

## **PART 7 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT STANDARDS**

### **7.1 EXISTING RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

#### **7.1.1 Conversion of existing houses to flat accommodation**

In general there is a presumption in favour of retaining houses suited for family accommodation in their original undivided form.

Subdivision of houses into a number of smaller units will only be acceptable in areas which are characterised by large houses on relatively extensive sites where populations are generally falling, which are well served by public transport and where subdivision into a number of units would not result in a dramatic alteration to the character of the area, and provided, the original premises are more than 1,200 sq. ft. (111.48 sq.m.) (net floor area) excluding any garages or more than 1,400 sq. ft. (130 sq. m.) (net floor area) where they form part of a terrace.

The subdivision of housing above business premises and housing on primary traffic routes within urban areas may also be permitted.

In all instances the standard of development provided should satisfy the following criteria;

- The minimum size of the unit is 45m<sup>2</sup> or more,
- The internal space and design standards are acceptable,
- Flats are self-contained or, when this is not possible, have at least one bathroom and toilet for every two units, or one for every floor of a house,
- Kitchen facilities shall be provided in each unit,
- Sound insulation is installed to alleviate the problems of noise both between the new residential units and between them and neighbouring dwellings, and sound insulation and ventilation treatment against road and railway noise is installed on noise sensitive facades,
- Adequate, safe and secure access to all dwellings is provided,
- Those intended for families are provided on the ground floor or have direct access to a garden,
- Adequate parking is provided and the parking is not provided at the expense of garden or courtyard areas necessary for amenity purposes,
- Car parking in the surrounding grounds is dealt with sensitively; extensive parking areas to the front of the building line will be resisted,
- Each flat has a refuse bin storage area to accommodate three bins, household waste, recyclable materials and a brown bin,
- Each flat has washing/drying facilities which are suitably accessible to the occupants of that unit and well designed,
- Any extensions or additions are limited to an appropriate size and meet with the council's design standards.

#### **7.1.2 Extensions and alterations to Dwellings**

Extensions to existing dwellings will be assessed in terms of impact on existing adjacent residential amenity and the design approach.

Impact on residential amenity can result from over-shadowing, loss of light and loss of outlook or from loss of privacy resulting from over looking. Extensions will not be permitted where they result in a negative impact to adjacent residential amenity.

In terms of design, care should be taken to ensure that the design satisfies the following criteria:

- Follows the pattern of the existing building as much as possible,
- Is constructed with similar finishes and with similar window arrangements to the existing building so that they integrate better with it,
- Elevational detailing should match that of the host structure,

- In the case of an extension to the side of a house, be set back at least 150mm from the front wall of the existing house to give a more satisfactory appearance,
- In some circumstances a gap of 1m to be retained between it and the neighbouring dwelling so as to prevent dwellings which were intended to be detached from becoming a terrace,
- Have a pitched roof, particularly when visible from the public road or when the building is two or three storeys high. The traditional ridged roof is likely to cause fewer problems in the future rather than flat ones,
- Dormer extensions should not obscure the main features of the existing roof, i.e. should not break the ridge or eaves lines of the roof. Box dormers should be avoided,
- Front dormers should normally be set back at least three-tile courses from the eaves line and should be clad in a material matching the existing roof,
- Proposed side extensions must retain side access to the rear of the property where possible.

The Planning Authority will produce a Supplementary Planning Guidance Note relating to house extensions and conversion and sub-division of existing houses during the term of the Plan.

## **7.2 STANDARDS FOR NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN AN URBAN AREA**

### **7.2.1 Infill Residential Development**

Potential sites may range from small gap infill, unused or derelict land and backland areas, up to larger residual sites or sites assembled from a multiplicity of ownerships. In residential areas where the character is established by its density or architectural form, a balance has to be struck between the reasonable protection of the amenities and privacy of adjoining dwellings, the protection of the established character and the need to provide residential infill. The design approach should be based on recognition of the need to protect the amenities of directly adjoining neighbours and the general character of the area and its amenities, i.e. views, architectural quality, civic design etc. However, subject to reasonable conformity with these, developments on infill sites, particularly those in excess of 0.5 hectares (1.2 acres), should be capable of proposing their own density and character. Local authority intervention may be needed to facilitate this type of development, in particular with regard to the provision of access to backlands.

### **7.2.2 Density**

The Planning Authority will have regard to the 'Residential Density Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (DoEHLG; 1999) as a basis for the assessment of proposals. More specific recommendations may be adopted in Action Area Plans.

Higher densities will be considered in respect of all sites in urban areas, but particularly those developments in excess of 0.5 hectares (c1.23 acres). When considering proposals for housing developments the Council will give first priority to securing a good environment for residents, having regard both to the individual characteristics of the site and the character of the surrounding area. Subject to this, development should make the best use of land and new dwellings should be constructed at an appropriate density.

In some special circumstances, e.g. in areas of environmental or architectural merit, the appropriate density may need to be lower. It will not be necessary to match adjacent densities except in very small infill situations. However higher density will require higher quality.

### **7.2.3 Site Coverage**

In order to prevent adverse effects of over-development in inner urban locations site coverage of between 70% and 80% would be appropriate. However, flexibility will be applied in the interests of achieving a more sustainable use of inner urban/town centre land.

**7.2.4 Plot Ratio**

Plot ratio is defined as the gross floor area of buildings on a site divided by the gross site area and is used to depict the intensity of use on the site. In calculating the area of site adjoining road widths are excluded. The following range of indicative plot ratios is recommended:

Town Centre/Brownfield: 1.0-2.5

Inner Suburban: 0.5 -1.0

Outer suburban:

Close proximity to public transport: 0.35-0.5

Remote from public transport: 0.25-0.35

**7.2.5 Design**

Development proposals must exhibit a high quality of architectural design and layout in order to achieve a high quality living environment. All housing developments will be assessed in both quantitative and qualitative terms as to whether they demonstrate the key elements of a good urban design and meet prescribed standards. This may be summarised as follows:

**Table 7.1:** Elements of good design

<u>Qualitative Criteria</u>	<u>Quantitative Criteria</u>
- Safety	- Density
- Privacy	- Site sizes
- Sense of identity	- Public open space provision
- Variety	- Recreational open space
- Functionalism	- Play areas, etc.
- Convenience	
- Access for the disabled	
- Overall aesthetics incorporating hard and soft landscaping	

**7.2.6 Privacy and enclosure**

- (i) In order to achieve adequate privacy and open areas between houses in new residential development the normal minimum rear garden space shall be not less than 10 metres in depth. This should be measured to the rearmost wall of the house and should not extend less than the full width of the house. As it is appreciated that this standard may not be readily complied with on all occasions, discretion will be employed where a side garden of equal or greater dimensions can be substituted for rear garden space and where the building design provides for the achievement of privacy.
- (ii) Where a front boundary wall or fencing is provided, the design and materials shall be such as to provide a pleasing design feature to the overall housing layout.
- (iii) Rear boundary walls or fences shall be constructed to a height of not less than 1.8 metres. Permanent screening of a similar height should also be provided between the gardens of adjoining houses for a minimum distance of 2.5 metres behind the rear of the house.

**7.2.7 Over-looking**

In general there should be a distance of 22m between opposing rear first floor windows. Innovative dwelling types, such as single aspect houses which have their main sleeping and living areas on one side, and circulation and bathrooms on the other, can be closer. These housing forms create more of an intimate village form. Where developments are proposed in existing residential areas a distance of 35m or greater is required in the case of overlooking living room windows and balconies.

Any window proposed at ground floor level shall not be less than 1 metre from the boundary it faces.

**7.2.8 Overshadowing**

This will be problem with significantly high buildings or when new buildings are located close to adjoining structures. Daylight and shadow projection diagrams should be submitted for such proposals. The recommendations of 'Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice', (B.R.E. 1991) or B.S. 8026 'Lighting for Buildings, Part 2 1992: Code of Practice for Day lighting' should be followed in this regard.

