

# **Ardmore/Marlinstown Local Area Plan 2009-2023**

Comhairle Chontae na h-Iarmhí



**Westmeath County Council**



Forward Planning Section  
Westmeath County Council  
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# Ardmore / Marlinstown Local Area Plan

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## **1.0 Introduction**

### **1.1 Overview**

Mullingar is the administrative capital of County Westmeath, which together with Athlone comprise the two largest urban centres in the County and the Midlands. Situated centrally in the County, Mullingar has direct transportation links by road and rail with Dublin to the east (70km) and Sligo to the west (130km). The National Primary route N4 intersects the National Secondary route N52 just north of the town.

Mullingar Town is a town which has experienced significant growth during recent times. Having been afforded “Gateway Town” status with Athlone and Tullamore under the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) in 2002, it is anticipated that the population of Mullingar Town will increase by approximately 7,000 by 2014. The preparation of a Local Area Plan for the Ardmore/Marlinstown will assist in accommodating part of the anticipated long-term strategic expansion of the town. This Plan also sets a framework for the integrated development of this area up to 2023.

### **1.2 Description of the Plan**

The purpose and importance of the Local Area Plan (LAP) is to take a long term view of the future development of Ardmore/Marlinstown, in order to manage change in the development of the lands and provide for new development that contributes to, and enhances the existing qualities of Mullingar Town. The Local Area Plan for Ardmore/Marlinstown is therefore based on an integrated approach to the planning and development of this area. This should ensure that development is planned and delivered in a comprehensive and co-ordinated manner.

The Plan study area comprised approximately 214 Ha, located on the south-eastern edge of Mullingar. Over half of the area has been already developed or serviced. Both social and basic road infrastructure are inadequate to cater for any further significant development in this area. Therefore an integrated approach is required to ensure that future development will be complimented by necessary support infrastructure, services and amenities and future development will be accommodated without jeopardising the quality of the existing environment or exceeding current capacity. To this extent the Local Area Plan represents an integrated strategy for physical, social and economic development of the south-eastern sector of Mullingar, consistent with the protection and enhancement of its amenities.

### **1.3 Timescale**

The policies and objectives set out in the Local Area Plan remain in effect for a six year period (2008 - 2014), but can be subject to amendment or review during this period where Westmeath County Council consider it relevant and appropriate in the interests of the proper planning and sustainable development of the town. In accordance with Section 18 (4) (a) of the 2000 Act it is envisaged that the development of the Plan area will be phased over a longer timescale of 15 years, to ensure the appropriate complementary infrastructure and facilities are in place for the established and future residential community and to provide for a realistic timescale within which the entire Plan can be implemented. In this regard the Local Area Plan also prescribes a phasing plan for staged implementation over the 15 year period.

## **2.0 Planning Context**

### **2.1 Statutory Context**

The Ardmore/Marlinstown Local Area Plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Section 18 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2007 and the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001(as amended). Under this section “a Planning Authority may at any time, and for any particular area within its functional area, prepare a local area plan in respect of that area”. Both the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014 and the Mullingar Town Plan 2008-2014 provide for a Local Area Plan to be undertaken for Ardmore/Marlinstown area.

In addition, the application and contents of this Plan have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Section 19 of the Planning and Development Act (2000). Section 19 (4)(a) requires that the Plan contains information on the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan. This has been addressed in the form of an Environmental Assessment Report on the plan objectives and policies and is contained in Section 8.

The formal preparation of this plan commenced in May 2004 with the presentation of an “issues paper and working draft” to the Mullingar Area Members, all this prior to the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 coming into operation on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2004.

In accordance with Section 20 of the 2000 Act, Westmeath County Council consulted with the public before the preparation of this plan. An initial pre-draft public consultation exercise was held in the Mullingar Park Hotel on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2004. A number of submissions were received arising from the display of the pre-draft plans for one week, commencing on the 29<sup>th</sup> July 2004. An additional consultation was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2005 for the relevant landowners.

This Local Area Plan consists of a written statement and masterplan maps. If any conflict or ambiguity arises between the written statement and the supporting maps, the written statement will take precedence.

### **2.2 Policy Context**

The national, regional and local policy framework for the Plan is formed by the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002, Midland Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG) 2004, Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014, and various National guidance documents such as: Sustainable Development – A Strategy for Ireland, 1997; Childcare Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2001; Traffic Management Guidelines, Dublin Transportation Office/Department of Transport 2003; Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines, (published by the DoEHLG 2008), Action on Architecture 2002-2005, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Islands and the “Planning System & Flood Risk Management – Consultation Draft Guidelines for Planning Authorities” DoEHLG 2008.

### **2.3 National Spatial Strategy 2002 (NSS)**

Under the NSS, Mullingar has been designated as a ‘Gateway Town’ in conjunction with Athlone and Tullamore. The underlying message within the NSS is the

importance of gaining the critical mass of population, employment and infrastructure to support the proper and orderly spatial growth of the country. Mullingar is identified within the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG) as a specific growth pole as part of the linked gateway.

The concepts and messages the NSS delivers with regard to the sustainable growth of our towns and cities, and which have relevance to this Local Area Plan are:

- Responding to additional housing needs in a way that supports good planning practices, strengthening and sustaining existing settlements by focussing on their town centres and then moving outwards in a planned and coordinated way by identifying development opportunities
- Good planning practice must ensure that the development of land for housing and other uses is in clear tandem with the provision of necessary amenities and services
- Ensuring development avoids urban sprawl, is of a high standard of urban design, promoting compact, public transport friendly and sustainable urban areas
- A clear development and services framework to support the gateway role of our towns
- Ensuring new housing at edges of villages and towns is of a quality, design and character, scale and layout related to the character and form of the village or town in question. This will ensure continuity of form and integration
- The NSS recognises the need for vibrant cities and towns. It states there should be 'integrated strategies for physical, economic and social development and environmental protection, to guide and promote sustainable development, particularly with regard to planning, land use and transportation'. There is an increasing awareness of the vital role that good design and planning plays in creating a sustainable and competitive town and one that is pleasant to live and work in.

