Improvements to signage, shop fronts, streetscapes and the creation of more attractive pedestrian areas provide opportunities for further improvement to the attractiveness of the town centre.

An important aspect of a successful town centre is the vitality and vibrancy prevalent in the central areas. Providing an attractive and pedestrian friendly town centre will encourage increased residential use which can add to the vibrancy and benefit security in the evening and night time after the typical core commercial activities have ceased business.

The Council will seek to maintain a strong residential base in the town centre area and will encourage the use of vacant upper floors for complimentary town centre uses and residential use. Residential use will also be encouraged in mixed use – town centre developments, particularly where proposals involve the loss of existing residential units.

The Council will seek to safeguard predominantly residential areas on the edge of the town centre by prohibiting undue encroachment of commercial uses into established residential areas and streets, examples include Harbour Street, Bishopsgate Street, Millmount Road, Auburn Road, Sundays Well Road and Lynn Road. This is considered desirable in order to protect the residential amenity of existing properties, to retain residential character and to foster and protect a sense of community.

The number of active frontages in a town centre area also contribute to its vitality and attractiveness, an active frontage could be defined as a street frontage commercial activity that actively addresses the streetscape to attract passing trade and are typically the traditional high street retailers. No more than 2 in every 5 high street units/outlets will be permitted a change in use to a non-retail use, within the core retail area.

Section 2.2.4 Retailing, Policy P-EY10 nominates primary shopping frontages in Mullingar and Athlone where the loss of retail units, to non-retail use, at pedestrian level, will be resisted; Pearse St., Mount St., Castle St., Oliver Plunkett St., Dominic St., and The Square; in Mullingar are such frontages.

In addition to the policies set out in the Section 2.2.4 on retailing the following shall apply in Mullingar:

P-MG18 To promote Mullingar as a primary retail/commercial centre in the Midland Region.

P-MG19 To actively encourage consolidation of commercial development in the town centre area.

P-MG20 To retain active frontages within the core retail area defined in the Retail Strategy.

P-MG21 To ensure any retail development will compliment existing provision and complies with the Retail Strategy.

P-MG22 To protect the amenity of existing areas within and adjacent to the town centre which remain predominantly residential, from commercial and speculative development.

P-MG23 To ensure that commercial development will compliment the existing town centre in terms of design, siting and function, promoting pedestrian permeability and linking with the existing pedestrian and street network.

P-MG24 To encourage the use of upper floors of commercial premises in the interest of making best use of existing town centre infrastructure.

P-MG25 The Council will encourage environmental improvements in the town centre shopping area. The provision of convenient and safe pedestrian crossings and routeways through the town will be a priority (including disabled access), as will landscaping developments, and the requirement of high standards of design and finish of commercial development.

P-MG26 Proposals for large-scale town centre redevelopment shall be asked to demonstrate links to public transport.

O-MG11 To consolidate the existing retail and commercial function of the town centre area.

O-MG12 To sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of the area.

O-MG13 To undertake a comprehensive study of the feasibility of pedestrian priority in the central areas of the town and to implement the recommendations of any such study.

O-MG14 To undertake a comprehensive study of the feasibility of providing and facilitating a public transport network within the town and to ensure development does not compromise the future provision of such a network.

O-MG15 To maintain an efficient, competitive and innovative town-centre retail sector.

O-MG16 To develop a traffic management strategy and provide for a good quality car-parking programme linked to the pedestrian network in the town.

O-MG17 To manage public car parking both on-street and in car parks considering various needs such as people with disabilities, commercial vehicles, taxis, motor cycles, etc; considering the conflicts between all day parking and short stay; and considering the need for good advance signage.

O-MG18 The re-development of Cusack Park GAA grounds, including the provision of a link road from Friars Mill Road to Robinstown, may only be facilitated where the GAA grounds can be re-located within the urban zoned envelop of Mullingar.

O-MG19 The re-development of the Greyhound Stadium shall have regard to, and provide connectivity to the redevelopment of the identified regeneration area in Lynn Business Park and support the objective to develop a linear park along the Brosna; a mix of uses will be promoted on the site, however, large scale retailing, including retail warehousing, that will compete with the retailing role of the Town Centre will be resisted. Any

	proposals to redevelop shall only be facilitated where proposals for relocation of the Greyhound Stadium within the zoned envelop of Mullingar Town are included.
O-MG20	To prepare a regeneration plan (masterplan) for the area, promoting a mix of uses, precluding retailing that will compete with the retailing role of the town centre, a high standard of urban design and provide a linear park along the Brosna, in an area in Lynn bounded by the River Brosna and other lands to the east, Station Road (I-2201) to the west, the rail line to the north and the Business Park Road (I-2200) to the south.
O-MG21	To identify and reserve a site for heavy industry/bad neighbour type uses in Mullingar. The objective will be secured within 12 months of the adoption of the plan.

3.1.4 Urban Renewal & Regeneration

The Urban Renewal Act, 1986, and Urban Renewal programme 1994 – 1997, which are now drawing to a close have led to the development of a number of important sites in the town. Having regard to the generally buoyant nature of the local economy there are very few derelict sites in Mullingar and the Council will continue to use its powers to ensure that such sites are developed. The Mullingar Integrated Area Plan 1998 identified three sites for development, Westmeath Council off Blackhall Street, the Railway Station property and the site of the former Cattle Market. Two of those sites, Westmeath Council off Blackhall Street and the Railway Station property have yet to be developed. The Council will actively encourage suitable development at the sites identified in the Mullingar Integrated Area Plan.

Development of infill and under utilised back land sites will be encouraged in the town centre area in the interests of achieving the most efficient use of urban lands and to stimulate regeneration of the more disadvantaged areas of the town, the Council will encourage the provision of residential accommodation in all town centre regeneration schemes.

Generally, areas that have not experienced in depth development have retained a network of buildings with strong character and a quality of design that provide an attractive streetscape that has not been diluted or degraded by inappropriate infill development, the Planning Authority will seek to retain buildings and streetscapes of character in the town and new development will be expected to enhance streetscapes and retain features of interest and vernacular detailing.

New development will be expected to create or positively contribute towards a connected network of streets and spaces, putting the requirements of pedestrians and cyclists as a priority by creating direct routes that connect to the existing network.

The Planning Authority will investigate designating areas of the Town to facilitate and encourage development for the purposes of regeneration.

3.1.5 Community, Institutional & Educational Development

Population increase has resulted in considerable pressure on existing school facilities and a number of additional primary schools have been established in the environs of the town to cater for the increased demand. A new primary school has been developed at Raithin on the C-link, to house an established school moving from temporary accommodation. A number of the existing schools, traditionally catering for the rural population on the outskirts of the town are accommodating students from the urban area. The need for a primary school and perhaps a secondary school has been identified, as part of the Robinstown Local Area Plan, and sites have been identified in Ardmore/Marlinstown as part of the study carried out for that area. As new communities develop, school sites will be required and this will be addressed in Local Area Plans.

A study of school places in 2005¹ found that there were fifteen primary schools with a combined enrolment of 3,083 within a five-mile radius of Mullingar town centre, an enrolment increase of 11% from 1995. Since then, a further primary school has begun to operate in the

¹ Schools Report for Athlone & Mullingar, carried out by Forward Planning & Policy Section Westmeath County Council, October 2005.

area. Four post primary schools in a five-mile catchment of Mullingar had an enrolment of 2,263 compared to 2,248 in 1995. The study also found that in general the pressure from increased enrolment was experienced in schools outside the town, as urban parents exercised choice in relation to selecting a school.

The Council will co-operate with the relevant education authorities to ensure that school and college sites are made available as needed, and to encourage the maintenance and development of existing facilities.

While Mullingar does not have a local third level institute the town is located only approximately 30 miles away from both Maynooth University (NUI) and Athlone IT and Dublin is accessible by both bus and rail transport options. However, the location of a third level institute, college or campus in Mullingar would be a significant benefit to the town in terms of marketability, economy and profile.

In terms of other social and community facilities, Mullingar is well served by existing provision. FAS, the training and employment authority provides a range of courses from manufacturing and engineering to electronics and information technology. The V.E.C. provides a programme of day courses as well as evening educational classes for adults. The variety of courses available depends on the level of demand. The Council will facilitate third level institutes or remote campus provision in the town and may designate sites for third level education provision over the course of the Plan.

The town is well served by sports clubs both for indoor and outdoor activities, with facilities for Horse-riding and Greyhound Racing. The Council will actively encourage the retention of such facilities in the town as they offer an important complimentary leisure role to the more commercial nature of the town centre and are an important tourism and economic draw, primarily resulting from proximity to the town centre. The need for further facilities in line with the growth of the town as a linked Gateway will continue to be addressed. The "County Westmeath Sports, Recreation and Leisure, Facilities and Needs Survey Analysis Report" was published in June 2002, and provides a firm foundation on which to build and progress the development of sport, recreation and leisure activity. Within the larger housing estates of Ennell Court and Dalton Park, Community Centre / Youth Clubs have also been established.