**7.2.9 Private Open Space for houses**

To ensure that conventional dwellings have adequate private space the following standards, as set down in the Residential Density Guidelines (DOE LG, 1999), will apply;

- In general, development should have regard to the general character of the area in which they are located,
- For 3/4/5 bedroom houses, a minimum of 60-75m<sup>2</sup> should be provided as private open space,
- 1 to 2 bedroom houses, a minimum of 48m<sup>2</sup> should be provided as private open space,
- A garden of 25m<sup>2</sup> should be considered the minimum for inner urban infill dwellings. Consideration will be given to further reduction if the site is difficult, is on a road frontage, is less than 10m deep and design is of a high standard.

Where appropriate a condition may be put on permissions requiring that no additional development whatsoever take place within the curtilage of each house save with a prior grant of permission, notwithstanding the exempted development provisions of the Local Government (Planning and Development) Regulations 2000 - 2006 (or any amendment or replacement of said Regulations).

Innovative layouts may contain a combination of private and semi-private spaces in courtyard layouts. It may be considered appropriate to accept the sum of the area of both spaces as satisfying the private open space requirement for these dwellings.

All houses (terraced, semi-detached, detached) should have an area of private open space behind the building line.

**Table 7.2** Private open space for houses:

Accommodation size	Min private open area
1-2 bedrooms	48m <sup>2</sup>
3-4-5 bedrooms	60-75m <sup>2</sup>

**7.2.10 Public Open Space**

Open space in housing estate areas shall normally be based on a standard of 15% minimum of gross site area. The open space provision should be on a hierarchical system distributed throughout the housing area, ranging from small children's play areas, located in sight of their homes to larger areas where recreation and games can be facilitated.

Regard should be given to "Residential Density Guidelines" (DoELG, 1999). Standards will be divided between qualitative and quantitative and policy and standards in this regard are scheduled in Table 7.2 above.

**7.2.11 Internal Standards for apartments**

The Planning Authority will have regard to standards scheduled in the 'Social Housing: Design Guidelines', (Dept. of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 1999) and the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (2007), in the assessment of the quality and adequacy of residential layout.

The recommended minimum floor areas and standards for apartments are as follows:

**Table 7.3** Minimum overall apartment floor areas:

One bedroom	45 sq m (38 sq m)*
Two bedroom	73 sq m (55 sq m)*
Three bedrooms	90 sq m (70 sq m)*

\* Figures in brackets refer to 1995 guidelines

**Table 7.4** Minimum aggregate floor areas for living/dining/kitchen rooms, and minimum widths for the main living/dining rooms for apartments.

Apartment type	Width of living/dining room	Aggregate floor area of living / dining / kitchen area*
One bedroom	3.3 m	23 sq m
Two bed	3.6 m	30 sq m
Three bedrooms	3.8 m	34 sq m

\* Note: An enclosed (separate) kitchen should have a minimum floor area of 6.5 sq. metres. In most cases, the kitchen should have an external window.

**Table 7.5** Minimum bedroom floor areas/widths for apartments

Type	Minimum width	Minimum floor area
Single bedroom	2.1 m	7.1 sq m
Double bedroom	2.8 m	11.4 sq m
Twin bedroom	2.8 m	13 sq m

\* Note: Minimum floor areas exclude built-in storage presses.

**Table 7.6** Minimum aggregate bedroom floor areas for apartments

One bedroom	11.4 sq m
Two bedroom	11.4 + 13 sq m = 24.4 sq m
Three bedrooms	11.4 + 13 + 7.1 sq m = 31.5 sq m

**Table 7.7** Minimum storage space requirements

One bedroom	3 sq m
Two bedrooms	6 sq m
Three or more bedrooms	9 sq m

### 7.2.12 Private Open Space for apartments

The provision of some private open area increases amenity of apartment living thereby making them more sustainable. For this reason, the provision of some private gardens, suitably landscaped, should be included in new apartment developments. Courtyards, terraces/patios, balconies and roof gardens, particularly in the inner urban areas should be considered in the design of new apartment development, where it is not practicable to provide a private garden.

To ensure that apartments and flats have adequate private space the following standards, as set down in the Residential Density Guidelines (DOE LG, 1999), and the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government; Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for Apartments (2007) will apply:

**Table 7.8** Minimum floor areas for main apartment balconies in the town centre/inner urban areas

One bedroom	5 sq m
Two bedroom	7 sq m
Three bedroom	9 sq m

Inner Urban/Town Centres:

1 bedroom apartment: min. of 10m<sup>2</sup> of private open space  
2-3 bedroom apartment: min. of 15-20m<sup>2</sup> of private open space

The shortfall in provision shall be made up in the form of communal space.

Outer suburban areas:

- 1 bedroom apartment: min. of 20m<sup>2</sup> of private open space  
2-3 bedroom apartment: min. of 30-40m<sup>2</sup> of private open space

In outer suburban areas private space may be in the form of communal gardens or courtyards.

### 7.2.13 Landscaping

Trees and shrubs help blend new houses and buildings into the landscape and enhance the amenity, aesthetic quality and wildlife value of a development. Where possible, existing trees and fences/ hedgerows should be preserved and incorporated into the design. Detailed proposals providing for a mix of both hard and soft landscaped areas should form part of the estate development application. In the interests of sustainable development, existing trees or hedgerows should be retained. Additional planting should be selected from native species. Applicants should refer to Council Publications in this regard.

### 7.2.14 Phasing of large development

- (i) In large developments the Planning Authority will seek phasing programmes. The phasing can be by: number of units over a certain time period, or on completion of a particular area of a development. Commencement of any next phase will not be permitted until all services and infrastructures are completed to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.
- (ii) The Planning authority may condition that no houses in a development shall be occupied until services to each house has been completed and are operational.

### 7.2.15 Taking in charge

Generally, individual phases of development will not be taken in charge, only the entire completed development will be considered. In any applications to have a development taken in charge, the Council will have regard to its policy document 'Taking in charge policy for private housing developments.'

### 7.2.16 Parking

Car parking for detached and semi-detached housing should be within the house site. Car parking for apartments and detached terraced housing should be in informal groups overlooked by housing units. The visual impact of large areas of car parking should be reduced by the judicious use of screen planting, low walls and the use of textured or coloured paving for parking bays.

**Table 7.9** Parking for new houses

Dwelling 4+ bedroom units	2 spaces per dwelling
Dwelling/Apartment 1-3 bedroom units	1 space per unit
Visitor Parking	1 visitor parking space for every 3 residential units

### 7.2.17 Road design and layout

Major Access Roads Main link within housing areas serving 100-300 residential units. Speeds should be physically constrained by the road layout between 20mph and 30mph.

Minor access Roads Generally serve small groups of houses, up to 50 dwellings. Speeds physically constrained by road layout to 20mph. Some of these will have a shared surface for vehicles and other road users. The careful positioning of buildings, landscaping and the use of different materials can help to reinforce the need to reduce speed and reduce the dominance of the motor vehicles. (Source; Traffic Management Guidelines).

### 7.3 STANDARDS FOR NEW HOUSING IN A RURAL AREA

It is the Council's intention to enable and enhance new development in the countryside to be absorbed in a sustainable way. Development should reflect the vernacular aspects in design and treatment to ensure a respect for the local and traditional context, with minimal intrusion on the landscape and utilising appropriate design, scale and materials and use of planting and landscaping.

The Council has produced a supplementary design guideline, the 'Westmeath Rural Design Guidelines' to guide and advise rural development, the Council will have regard to the guidelines in the assessment or rural residential proposals.

#### 7.3.1 Plot size

The scale of the building should be appropriate to its settings. Larger houses and their resultant form, whilst they may be visible should be contained in the landscape, avoiding obtrusiveness. The size of the site is an important factor. A small, typical, half-acre site is unsuitable in a country setting for a larger house.

#### 7.3.2 Building line

The set back of buildings from the public road will depend on site size, adjacent building line, and topography of the site. In the absence of existing houses or a specific character, new developments will be required to be set back to building lines as follows, subject to requirements of good design and layouts:

**Table 7.10** Building line setback

Road Capacity	Distance from centre line of roadway (minimum)
Dual Carriageway	45m (148ft) from the centre line of the near-side lane
National Route	45m (148ft)
Regional Route	37m (121ft)
County Roads	Local Factors

#### 7.3.3 Orientation

This will be influenced by the direction of the sun and make maximum use of existing landscape screening, regard should be had to the Westmeath Rural Design Guidelines.