#### **2.4 Midlands Regional Authority Regional Planning Guidelines, 2004 (RPGs)**

The Regional Planning Guidelines have been prepared to implement the National Spatial Strategy adopted by Government in 2002, to achieve balanced regional development and aimed at a better distribution of employment opportunities across the country and delivering a better quality of life as a result.

Priorities included in the RPGs relevant to the Ardmore/Marlinstown LAP are as follows:

- To develop a cohesive settlement strategy that will promise the linked Gateway (Athlone, Tullamore & Mullingar) together with the principal towns of Longford and Portlaoise as the primary foci for attracting business and population to the region. These are vibrant, well-established towns with existing infrastructure and a wide range of established functions and are best equipped to accommodate further development.

- The need for a more defined urban structure that can provide enhanced capacity to deliver quality services and employment opportunities at a regional level and a range of supporting local services to support the viability of rural communities.
- The importance of the N52/N80 linking Dundalk –Mullingar-Tullamore-Portlaoise-Enniscorthy-Rosslare as a potential key national north south trade route which links with the N2, N3, N4, N6, N7/8 and N9.
- Accelerated growth and investment to the gateway, providing for sufficient infrastructure facilities and services to support projected population increase, housing need and economic growth.
- Development, promotion and expansion of Business and Technology Parks to Athlone, Mullingar and Tullamore and of focussed and local industrial parks to serve indigenous industries.

Critical Enabling Investment Priorities relevant to the Plan are as follows:

- A targeted land servicing measure, in terms of water services, access investments, telecommunications and energy to release key serviced land for residential, industrial, and commercial purposes in the gateway and principal towns of Athlone, Tullamore, Mullingar Portlaoise and Longford.
- Targeted investment in inland waterways network in the region through development of a Midlands Waterway Navigational Ring (MWNR), within the context of a wider urban renewal and recreational facility initiative aimed at developing the full potential of canal and lake harbour areas throughout the region.

## **2.5 Westmeath County Development Plan 2008 - 2014**

Section 3.1.12 of the County Development Plan 2008-2014 (CDP) identifies the need for the preparation of a Local Area Plan to guide the sustainable development of new urban extensions and states that such exercise will be conducted for lands within the Ardmore/Marlinstown area. Various planning objectives and policies within the County Development Plan are relevant to this Local Area Plan, including the following:

**P-UA4** It is the policy of the Council that large Greenfield or redevelopment areas which are zoned for development should be subject to framework plans which may be prepared as Local Area Plans.

## **2.6 Mullingar Town Plan 2008-2014**

Population projections included in the Mullingar Town Plan state that the total population of Mullingar is to reach 22,621 persons by 2014, and this will involve approximately an additional 2,966 houses.

The Town Plan includes development policies and objectives which must be considered during the preparation of the Ardmore/Marlinstown Local Area Plan. The objectives map attaching to the Mullingar Town Plan prescribes the area within Ardmore/Marlinstown which will be the subject of a detailed Local Area Plan. The following specific policies and objectives are relevant to the Local Area Plan:

**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-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-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-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-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-MG68** Construct a roundabout on the R156 at Prospect.

**P-RDE9** To protect areas of archaeological potential.

**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-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.
- O-MG54** Pedestrian link across canal and railway at Saunders Bridge.
- 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-MG92** The development of an amenity area and linear park along the Canal and development of the urban Harbour area for water-based activities.

## **2.7 Westmeath Retail Strategy 2007**

The Retail Planning Guidelines (RPG's) for Planning Authorities, issued by the Department of the Environment and Local Government (DoEHLG) in 2005, require Local Authorities to prepare retail strategies and policies for their areas and to incorporate these where appropriate into their development plan. Mullingar is one of the two principle town centres in the County and forms the first tier within the retail hierarchy of County Westmeath.

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 permitted and/or 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 town exhibits a number of higher order retail, service and specialist functions, not found in the smaller towns and villages in the County. It has an extensive range of convenience and comparison shopping as well as entertainment facilities, restaurants, night clubs and pubs.

The preferred locations for new general retailing in Mullingar in the short-term period up to 2011 is the town centre, and edge-of-centre sites immediately adjoining the town centre, including the 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. This plan identifies a location for a neighbourhood centre to serve the LAP area.

## **2.8 Housing Strategy for County Westmeath, 2008-2014**

The Housing Strategy was prepared by Westmeath County Council in respect of the County Council and Athlone UDC planning authorities, as required under section 94(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000. The strategy sets out current and future housing requirements within the County and in particular the requirement for social and affordable housing.

In relation to this Local Plan Area, Mullingar is identified as one of two key urban centres in the county which also includes Athlone. In the Mullingar and East area, an important driver in the residential property market has been the Greater Dublin commuter market and the growth of significant employers such as Intel in the Greater Dublin area. Combined with the elevated prices of housing for first time buyers in Dublin, Mullingar and the eastern part of the county have been an attractive destination for first time house buyers.

In relation to the rental sector in Mullingar, auctioneers estimate that, of the schemes of apartments built under the various tax incentive schemes approx. 90% are rented. There is a need to accommodate a projected increase of 9,200 additional households in County Westmeath during the period of the Housing Strategy.

The Strategy aims to concentrate residential development, where possible, in locations where there is access to the main line rail network and where there is easy access to education, employment and other commercial and community facilities. The continued dominance of Mullingar and Athlone as population centres should therefore be encouraged.

The need to provide and make use of resources and services requires that a more significant level of housing be provided in the main towns and rural settlements. The indicative spatial distribution of future housing between urban and rural should be approximately 65% urban and 35% rural. This spatial distribution therefore aims to support the role of Mullingar and Athlone as the main development centres in the County.

In relation to Mullingar, it is projected that 2,966 households will be formed in Mullingar over the next 6 years of the Housing Strategy (2008-2014).