The Council will encourage the provision and extension of community and sporting facilities, in recognition of the importance of such facilities in the welfare and development of society, and resist the loss of such facilities in the town centre area. The Council will consider provision of support for community projects on an individual basis.

There are places of worship for the various religious denominations represented in the town, some are in established premises, while others occupy unsuitable temporary facilities. The current trend of inward migration with a strong representation by non-national migrant workers raises new challenges to integrate different groups into society; to promote social inclusion the Council will work with representative agencies to provide community facilities to meet the needs of the growing communities.

The Council will assist religious bodies in the identification of suitable sites and premises for meetings or worship. To promote social inclusion, the Council will work with representative bodies both religious and secular, to realise the needs of the varied communities that now define Mullingar.

The provision of community and sporting facilities is essential, and the Council will welcome the expansion of this type of service. To this end part of the County Hall has been transformed into an integrated Arts Centre, the Market House has been refurbished, and accommodates a tourist information office and a civic reception room; and the former Vocational School on the Jail Hill will soon be developed for use in relation to Irish language and culture. The Council also recognises the need to reserve lands for multiple use sports facilities and to identify locations for municipal parks to serve the expanding town.

The Council shall encourage and assist the formation, development, guidance and co-ordination of community organisations, local interest and self-help groups, and to co-operate with any bodies who wish to expand the provision of social and sporting facilities.

To promote the development of the library service to meet the needs of the community, subject to the availability of finance.

Health care provision is an important part of a community's needs and for a growing urban centre such as Mullingar an up to date modern hospital is very important. The Regional Hospital in Mullingar is one of three regional hospitals in the Midlands Region, the others being Tullamore and Portlaoise. The Hospital is designated as the Regional Centre for certain specialties including maternity and paediatrics and has benefited from a significant extension, proposals for the fit out and alteration of the hospital has also been permitted. The Council recognises the significant importance of this service to the town and its hinterland.

The Council will co-operate with the Health Service Executive (Midlands Region) in the provision of health, community and social facilities and also to co-operate with other groups who may wish to provide desirable social services in the town. The Council recognises that people in communities have a right to be involved in the shaping of the areas in which they live.

O-MG22	To facilitate the provision of community and social services to meet the needs of the town.
O-MG23	Construct new civic offices for Westmeath County Council adjacent to existing headquarters.
O-MG24	To facilitate greater public access to the resources of Mullingar Branch of the County Library.
O-MG25	To identify and reserve a site for multiple use sports facilities at Robinstown.
O-MG26	To co-operate with the HSE and the Midlands Health Board in the provision of health community and social facilities.
O-MG27	To identify and reserve sites for multiple sports facilities.
O-MG28	To encourage the provision and upgrading of social facilities such as, sports and leisure facilities to meet the needs and aspirations of the town/ neighbourhoods.

3.1.6 Public Servicing & Environmental Protection

Water Supply

Mullingar derives its water supply from Lough Owel, which is a surface water source with sufficient capacity for the provision of a supply for the foreseeable future. A treatment plant has been provided at Portloman.

Surface Water

The River Brosna flows through the central area of Mullingar and forms the principal surface water collector. A study of the catchment area has been carried out to ascertain the river flow and channel capacity with the aim of maintaining free flow conditions and minimising the risk of flooding incidents while accommodating the expansion of the built up area of the town. The Local Area Plan for Robinstown in particular, has taken account of this issue.

Sewerage & Sewage Treatment

The scale of development which took place over the period of the current plan put the sewerage network and treatment plant under severe pressure and required that the development of some zoned lands could not be carried out. Planned improvements in both the network and treatment plant will respond to these issues. This rapid expansion and on-going development pressures on Mullingar town and environs requires a review of the existing foul and surface water drainage system to include a review of the capacity and condition of the network, storm overflows, assessment of future development areas, capacity of the river Brosna, the capacity of the waste water treatment plant and pumping stations, the effect of phosphate loading on Lough Ennell, etc. A Waste Water Treatment Plant and Main Pumping Station are to be provided as a Design Build Operate (DBO) Scheme and a contractor will be appointed in late 2006.

P-MG27	To continue the development and improvement of the water supply and sewerage services to provide for the anticipated water and drainage requirements of the
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area where financial resources permit. Planning permissions will not be granted where it is likely that foul sewers or storm water systems will be unable to cope with the additional discharges. Planning permission will not be granted to any development that cannot be connected by gravity to a public sewer;

P-MG28 It is the policy of the Council that where a development is facilitated by public services which have been or will be provided, a contribution towards the cost of providing such services will be required as provided by the Local Government (Planning and Development) Acts 2000-2006. Contributions will be levied at the rate prevailing at the time;

P-MG29 It is the policy of the Council that where a development includes the provision of roads, footpaths or other services, the Council will normally require satisfactory security (i.e. bonds) from the developer in order to secure the provision and maintenance of such services.

- O-MG29** To provide infrastructure services to meet present demand and to facilitate the orderly expansion of the town.
- O-MG30** Examine the existing sewerage systems and make provision for extension of piped sewerage and surface water network to service future development needs.
- O-MG31** Make provision for upgrading Clonmore Waste Water Treatment Plant as required to facilitate development needs.
- O-MG32** Continue to implement a water conservation strategy.
- O-MG33** Advance channel improvement proposals for the River Brosna in consultation with the O.P.W.
- O-MG34** Monitor sewage storm overflow frequency and plan and implement network responses.
- O-MG35** Make provision for extension of drainage facilities to the Robinstown area.

Waste Disposal

The waste arising from Mullingar is considered as part of the Midland Waste Management Strategic Study. Mullingar Action Group are actively involved in the recycling of glass and aluminium cans and have provided receptacles for glass at Penney's car park, Buckley's car park, Clonmore Shopping Centre, O' Driscoll's Supermarket, Bellview N.S., Lynn Heights, Mullingar Golf Club, Blackhall car park, Town Mall, and the General Hospital. They also provide a kerb side collection from public houses in Mullingar. Also in Grove Street a car dismantling enterprise is in operation.

P-MG30 To conform to the Government and E.U. waste management hierarchy as follows;

- Prevention
- Reduction
- Re-use
- Recycling
- Safe disposal subject to economic and technical feasibility.

P-MG31 The Council will co-operate with other agencies in viable schemes for the extraction of useful materials from refuse for re-use or recycling.

P-MG32 To ensure that public areas are maintained free of litter.

P-MG33 To eliminate all unauthorised fly tipping and to regulate and control the disposal of all builders spoil and rubble.

Telecommunications

Mullingar is served by the most up to date digital exchange technology. This provides both PSTN and ISDN services to the business and residential customers in the area and offers a full range of advanced customer services including voicemail, call diversion, call waiting and hotline. Mullingar is strategically located on the Telecom Eireann optic transmission network, allowing full route diversity to the national and international networks. A local fibre ring allows the extension of this diversity to the business and industrial centres of the town. Mullingar has

access to a fully managed network and to the 'Frame Relay' service. Local call access to Internet is also available.

P-MG34 To facilitate where practical and necessary the provision and extension of communications services in Mullingar; regard will be had to the Department Guidelines.

P-MG35 To support national and international initiatives for limiting emissions of Greenhouse gases and encouraging the development of renewable energy sources.

(i) Renewable energy comes from natural, inexhaustible sources such as the sun, winds, falling water, oceans, plants and the earth. Energy can also be derived from a range of waste products such as sewage, refuse and agricultural waste.

(ii) In line with the principles of sustainable development, the Council will encourage the development of appropriate energy sources, which make use of natural resources in an environmentally acceptable manner.

3.1.7 Transportation Accessibility & Parking

Mullingar is located on the main Dublin - Sligo (N4) road, 80 km from Dublin and 117km from Sligo. Kilbeggan is 22 km to the south and is located on the Dublin-Galway (N6) road. Mullingar is a hub location in regard to the national road network, although its north-south linkages are somewhat deficient in comparison with its east-west links. In addition to the national primary N4 and the national secondary N52, the following regional roads radiate from it: R390 to Athlone, R391 to Clara, R392 to Ballymahon/Roscommon, R393 to Ballinacarrigy/Longford, R394 to Castlepollard and the R156 to Trim.

Accessibility to Mullingar has been greatly enhanced by the completion of the M4 motorway from Dublin to Kinnegad and the dual carriageway extension from Kinnegad linking to the Mullingar By-pass. Accessibility has been further enhanced by the construction of the north western arc of the C-link, linking the R-390 (Athlone Road) with the R-394 (Castlepollard Road) and the N52 eastern by-pass. The on-going improvement of the national road network will be of benefit to the economic development of the town, as will the improvement of more local transport links to local and regional centres.

Mullingar is served by approx. eight trains to Dublin daily, commuting time by train to the capital is approximately 70 minutes. The Town also has a regular bus service to Dublin and other regional links. A disused rail line links Mullingar with Athlone and it is the policy of the Council to pursue the re-opening of this line with relevant state agencies. The use of public transport to commute to the capital, and more generally, will become more attractive provided an efficient public transport network is in place which provides an attractive alternative to private car use.