#### 7.3.4 Boundary treatment

Hedgerows should be retained and reinforced in all circumstances; only in exceptional circumstances shall hedgerows be allowed to be removed. Native hedgerow species are recommended for planting, plants of local provenance are always preferable and do not interfere with the genetics of the wild populations. (see appendix 8.2.5)

Trees provide an attractive element to any garden or home and help to blend new housing into the countryside. As above native trees are ecologically more valuable than non-native species (see appendix 8.2.5)

Planting clumps of trees is preferable to single trees, and biodiversity value can be further enhanced, by connecting new planting with hedgerows, woodland edges and rivers and ponds.

#### 7.3.5 Traffic safety and sight visibility

It in the interests of traffic safety, it is an objective to ensure that appropriate sight distances, as set out below, are provided from vehicular entrances on the road network. As set out by the NRA Design Manual for Roads and Bridges site distances shall be measured from a point 2.4m from the road edge at the proposed access to a point at the near edge of the approaching carriageway.

The prescribed site distances are as follows;

- County Roads: 90 metres (295 feet)
- Regional Roads: 150metres (495 feet)
- National Roads: 230 metres (754 feet)

This requirement is related to average conditions on a straight road. More stringent sight distances may be required in particular conditions. The 90 metre standard for County Roads may be reduced to 60 metres on secondary or tertiary roads at the discretion of the Planning Authority. A discretionary 10% margin may also apply generally and in areas of particular environmental sensitivity.

The new entrance shall be located within a 12m x 3m parking strip which shall adjoin the metalled edge of the public road. Hedgerow disturbance should be limited to that required to provide the parking strip and required sightlines only.

### 7.3.6 Entrances

A new entrance should combine the requirement for continuity in the type of boundary with carefully considered linking of walls or hedges to gate piers and gate.

Walls shall be of masonry or rendered and capped block construction. The use of brick must be carefully considered and shall only be permitted where it is in character with the rural area. The entrance gate shall be located within the parking strip and recessed 4m behind the new fence line. The entrance gate shall be joined to the new fence line by wing walls which shall be splayed at angles of 45 degrees. Walls shall be a maximum height of 1.2m.

**Table 7.11** New rural entrances should not be located within the following distances of junctions.

	<b>Adjacent</b>	<b>Opposite</b>
<b>County Roads</b>	50m (165 feet)	10m (33feet)
<b>Regional Roads</b>	100m (330 feet)	25m (87 feet)
<b>National roads</b>	150m (495 feet)	50m (165 feet)

### 7.3.7 Drainage requirements

Where public services are available (or likely to be), the developer will be required to connect to them.

The standards for single private wastewater treatment will be as set out in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 'Wastewater Treatment Manual on Wastewater Treatment Systems for Single Houses' 2000 and as may be amended, which requires certification by a person, suitably qualified, and with professional indemnity insurance, as listed on a panel established by the local authority for the purpose.

### 7.3.8 Water

Each dwelling shall have a viable and secure access to a water supply provided to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.

## 7.4 ENTERPRISE AND EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT IN AN URBAN AREA

### 7.4.1 Development Considerations

Industrial and commercial developments on greenfield sites will be required to satisfy minimum requirements for design regarding location, layout, finishes, access, tree planting and landscaping, boundary treatment, water supply, drainage, and effluent disposal.

In addition, sufficient space shall be reserved within the curtilage of the sites for parking of all employees and visitors cars, and for the loading and unloading of vehicles. Parking should be integrated in the overall design layout, and expanses of parking shall be broken by planting and landscaping.

It is intended that such developments should leave one-third of the site free from buildings and that adequate rear access to business premises be made. The Council shall require that adequately screened onsite storage be provided for raw materials, waste products and finished goods.

The Council will require that the design of structures be of a good standard and compatible with the design of adjacent structures in terms of building line, heights, roof design, proportions, window design, materials etc., and will consider the preparation of a Design Guide for Industrial Estates during the Plan period.

The Council does not favour the splitting of occupancy on serviced sites and will consider the designation of sites for smaller cluster/inclusion units.

The Council will require full details of the nature of and processes involved in industrial activities together with the means of dealing effectively with effluents, noise, solid waste and gas emissions if relevant.

The Council will encourage the option of living over commercial or retail developments, particularly in central areas.

The Council will, in dealing with applications for industrial development, take account of relevant provisions of the Regulations on Environmental Impact Assessment (SI 349/89) and where relevant, the Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992, in relation to integrated pollution control licensing.

#### **7.4.2 Facilitation of enterprise and employment development**

The Council will be prepared to use its powers of site assembly where appropriate to facilitate desirable development for enterprise and employment.

#### **7.4.3 Site coverage**

It is an objective of the Planning Authority to seek to achieve the following standards with regard to new development;

- (i) In the built up commercial areas of the town, it is desirable that an adequate proportion of sites be left without covered structures for off loading, air circulation, refuse storage etc. Generally 20% of sites being developed for commercial or institutional or industrial purposes will be required to be left uncovered.
- (ii) A maximum plot ratio of 1:2 will be imposed. Plot ratio is defined as the gross floor area of buildings on a site divided by the gross site area. Provision of rear access to business premises may also be required. As a general rule the Council will favour industrial activity characterised by low water and energy consumption and minimal waste production.

#### **7.4.4 Mixed use developments**

In considering mixed use developments within the areas identified as appropriate in the County's towns and villages. The following mechanism for securing mixed-use developments in appropriate locations will be applied;

- (a) No less than two separate planning uses will normally be allowed (i.e. retail/residential or retail/offices etc.);
- (b) Where two separate planning uses are proposed, no one singular use will prevail in terms of >70% of the total gross floorspace;
- (c) Where more than two separate uses are proposed, no one singular use will prevail in terms of >50% of the total gross floorspace.

Without such a mechanism it is recognised that one predominant use may prevail on such designated lands. Mixed use developments in town/village centres are appropriate in attaining

sustainable development objectives, creating opportunities to live, work, shop etc. within urban environments and reduce the propensity to travel by the private car.

#### 7.4.5 Childcare

Childcare facilities should comply with the provisions of 'Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities.' Childcare facilities are a key element in the provision of sustainable communities, and the following locations are considered appropriate locations for childcare facilities;

- (i) In communities/larger new housing estates
- (ii) The vicinity of concentrations of work places, such as industrial estates, business parks and any other locations where there are significant numbers working
- (iii) In the vicinity of schools
- (iv) Neighbourhood, district and town centres
- (v) Adjacent to public transport corridors, park-and-ride facilities, pedestrian routes and dedicated cycle ways.

In relation to new housing areas a standard of one childcare facility providing for a minimum of 20 childcare places per approximately 75 dwellings shall be provided.

Applicants should note that the following standards should be applied in all applications for full day-care childcare facilities, since the planning authority will have regard to them.

Minimum floor space per child; 2.32 m<sup>2</sup>, exclusive of kitchen, bathroom and hall, furniture or permanent fixtures.

The Explanatory Guide to the Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations, 1996, recommends;

AGE OF CHILD	FLOOR AREA PER CHILD
0 – 1	3.70 m <sup>2</sup>
1 – 2	2.80 m <sup>2</sup>
2 – 6	2.32 m <sup>2</sup>

These recommendations relate to clear floor space per child. Extraneous areas such as kitchens, toilets, sleeping and other ancillary areas are deemed to be separate.

Adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to play indoors and outdoors during the day are provided, having regard to the number of preschool children attending the service, their age and the amount of time they spend in the premises.

The care of babies should be confined to the ground floor only. In relation to drop-in and seasonal services, for pre-school children the Explanatory Guide to the Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations, 1996 recommends the following;

- Clear floor space per child: 2.00m<sup>2</sup>, exclusive of kitchen, bathroom and hall, furniture or permanent fixtures. In relation to drop-in services for other children and after-school care, the following indicative standard is suggested (but should be considered having regard to all relevant circumstances of the application, including the need for such services in the area and the likely number of hours each child will spend in the facility on an average day),
- Clear floor space per child: 2.00m<sup>2</sup>, exclusive of kitchen, bathroom and hall, furniture or permanent fixtures.