### **2.9 Part 5 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2007**

The Council's policy is to reserve 20% of lands zoned for residential use or mixed development for social and affordable housing in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000-2006 (Part 5) and the Housing Strategy for County Westmeath 2008-2014. Accordingly Westmeath County Council will require a 20% quota of social/ affordable housing to be provided on each housing development within the county on lands zoned or reserved for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses. This policy shall apply within the Local Area Plan area.

### **2.10 Development Contributions**

The Council will when granting a permission under S 34 include condition/s for requiring the payments of contributions in respect of public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in its area and that is provided, or that is intended will be provided, by or on behalf of the Local Authority, in accordance with a Development Contribution Scheme made under S 48 (2) of the Planning And Development Acts 2000-2007.

In addition to the terms of the scheme, the Planning Authority will require the payment of a special contribution in respect of a particular development where specific exceptional costs not covered by a scheme are incurred by any Local Authority in respect of public infrastructure and facilities which benefit the proposed development.

Wherever appropriate, the Council may require payment of a contribution in respect of any public infrastructure service or project in accordance with the terms of S. 49 (2) of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2007.

### **3.0 General Context**

#### **3.1 Strategic Location**

The Plan area is located within an attractive natural environment comprising a series of ring forts within an undulating landscape. The study area covers approximately 214 ha of land, equating to about 27% of the physically developed area around Mullingar (approx 775 ha).

Situated south of the old Dublin Road and bisected North and South by the narrow suburbanised Ardmore Road (L-1133-0), the Plan area lies to the South-Eastern edge of Mullingar Town and is bounded physically by the N52 Bypass to the east and south east and the Royal Canal to the west and south-west. The Eastern N52 bypass traverses the south east of the area which, along with the western Clonmore Link, will form a complete circuit of Mullingar in conjunction with the existing N4 relief road.

The future development of Robinstown to the North of Mullingar Town, and within approximately 1 mile of Ardmore/Marlinstown, will benefit this Plan area. Robinstown will provide significant recreational facilities to accommodate the needs of the wider Mullingar area in addition to a number of business, employment and commercial uses which will sustain the Gateway status and growth of Mullingar Town in the medium to long-term.

#### **3.2 Topography and Geomorphology**

The topography of the study area is quite varied. To the North of Ardmore Road, East of the Canal, the land slopes downwards from the central undulating pasture to the canal edge. The land then rises up to the Saunders Bridge area. To the far East of these lands, South of the Dublin Road, is the highest point of the entire study area overlooking the landscape to the South and South-west. The pasture land rolls down towards the Ardmore Road.

The area is rural in nature and is bounded by the Royal Canal to the west and south-west. The land bottoms out into rushy plain/depression that meets the substantial embankment of the canal. There is extensive tree coverage and foliage along the pathway adjacent to the canal. Across the lands there are quite well-defined field patterns bounded with mature hedgerows and foliage which contribute to the rural character of the area. The remainder of undeveloped land south of Ardmore Road are at a level of between 96 and 100 metres and increase southwards to a level of 106 metres around the ring-fort. The lands are currently used for agriculture.

The area close to the Canal is landscaped with dense foliage mainly consisting of trees, bushes and gorse. This type of landscape tends to be more ecologically diverse than the open fields of grassland and should therefore be incorporated into open space networks, in particular around watercourses.

The area hosts a network of slow open drainage channels. Power lines traverse the area radiating particularly from the ESB substation off the Ardmore Road. To the southeast of the site, a portion of the lands have been master planned by the IDA with road infrastructure and services provided. These lands are expected to accommodate high quality design industrial units within a landscaped environment.

### 3.3 Geology

The bedrock in the study area is composed of two rock types: the Lucan Formation (otherwise known as Calp limestone, consisting of a bedded series of limestones and hard cherty beds), and Waulstorian Limestone (which consists of massive unbedded fossil rich muddy limestones).

The ground on the East side of Saunders Bridge has impeded drainage characteristics on the east side of the canal. The soft ground in the area has implications for road and housing construction, therefore specific geotechnical evaluation has to be carried out before development can be considered.

### 3.4 Amenities

The area is bounded to the west and south by the Royal Canal. This is a designated Natural Heritage Area and an invaluable amenity for the Town. The potential of this amenity has not been fulfilled at present. While there are walkways along the Canal, these require further upgrading and enhancement. External connections to surrounding streets/roads are not always clearly defined. It is an objective of this Plan to enhance this unique amenity and ensure its valuable contribution to the new expansion area. In order to achieve this important objective both the Canal and its surrounding amenity should be fully integrated in any proposed new development. There are no existing formal sports or recreational areas within the study area. These will have to be provided for the area as part of the Local Area Plan.

### 3.5 Heritage

It is an objective of this LAP to protect all recorded sites and monuments and promote their integration with the expansion area. Visible heritage mainly manifests itself with five national recorded monuments within the area, four of those occupying a promontory running north to south through the southern Plan area, taking advantage of the high ground level. The five designated areas comprise four ringforts and one earthwork and are depicted on Map 3. These existing ring-forts and earthworks are historical amenities that form an intrinsic part of the landscape. The Marlinstown graveyard lies outside the study boundary.

The list of Recorded National Monuments in the Ardmore/Marlinstown Area are as follows:

Monument Number	Townland	Classification
WM019-077	Ardmore	RINGFORT
WM019-077	Ardmore	EARTHWORK
WM019-079	Ardmore	RINGFORT
WM019-081	Ardmore	RINGFORT
WM019-082	Ardmore	RINGFORT

### 3.6 Receiving Built Environment

The Ardmore Road has traditionally attracted one-off houses seeking a rural setting. The proximity of the Town Centre and the unprecedented pace of growth has resulted in the area being partially absorbed by the natural expansion of the Town.

The majority of the lands North of the Ardmore Road which have been developed, are for residential purposes at a medium-low density. The manner in which this development has occurred is not different from any other established towns in Ireland. New developments on the outskirts of the towns, particularly in residential areas are conceived in isolation following a suburban car-based model. Orientated inwards, these areas have little relationship with both adjacent developments and the rest of the Town.