Roads:

P-MG36 To make Mullingar more accessible by road, to improve local and regional links and to take action as necessary to improve traffic circulation within the town.

P-MG37 To examine the need for and feasibility of improved traffic measures, particularly at congested areas in the town and with reference to reducing the volume of extraneous through traffic in the town centre.

P-MG38 To follow the Traffic Management Guidelines published by the Department of Transport, Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the NDP and the DTO in 2003, to promote road safety and to avoid the creation of traffic hazard.

Public Transport:

P-MG39 To facilitate the provision or improvement, where possible, of public transport by statutory and private operator services to serve and link Mullingar to other urban areas within the Midlands.

P-MG40 To study the need for a safe and convenient coach-set down location in or near the town centre.

Vulnerable Road Users:

P-MG41 To make Mullingar more accessible to the needs of the disabled community and to implement the programme of works required on streets, footpaths, etc. in accordance with the Councils Disability Audit Implementation Plan.

P-MG42 To provide disability-crossing points at locations defined throughout the town.

P-MG43 To promote the development of walking and cycling in the Mullingar area. Cycling and walking are environmentally friendly, fuel-efficient and healthy modes of transport, and their development is in line with the principles of sustainability. It is intended to encourage the provision of secure bicycle parking facilities in district centres and to investigate the possibility of developing cycle-ways. It is intended to further secure and develop pathways.

P-MG44 To promote the integration of the needs of the car-user with the needs of the pedestrian in an effort to make the town a more pleasant and efficient place in which to live and work.

P-MG45 In the design and/or improvement of roads and in the assessment of planning applications for new developments the safety of road users, including motorists, cyclists and pedestrians, will be a primary consideration. Cyclists and pedestrians are especially vulnerable in road accidents and new design must pay particular attention to securing their safety.

P-MG46 Where planning permissions are being granted for major new developments, such as offices, apartments, retail and industrial schemes, it is the policy of the Council to require that adequate covered facilities be provided for the secure parking of bicycles.

P-MG47 To continue the programme of improvement of footpaths throughout the town.

P-MG48 To explore measures where development consolidates the urban form, for off-street or rear servicing of retail and commercial premises.

O-MG36 Road from Newtown Lawns to N52 By Pass for realignment.

O-MG37 Robinstown Area Plan – link road from Castlepollard Road to Delvin Road.

O-MG38 Tunnel under Canal to facilitate regeneration of Cusack Park / Harbour Place area.

Traffic & Parking

The completion of the (N52) Mullingar by-pass and western C-link road have relieved through traffic from the town centre. The continuation of the C-link to the Tullamore Road will further reduce through traffic.

Mullingar town centre suffers from a shortage of car parking spaces at certain peak times. There are some 2000 off-street car parking spaces in Mullingar; 445 will be lost arising from the Blackhall development and 1250 will be provided as part of that development. In the interests of the long-term development of the town, the possibility of providing another public car park close to the town centre is being examined.

Opportunities may arise for future traffic relief for local environmental improvements by the Council or other bodies, i.e. better and wider footpaths, landscaping etc. such as those carried out at Castle Street and in front of the Town Park at Pearse Street. The Council intends to pursue a policy of providing designated cycle ways to international standards as opportunity and funds present themselves. In particular, the Council will seek to join Mullingar to any proposed system of National and International cycle ways.

P-MG49 Promote greater efficiency in traffic circulation and to provide additional car parking accommodation in the town. This policy will need to be kept under review as the availability of convenient and affordable parking in an area can influence people's decision on their mode of travel and has the potential to be a powerful travel demand management tool. If demand management policies are being implemented then a

reduction in the number of parking spaces may be desirable in congested urban areas. This can only be utilised where public transport provides a viable alternative.

- O-MG39** Consider the provision of off-street car parking multi-level either on their own or preferably in conjunction with other development at The Pound Field, Blackhall Street, behind Heatons at Bishopsgate Street and at the public car-park area off MacCurtain Street.
- O-MG40** Additional commuter car parking to be made available at Railway Station in Mullingar.
- O-MG41** Loading bays to be provided at agreed locations throughout the Central Business Area.
- O-MG42** Pay and display parking to be extended to outline car parks and streets as necessary and subject to approval by Members.
- O-MG43** Pay and Display Parking and the fee structure will be used to manage the use of spaces between all day parking and short stay.
- O-MG44** The programme of signage, marking, surfacing, public lighting and general presentation of all car parks to be continued.
- O-MG45** The increased level and profile of enforcement to be maintained;
- Facilitate out of town centre all day parking and to promote local bus link services as part of overall traffic management objective.
 - Areas for bus stops to facilitate introduction of local bus services to be agreed including locations for terminus.
- O-MG46** Develop a network of interlinked pedestrian routeways throughout the town.
- O-MG47** To enhance a secure and safe pedestrian footpath along the line of the Canal in the town and beyond.
- O-MG48** Continue programme of urban landscaping including measures to improve pedestrian safety, convenience, and accessibility through the town centre.
- O-MG49** Secure cycle parking facilities to be installed at Public Buildings such as the Library, Swimming Pool, County Buildings and Market Square.
- O-MG50** Advanced stop lines for cyclists to be provided at all remaining traffic signal installations.
- O-MG51** A segregated cycle track to be developed alongside the pedestrian footpath of the Canal Line between Grange and Saunder's Bridge.
- O-MG52** The programme of footpath widening, dished crossing points and tactile paving throughout the town to be completed.
- O-MG53** Implementation of works required on streets, footpaths etc in accordance with the Council's Disability Audit Implementation Plan. Provision of secure cycle parking facilities to be incorporated into new development proposals.
- O-MG54** Pedestrian link across canal and railway at Saunderson's Bridge.
- O-MG55** Pedestrian Bridge over Railway Bridge on Longford Road.
- O-MG56** To examine the potential and implementation of pedestrianisation of some of the main shopping streets in the town centre.
- O-MG57** Widening of footpaths in town centre to make streets more pedestrian friendly.
- O-MG58** Where a development is not fully serviced by public car parking, it is the policy of the Council that a contribution towards the cost of providing such parking accommodation will be required, as provided for by the Local Government (Planning and Development) Acts, 2000-2006. This charge will be related to the type of development proposed and the cost of the provision of the car park.
- O-MG59** To apply car parking requirement standards to all new developments in Mullingar in accordance with **Section 7.3** of the County Development Plan. It will also be policy to allow the relaxation of same where a proposed development warrants this relaxation, and it is in the best interests of the area concerned.
- O-MG60** To examine the issue of off-street parking and to take ameliorative measures where problems exist regarding under-supply or incorrect use.
- O-MG61** Construct the Belvedere Link Road, a two lane road linking the N52 to Belvedere.

O-MG62	Construct a 2 span vehicular bridge linking Fairgreen with College Street.
O-MG63	Construct the Bleach Yard Link, linking Bleach Yard and Grove Street.
O-MG64	As development proposals provide opportunity, establish a widened building line on Grove Street.
O-MG65	Construct a road link from Lynn Road to the Fire Station.
O-MG66	Construct a roundabout at Weldons Cross on the R-390 (Athlone/Ballymahon Road junctions).
O-MG67	Upgrade and link traffic signals at Green Bridge, Mount Street, Nugents Corner and Dublin Road Bridge.
O-MG68	Construct a roundabout on the R-156 at Prospect
O-MG69	Construct a 1.2km carriageway and bridge over Lacey's Canal to complete the C-link western by pass.
O-MG70	Construct a high quality roadway linking the R-394 with the Delvin Road, Harbour Street with the Robinstown Area and an underpass/tunnel linking Friars Mill Road with the Robinstown Area.
O-MG71	Facilitate local Bus Service and agree Terminus and location for Bus Stops.
O-MG72	To consider Cycle-ways Networks Study – linked to the canal.
O-MG73	Construct a roadway to facilitate the development of the Special District to the south of the N4/R-394 junction and to provide access to Sporting Recreation lands within the Robinstown LAP area.

3.1.8 Natural Heritage

The attractiveness of Mullingar town to resident and visitor alike is heavily dependent on the condition of the natural environment of the town. In any town, this asset is difficult to protect as demand for space increases and the town grows. The Royal Canal and the Brosna River represent important corridors for wildlife, as does the railway line. Where natural features are compromised by development proposals, the Council will exercise its development management power to protect the environment. Even small stretches of hedgerow or individual trees can be important parts of the natural environment and should be protected.

The Council will normally not grant planning permission for development that requires the felling of sound mature trees of native and broadleaf species and other species of interest or amenity; design and layout of development proposals should recognise important trees and tree stands and incorporate them into proposed layouts. Tree surgery rather than felling will be encouraged. Any proposals for tree removal should be supported by a report and assessment of the subject tree(s) undertaken by a suitably qualified arboriculturist.

P-MG50 To protect the natural environment of Mullingar especially along the wildlife corridors of the Royal Canal, the Brosna River and the railway line restricting development that will have a negative impact on the character and setting of natural heritage areas.