In relation to all applications for childcare facilities, the Information which should be submitted (as a minimum) is as follows:

- (i) Nature of the facility;
  - Full day care
  - Sessional

- Drop In
- After School Care
- (ii) Numbers of children being catered for and number of staff (part time and full time),
- (iii) Parking provision for both customers and staff,
- (iv) Proposed hours of operation,
- (v) Open space provision and measures for management of same.

#### 7.4.6 Petrol filling stations

Regard shall be had to the Retail Planning Guidelines, (DOELG, 2005) and the County Retail Strategy when accessing applications.

Proposals for petrol stations shall comply with the requirements of the Foras Forbatha document RT 181 Geometric Design Guidelines (Intersections at Grade, 1986) and the document Design Manual for roads and Bridges National Roads Authority (2000) along with the Dangerous Substances Regulations SI 311 (1979).

Petrol filling stations can provide a wide range of retail goods in an associated shop. These shops should in general remain ancillary to the use of the site as a petrol filling station. A shop of up to 100m<sup>2</sup> is considered acceptable when associated with a petrol filling station. Above this threshold, the sequential test approach will be applied, i.e. the retail element of the development should be assessed by the by the planning authority in the same way as would an application for a retail development (without petrol filling facilities) in the same location.

New petrol filling stations and refurbished existing stations will be required to have a high quality of overall design and architectural layout to ensure and attractive environment, which integrates into its surroundings. Standard corporate designing will have to be modified as required by local circumstances. The forecourt canopy should be integrated into the overall design, and sited so that it does not dominate the surrounding building.

Petrol stations will not generally be permitted adjoining residential areas, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that no significant damage to residential amenities will occur by reason of factors such as noise, visual obstruction, safety considerations or fumes and smells. Hours of operation may be limited in residential areas. Car washing and turbo-drying facilities are to be sited so as not to interfere with residential amenities.

#### Design and Layout:

- a) A minimum frontage of 30m within the 60kmp/h (40mph) speed limit and 45m in other speed limits areas.
- b) A minimum distance of 7m from the pump island to the road boundary.
- c) Two access points between 7-9m wide, with a minimum junction radius of 10.7m.
- d) A min distance of 50m from entrance to nearest major junction and 25m to nearest minor junction.
- e) A footpath of 2m wide with 0.5m high wall along front boundary.
- f) A petrol/water interceptor to the surface to the surface water drainage.
- g) A scheme of landscaping.
- h) All new petrol stations must be laid out in such a manner that vehicles are re-fuelled, and can wait to be re-fuelled, clear of the adjoining roadway, thus access shall be designed to give best visibility.
- i) The layout of new or redeveloped petrol filling stations shall permit safe access for delivery tankers up to 15.5m in length, and an adequate off road area shall be provided for parking these vehicles safely without obstructing access to pumps while fuel is being delivered to the petrol filling station.
- j) Forecourt lighting including canopy should be limited to that which is necessary for the safe operation of the petrol filing station but external lighting should be diverted away from the public roadway to prevent a traffic hazard and so as not to interfere with amenities of adjoining buildings.

#### **7.4.7 Amusement arcades**

In considering proposals for amusement arcades the Council will have regard to the likely impact on the amenity of neighbour activities. By their nature they rarely enhance the character and quality of buildings or the area. There will be a presumption against locating them or expanding existing arcades in primary frontages or smaller settlements in order to maintain the vitality and character of shopping areas. They will not be permitted close to residential areas, schools, churches and other community used buildings or associated lands due to the potential for noise and general disturbance.

#### **7.4.8 Automatic teller machines**

The provision of automatic teller machines will be strictly monitored having regard to the need to protect the character of the relevant building and to allow the normal function of the footpath. The Council would seek to minimise the impact of these machines by not allowing canopies and encouraging the provision of lobby facilities.

### **7.5 ENTERPRISE AND EMPLOYMENT IN A RURAL AREA**

#### **7.5.1 Agriculture**

##### **Agricultural buildings and structures**

- (i) The design, scale, siting and layout of agricultural buildings should respect, and where possible, enhance the rural environment.
- (ii) Buildings should generally be located a minimum of 100metres from the nearest dwelling other than the applicants dwelling.
- (iii) Applicants must demonstrate their ability to store and dispose of agriculture waste.
- (iv) In visually sensitive areas the Council will seek to group together and site buildings in an appropriate manner, and require the use of harmonious external materials to minimise obtrusion on the landscape. The use of dark coloured cladding, notably dark browns, greys, greens and reds are most suitable for farm buildings, and roof areas should be darker than walls.

##### **New buildings/structures**

- (i) New buildings for industrial or commercial enterprises on farm holdings may be acceptable if they are small-scale and can be satisfactorily integrated into an existing group of farm buildings.
- (ii) A new building separate from any existing group of buildings will not be approved in the following circumstances;
  - Where the proposed use would result in nuisance problems for an existing dwelling.
  - Where an additional building would give rise to or exacerbate access or servicing difficulties at the existing group of buildings.
  - Where a location separate from the existing building group would permit the proposed development to be more satisfactorily integrated into the landscape.

##### **Reuse of existing buildings**

- (i) Planning permission may be granted for the re-use of redundant farm buildings for small-scale industrial purposes, provided the Council is satisfied about the following matters:
  - That the building was previously in agricultural use for a reasonable period of time.
  - That it is no longer required for agricultural purposes.
  - That the use can be largely contained within the existing building.
  - That any alterations to the building are relatively minor and that their design and materials respect its architectural style.
- (ii) Where permission is given for the conversion of a building, which is part of an agricultural holding, exempted development rights for new farm buildings on that holding may be withdrawn.

**Agricultural related industry**

- (i) Agricultural-related industrial development may be permitted within the agricultural zone where it does not conflict with the amenity or viable use of farm holdings.
- (ii) Other considerations include traffic safety, pollution and waste control, and the satisfactory treatment of effluents, smells and noise, the size and form of building and the extent to which they can be integrated into the landscape.

**Intensive agriculture**

Intensive agriculture proposals shall not be permitted where such proposals would;

- Be located on roads which would not be capable of accommodating heavy vehicles generated by these productive units
- Have an adverse environmental impact on soil, ground water or rural amenities
- Have insufficient ability to deal with the disposal of wastes and slurries in an environmentally sustainable manner.

**7.5.2 Piggery developments**

- (i) New piggery developments exceeding 3000 pig units (1 sow litter = 10.p.u, 1 pig = 1 p.u.) shall preferably be sited a minimum distance of 5 km from existing population centres exceeding 200 persons. The following shall be taken into consideration:
  - (a) Where considered warranted by the Sanitary Authority, a treatment plant shall be provided for piggery developments.
  - (b) The developer shall have all lands available for spreading in his/her ownership.
  - (c) Management controls for slurry spreading shall have regard to;
    1. Spreading rates based on assessment of lands concerned;
    2. Storage tank capacities with at least 6 months winter storage;
    3. Time of spread;
    4. Distance from water-courses, with a minimum distance of 30 m in all cases, and;
    5. Distance from houses and public buildings, with a minimum distance of 100m except with the consent of the owner.
  - (d) Band spreading or soil injection of all slurries shall be a prerequisite for all piggery developments. Slurry spreading by splash plates shall not be permitted. The use of odour masking agents when slurry spreading shall be required in appropriate developments.
  - (e) Where other than the public water supply is being utilised as the source of water supply, the applicant shall satisfy the planning authority as to adequacy of source.
  - (f) Where an application for an intensive piggery development is made the following will generally be the council's requirements.
- (ii) Prior scoping with the developer of a comprehensive E.I.S. covering all relevant impacts both physical and socio-economic.
- (iii) Acceptance of the E.I.S. only on the basis of proper treatment of all impacts on a multidisciplinary basis and inclusion of technological mitigating measures, where appropriate.

**7.5.3 Extractive industry**

The Planning Authority will have regard to the provisions of the DoEHLG's "Quarries and Ancillary Activities; Guidelines for Planning Authorities" in the assessment and determination of development proposals.