Developments tend to be defined by site ownership. As a result, duplication of development access roads, fragmented amenity areas and lack of social integration between areas is a common theme. This is evident in the layout of established and new residential developments off Ardmore Road. With regards to open space provision, this has been provided quantitatively; however, the quality and integration have been inadequate.

The lands to the south of the Ardmore Road remain largely undeveloped. These, characterised by undulating fields and ring-forts, are rural in nature and currently used for agriculture.

To the east of the N52 Mullingar by-pass, the newly built and fully serviced IDA Business park has the potential to accommodate high quality light industrial and technological companies. The design standard of the site is intended to be of a high quality. It is an objective of this Plan to reserve these lands for Enterprise and Employment use. (Reference Map No. 2, Area No. 7). The area is conveniently located adjacent to the new N52 bypass. Due to its strategic location and design standards, it is anticipated that the area will attract high quality and low impact developments appropriate to the enterprise and employment zoning and also provide a critical future employment resource for residents and workers in the wider Mullingar Town area.

### **3.7 Urban Structure and Connectivity**

Despite being surrounded by two major roads, the area has weak linkages and integration with the Town Centre and the rest of Mullingar.

As a result of ad-hoc development and lack of coordination, newly built estates have not been fully integrated with neighbouring land uses. Desire lines for movement have been restricted to fit ownership patterns and rigid vehicular movements. The existing internal circulation network which relies largely upon the Ardmore Road will not be able to cope with significant further development unless improvements to the transportation system are introduced in the Area. In order to address this deficiency it is important to provide the Area with a new transportation and movement network.

The predominant type of layout used in recent developments around Mullingar are cul-de-sac based developments. These are perceived to be a safer answer to protect neighbourhoods from the damaging effects of vehicular traffic. Cul-de-sac based developments to a great extent contribute to increased traffic due to its arboreous structure. Travel distances increase geometrically due to the lack of linkages between surrounding estates. In addition, it has been demonstrated that this type of development produces places that are not safer than traditional permeable layouts, i.e. streets.

While the provision of additional road infrastructure may be seen to play a key part on this new structure; pedestrian and cycling infrastructure is as important. This

should connect the area both internally and with the rest of the quarters of the Town. The Canal offers a unique opportunity for this purpose.

### **3.8 Road Infrastructure**

#### **Ardmore Road**

The plan area is bisected by the Ardmore Road, which runs east to west. Its capacity is impacted upon by extensive ribbon development and the levels of extraneous traffic which it carries. Its junctions with the surrounding network are constrained at Saunders Bridge and at the house-lined junction on Turnpike Crossroads. Some interim traffic calming has taken place. Carriageway widths are restricted and improvements are required to facilitate pedestrian and cycleway movements.

It is an objective to provide a pedestrian walkway by means of a pedestrian bridge at Saunders Bridge to improve pedestrian safety at this location.

#### **Marlinstown Road**

This road is a quiet rural road, which terminates in the countryside at a level crossing with the Dublin railway line, with the route continuing onwards as a private lane. Most of its length will be largely unaffected by the bypass road. It also serves a small historic graveyard within a quiet rural setting. This is a narrow road with few passing points predominantly only suitable for low levels of traffic. This laneway does not have capacity for further development.

#### **Canal Side Track**

On the Western side of the Plan area, a narrow trackway runs along the top of the Canal's Eastern embankment serving a small number of residences and farmlands. It overlooks the Canal and railway line to its west and the zoned open space of the Local Area Plan. It is an objective of this Plan that any additional crossings of the Canal required in the longer term should respect the existence of this movement corridor.

#### **Eastern N52 bypass**

The recently completed Mullingar Eastern N52 bypass serves the Plan area from the Dublin Road roundabout, crossing over the Canal and the railway line. It will link eventually with the Western C-link, via the Clonmore Section, to provide full vehicular circulation of Mullingar in conjunction with the N4 relief road. The bypass forms the eastern boundary of the plan area and provide high quality access from the N4 and national route network to the industrial zone. This route will ultimately provide an important access into the Local Area Plan area. Access onto the bypass will be restricted to controlled junctions and roundabouts in accordance with Westmeath County Council and NRA policy.

The provision of the bypass is a key element of the proposed upgraded infrastructure for the area as it removes extraneous traffic from the town core, enabling the enhancement of the physical environment, pedestrians and cycle safety within the town centre area. Inevitably, if Mullingar continues to meet its potential in terms of its planned expansion and redevelopment, there will be continued traffic generation, which will have to be managed to reduce conflicts over increasingly limited space.

### **3.9 Public Transport Provision**

Apart from the Bus Eireann service operating along the Dublin Road, there is currently no public transport serving the Ardmore Road or Marlinstown Road.

There are presently twenty daily train services between Mullingar and Dublin along the Dublin-Sligo line. The station is conveniently located in the Town Centre. Despite the fact that the line runs parallel to the Canal to the South of the Plan area, proposals to open a new train station or a platform that would serve the Plan area are against current Iarnrod Éireann policy of providing only one station per town.

It is an objective of the Westmeath County Council to undertake a full Land Use and Sustainable Movement Strategy for the Mullingar area. This will examine public transport/bus routes, primarily on the distributor routes throughout the town and related land uses.

### **3.10 Physical Infrastructure**

#### **Water Supply**

With respect to water provision, Mullingar derives its supply from Lough Owel, which is a surface water source with sufficient capacity for the provision of a supply for the foreseeable future. From there, water is directed to a small water tower within the study area which acts both as a reserve and a pressure stabiliser. Despite the Town having enough reserves of fresh water; due to infrastructural constrictions, current water supply is almost at capacity. Improvements will be made during the life of the plan in order to ensure that the water supply will adequately service the developable lands. The existing water main system serving Marlinstown/Ardmore Road and its hinterland will need to be extended to serve the proposed lands. A network analysis will be carried out to facilitate the proposed development.