P-MG51 To provide green links from the town to the surrounding countryside along the Royal Canal Feeder Line to Lough Owel, along the Brosna and Lacys Canal to Lough Ennell and to link areas of public open space in the town by pedestrian and cycling corridors.

P-MG52 To continue the programme of tree planting and environmental enhancement through out the town.

P-MG53 Trees or groups of trees that form a significant feature in the landscape shall be preserved wherever possible. In the implementation of this policy the Council will consider making Tree Preservation Orders where it appears expedient in the interest of amenity and over the course of the Plan will undertake a tree survey.

O-MG74 To protect and conserve the town's natural heritage.

O-MG75 Survey trees and stands of trees for possible protection by Tree Preservation Order.

O-MG76 Protect the natural environment of the Royal Canal, Brosna River and Railway line and their corridor through the town, and links to the lakes.

O-MG77 Investigate the potential of a link along the River Brosna and Lacys Canal to Lough Ennell to provide a wildlife corridor and pedestrian link from the town to the immediate countryside.

3.1.9 Archaeology & Built Heritage

Mullingar was one of the palatine towns founded by the Norman's, in 1227 a priory was founded by Canons Regular of St. Augustine, the Dominicans also started a foundation about the same time. No upstanding remains survive from these early origins. Within the boundary of Mullingar town there is a Zone of Archaeological Potential, protected under the National Monuments Acts 1930-2004. It will be necessary to safeguard the archaeological value of all lands within this area through the exercise of development management power. Significant archaeological excavations have been ongoing.

There are also a number of sites of historic and cultural interest throughout the town and county that are not recognised or safeguarded in the Record of Protected Structures or the Sites and Monuments Record, an example being the Famine Graveyard at Robinstown, it is important that the heritage value of such sites are recognised and not compromised by inappropriate development and the Planning Authority will utilise its development management powers/responsibilities to protect such sites.

Built Heritage

The town contains some early 19th century style architecture, mainly along the wide main streets of the town centre and is dominated by the Cathedral, dedicated in 1939, an imposing renaissance style structure. This is further enriched by All Saints Church, which dates from about 1200 AD, and St. Mary's College built in 1850 in rough-cut stone limestone with an imposing Italianate Tower. Directly beside is the Cathedral House formerly the Bishop's Palace, which was built in 1870 as a result of an architectural competition.

Worthy of note is the Market House erected towards the end of the 18th century. Other interesting additions to the built environment are the Courthouse built in 1825. At first floor level it has square headed windows inset in blank arches divided by simple pilaster. Below these is a five bay arcade slightly advanced and flanked by segmental headed arches. The Courthouse was built at the same time as the Gaol, which formerly occupied the site of the present County buildings opposite.

The early 19th century brought the Royal Canal. The Royal Canal provides an attractive feature for Mullingar and was an important focus of the town development over the last century. Mullingar town centre is of a compact layout with most retail and commercial development concentrated within the loop which the Royal Canal makes around the Town: notably Oliver Plunkett Street, Pearse Street, Castle Street and Mount Street.

Outside the central core of the town there are a number of single story or 1½ storey terraces and groups of houses, although modest with simple detailing, yet have character and add considerably to the setting of their streetscapes.

Architectural Conservation Areas

It is proposed to designate additional Architectural Conservation Areas as follows and as indicated on the attached maps. Mullingar – Town Centre, Ginnell Terrace, Millmount Road, Fairview Terrace, Auburn Road (part of), Harbour Street, and St Brigids Terrace.

Vernacular Buildings

In addition to the buildings of special interest included in the RPS, County Westmeath contains a wide variety of vernacular buildings. These buildings contribute in a particular way to the distinctive character of local areas; which can be significantly diminished by their loss. The Council will seek to retain these where feasible.

A National Inventory of Architectural Heritage has been compiled by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government for Co. Westmeath including Mullingar. Buildings of architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, technical or social merit have been identified in the Inventory and will be added to the Record of Protected Structures as directed by the DoEHLG.

P-MG54 To prevent forms of development that would be injurious to the town's architectural and archaeological heritage.

P-MG55 To protect those monuments within the zone of Archaeological Potential established in the Urban Archaeology Survey for Westmeath and all other recorded monuments, which are afforded protection under the National Monuments Acts.

P-MG56 To preserve and protect Mullingar's built environment in terms of streetscapes, individual buildings and features of historical, architectural or artistic interest.

P-MG57 To protect the streetscapes and vistas, which are resultant from Mullingar's present urban form. Development proposals that necessitate the demolition of existing structures that are an established part of the town's urban fabric, will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that the building is structurally unsafe for retention, conversion or adaptation, reports demonstrating same should be completed by an appropriately qualified professional, where proposals relate to protected structures (or proposed protected structures) reports should be undertaken by a suitably qualified Conservation Architect.

P-MG58 To implement the recommendations of the NIAH in incorporating those buildings of architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, technical or social interests for protection in the Record of Protected Structures. Existing protected structures are detailed in **Schedule 4**.

P-MG59 Protect Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA's) and to consider designating other streets and areas in the town as ACA's or areas of townscape character.

P-MG60 It is the policy of the Council to encourage the rehabilitation, renovation and re-use of existing older buildings where appropriate.

P-MG61 It is the policy of the Council that areas that have particular environmental qualities that derive from their overall layout, design and unity of character be designated as Architectural Conservation Areas and that the character of such areas be preserved.

P-MG62 To implement the provisions of the Derelict Sites Acts to prevent or remove injury to amenity arising from dereliction.

P-MG63 To secure the development and renewal of obsolete areas, where they are identified.

P-MG64 To restrict non-essential advertising structures, or any advertising structures, which would impact injuriously on amenity, the built environment or road safety, and to have unauthorised signs removed.

P-MG65 To identify sites of cultural and historical importance within the town and to develop management proposals to facilitate their protection.

O-MG78 It is an objective of the Council to prepare a guidance leaflet to provide relevant information on Architectural Conservation Areas.

O-MG79 To prepare a policy document on Tall Buildings for Mullingar Town.

3.1.10 Tourism

Tourism has potential to make a more significant contribution to the economy of the county. The main tourism product is the rural areas and landscape; the quality of the urban areas is also an important tourism product. Mullingar is an attractive town with a good range of shops and other services. There are many visitor attractions within the town and within reasonable proximity to the town. Although traditionally it has not featured very strongly as a destination; tourists are usually en route to the west or north and the town is seen as a place one must pass through rather than a place to stop in; building on 'Gateway' status will generate a greater sense of place and recognition which will benefit the tourism potential and

marketability of the town. Westmeath Tourism, supported by Westmeath Community Development, is active in the promotion and marketing of the County.

Significant potential exists for the establishment and promotion of Mullingar as a tourism centre; strong links and proximity to the greater Dublin Area, airports and ports, provide a significant and accessible customer base that can benefit both the short and long stay sector. The attractive urban form, setting, accessibility to attractions such as the lakes, heritage sites and the attractive network of Villages and Towns can all enhance the tourism potential of the town. The Council will draw on these features to maximise the tourism potential of the town and through implementation of other relevant Plan policies will seek to retain the elements of the Town that form its character and setting.

The provision of increased hotel facilities over the term of the last Plan provides choice and quality in overnight accommodation in the town and other hotel services which is beneficial for tourism and for the business of the town in general. Recent hotel developments at Marlinstown and the Town Centre contribute to the number of approved rooms and suites in hotels in the town. Newbury Hotel (12 bedrooms), Park Hotel (95 bedrooms), Bloomfield House Hotel (111 Bedrooms), Greville Arms Hotel (40 bedrooms), Annebrook House Hotel, and Austin Friar Hotel (18 bedrooms).

Belvedere House and Gardens on the shore of Lough Ennell is a major tourist attraction and recent works to the estate have included the restoration of the house and works to the park and gardens. Other works that benefit the tourism product in Mullingar include, the opening of the first stage of the Westmeath Way, the county's second way-marked walking trail, south of the town to Kilbeggan linking with Lough Ennell and the Brosna, improved facilities at Lough Owel Sailing Club, improved boat hire facilities at Lough Ennell and new facilities at the Mullingar Equestrian Centre.

The Royal Canal and its feeder canal to Lough Owel is an important amenity for the town and has significant tourism potential. An extensive programme of work to restore navigation on the Royal Canal has been ongoing by Waterways Ireland and it is intended that the canal will be navigable to Richmond Harbour at Cloondara, in Longford, it's junction with the River Shannon, by 2008. Use of the Canal for recreation and tourism has been growing and there is huge potential for further growth. The Council will consult with Waterways Ireland and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the DoEHLG, Royal Canal Amenity Group and Inland Waterways Association and local communities on development proposals affecting the Royal Canal.

There are positive actions the Council can take to ensure that Mullingar realises its tourism potential. The Council will take action to conserve the natural and built heritage in town, put amenity development in place to ensure that adequate information, interpretation and access is available and generally to co-ordinate the physical development of the town such that its inherent tourism potential is maximised.

P-MG66 To promote Mullingar as a tourist destination, especially for over-night stopping tourists.

P-MG67 To co-operate with bodies involved in Tourism operations and planning and where appropriate, to assist projects that will improve the amenities of the town.