In assessing an application for development (whether for a new quarry or an extension to an existing) the need for the development in terms of national importance and the impact of the development on the local economy together with the following;

- Nature and quantity of aggregate(s) to be extracted, including total and annual tonnage of excavated aggregate(s).
- Location – relative to dwellings or other developments (within km of site), aquifers and groundwater, environmentally sensitive areas, special amenity areas and areas of archaeological potential in particular.
- Description of development works including buildings, fixed and mobile plant, roads, fuel tanks, stockpiles, storage of soil, overburden and waste materials, settling ponds.
- Estimated working life of quarry; including phasing programme.
- Working methods, maximum extent and depth of working and hours of operation-frequency of blasting etc.
- Nature and extent of operations including ancillary processes (such as crushing, concrete manufacturing) and equipment to be used.
- Noise generation and control.
- Dust generation and control.
- Waste disposal-waste rock, unmarketable products etc.
- Water supply and discharge requirements.
- Impact on water table: minimisation of disturbance to the existing surface and subsurface hydrological regime must be ensured on site and in proximity to the quarry.
- Ecology; Due consideration must also be given to sites of ecological value and designated species which lie outside designated sites.
- Ground Stability; this is not just an issue in shaft mining or underground quarrying but also relates to vertical surfaces left in place after stone, or aggregate extraction.
- Transportation arrangements for products and road network in the area.
- Effects on amenity of the area and in particular residential, visual amenity.
- Natural and proposed screening of site.
- Restoration and aftercare proposals- Aftercare proposals should be submitted with the planning application. For example: intended landform gradients and drainage of the site following mitigation and aftercare works. It should be noted that the record of past restoration by the developer will be taken into account.

### **Duration**

In evaluating applications for permission for new quarries, consideration may be given to limited duration permissions, to allow for the re-evaluation of the development in light of unforeseen environmental implications and in light of changes in environmental standards and technology.

### **Rehabilitation**

To ensure that all existing extractive sites shall be rehabilitated to suitable land uses and that all future extraction activities shall be subject to comprehensive rehabilitation and landscaping programmes. For larger sites in particular, a phased rehabilitation scheme will be appropriate. Each planning application shall be considered on a case-by-case basis and where relevant will be dealt with under the Waste Management Strategy. Opportunities for habitat creation will be explored where appropriate to enhance the natural heritage of the site.

### **Bonding**

Developers will be required, by way of planning condition to lodge a financial bond to ensure satisfactory reinstatement of the site following the completion of extraction. The past record of the operator will be taken into account. A financial contribution may also be required from the developer towards the cost of upgrading or repairing the local road network.

### **Development assessment criteria**

Planning Applications for permission for rock, sand or gravel extraction should provide sufficient detail to address;

- a) Site Layout;

- Full details of the nature of material to be extracted; the type of rock, sand or gravel.
  - Full details of the location and layout of the plant, extent of workings proposed including plans, elevations and sections.
  - Maps showing (a) total site area, (b) area to be excavated, (c) any ancillary proposed development, (d) all dwellings or other development (within 1km of site).
  - Full details of forecourt planning, including entrances and exits.
  - Full details for provision on site for parking of cars, trucks and other mobile machinery.
- b) Landscape;
- Details of existing landscape features such as contours, trees, hedgerows, boundary walls, buildings and other items, existing on site, and within 0.5 kilometres of the outer boundaries of the site.
  - Details of over ground and underground services existing on the site.
  - Details of the proposed screening of the site during extraction and prior to rehabilitation.
  - The likely environmental effects of the quarry development and proposals to mitigate against negative effects.
- c) Protection of the Built and Natural Environment;
- Details of all items of archaeological, historical and scientific interest present on the site or which would be affected by the proposed development.
  - Protection of identified geological or geomorphological heritage features.
  - The protection or conservation of both ground and surface water resources.
  - Effective control of gaseous emissions and dust.
  - Noise, vibration and subsidence.
- d) Work Programme, a comprehensive programme for work will have to be presented by operators covering;
- The intended phasing and annual rate of excavation and locations of soil heaps or tailings. An operational plan with maps should be submitted.
  - The water supply available on site and details of minimum flow.
  - Details of the method of extraction, any ancillary processes (such as crushing, concrete manufacture, etc.), equipment to be used, stockpiles, storage of soil and overburden, storage of waste materials, settling ponds.
  - Description of development works (buildings, fixed and mobile plant, roads, fuel tanks, water supply and drainage, earth mounds, boundary treatment, etc.).
  - If there is to be washing of aggregates on site, proportions of silt present, and proposals to deal with silt (e.g. location and size of silt beds), and protection of adjoining watercourses, and.
  - Arrangements for the washing of trucks before leaving the site.
- e) Working of the Site;
- The estimated maximum final excavation depth and its relationship to the water table on the site.
  - Details of the produce to be processed on site.
  - Details of the daily and hourly throughput of the plant.
  - Details of provision of adequate securities to “self police” compliance.
  - Proposed hours of operation.
- f) Transport, if materials are to be transported by road, the following details will be required;
- The roads to be used for the transport of materials to and from the plant. A map showing such routes should be submitted.
  - Details of all generated traffic and estimated volumes, including predicted type, frequency, axle loading, axle configuration of all heavy goods vehicles;
  - Spillage prevention measures.
  - Details of the types of trucks to be used in the final rehabilitation and a specification detailing how the work is to be carried out.
- g) Rehabilitation & Remediation;

- Details of comprehensive rehabilitation and after-care proposals.
- Report on the existing and finished landform, both of each phase and the overall excavation.
- Detailed report on quality and condition of topsoil and the overburden.
- Plans and section through the workings showing proposed finished gradients, landscape and boundary treatment.
- Plans showing all plants and materials to be used in the final rehabilitation programme and a specification detailing how the work is to be carried out.

The need for a full Environmental Impact Assessment shall be investigated by the Applicant/Developer's legal advisors with direct consultation with the Planning Authority. Applicants should have regard to the EPA's Advice Notes on Current Practice in the Preparation of Environmental Impact Statements.

In appropriate circumstances, or for proposals for large-scale extractive industry developments, the developer may be required to submit an Environmental Management System.

An Integrated Pollution Control (IPC) Licence from the EPA is required for metal mining, for quarries associated with cement, lime and ceramic manufacture, and for the extraction of other minerals covered by the Minerals Development Acts which exceeds threshold levels as set out in the Protection of the Environment Act, 2003. Such a licence covers noise, emissions to air and water, and waste management.

#### **7.5.4 Forestry**

Given the need to restructure agricultural practises the Council will assist the development of forestry, particularly deciduous forestry, as an alternative agricultural land use, while also protecting residential amenities of rural dwellers by the establishment of an appropriate area free from afforestation.

Forest developments should follow current best practice and the Forest Service's, Forestry and the Landscape Guidelines (July 2000) where landscape objectives should focus on compatibility with, and enhancement of, existing local landscape character. Landscape design plans should be prepared where sensitive high amenity areas are concerned.

Planting in the vicinity of public roads should be carried out in strict accordance with Forest Service Guidelines. Roadside planting should aim to enhance and complement existing visual amenities, without impeding views and prospects, particularly in sensitive high amenity areas.

Afforestation projects should be designed and implemented in a manner likely to enhance existing local amenities.

Any adverse impacts of afforestation on watercourses and sources of water supply should be prevented.

Forest owners should prepare and maintain a forest fire defence strategy, including provision and maintenance of adequate prescribed firebreaks, water supply reservoirs and forest access. Fire plans should be prepared for each forest and reviewed annually.

#### **7.5.5 Wind Energy**

Applicants should enter into pre-planning negotiations with Local Authorities and other relevant statutory and non statutory bodies (DoEHLG, The Forest Service, Irish Aviation Authority etc) at an early stage before detailed proposals are drawn up.

Proposals for the development of wind farms need to be accompanied by an EIA as required by defined thresholds outlined in the Planning and Development Regulations 2001. In other cases the Planning Authority may require an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) where the size of

the development does not exceed the statutory threshold but the Planning Authority considers the effect of the proposed development on the environment is likely to be significant.

All applications shall include 'zone of visual influence' maps and in areas where a number of wind farms already exist or are permitted, the visual impact of a proposed wind farm cannot be considered in isolation. In such instances maps indicating the zones of visual influence of all existing and permitted wind farms shall be submitted. Areas of inter-visibility shall between wind farms shall be carried out. This analysis shall include photomontages of the wind farms from within the inter-visibility zone.