#### **Sewerage**

Foul sewerage is a defining constraint pending the provision of a new drainage system to serve the Ardmore/Marlinstown area as identified in the County Development Plan.

Part of the Plan area has recently been serviced by the construction of Phase 1 of the Marlinstown Extension to the Mullingar Sewerage Scheme Drainage area under a Serviced Land Initiative Scheme. The up-grade of the Clonmore Sewage Treatment Plant, which is currently underway, will address capacity issues for the plan area into the future.

#### **Surface Water**

The remaining undeveloped areas follow a natural pattern of land drainage. As the area changes from rural to urban, the area of impervious surfaces will also increase, including roads, paths, car parks, buildings and their rooftops. The plan area will be served by single systems for both surface water and sewage. In the case of surface water, the piped network will be complemented as appropriate with the provision of attenuation and storm water retention ponds when appropriate.

#### **Energy and Communications**

The area is well serviced in terms of energy and communications, including the natural gas network and the Metropolitan Area Network.

### **3.11 Community Facilities**

Traditionally there has been a strong community presence among the established residents located along the Ardmore Road. It is an objective of the Plan to provide social and recreational facilities within all new developments to ensure an adequate quality of life of the residents, existing and new. While there is an array of social and recreational facilities within Mullingar Town, there is still a requirement to provide facilities within new neighbourhoods and such provision, within and adjacent to the new neighbourhood centre is an objective of the Local Area Plan.

### **3.12 Childcare and Educational Provision**

Adequate childcare and primary educational facilities within walking or cycling distances are fundamental to the development of any sustainable community. Therefore, it is imperative to plan for the future provision of such critical infrastructure.

The Plan area is deficient in levels of provision of childcare and educational facilities within walking distance to cope with the forecast increase in population. There is currently one small childcare facility operating from a dwelling on the Ardmore Road.

### **3.13 Retail Provision**

The area relies on external retail provision for both convenience and comparison goods. At present Mullingar exhibits a number of higher order retail, service and specialist functions, not found in the smaller towns and villages in the County.

It has an extensive range of convenience and comparison-shopping as well as entertainment facilities, restaurants, arts facilities and pubs. In view of its current role, it is likely that the Town Centre will be able to sustain its position as the dominant retail centre. It is anticipated that the Plan area will rely on this retail provision for comparison goods.

An adequate provision of convenience goods, including a range of local shops, located within walking distance, is required to facilitate the proper development of the Plan area. This will be provided within the new neighbourhood centre. This neighbourhood centre provision will function as the hub of this new area. This retail provision shall not compete with the Town Centre but complement the existing facilities.

### **3.14 Employment**

The Plan area is relatively undeveloped at present in terms of employment provision. Mullingar Town however is a major employment centre with a number of employers based in areas such as the Mullingar Business Park and the Clonmore Business Park, in addition to a range of professional services which are available in the area.

While many local residents rely on Mullingar Town for employment and local service provision, an increased number of them commute to Dublin for employment. House price inflation in the Dublin Metropolitan Area and in addition to the improvement of railway services and road infrastructure have contributed to this trend.

In addition to the IDA lands there is a significant amount of land zoned for employment purposes in the Plan area to complement other lands zoned in the town for such purposes including Robinstown. It is envisaged that potential enterprise and

employment developments will provide local employment opportunities for existing and future residents complementing those already servicing Mullingar Town. This will provide and facilitate the creation of a more sustainable living/working environment, with reduced need to travel long distances, whilst enhancing the local economy.

Additional employment opportunities should be provided for within the area in order to achieve a truly mixed use neighbourhood. It is anticipated that further employment opportunities would arise from childcare, education, health and local facilities in general.

## 4.0 AREA CAPACITY AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

### 4.1 General

This section follows on from the previous section which looked at the general context of the Plan area. A forecast population will be obtained based on land availability and recommended densities.

### 4.2 Population Projections

It has been estimated that there are approximately 830 dwellings within the existing plan area. Using the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008 standard household size of 2.5 persons per household, it is estimated that there are approximately 2,075 persons residing in the area at present.

It is estimated that this area has the potential to provide approximately 2,000 new housing units, comprising a mix of housing types, the precise number will be determined by residential densities, including typology and mix. Densities will have regard to existing pattern of development, as depicted in the DoEHLG guidelines, "Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, 2008" and the need to achieve a critical mass of population to support the infrastructure requirements of the area, including public transport, neighbourhood shopping, schools, community facilities etc. Higher densities are envisaged in the centre of the development area.

On the basis of the estimated 2000 additional households, (and applying a lower household size based on future trends), the overall potential population for the area, including established residents is of the order of 6,500.

### 4.3 Open Space Requirements

A "Sports, Recreation and Leisure Facilities and Needs Survey" Report for County Westmeath was carried out in June 2002. The report aimed to assess sport/recreation/leisure needs throughout County Westmeath. The County Development Plan standards for open space and recreation provision are as follows:

- Outdoor recreation 'playing' space – to be provided at 2.4 hectares per 1,000 of population,
- Outdoor equipped playgrounds – to be provided at 1 per 5,000 of population,
- Casual/informal play space within housing areas – to be provided at 0.4 – 0.5 hectares per 1,000 of population,

On this basis of the estimated population the following open space recreational provision will be required:

- Outdoor recreation 'playing' space – 15.6 ha
- Outdoor equipped playgrounds – 1 to 2
- Casual/informal play space within housing areas – 2.6 – 3.0 ha

Community facilities are ideal locations for passive and recreational open space. Recreational space should be provided in close proximity to a neighbourhood centre and proposed primary school. The following facilities are recommended to be provided:

- 1 multipurpose grass pitch to host gaelic, soccer and rugby
- 1 all-weather pitch to host training, hockey, soccer etc.
- 2 courts to house five-a-side, tennis or basketball
- 1 playground/children's play facility
- 1 complex to host changing rooms, ancillary office and stores

The above facilities may be provided as part of development of the school facility recommended in the Plan and should be available for community use.