P-MG68 To facilitate and encourage the provision of a range of accommodation and ancillary tourist services.

P-MG69 To protect the character of the town and its heritage in order to provide a sound basis for the development of tourism.

P-MG70 To promote public use of the Royal Canal. Walks and canal – link green spaces (Lough Owel feeder canal link).

O-MG80 To promote and facilitate the development of Mullingar as a tourism centre.

O-MG81 Protect architectural heritage and streetscapes.

O-MG82	Provide additional sign posting where appropriate.
O-MG83	To investigate the feasibility of establishing a Railway History Museum, when a suitable location becomes available.
O-MG84	Co-operate with Mullingar Tidy Towns and other community organisations in enhancing the town appearance.
O-MG85	Continued implementation of the Anti Litter Programme.

3.1.11 Open Space, Recreation & Amenity

With the exception of the Royal Canal and the Town Park, most of the substantial areas of open space in Mullingar consist of privately owned sports grounds and playing pitches. However, the town is well positioned within the 'green' north-south linkage of Westmeath's lakes, which connect also with the canal, and their associated amenities.

A survey of open space in Mullingar shows, that there are approximately 46 acres of public open space available. The Town Park containing 6 acres and the Royal Canal encompassing roughly 40 acres. Additionally, the existing public recreational open space in Mullingar comprises approximately 40 acres and serves six main sporting activities, GAA, Soccer, Rugby, Athletics, Tennis and Pitch and Putt, Greyhound Racing Track, primarily in private ownership. As urban land becomes more valuable there is a tendency for sporting facilities to move out from the town and release land to higher rental value uses. Facilities removed from the built up area are less accessible to all members of society, are car dependent and a less sustainable form of provision.

Over recent years there has been an urban enhancement scheme in place on the Royal Canal and maintenance work is ongoing on the Town Park, including the design and implementation of an upgraded entrance from Pearse Street to provide an enhanced street presence. The development of Belvedere House and Gardens although outside the development area, represent a very significant amenity for the town.

There is a need to provide more public open space including appropriate recreational open space to serve the new and planned outlying developing residential areas, particularly to the west of the town. The preparation of a feasibility study to identify the long-term recreational needs of the town is required.

The Council has recognised the potential of the Royal Canal and the River Brosna to create an integrated system of amenity and recreational open space which offers potential for further extending the urban pedestrian network along the banks and integrating this network with the town open space system. The urban section of the Royal Canal is an ideal location for water-based sport particularly as it is linked to Lough Owel by means of a feeder Canal. The banks of the feeder canal linking Lough Owel and Mullingar have potential as amenity open space and as such suggest the possibility of linking the lakeside amenity area with the urban open space, thus providing an integrated system of urban/rural open spaces. The feeder canal also needs to be developed to secure the linking of water-based activities on the urban section of the Royal Canal with Lough Owel.

P-MG71 It is the policy of the Council that adequate amenity and recreational open space and facilities, including community facilities and centres, should be available for all groups of the population at a convenient distance from their homes and places of work.

P-MG72 To link the town to the surrounding country via 'green' linkages.

P-MG73 To retain the open space use of lands with established recreational uses where practicable. It is the intention that such lands be retained in open space use and that their condition be managed in such a way as to be conducive to the maintenance or improvement of the amenity of the area in which they are situated. In the event of permission for development being granted on these lands, open space provision in excess of normal standards will be required, to maintain the open character of such parts of the land as are considered necessary by the Council.

P-MG74 To link open space and amenity developments in order to secure integration of provision.

P-MG75 To ensure the protection of existing amenities from new developments or obsolescence.

P-MG76 To co-operate with Sporting Organisations who wish to develop or expand facilities and to resist the loss of such facilities.

P-MG77 To protect and extend the network of pathways and public rights of way in the town.

P-MG78 To levy contributions from private developers for the provision of open space.

P-MG79 To ensure the provision of a major park in the region of 50 acres for the town.

O-MG86 Upgrade and extend the town's amenities.

O-MG87 Enhance the town's position in the link between the lakes, the canal and associated amenity opportunities.

O-MG88 Passive and active recreation area to be identified and zoned to facilitate west side of town.

O-MG89 Provision to be made for Play Ground facility in accordance with the County Play Policy Document.

O-MG90 Facilitate the improvement of public open space in various housing estates in conjunction with local residents.

O-MG91 Integrate major open space areas into the existing fabric of the town by means of a pedestrian system.

O-MG92 The development of an amenity area and linear park along the Canal and development of the urban Harbour area for water-based activities.

O-MG93 The development of the feeder canal and the banks as an amenity area, linking Lough Owel and Mullingar.

O-MG94 Link south of the town to Lough Ennel through the development and reinforcement of green linkages.

O-MG95 The development of a linear park as opportunity occurs along the River Brosna through the town and to the north and south and along Laceys Canal as opportunities arise.

O-MG96 The development of land at Clonmore for open space and recreational purposes.

O-MG97 Amenity improvements to all approach roads to the town.

O-MG98 Continue tree-planting programme around the town and promote Neighbourhood Schemes.

O-MG99 Residential development of this site, to the south of the Ballymahon/Athlone Road, shall be low-density residential development, to protect the amenity value of the Canal.

The area known as "Campfield" in Mullingar Town to be considered for the development of a Town Park. Further development of Lakeshore Areas owned by Council in Mullingar Electoral Areas including Portnashangan, Tudenham, Ladestown, Donore and Tullaghan.

Prepare and implement an open space strategy for the town of Mullingar that will include the selection of suitable lands for the development of approximately 50 acres of shared open space and to identify areas of under-provision to the west of the Town to address any shortfall.

3.1.12 New Development Areas

The need to consider sustainability and the development of understanding of urban design principles has promoted the mixing of uses to give variety and vitality to areas and reduce the need to travel. Land use zoning segregates uses and broad zonings may create travel demand, may not offer variety in functions or enable communities to be centered around neighbourhood facilities and commercial activities. To provide for new residential communities and compatible mixed development where appropriate, and the necessary social and physical infrastructure, the preparation of more detailed plans or masterplans for areas is considered more appropriate. Since the last plan was adopted and following up on objectives contained in the plan, more detailed plans for two development areas, have been carried out. A master

planning exercise was carried out for Robinstown and adopted as a Local Area Plan and the zoning provisions of that plan are incorporated as part of the zonings in this County Development Plan review, map attached. The Robinstown LAP is a large document, which deals comprehensively with the development of that area. It is a statutory plan, which will guide development and must be taken into account in any development proposal. A similar Master planning exercise has been carried out for the Ardmore/Marlinstown area and this plan will be brought forward as a Local Area Plan.

In addition this plan provides that undeveloped areas of land are zoned for detailed plans or masterplans to be carried out and adopted as Local Area Plans. Lands both sides of the Lynn Road and the Tullaniskey Road are to be the subject of Local Area Plans. This will allow for finer grain of uses, for detailed consideration to be given to layout and design, and for more careful consideration to be given to issues such as the provision for recreation, amenity, education and community facilities in line with residential development.

3.2 ATHLONE ENVIRONS PLAN

3.2.1 Profile & Resource Base

Population Workforce & Employment

The context in which the planning of Athlone Environs takes place has changed fundamentally since the adoption of the last Plan. Athlone, together with Mullingar and Tullamore, is part of a 'linked gateway' for the Midlands Region under the National Spatial Strategy. This 'linked gateway' has been incorporated into the Regional Planning Guidelines and the implementation of a linked gateway strategy is a task to be carried cooperatively by all the local authorities involved and the priorities for this are set out in the Gateways Section 2.1.2. Additionally in relation to the Environs area, the urban boundary extension of Athlone Town in 2004 has reduced the lands within the Environs to 346ha in total. The remaining lands mostly comprise Enterprise use and Education/Science/Technology Business Park use. These lands are an important part of the development area of the overall town of Athlone and this Plan must be read in conjunction with the Athlone Town Plan.

The environs area of Athlone Town, both in Westmeath and Roscommon, provides a significant commercial and industrial employment base to support the important regional role of the town. Industry and light industry/warehousing contribute significantly to the economy of the town and region. There are over 320ha of lands zoned to accommodate various employment and enterprise generating uses in Enterprise, Industrial/Commercial and Education/Science/Technological/Business zonings in the Environs Plan, more than half of this area is undeveloped green field lands.

3.2.2 Enterprise and Employment

The Environs Area of Athlone within the Roscommon County administrative boundary has experienced significant growth both in industry and population based primarily on incentives available to developers. The more favourable grant incentives available in County Roscommon have largely operated to attract mobile inward investment to the Monksland Environs. It is anticipated that this pattern of development will not continue since the BMW Region includes both County Roscommon and County Westmeath and given the greater role of regional planning guidelines in the Development Plan process. The lands developed by Westmeath County Council for industrial use at Blyry and the Moydrum Road have been fully utilised. The Council recognises the need for the development of further such sites.

P-AEP1 To ensure that sufficient industrial land is available when required and to encourage and facilitate the expansion of existing industry where it conforms to the proper planning and sustainable development of the areas involved.