Council will encourage wind energy in so far as such developments would not have an adverse affect on residential amenities, views or prospects, Special Areas of Conservation, Protected Structures, aircraft flight paths, by reason of noise or visual impact. Applications for such developments will not be encouraged in Areas of High Amenity.

In assessing such applications the Planning Authority shall have regard to the following;

- The Landscape Character for the County.
- Whether an area has significant wind energy potential on the basis of the nature and extent of the wind resources in the area.
- The suitability/strength of the grid and accessibility to it.
- Road access to the site during the construction phase.
- The suitability of the site, having regard to its other land use policies, including the need to protect areas of important built and natural heritage from inappropriate development, and
- Any other (local) planning considerations, including measures to minimise the impact of proposed wind farms in the local environment.
- Distances to National primary and secondary roads, dwellings housing, adjoining property.
- Zone of visual influence.
- Noise Impact.
- Potential Shadow flicker.

The following conditions will apply where Wind Farms are permitted;

- (a) Blades must rotate in the same direction.
- (b) Layout should be compact.
- (c) Sky lining should be avoided.
- (d) Three-bladed machines should be deployed.
- (e) Solid towers should be used.
- (f) Towers and blades should be finished in matt grey colour.
- (g) All grid connection within the site to be underground.
- (h) This may also be a requirement further a field in certain circumstances.
- (i) No fencing to be permitted on any part of the site.
- (j) Access roads to be un-surfaced.
- (k) Structures must be decommissioned at the life expiry of the farm and the site re-instated."

#### 7.5.6 Development Management Procedures in Areas of High Amenity

1. Desirable recreational, leisure and tourist related development.	Suitable sites and in accordance with the proper planning and development of the area. (Specific Area identified in Lough Ree Area of High Amenity)
2. Exempted Development	Check views and prospects.

3. Farm Development	Check views and prospects. Restriction on location, design and use of materials. Control of effluent discharge and strict pollution control. Screen planting.
4. Renovations and extensions to existing development.	Restriction on design and use of materials. Control of boundary treatment. Improve access and provide off-carriageway parking where possible. Screen planning conditions to be imposed. Selected planting of front boundaries.
5. Bona Fide Replacement Housing	Existing residence to be demolished or restricted in use, i.e. agricultural use or for purposes incidental to enjoyment of the dwelling. Restriction on design, siting and materials used. Control of boundary treatment and landscaping to a high quality. Restriction of tree felling and scrub clearance. Restriction on change of use after development is completed. Check necessity for creation of right of way. Strict control of possible disturbance to areas of scientific interest and woodlands. Subject to restriction on first occupancy whereby the applicant is the first occupant.
6. Housing for the immediate family (son/daughter) of established residents living on landholdings, who demonstrate housing need and have long term intrinsic links with the area. The entire landholding will be demonstrated to have been in the resident's ownership since before the adoption of the Draft County Development Plan 2000. No more than three additional dwellings to be permitted on any such holding.	Provided there is no alternative site on farm outside of Area of High Amenity. Restriction on design, siting and materials used on construction. Control of boundary treatment. Development to be landscaped to high quality. Restriction on tree felling and scrub clearance. Restriction on change of use after development is completed. Check necessity for creation of right of way. Strict control of possible disturbance to areas of scientific interest and woodlands. Subject to restriction on first occupancy where the applicant is the first occupant
7. Access and essential facilities for existing land amid water based activities	Strict control of siting and design of structures. Landscaping to be of highest quality. Public access to be maintained.
8. Conversion of buildings to hotel use.	Use encouraged on suitable sites.

### 7.5.7 Tourism Appraisal

#### Sustainable Tourism Planning Control Checklist

The following checklist is for applications for planning permissions for new development. The list can be applied to all new development including new tourism related development. For most applications a simple but honest assessment – yes or no – is all that is necessary.

Not all questions will be relevant to any particular application, but some or most will be. If the answers to these questions are mainly 'Yes', then the development proposal is likely to contribute to sustainability. Mainly 'No' answers suggest the proposal is likely to conflict with sustainability principles identified in section 2.3.3.

- 1 Land, Buildings, Resources & Waste
  - a. Is the proposal on a 'brownfield' site or in existing vacant building (s)?
  - b. Does the proposal use land, energy, water, soils, minerals and materials prudently? (E.g. Does it minimise land-take; does it incorporate energy/water saving devices; is it orientated to take advantage of sunlight; does it re-use other materials?).
  - c. Does the development avoid floodplain?
  - d. Have opportunities been taken to incorporate the use of renewable energy sources? (e.g. wind, hydro, solar, CHP).
- 2 Natural Environment – Landscape & Wildlife
  - a. Are valuable wildlife habitats protected or enhanced? (e.g. designated sites, woods, hedges, wetlands).

- b. Will the proposal increase broad-leaved tree and hedge cover?
  - c. Does the proposal safeguard landscape quality and retain open countryside? (In conjunction with a landscape character assessment).
- 3 Pollution & Climate Change
- a. Is the quality and volume of water safeguarded? (Ground-water, surface water and drinking water).
  - b. Are air, noise and light pollution all prevented in the proposals?
  - c. Has allowance been made for projected climate change impacts? (e.g. more storms, flooding, subsidence).
- 4 Transport & Access
- a. Are measures proposed to reduce the number of car or lorry journeys to the development?
  - b. Is the development accessible to all modes of transport? (incl. walking, cycling, public transport).
  - c. Is access available for all people? (incl. elderly and those with disabilities).
- 5 The Local Economy
- a. Does the proposal increase employment opportunities for local people?
  - b. Will local goods and suppliers be used wherever possible so that income is re-circulated locally?
- 6 Local Needs & Local Views
- a. Will the development also help to meet other local/community needs (e.g. by supporting services).
  - b. Have local people had a chance to contribute ideas or opinions?
- 7 Quality, Local Distinctiveness & Culture
- a. Is a high quality of building design and materials incorporated?
  - b. Does the proposed design protect and enhance local heritage, diversity and distinctiveness?
  - c. Will the development assist participation in – or access to – arts, culture and heritage?

(Source: Future Footprints, Sustainability Southwest, UK; [www.futurefootprints.org.uk](http://www.futurefootprints.org.uk))

## 7. 6 PROTECTED STRUCTURES

Good design and conservation go hand in hand. They both recognise that the historic environment is a precious asset that must be conserved for future generations. However, this is not to say that historic environments cannot change. Good conservation ensures that important buildings and spaces continue to have contemporary relevance and vitality. Good design learns from the past and respects it in developing policies and proposals for new buildings and refurbishment. Together they both strive to create diverse and stimulating environments.

### 7.6.1 Extension or alteration to a protected structure

The Council will normally only grant consent to proposals for the extension or alteration of a Protected Structure where all the following criteria are met;

- (a) The essential character of the structure and its setting are retained and its features of special interests remain in situ, intact and unimpaired.
- (b) The works proposed make use of traditional and/or sympathetic structure materials and techniques which match or are in keeping with those found on the structure.
- (c) The architectural details (e.g. doors, gutters, and windows) match or are in keeping with the structure.

### 7.6.2 Development affecting the setting of a protected structure

The Council will not normally permit development, which would adversely affect the setting of a Protected Structure. Development proposals will normally only be considered appropriate where all the following criteria are met;

- (a) The detailed design respects the Protected Structure in terms of scale, height, massing and alignment.

- (b) The works proposed make use of traditional or sympathetic structure materials and techniques which respect those found on the structure.
- (c) The nature of the use proposed respects the character of the setting of the structure.

### 7.6.3 Recording and designation of a protected structure

The Council will endeavour to keep an up-to-date and accurate list of Protected Structures, in the form of a local Record of Protected Structures, and to inform owners/occupiers of the structure's status and their responsibilities. It is the intention of Westmeath County Council to seek to modify the Schedule of Recorded Protected Structures during the period of the Development Plan.