Westmeath County Council intends to significantly increase the provision of open space for the Town area through the provision of a sports complex and associated playing fields at Robinstown to the North of Mullingar Town and approximately 1 mile from the Plan area. This project is at advanced planning stage. Once it is completed, it will provide a major recreational amenity serving the entire Town.

In the current Mullingar Town Plan 2008-2014, 18.33 ha of the Ardmore/Marlinstown Plan area is zoned for open space which consisting of the land adjacent to the canal. This amount of zoning accounts for just 8.6% of the total plan area (213.94ha).

In accordance with County Development Plan Standards, public open space should be provided at a minimum rate of 15% of the total site area. This allocation should be in the form of usable open spaces within residential developments and, where appropriate, larger neighbourhood parks to serve the wider community. A central component of this Plan in regard to open space, is the reservation of lands for a 7.03 hectare public park in the centre of the area, adjacent to other key community facilities.

The proposed neighbourhood park may accommodate one all-weather pitch and will be considered a suitable location adjacent to the new neighbourhood centre with linkages to the surrounding residential areas.

#### **4.4 Educational Requirements**

Typically, approximately 200 persons per thousand of the population are of school-going age, 60% of which are at primary level and the remaining 40% at secondary level.

If an additional 4,500 persons were in the Plan area, it is estimated that when completed approximately 900 additional persons would potentially be of school-going age, 60% of whom would be at primary level and 40% at secondary level. This is in addition to an estimated approximately 400 children of school-going age live already in the area. The table below illustrates how the additional pupil numbers generated during the development of the area would breakdown over an estimated 15 year period.

- Over a 15 year period = 60 additional pupils per year.
- 60% primary school children = 36 additional pupils per year.
- 40% secondary school children = 24 additional pupils per year.
- Based on 8 primary years = 480 additional spaces required.
- Approximately 24 classrooms are required (19/20 per year).

Westmeath County Council prepared a report on primary schools provision in the Mullingar area in 2005 which identified an enrolment increase of 11% from 1995. The report also identified the need for additional primary school places to be provided on the eastern side of Mullingar to serve existing and future development in the

Ardmore/Marlinstown area. The Council have had discussions with the Department of Education and Science in relation to the reservation of suitable lands for primary school site in the area. It is recommended that the maximum provision of 32 units should be accommodated which according to the Department of Education & Science – Planning guidelines for primary schools, (2000) requires a site of 5.0 acres or 2.03 hectares..

Arising from the consultation process, a shortage in secondary school capacity in the town was also identified. As a result, in addition to the projected increase in secondary school children and anticipated continued growth in population, it is recommended that one new secondary school is provided and a site for this purpose is also reserved within the plan area.

#### **4.5 Childcare Facilities**

In addition to resident population needs, the Ardmore/Marlinstown Area will attract a number of young families and therefore will require adequate childcare facilities. Applying Government Childcare standards which indicate that approximately 20 spaces per 75 dwellings are required it can be assumed that the projected additional population of 4,500 persons will require approximately 530 childcare spaces over a period of 15 years

This does not take account of existing levels of provision in the wider area or that the capacity in relation to existing provision may in time become available. Therefore the precise levels of childcare provisions will be estimated in consultation with service providers and Westmeath County Childcare Committee. The objective to provide childcare services and facilities in conjunction with new residential and industrial development at appropriate locations or as part of a community hub is a key objective of the plan. Where required, the Council will apply DoEHLG Childcare Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2001 to new residential estate developments applications.

#### **4.6 Retail Requirements**

The Ardmore/Marlinstown area will require adequate retail provision if a sustainable neighbourhood is to be developed. The Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014 Retail Hierarchy states that the plan area has a neighbourhood function and provides for the establishment of a new neighbourhood centre to serve the Ardmore/Marlinstown area.

The essence of Neighbourhood Centres is that they serve quite localised catchment areas in a way which is convenient to the population served. The distribution of such facilities cannot be too widespread however, as this would negate the benefits of a local focus of provision and development could be unviable. Thus, there needs to be a reasonable quantum of scale to provide a good local range and provide a viable focus of shopping and service outlets. In the context of peripheral or suburban Mullingar a local catchment population for Neighbourhood Centres of some 5,000 – 10,000 would be appropriate and this could justify up to 2,500 – 5,000 square metres gross total retail and services floor space, in accordance with the adopted Retail Strategy.

In accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2005 and the Retail Strategy 2007, it is recommended that the following retail provision is accommodated within the neighbourhood centre:

Supermarket – Single level, self-service stores selling mainly food, with a net sales area of less than 1,200 square metres, with adjacent car parking.

Other retail development within the neighbourhood/residential areas will be in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2005 and the County Development Plan 2008-2014.

Local shops located in local centres or neighbourhood centres perform an important function in urban areas. They can provide a valued service, catering particularly for the daily or casual needs of nearby residents or of those passing by. Local shops encompassing both food-stores and important non-food outlets such as pharmacies have significant social and economic functions; they offer a particularly important service for those who are less mobile, especially elderly and disabled people, families with small children, and those without access to a car.

#### **4.7 Community Facilities**

Community facilities such as primary schools, youth facilities, medical facilities and open space make important contributions to neighbourhood life and will need to be provided as part of the overall development of the Ardmore/Marlinstown area.

#### **4.8 Summary of Issues**

Ardmore/Marlinstown has the potential to accommodate a population total of 6,500 persons. The area needs further mixed uses in addition to residential uses such as recreational, community, educational and open space provision as well as commercial, retail and pedestrian and cyclist connectivity.

Where housing development has happened, very little in the way of these additional uses have been provided which has the potential to leave the area disconnected from the town and other surrounding developments.

The identified issues for the area include the lack of an identifiable centre dispersed nature of development; the lack of physical integration between component areas, the need for integrated and effective movement, infrastructure and the absence of community facilities such as a school. These are all elements that need to be addressed in order to create a more attractive neighbourhood that would contribute to the consolidation of the established built form and ultimately a sustainable community as advocated in ministerial guidelines recently published.