P-AEP2 To facilitate the development of enterprise and the growth of employment in the Athlone Environs and to this end the Council will co-operate with other agencies including the private sector in promoting economic and social development and in assisting the provision of employment opportunities.

P-AEP3 The State has established and funded several organisations with different roles in relation to employment, principally, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Forfas, FÁS, Leader 2 and the County Enterprise Board and Area Partnerships. The Council has a role as a Local Authority in complementing and assisting the work of these agencies. The policies of the Plan are formulated in this context and are designed to facilitate the achievement of sustainable development.

P-AEP4 To accommodate "office-based industry" in Enterprise & Employment zones. Office based industry is a growing sector which crosses the boundary between the traditional industrial and office use. It is concerned with the output of a specified product or service including: data processing, software development, information technology, technical and consulting, commercial laboratories/healthcare, research and development, media recording and general media associated uses, publishing, telemarketing etc.

(i) To encourage the development of linkages between the Athlone Institute of Technology and local industry.

(ii) To encourage, facilitate and develop the creation and expansion of linkages, physical and otherwise, between third level educational institutions and the science business and technology centre.

P-AEP5 To facilitate the establishment of grouped, small starter/incubator workshops, craft or service units in neighbourhood centres, subject to strict development management standards.

O-AEP1	Prepare Action Area Plans to facilitate the development of the large areas zoned for development.
O-AEP2	To facilitate the expansion of the high-technology industrial base in designated areas.
O-AEP3	To foster the development of tourism.
O-AEP4	To facilitate further non-retail, commercial development in the Athlone Environs.
O-AEP5	Investigate the possibility of acquiring further lands for the development of serviced sites for industrial/warehousing use.
O-AEP6	Secure the 'tidying-up' and environmental improvements of the existing industrial estate at Blyry.
O-AEP7	Co-operate with the relevant national regional and local agencies in the promotion of the town for manufacturing and office-based industry.

3.2.3 Housing

The alteration to the Athlone Town Council administrative boundary (in 2004) resulted in significant areas of residentially zoned lands at Cornamaddy, Cornamagh, Lissywollen, etc. being incorporated into the Town Council urban area. As a result, substantial areas of zoned residential land are provided in the urban area to accommodate the future population growth of the Town and the areas will primarily be developed in accordance with adopted local area plans, action area plans or masterplans. It is envisaged that most of the population growth for Athlone Town and Environs will be accommodated within the Town Council Area.

Nevertheless, there are some remaining pockets of residentially zoned land, albeit primarily reflecting the established land use but with development potential in the environs area. There are approx. 40 acres of zoned residential land in the Environs Plan with approx. 20 acres remaining undeveloped. The existing built up residential areas may provide opportunities for backland and infill development and based on a residential density of a minimum 14 units per acre, the land zoned for residential development has a capacity for approx. 300 additional dwellings.

P-AEP6 It is the policy of the Council that areas, which are suitable for in-depth residential development, should only be developed in accordance with an overall plan for the comprehensive development of the area.

P-AEP7 To promote a high quality of design and layout in new residential development in accordance with the Residential Density Guidelines, (Department of the Environment & Local Government, 1999). A central function of land-use planning is to ensure that new residential development presents a high quality living environment for its residents, both in terms of the standard of individual dwelling units and in terms of the overall layout and appearance of the scheme. In implementing this policy the Council will evaluate proposals for new residential development in accordance with the criteria set out in Part 7, Development Management Standards of the Plan.

P-AEP8 To conserve the existing housing stock wherever possible and to protect and improve residential amenities in existing residential areas.

P-AEP9 Where lands have been developed on the basis of low density layouts in order to retain the open rural nature or details of interest, it is the Council's policy to retain some of the open character of these lands. The Council will require that 20% of the site area be retained for open space purposes.

P-AEP10 It is the policy of the Council that the naming of new residential development should reflect the local and historical context of the site, wherever practical, and if possible should include the use of the Irish language.

P-AEP11 (i) To promote and encourage the provision of housing accommodation in accordance with the proposals outlined in the document "Social Housing - The Way Ahead".

(ii) "Social Housing - The Way Ahead", (Department of the Environment & Local Government, 1995) sets out the broad aim of ensuring that every household has a dwelling suitable for its needs, located in an acceptable environment, at a price or rent it can afford. It embraces all sections of the housing market, owner-occupier, public rented, private rented and voluntary housing. In addition, it recognises the importance of conserving and improving the existing housing stock in line with the concept of sustainable development.

(iii) In the furtherance of this policy the Council will, *inter alia*, ensure the provision of a wide range of house types and sizes to cater for the differing needs of the population including the elderly, and will promote social integration within residential developments.

P-AEP12 (i) To permit home based economic activity where, by virtue of its nature and scale, it can be accommodated without detriment to the amenities of the residential area.

(ii) Home based economic activities are small scale commercial and professional businesses carried out by residents of the dwelling, and are subordinate to the main use of the property as residential accommodation. The Council accepts the need to accommodate such uses and recognises their importance in terms of employment creation and the achievement of sustainability. Such uses would include childcare provision, such as crèche, playschool etc.

(iii) Under the following circumstances planning permission for such uses may be granted where such activity is not seriously injurious to the residential amenity of the area and will not cause any environmental problems arising from increased traffic, noise, fumes, vibration, smoke, dust, odour, hours of business, interference with television reception or for any other reason and where adequate parking is available.

(iv) Permission for home based economic activity will only be granted to the resident of the house. Consideration will be given to the granting of temporary permission for home based economic activity in certain circumstances in order to enable the impact of the activity on residential amenity to be assessed.

(v) Applications for the provision of a crèche, playschool or other similar uses will be considered on the basis of local need, impact on the amenities of adjoining residents and traffic safety.

O-AEP8 To facilitate orderly development to meet the housing requirements of the town.

O-AEP9 Co-operate with Athlone Town Council in the provision of public housing where suitable land is available.

O-AEP10 Continue the programme of refurbishment and upgrading of the Council's existing housing stock;

O-AEP11 Provide social and affordable housing and facilitate voluntary housing organisations.

O-AEP12 To require the sequential development of residential zoned lands on the Ballymahon Road

O-AEP13 Residential development of lands to the north of the Moydrum Road, as identified on the objectives map, shall be at a maximum density of 2 units per acre.

3.2.4 Retail/Commercial/Town centre

Commercial Development

Athlone Town is well served in terms of existing shopping provision. The central location of Athlone and its accessibility and the range of services and amenities available, including the Regional Sports Centre, generate opportunities for other commercial development such as hotel, conference facilities, corporate regional headquarters etc. It is the policy of the Council

to protect the role of the retail core and town centre of Athlone Town as the main area for retailing.

P-AEP13 To promote commercial development, with the exception of shopping centres, at appropriate locations in the Athlone Environs.

P-AEP14 Retailing in Athlone Environs will be confined to local provision. It is the policy of the Council that any retail development will compliment existing provision. In dealing with applications for large scale retail development the Council will have regard to the provisions of the Local Government (Planning and Development) General Policy Directive (Shopping) 1998, which requires that the scale of the proposed development be justified in terms of need and its effect on established retail outlets and to the 'Retail Planning Guidelines' (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 2005).

O-AEP14 Promote the development of the town as a commercial centre;

3.2.5 Community, Institutional & Educational Development

Primary schools in Athlone Town Council and Environs had over 2,000 pupils enrolled in 2006/07. There are approx. ten primary schools in the town most of which are located in the Town Council area. Enrolment has increased from the 1997/98 level of 1,556 pupils, although the previous Plan predicted declining enrolments. There are five post primary schools serving the Town with a 2006/07 enrolment of 2,700 students.

Athlone Institute of Technology established in 1970 had an initial enrolment of 36 students, which has grown to over 5,000. The main campus is on the Dublin Road within the extended Town Council area, there is also a small Town Centre campus occupied by the Department of Design. The main campus is situated approximately 1.5 miles from the town centre on the Dublin Road and currently houses the Schools of Business, Management and General Studies, Engineering, and Science, the Library, the Information Technology Centre, the main student canteen facilities and the Institute's Administration offices. A new Tourism/Hospitality Building was officially opened in 2003 and there are further extension proposals to facilitate the School of Engineering.

In relation to projected need, it is not envisaged that significant population growth will be accommodated within the Athlone Environs area and any increased demand for education provision will be accommodated within the Town Council Area in the existing network of primary and secondary schools and in the planned new primary school within the Cornamaddy Action Area Plan. The Council will favour new developments in the educational sphere e.g. Schools, I.T. 2000 programme, which serve to broaden the level of service provided to the Community.

FÁS has its regional headquarters at Garrycastle in the Athlone Environs and trains apprentices and night students and runs short courses for businesses in its Athlone premises and in outreach centres. REHAB also have a large training centre at Garrycastle.

P-AEP15 To encourage and assist the formation, development, guidance and co-ordination of community organisations, local interest and self-help groups, and to co-operate with any bodies who wish to expand the provision of social facilities.