## 7.7 ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION AREAS (ACA'S) AND TOWNSCAPE

- (i) New Development in an Architectural Conservation Area;  
The Council will normally only permit development proposals for new buildings, alterations, extensions and changes of use in, or which affects the setting of an Architectural Conservation Area where all the following criteria are met;
  - (a) The development preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the area.
  - (b) The development is in sympathy with the characteristic built form of the area.
  - (c) The scale, form, materials and detailing of the development respects the characteristics of adjoining buildings in the area.
  - (d) The development does not result in environmental problems such as noise, nuisance or disturbance which would be detrimental to the particular character of the area.
  - (e) Important views within, into and out of the area protected.
  - (f) Trees and other landscape features contributing to the character or appearance of the area are protected.
  - (g) The development conforms to the guidance set out in Architectural Conservation Area development briefs.

## 7.8 SHOPFRONTS

### 7.8.1 Shopfront design

Traditional shop front designs and nameplates over shop windows should be preserved. The Council will require that new shop fronts designs be in keeping with the existing character and traditional form of the streetscapes of the county;

- Projecting signs should be of 2.4m clearance above street level
- Internally illuminated fascias will not be permitted
- Internally illuminated signs shall be restricted
- Illumination of fascia signage, shopfronts or distinctive architectural features should be discreet and limited to spot-lighting, up-lighting or disguised minimalist strip lighting.
- Product advertising and permanent canopies shall not be permitted.
- (i) The Planning Authority shall encourage good shopfront design in new shopfronts and shall actively pursue the replacement of existing poor quality shopfronts. Recent trends in shop front design have shown a preference for the traditional timber shopfront and the Planning Authority shall continue to encourage such types of development. Good modern design shopfronts will also be encouraged where appropriate. An illustrative Advice Note will be produced during the plan period. See also 'Old Shopfronts' (ENFO Action Sheet15).
- (ii) The design of a new shopfront should relate to the architectural characteristics of the building of which it forms part. Such features as existing arches, stringcourses, plaster detailing or existing fascias and brackets should be considered in the new design and new internal alterations or proposed advertising must not interfere with such details.
- (iii) If aluminum is used it should be anodized or treated in an appropriate colour. Westmeath County Council will consider developments leaving exposed stonework provided;

- i. The location is deemed suitable;
  - ii. Planning permission is obtained and;
  - iii. Good building practice is observed.
- (iv) Wholesale removal of rendering along a streetscape is not encouraged and only focal buildings are considered appropriate for this treatment. Where there are elements of the original shopfront framework remaining, these might be retained in order to help integration of the new shopfront with the building as a whole.
- (v) New shopfront design must respect the scale and proportioning of the streetscape by maintaining the existing scale of development along the street and respecting the appropriate plot width. Large expanses of undivided glass will generally not be permitted. Elevational modelling and vertical proportioning should break up long runs of horizontal facades. The uses of fascias, pilasters and stall risers are means to achieve this.
- (vi) Fascia panels should be provided as an integral part of the shopfront and should be of a depth appropriate to the size of the building and the proportion and the length of the shopfront. The construction of fascias linking two or more buildings, which have different architectural identities, is generally unacceptable. The construction of fascias extending above the level of the first floor windowsills and the obscuring and defacing of windows or other architectural details such as string course, friezes and cornices, shall not be permitted.
- (vii) It is desirable to provide a stall riser on shopfronts of at least 300 – 600mm in height for visual reasons and to provide protection from fouling by animals, splashing from feet of passers-by and security. This should be executed in a durable material. The use of the public footpath for security stanchions or roller shutter fittings shall not be permitted.
- (viii) Corporate image shopfronts will not necessarily be acceptable as compatibility with individual buildings and streetscape is considered more important than company demands for uniformity.
- (ix) The use of plastic canopies over windows shall be discouraged, except where shading of a window is required. In this case the traditional rectangular awning shall be considered suitable.

### 7.8.2 Security Screens

The installation of security shutters can visually destroy and deaden the shopping street at night and thereby detract from the environment of the environs. It is a policy of the Council to discourage the use of such shutters and to ensure the removal of unauthorised ones.

Where security shutters are considered to be essential, the Council may permit them provided they match the following criteria;

- (a) They must of the open grill type;
- (b) They must be painted to match the shop front colour scheme;
- (c) They must be located together with their associated housing behind the window display or behind the glazing.

The provision of roll down external screens will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.

## 7.9 ADVERTISING AND SIGNAGE

The Council recognises the importance of the role of well-located and sympathetically designed advertising, to contribute to the character and vitality of a commercial unit. However by design, scale, location, proliferation or ancillary issues such as manner of advertising and signage has the ability to seriously injure the visual qualities of an area or in some cases pose a hazard to motorists' through distraction.

### 7.9.1 Advertising hoardings and billboards

In general the Council will not look sympathetically on applications for nationwide hoardings as saturation point has been reached in the County. Excessive outdoor advertising will be strictly controlled. Such advertising will not be permitted in the following locations:

- Close to a listed building, a public open space or an important view.
- In predominantly residential areas, especially on prominent gable walls.

- Where a proliferation of such signage already exists.
- On street elevations.
- Where they may cause a road hazards.
- Where it is considered there may be a detrimental visual implication.

Where such advertising could perform a role in screening of derelict or obsolete areas thus improving the overall visual amenities of these areas favourable consideration may be given to applications for temporary permission for signage which performs this function. Such proposals should not interfere with the desirability of the ultimate re-development of such areas.

### 7.9.2 Local advertising

(i) The importance of local advertising in the economy of County Westmeath is recognised. Such advertising can play an important role in enabling the identification of a particular trade or service outlet or tourist facility. Local advertising structures can be segregated into two specific categories:-

- On-premises local advertising.
- Remote local advertising.

The special needs of hotels and guest-houses or services in rural areas for directional signs is catered for by licensing fingerpost signs.

### 7.9.3 On-premises local advertising

Applications for this type of local advertising will be assessed on merit having regard to the following points:

- Signs on free-standing hoardings are undesirable.
  - Size and scale of signs shall not be in conflict with those on existing structures in the vicinity.
  - Projecting signs should generally be at fascia level.
  - Structures will not be allowed above the eaves or parapet level on the buildings.
  - Signs should not interfere with windows or other features of the façade, they should not project above the skyline or outside the general bulk of the building.
  - Does not obscure architectural features such as cornices or window openings.
  - Advertising signs erected parallel to a road or street are preferable to those projecting at angles thereto.
  - Signs which compete with road signs or otherwise cause traffic hazard shall not be permitted.
  - Advertising signs are undesirable in residential areas.
  - Flashing reflectorised or glitter-type signs will not be permitted.
  - Solid block or painted lettering will be preferred to hollow plastic or neon type signs.
  - Traditional sign writing will be encouraged.
  - Advertising signs of good quality and design which enhance and complement the streetscape will be encouraged.
  - A plethora of advertising signs which cause visual clutter on buildings or streetscape will be discouraged.
  - Is sympathetic in design and colouring both to the building on which they will be displayed and their surroundings.
  - Shopfront advertising should be designed as integral part of the shop front and not left as an afterthought.
- (ii) The Planning Authority will require commercial interests and especially multiple outlets groups to adjust the use and scale of their corporate image-advertising logo to respect the scale and design of adjacent properties and streetscapes.
- (iii) Modern approaches to advertising such as internal window signs will be considered.

#### **7.9.4 Fingerpost signs**

The erection of finger post signs will require a licence from the Planning Authority and should comply with the following;

- Directional signs for major tourist attractions and community facilities will be considered but product advertising will not be permitted
- Signs must be of a standard size and colour and where permitted shall be provided by the licensee but will be erected by the Council

#### **For Hotels, Guesthouses and industrial/commercial premises**

- Each sign shall be a finger-post sign of standard dimensions (i.e. 950mm x 288mm) with white lettering on a brown background with a white trim;
- The sign shall be erected on an existing road-sign pole where this is available, or otherwise on a pole of the same type specially erected.
- Signs shall not be permitted beyond a distance of 10km from the premises;
- A maximum of two signs may be permitted in respect of any establishment on a local Road which connects to more than one Regional Route;
- Signs will not be permitted on national roads;
- In addition to the initial sign, further signs will be permitted at intersections along the route of the County Road as necessary;
- A sign shall be permitted only at a junction between a County or private road and another National/Regional Road, or at an entrance leading off a County or private road;
- Signs shall not be permitted at a junction between two National Routes or two Regional Routes or between a National Route and a Regional Route where the maximum speed limit applies. A maximum number of six signs shall be permitted on a single pole at any junction;
- Where appropriate, a sign may be permitted subject to a condition that if there is a further application in respect of a sign for another facility at the same junction, the Planning Authority may require the first sign to be removed and replaced by a joint sign advertising both facilities. This requirement is subject to the overall limitation of six signs as defined in the previous paragraph.