## **5.0 ANALYSIS, PLAN CONCEPT AND GENERAL OBJECTIVES**

### **5.1. General**

In previous chapters an assessment of the receiving environment and the future needs of the area was carried out. The findings of this assessment are included in the following SWOT (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats) analysis.

### **5.2. SWOT Analysis**

#### **Strengths**

- Strategic location close proximity to the town centre and main road infrastructure.
- The quality of the natural environment including the Royal Canal.
- The inclusion of the high-standard IDA business park within the Plan area and its potential as a major employment centre.
- Land availability.
- Established residential community.

#### **Weaknesses**

- Lack of an urban structure
- Uncoordinated plot by plot development.
- Deficient public open space, community and social facilities provision.
- Inadequate transportation infrastructure, including facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Need for additional primary school places.

#### **Opportunities**

- 
- To provide a new sustainable quarter for the town with new neighbourhood centre.
- To enhance the urban structure of Mullingar.
- To achieve integration between existing and new development, with adequate links to the town centre and neighbouring areas.
- To provide a new open space network to serve the needs of the area, linked to the Royal Canal.

#### **Threats**

- Ad-hoc and uncoordinated development
- Unsustainable patterns of development
- Loss of potential to create an integrated development scheme/pattern.

### **5.3. Plan Concept**

It an objective of the plan to secure the orderly and integrated development of the area, to secure integration with adjoining development areas, to enhance connectivity to the town centre, to ensure that development is appropriately designed and sited and to enhance the environmental quality, natural and man made assets of the area.

At the heart of the area there will be a neighbourhood centre which will comprise a mixture of uses such as residential, employment, retail, commercial, community and recreational – all within walking (10 mins) distance. Education needs of the new community are provided for in the plan layout.

The proposed Plan aims to achieve the appropriate built form envisaged for the area based around the natural landscape, established and committed development and open space requirements. It is not the intention of the Local Area Plan to be prescriptive as to exactly how buildings should be designed or constructed, but rather to guide the layout character and urban structure of this development area that will ensure its future viability and sustainability. Future urban form, open space and movement network is defined on the basis of individual character areas, details of which are set out in Section 6.

It is important to reiterate that the planned expansion area is not intended to compete with the vitality and viability of Mullingar town centre area, but will complement it by providing localised facilities to accommodate the daily requirements of a growing urban expansion area.

The new neighbourhood already has the benefit of the IDA Business Park which has been constructed to a high quality standard. It is envisaged that this area will be a critical future employment resource for residents of the Plan area and the wider Mullingar Town area into the future, and this will underpin the towns gateway role.

#### **5.4. Framework for Masterplan Area**

The planning objectives which are outlined in Section 6 are intended to help provide the framework for the cohesive development of the Ardmore/Marlinstown area over the 15 year implementation period of this Local Area Plan.

#### **5.5 Zoning Objectives**

The plan includes proposals for land use zoning in accordance with Section 10 (2) (a) of the Planning & Development Acts 2000-2007. These land use zoning objectives relate to the entirety of the study area including existing established developed and undeveloped areas and are depicted in Map 8.

## 6.0 FRAMEWORK FOR MASTERPLAN AREA, POLICIES, OBJECTIVES AND DEVELOPMENT CONTROLS

### 6.1 General

The Plan area comprises approximately 214 ha (Map1). Over half of the area has been already developed or serviced. Both social and road infrastructure are considered to be inadequate to cater for the further development envisaged in this plan. A more coordinated approach to the shaping and management of the built environment, is required to ensure integrated and sustainable forms of development.

The Plan indicates the most appropriate and optimal means of developing the plan area in a sustainable manner. A sustainable urban quarter implies a mixture of uses to accommodate needs such as local shops, offices, schools, health centres, educational and recreational areas, all within a permeable urban structure.

### 6.2 Plan Concept & Description

The backbone of the area will be formed by two new avenues running from North to South and from East to the centre of the LAP lands and the provision of a new neighbourhood park adjacent to a new primary school, neighbourhood centre and other essential community facilities. The new north south road will link the old Dublin Road with the Russelstown Road at Boardstown and the second one will link the new N-52 bypass to the east with the new north-south avenue. The north south link envisages a crossing of the canal / railway in the longer term. It is proposed that the plan area will pivot around this neighbourhood centre and school. A network of interconnected streets emanating from this core is envisaged.

This network will generally comprise medium-size perimeter blocks as the basis for development. The combinations of a permeable grid with the use of perimeter blocks of medium size helps to create highly integrated places. Each building and each development equally adds to the shaping of a common public space which along with proposed recreational areas will result in the establishment of a truly active new quarter for the town of Mullingar.

The neighbourhood will be further enhanced with the provision of open space along the Royal Canal which will continue along the railway line and will link to the new development areas.

The plan maps are indicative in layout and built form and provide the framework for development, without necessarily prescribing individual estate layouts. However the plan does identify a clear framework of roads, services, open space, and specific uses in each area, which should be followed. The plan also prescribes urban design and place making principles for the area which are critical to the successful implementation and therefore must be adhered to.

#### **POLICIES**

- The Plan area will be developed in accordance with the development control policies in this Plan and in the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014
- These policies and controls are grouped in the following Character Areas (see sections 6.3 to 6.18)
- All land uses will comply with the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008 Part 6.2 Zoning Matrix
- Additional policies and controls are included in sections 6.20 to 6.28.

### **6.3 Character Areas**

Fifteen character areas have been selected on the basis of the established pattern of development within the surrounding area, accessibility, the environment, landscape and infrastructure provision.

The following sections examine each of the character areas as proposed as part of the overall plan for the Ardmore/Marlinstown Plan Area. Each area has distinctive characteristics requiring specific attention and controls. These controls aim to achieve an attractive built environment and a coherent mix of uses within the plan area. This is to ensure the sustainable development and longterm viability of the area. The boundaries of character areas are indicated in Map No.4.