P-AEP16 To co-operate with the relevant education authorities to ensure that school and college sites are made available as needed. To facilitate the further development of third level education in the region, in the interests of the future economic, technology, scientific, commercial, industrial, social and cultural development of the State and specifically the Midland Region.

3.2.6 Public Servicing & Environmental Protection

Water & Drainage

The lands serviced by public sewerage will not be sufficient for the needs of the town over the next six years. Detailed investigation of lands on the periphery of the serviced area will be undertaken in order to prepare for the extension of the serviced area commencing with the lands in the vicinity of Cornamaddy, Blyry, Creggan and Bunnahinly, which are zoned for development.

The River Shannon is the water supply source and the treatment works is in need of modernisation. The development of a new water intake plant, treatment plant and distribution network is planned to increase the capacity of the regional water supply scheme. A wastewater minimisation programme is underway in the town. A number of surface water improvement schemes are at present being undertaken by the Council. Athlone's wastewater treatment works was constructed in 1992 and can be extended as necessary to cater for the projected needs.

Waste Disposal

Waste disposal is to a modern landfill site at Ballydonagh, to the east of Athlone, which is adequate to meet needs over the Plan period.

P-AEP17 To continue the development and improvement of the water supply and sewerage services, to provide for the anticipated water and drainage requirements of the area. Planning permissions will not be granted where it is likely that foul sewers or storm water systems will be unable to cope with the additional discharges. Where possible, development shall be serviced by a gravity system. Where this is not possible and where it is in the interests of proper planning and sustainable development of the area, pumping will be considered as an alternative.

P-AEP18 It is the policy of the Council that where a development is facilitated by public services, which have been or will be provided, a contribution towards the cost of providing such services will be required as provided by the Planning and Development Acts, 2000-2006. Contributions will be levied at the rate prevailing at the time.

P-AEP19 It is the policy of the Council that where a development includes the provision of roads, footpath or other services the Council will normally require satisfactory security from the developer in order to secure the provision and maintenance of such services.

P-AEP20 To conform to the Government and E.U. waste management hierarchy as follows:

- Prevention
- Reduction
- Re-use
- Recycling and
- Safe disposal subject to economic and technical feasibility.

P-AEP21 The Council will co-operate with other agencies in viable schemes for the extraction of useful materials from refuse for re-use or recycling.

P-AEP22 To ensure that those public areas and areas visible from public places are maintained free of litter.

P-AEP23 To eliminate all unauthorised fly tipping and to regulate and control the disposal of all builders spoil and rubble. To support national and international initiatives for limiting emissions of Greenhouse gases and encouraging the development of renewable energy sources.

(i) Renewable energy comes from natural, inexhaustible sources such as the sun, winds, falling water, oceans, plants and the earth. Energy can also be derived from a range of waste products such as sewage, refuse and agricultural waste.

(ii) In line with the principles of sustainable development, the Council will encourage the development of appropriate energy sources, which make use of natural resources in an environmentally acceptable manner.

O-AEP15 Carry out improvements to surface water drainage on the river AI.

O-AEP16 Development of South Westmeath Water Supply Scheme to include a new abstraction point and water treatment works to serve Athlone Environs and South Westmeath.

3.2.8 Transportation Accessibility & Parking

The Dublin/Westport, Dublin/Galway main rail lines run through Athlone. Service on these lines includes a daily commuter train to Dublin. A disused branch line links Athlone and Mullingar. Athlone is located on the N6 Dublin/Galway road, which is one of the most important arterial roads in the country.

The Athlone Relief Road, which was opened in 1991, has greatly relieved the traffic congestion caused by through traffic. Ongoing road works in the town are intended to encourage use of the relief road by local east - west traffic, in order to relieve traffic in the narrow town centre streets. The town is connected to Roscommon by the N61, to Cavan by the N55, to Birr by the N62, to Mullingar by the regional road R390, and to Tuam by the regional road R363. A large section of the Athlone Relief Road runs along and through Athlone Environs from the Dublin road roundabout to the Garrycastle Interchange after which the N6 is within the Town Boundaries until the crossing of the Shannon.

There is no direct access to the N6 where it is dual carriageway, lands which have good access via the interchanges are suitable for various forms of commercial use for which a prominent accessible location would be necessary and where the proposed uses would not compromise the carrying capacity of the national route. The new N6 will join the Athlone Relief Road within the Athlone Environs and this work will be completed by November 2008. The N6 dual carriageway from Kinnegad to Athlone will shorten commuting time to Dublin and will provide increased capacity on the national road, the environs area is strategically placed to the east side of Athlone to maximise potential links to the east region and Greater Dublin Area.

The large number of young people attending second level and third level educational institutions in the town presents an opportunity to encourage cycling and walking, while also assisting in sustaining a local public transport service. Bus Eireann operates a local radial service through the town.

P-AEP24 To co-operate with Athlone Town Council and Roscommon County Council and other agencies in improving traffic circulation in the town.

P-AEP25 To take action as necessary to improve traffic circulation.

P-AEP26 To promote the development of walking and cycling in the Athlone Environs. Cycling and walking are environmentally friendly, fuel-efficient and healthy modes of transport, and their development is in line with the principles of sustainability. It is intended to encourage the provision of secure bicycle parking facilities in district centres and to investigate the possibility of developing cycle-ways. It is intended to secure and further develop pathways.

P-AEP27 To promote road safety and to avoid the creation of traffic hazard. In the design and/or improvement of roads and in the assessment of planning applications for new developments the safety of road users, including motorists, cyclists and pedestrians, will be a primary consideration. Cyclists and pedestrians are especially vulnerable in road accidents and new design must pay particular attention to securing their safety.

P-AEP28 Where planning permissions are being granted for major new developments, such as offices, apartments, retail and industrial schemes, it is the policy of the Council to require that adequate covered facilities be provided for the secure parking of bicycles.

P-AEP29 To prohibit all direct access to the Athlone Relief Road.

P-AEP30 Where a development is not fully serviced by public car parking, it is the policy of the Council that a contribution towards the cost of providing such parking accommodation will be required, as provided for by the Local Government (Planning and Development) Acts 2000-2006. This charge will be related to the type of development proposed and the cost of the provision of the car park.

P-AEP31 To apply car parking requirement standards to all new developments in the Athlone Environs in accordance with **Section 7 of the Plan**. It will also be policy to allow the relaxation of same where a proposed development warrants this relaxation, and it is in the best interests of the area concerned.

O-AEP17 Reserve a line for eastern extension of Athlone Relief road / N6 through the Townlands of Creggan Upper, Creggan Lower and plan and provide for link to N62.

O-AEP18 Reserve a line for the proposed N6 motorway and interchange to connect to the Athlone Relief road.

O-AEP19 As part of the Action Area Plan for the Residential lands at Lissywollen north of the Athlone Relief road, determine a distribution road network for the area.

O-AEP20 As part of the Action Area Plan for the residential land and regional sports centre, between the Ballymahon Interchange and the Garrycastle Interchange south of the Athlone Relief road determine a line for the distributor road to serve the area.

O-AEP21 Provision of link road from Creggan to Golden Island and upgrade the level crossing at Bunnvalley to a bridge.

O-AEP22 Roundabout R916/N6 North of Garrycastle Interchange.

O-AEP23 Realignment of the R916 (700m) and construction of new road over rail-bridge.

3.2.8 Natural & Built Heritage

Conservation of the Built & Natural Environment

There are no Protected Structures at present in the Athlone Environs. The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage is being undertaken by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, buildings of architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, technical or social merit are identified in the Inventory.

There are a number of scheduled monuments within the Athlone Environs Area, it will be necessary to protect the archaeological value of the sites and monuments of importance through the exercise of development management powers.

While there are no sites of environmental importance designated within the Environs Area, the existing Dublin - Galway/Westport rail line and the disused Mullingar – Athlone rail line provide important wildlife corridors. Also, adjoining the zoned lands to the north east of the Environs Area is Crosswood Bog a (c)Special Area of Conservation and Natural Heritage Area. Where natural features are compromised by development proposals, the Council will exercise its development management power to protect the environment. Even small stretches of hedgerow or individual trees can be important parts of the natural environment and should be protected.

The Council will normally not grant planning permission for development that requires the felling of sound mature trees of native and broadleaf species and other species of interest or amenity; design and layout of development proposals should recognise important trees and tree stands and incorporate them into proposed layouts. Tree surgery rather than felling will be encouraged. Any proposals for tree removal relating to mature native or broadland species shall be supported by a report and assessment of the subject tree(s) undertaken by a suitably qualified arboriculturist.

P-AEP32 To protect from development those monuments within the Athlone Environs, which are listed in the Sites, and Monuments Record prepared by the Office of Public Works under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994.

P-AEP33 To prevent forms of development, which would be injurious to the town's architectural heritage, and to identify and compile a list of those buildings and structures of architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, technical or social interests for protection in the Record of Protected Structures (Schedule 4 of the County Development Plan).

P-AEP34 To implement the provisions of the Derelict Sites Act 1990 to prevent or remove injury to amenity arising from dereliction.