The foregoing, with the exception of the first point, will operate in the assessment of applications for the erection of directional signs for other services/facilities such as garden centres. Each sign shall be a fingerpost sign of standard dimensions (i.e. 950mm x 288mm) with dark brown lettering on a white background with a dark brown trim.

The basic planning control principal in this regard is to reduce visual environmental clutter and to meet the needs of basic necessities thus improving the overall quality of the physical environment and legibility of the county.

#### **7.9.5 The control of advertisements on a protected structure or in an ACA**

The Council will strictly control advertising on a Protected Structure or in Architectural Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Character and will produce a guidance leaflet for developers.

#### **7.10 CAR PARKING STANDARDS**

It will generally be required that developments that are residential, commercial, enterprise and employment or otherwise, shall comply with the parking standards detailed in Table 12 below.

The Council shall seek to control the provision of parking in town centres and has a policy to encourage alternatives to car commuting. Within designated central town locations a lower standard of car parking provision shall apply.

Table 12 Car parking standards

		<b>Countywide</b>	<b>Designated Area/Inner Urban</b>
<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Space /Unit</b>	<b>Space/Unit</b>
<b>Dwelling 4+ Rooms</b>	Dwelling 4+ Rooms	2.00	n/a
<b>Dwelling</b>	Dwelling	1.00	
<b>Flat</b>	Dwelling	1.00	
<b>Shopping</b>	100m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area	6.0	3
<b>Retail Warehousing</b>	100m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area	3.0	3
<b>Cash &amp; Carry</b>	100m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area	2.00	1.00
<b>Manufacturing</b>	100m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area	2.00	1.00
<b>Warehousing</b>	100m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area	1.5	1
<b>Office</b>	100m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area	3.00	1.5
<b>Bank/Financial Institutions</b>	100m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area	5.00	2.5
<b>Library</b>	100m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area	3.00	1.5
<b>Lounge, bar, function room, ballroom</b>	100m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area	20.00	10.00
<b>Restaurant</b>	100m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area	10.00	5.00
<b>Take-away</b>	Unit	5.00	2.5
<b>Hotel/Guest House</b>	Bedroom	1.00	1.00
<b>School (Primary or secondary)</b>	Classroom	1.00	0.5
<b>College (tertiary)</b>	Lecturer/Administrator	1.00	0.5
	Student	0.25	
<b>Church</b>	Seat	0.33	0.10
<b>Hospital</b>	Bed	0.33	0.10
<b>Nursing Home</b>	Bed	0.33	n/a
<b>Clinics and Group Medical Practises</b>	Consulting room	3.00	1.5
<b>Sports Hall/Club</b>	100m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area/ plus each court	2.00/2.00	1.5/1.5
<b>Cinema, theatre, Stadium auditorium</b>	Seat	0.20	0.10
<b>Childcare</b>	Employee	1.00	0.5
	Child	1 set down area per 5 children.	

The Town Centre Parking Standards, will apply in the following areas:

- In areas for which zoning objectives have been adopted which indicate 'mixed use town centre' also 'extended mixed use town centre' –
- In Mullingar the area bounded by the canal loop and the railway line to the south and including the Fairgreen and Fairgreen shopping centre as shown on the Mullingar objectives map,
- In Athlone the area west of the river centred on Connaught St., O'Connell St., High St., Main St., Castle St., Pearse St., and east of the river centred on Church St, Mardyke St., and Irishtown Upper; and extending northwards as far as St Kieran's Terrace and Grace Park Road and the Railway line and southwards as far as Inis Oir, as shown on the Athlone objectives map.

In addition for small development in town centres (e.g. small extensions) the planning authority will exercise discretion in relation to car parking requirements and in some circumstances no parking requirement will apply, in the interests of encouraging town centre development.

In smaller settlements, consideration will be given to the absorption capacity of the existing road network and off-street car-parking capacity, in the context of stipulation of additional requirements.

Required Dimensions:

Car Parking Bay	5m x 2.5m (end-on) 6m x 2.5m (parallel to kerb)
Loading Bay	15m x 3m (HGV) 6m x 3m (Small Van)
Circulation Aisle	6m in width.

**Table 13: Cycle Parking Standards**

<b>TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDED CYCLE PARKING PROVISION</b>		
	<b>1 SHEFFIELD STAND PLUS EITHER 1 SPACE PER CAR PARKING SPACES.</b>	<b>OR 1 SPACE PER Y SQ.M GROUND FLOOR AREA</b>
	X	Y
<b>Schools</b>		
<b>Primary</b>	-	500
<b>Secondary</b>	-	300
<b>University</b>	3	200
<b>Hospital</b>	14	700
<b>Retail</b>	14	550
<b>Housing (at ground floor)</b>		
<b>Normal Student Sheltered</b>		
<b>Health Centres</b>	14	350
<b>Offices</b>	14	700
<b>Hotels</b>	14(staff)	
<b>Pubs/Restaurants</b>	14	140
<b>Fast Food Outlets</b>	8	70
<b>Cinemas/Theatres/Sports</b>	14	450
<b>Leisure Centres/Sports</b>	10	300
<b>Factories/Warehouses</b>	14	850

### 7.11 FLOOD RISK AND PLANNING APPLICIATIONS

OPW Channels' are maintainable channels. The OPW requests that a 10m strip be retained from the top of the bank on both sides of these channels to allow for maintenance. This strip should not be paved or landscaped in a manner that would prevent access by maintenance plant.

'Drainage District Channels' are maintainable channels under the drainage districts and are maintainable by the local authority. Similar facilities for maintenance as required by the OPW may be appropriate at the discretion of the local authority

#### Development Assessment Criteria

The Council is committed to avert insofar as possible, the threat of flooding in new developments, to minimise the impact of structures and earthworks on flood plains and river flow, and to reduce, insofar as possible, the rate and quantity of surface water run-off from all new developments.

It shall be required that development proposals are framed such as to address in an authoritative manner the following issues with regard to flood protection;

- To require that a Flood Impact Assessment be submitted with all significant development proposals (areas exceeding 1 ha)- to identify potential loss of floodplain storage and mitigation proposals to minimise flood risk and impact.
- To require a certificate from a 'suitably qualified competent person' that the development will not contribute to flooding, with planning applications for smaller scale development proposals as considered appropriate.
- To require developers to submit, prior to commencement, details of Sediment and Water Pollution Control, for the agreement of the Drainage and Environmental Departments as appropriate.
- New development proposals must, so far as is reasonably practicable, incorporate the maximum provision to reduce the rate and quantity of runoff; hard surface areas (car parks, etc.) should be constructed in permeable or semi-permeable materials, on site storm water ponds to store and / or attenuate additional runoff from the development should be provided soak-aways or French drains should be provided, to increase infiltration and minimize additional runoff.
- Where proposed development are adjacent to watercourses of a significant conveyance capacity, any proposed structures (including hard landscaping), must be set back from the edge of the watercourse to allow access for channel clearing/maintenance, (A setback of 5m-10m is required depending on the width of the watercourse.)
- To reserve a strip of 10 metres from the top of the bank on both sides of "OPW Channels" to allow for maintenance. This strip should not be paved or landscaped in a manner that would prevent access by maintenance plant.

All proposals for development but especially those in floodplains and areas liable to flooding must, in so far as is reasonably practicable, incorporate sustainable design/construction measures to reduce the rate and quantity of runoff; for example;

- Hard surface areas (car parks, etc.), should be constructed in permeable or semi-permeable materials.
- On-site storm water ponds to store and/or attenuate additional runoff from the development should be provided.
- Soak-aways or French drains should be provided to increase infiltration and minimise additional runoff.

All new flood prevention or channel maintenance development must be designed and constructed to meet the following minimum flood design standards;

- For urban areas or where developments (existing, proposed or anticipated) are involved – The 100 year flood, i.e. the land could flood once in 100 years on average after drainage.