P-AEP35 To secure the development and renewal of obsolete areas, where they are identified.

P-AEP36 To restrict non-essential advertising structures, or any advertising structures, which would impact injuriously on amenity, the built environment or road safety, and to have unauthorised signs removed.

P-AEP37 It is the policy of the Council that trees or groups of trees that form a significant feature in the landscape shall be preserved. In the implementation of this policy the Council will consider making Tree Preservation Orders, where it appears expedient in the interest of amenity.

P-AEP38 To implement the provisions of both water pollution and air pollution legislation, in conjunction with other agencies, as appropriate.

P-AEP39 To protect the natural environment of Athlone Environs especially the River Shannon, the remains of the Esker and the wilderness corridor provided by the railway lines.

O-AEP24 To protect and preserve the heritage of Athlone Environs;

O-AEP25 Survey trees and groups of trees for possible protection by Tree Preservation Order;

O-AEP26 Protect monuments listed in the Record of Monuments and Places as established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Hinterland) Act 1994;

O-AEP27 Protect the sites listed in The Sites and Monuments Record;

3.2.9 Open Space, Amenity & Recreation

The Town Environs area is bounded on all sides, with the exception of its western boundary with the Town Council Area, by open countryside. It primarily consists of employment generating land uses such as enterprise and employment. There is a limited residential population in the environs area and no designated open space or sporting/recreational zoning. Open space will be provided within any proposed residential developments, sufficient to meet the requirements of the development proposed.

P-AEP40 It is the policy of the Council that adequate amenity and recreational open space and facilities, including community facilities and centres, should be available for all groups of the population at a convenient distance from their homes and places of work.

P-AEP41 To retain the open space use of lands with established recreational uses where practicable. It is the intention that such lands be retained in open space use and that their condition be managed in such a way as to be conducive to the maintenance or improvement of the amenity of the area in which they are situated. In the event of permission for development being granted on these lands, open space provision in excess of normal standards will be required, to maintain the open character of such parts of the land as are considered necessary by the Council.

P-AEP42 To link open space and amenity developments in order to secure integration of provision.

P-AEP43 To ensure the protection of existing amenities from new developments or obsolescence.

P-AEP44 To co-operate with sporting organisations who wish to develop or expand facilities.

P-AEP45 It is the policy of the Council to protect and extend the network of pathways and public rights of way in the town.

- O-AEP28** Upgrade and extend the amenities of the area.
- O-AEP29** In conjunction with Athlone Town Council prepare and implement an open space strategy for the town.
- O-AEP30** Integrate open space areas into the existing fabric of the town by means of pedestrian path systems.

3.3 MOATE TOWN PLAN

3.3.1 Profile & Resource Base

Moate is the third largest population centre in County Westmeath and is identified within tier 2 in the strategic settlement strategy of the Plan. Situated to the south of the County close to the Offaly border, it is reasonably accessible from all parts of the County. Located on the N6, the town has strong transportation links by road and is centrally positioned between Galway and Dublin. The railway connection from Mullingar is not currently utilised. The town is located 33km south of Mullingar, the County's administrative capital and 16km east of Athlone.

3.3.2 Historical Background

The town of Moate is part of the ancient territory of Moycoran in the kingdom of South Teffia. Prior to the coming of the Normans it was ruled by the O'Melaghlin's who earlier were High Kings of Ireland. The town gets its name from a large motte and bailey erected by the Normans at the end of the 12th century during their invasions of Ireland. The remains, which were erected on an esker can still be visited. The O'Melaghlin's erected the original Castle in the early 1500's. The Castle and land were confiscated under the Cromwellian settlement of 1656 and came into the hands of John Clibborn, a Quaker, whose descendants played a major role in the development of the town of Moate. Other Quaker families were attracted to the district and started small industries. In 1694 the first meetinghouse and burial ground were built, the ruins of which still remain.

The town grew in size in the 18th century with the establishment of industries such as tanning, cotton and linen manufacture. During that period a fine row of houses beside the Carmelite Church was built by the Quakers and has survived the centuries. Buildings like the Carmelite Church dated 1780 and St. Patrick's Hall built in 1770 also represent this era. The 19th century saw the development of Moate as a town with the building of schools, churches, the Courthouse, railway station and business houses. The Mercy Convent was built in 1860, and the Courthouse was erected in 1831, a two storey facade of three bays. On the north side of Church Street can be seen one of the remaining examples of the fine late 18th century three storey houses built in the town.

The urban character of the town is dominated by its wide main street, which is reminiscent of other midland towns such as its near neighbour, Ballymahon, Co. Longford. While this facilitates the establishment of wide sweeping vistas it does not allow for the development of the more intimate enclosed spaces of estate towns and villages with their more formal squares and greens. The development of Dun Na Sí and the Arts Centre has enhanced Moate's role as a significant heritage and entertainment centre for the Midland Region.

3.3.3 Population

The most recent population data for the town of Moate is the Census of 2006 when the population stood at 1,888, an increase of 24.2% over the period from 2002. The census of Moate recorded populations at the census of 1981 – 1,828, 1986 – 1,659, 1991 – 1,529, and 2002 – 1,520. Throughout that period the population of the town declined. The adjoining DED's of Moate, Ballybroder and Bellanalack are considered functionally part of the hinterland of Moate and information on these DED's is available from the 2006 census.

Population DED's of Moate, Ballybroder and Bellanalack							
DED	1996	2002	% Change 1996 - 2002	2006	% Change 2002 - 2006	Males 2006	Females 2006
Moate	1849	1941	5	2376	22.4	1198	1178
Ballybroder	205	250	22	254	1.6	123	131
Bellanalack	358	431	20.4	459	6.5	235	224
Total	2412	2622	8.7	3089	17.8	1556	1533
Moate town ²	1452	1520	4.7	1,888	24.2	949	939

² The data currently available from the 2006 census does not give information on census towns. This information will be available in 2007.

A projection for Moate based on an annual growth rate of 5% of the population of the town from 2002 would double the population by 2016, to in excess of 3000. This does not include the hinterland of the town. The significant projected growth of population for the county over the Plan period reflects the significant growth, which has been experienced arising principally from in-migration; and also the effect of the linked gateways of Athlone and Mullingar.

Since the 2002 Plan was adopted, 460 housing units have been completed in Moate, 317 are under construction and a further 485 have planning permission. The amount of housing land available for development in June 2007 was 82ha (this would include the 485 units above) which, at an average of 35 units per hectare (82ha less 10% for roads, open spaces, etc.), would provide for approximately 2,583 units, or a further increase in population of approx. 6,200; this is greatly in excess of predicted population growth. It is not necessary to zone additional lands for the Plan period. To ensure an appropriate and sequential growth, a development limit has been established which will act to co-ordinate the phased growth of the Town. Moate acts as a satellite town for Athlone with a significant number commuting to Athlone on a daily basis, population growth should be accompanied with a commensurate growth in employment in the town rather than relying on commuting, in order for the population growth to be sustainable. The reopening of the rail line which connects Athlone to Mullingar via Moate would make commuting to these towns and onwards by rail a more sustainable option and would open up other economic opportunities for Moate.

O-MTP1 Residential development will only be permitted on up to 50% of the remaining undeveloped Residential zoned lands in the Moate Town Plan for the term of the County Development Plan 2008 – 2014.

3.3.4 Enterprise & Employment

Moate falls within the commuting catchment of Athlone and to a lesser extent Mullingar and Tullamore, it is strategically located on the national road network within the linked gateway of the three primary regional towns.

Over 26ha of land is zoned for Enterprise & Employment use within the Town Plan which can support a number of indigenous industries and start up business to provide local employment. A further 18.5ha are zoned mixed use – town centre; other business and commercial development can be facilitated on such zoning complimenting traditional town centre shopping and leisure uses. The lands developed by Westmeath County Council for industrial use at Moate Business Park have not been fully utilised, yet the need for the development of further such sites is recognised. Lands are zoned on both the western and eastern approach on the N6 and will facilitate significant further development. It is anticipated that zoned lands in the Moate Town Plan will be available to meet demands over the Plan period.

P-MTP1 It is Council policy to promote Moate as an industrial location given its pivotal position on the Dublin/Galway road and to build on the existing industrial base. In particular the Council sees a need for serviced industrial sites to accommodate small-scale indigenous industries.

It is Council policy to facilitate the development of enterprise and the growth of employment in Moate to serve the Town, to this end the Council will co-operate with other agencies including the private sector in promoting economic and social development and in assisting the provision of employment opportunities.

To ensure a high standard of design for all enterprise development located on the approaches to the town, in the interests of protecting the urban fabric and attractive setting of the Town.

O-MTP2 It will be an objective during the lifetime of this plan to identify and acquire suitable land for enterprise use.

3.3.5 Housing

An estimated 460 new houses have been built in Moate during the current plan, a further 317 are under construction and 485 more have planning permission. New residential development requires supporting infrastructure: social and community; and good design, as addressed in the Section 2.8 Urban Areas. In any new development areas, a development proposal/planning application will be required to consider issues beyond the boundaries of the