#### **6.4 Area 1 – Landmark Site**

The area is located south of the Dublin Road and adjacent to the Royal Canal. It represents an opportunity for a high quality landmark development. The site comprises approx. 2.92 hectares. It currently accommodates residential development and a nursery.

This site has the potential to provide a significant entrance to the town via the Canal. The Canal should be a main focal point of any development which should optimise the location by overlooking and providing accessibility to the Canal. A buffer of 20 meters is required from the canal bank to the front building line to protect the amenity of the canal.

It is envisaged that the site could accommodate a signature residential development or a hotel, which would overlook and take full advantage of the canal setting and provide surveillance for the canal while maintaining a linkage to this important amenity. The architectural design of the development should be of the highest standard, using high quality materials and finishes.

The development will provide frontage to both the Dublin Road and Royal Canal, with access off the Dublin Road only. Private open space and car parking should be provided within the internal space of the building layout.

**POLICIES**

- The area shall be zoned commercial to accommodate a signature residential development or a hotel, or mixed scheme. Any development at this site should respect the status of the site and the amenities of residential development, both existing and proposed in its immediate vicinity.
- The Canal shall be a main focal point of the development.
- The development shall provide frontage to both the Dublin Road and Royal Canal. Adequate public access shall be provided, from the Dublin Road.
- A buffer of 20 meters is required from the Canal to the building line to protect the amenity of the Canal.
- Private open space and car parking shall be provided within the internal space of the building layout.
- The development shall have vehicular access from the Dublin Road and access to Area 2 that will ultimately link to the Ardmore Road.
- Parking will be provided within the site or below ground level if necessary.
- Provision shall be made for both a pedestrian and cycle-way access from the Dublin Road through the site to connect with the Canal Linear Park.
- Preserve pedestrian access along site fronting canal.
- The primary vehicular access to this site shall be secured off the Old Dublin Road, in accordance with the plan layout.

**CONTROLS**

Building Density:	35-50 units per has (res)
Plot Ratio:	0.40 sq.m / sq.m
Building Height:	minimum 2 storeys maximum 3+1 storeys
Buffer of 20 metres from the Canal to the building front line.	

**6.5 Area 2 – Canalside Residential Development**

This area comprises 6.88 hectares of land and is undeveloped at present. The area is linear and backs onto newly constructed development. The area is strategically located adjacent to the canal and any future development within this area must be sensitive to the character of the Canal.

It is envisaged that the residential development will be of a high quality design and at a medium density in order to minimise the impact on the canal. The area is intended to form a transition between the open space at Saunders Bridge and the landmark site to the North. The area will encompass a 5 metre deep landscaped buffer to the South near Saunders Bridge, which will help integrate the new development with the proposed linear Park alongside the Royal Canal. There will be a 20 metre buffer required between the canal bank and the front building line/new street as an elongated belt of green space. The development layout and built form shall respect the site contours and provide for high quality and usable open space.

It is important also that a connection is provided from this new development to the established development on the opposite side of the Canal. The connection is envisaged to be a pedestrian bridge which will facilitate both pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

In the calculation of appropriate residential density for this area, due regard will be taken of the amount of lands which are devoted to public open space use, including the Linear Park.\*

The existing Royal Canal Development entrance and associated boundary as permitted, will not be amended by the plan.

### **POLICIES**

- The area shall accommodate residential development at a medium density.
- There will be a 20 metre buffer required between the canal bank and the front building line/new street as an elongated belt of public open space.
- There will be a landscaped buffer along the entirety of the southern end of Character Area 2, of not less than 5 metres deep.
- The development shall include a connection from the Ardmore Road to Area 1.
- Connection to be provided to the established development to the west by means of a pedestrian footbridge.
- Provision shall be made for both pedestrian and cycle way links on an east west access across Character Area 2. The design and layout of these links shall respect the existing topography.
- Restriction in height to two storey development in Area 2, due to elevated nature of the site and three storey where appropriate, depending on elevation of the land.
- Provision shall be made for both footpaths and cycleway through the Canal Linear Park, in lieu of along the Local Road, and a contribution to be made towards the cost of same by the developer.

### **CONTROLS**

Building Density:	25-35 units per ha*
Building Height:	Restriction in height to two storey development in Area 2, due to elevated nature of the site and three storey, where appropriate depending on elevation of the land. Buffer of 20m from the Canal bank to the front building line.

## **6.6 Area 3 – Ardmore Infill Development**

This area is located Northwest of Ardmore Road. It is a substantial area comprising 11.71 hectares. The area is surrounded by existing housing developments to the North and East and will be further surrounded by proposed developments to the West. This area is appropriate for new residential development of a similar density to surrounding developments. The built form prescribed for the area will be centred around a circular open space. This open space will be landscaped to provide a central focal point for the neighbourhood. Additional open space provision will be located around the development in accordance with the Plan layout.

The surrounding residential developments will comprise dwellings overlooking a series of internal streetscapes which will all lead to the central open space. The suggested form and streetscape will be in accordance with the overall Plan layout.

Housing types shall comprise a mix of typologies and dwelling sizes to accommodate a broad range of household compositions.

Any new development will have to provide connections to adjacent, existing and new developments.

**POLICIES**

- The area shall accommodate residential development at a medium density similar to surrounding developments.
- Any new development shall provide connections to adjacent, existing and new developments.
- Housing types shall comprise a mix of typologies and dwelling sizes to accommodate a broad range of household compositions.

**CONTROLS**

Building Density:	25-35 units per ha
Building Height:	maximum 2 storeys

**6.7 Area 4 - Pettitswood Infill**

This area is located south of the Dublin Road and northeast of the Ardmore Road. The area comprises 9.97 hectares. The area is surrounded by established low to medium density housing to East along the Ardmore Road North towards Dublin Road and medium density housing to the North West. It is considered that the most appropriate means of developing this area is by providing housing at a maximum density of 35 dwellings per hectare, in keeping with the character of the surrounding area.

The development shall include an Avenue from the Dublin Road to Area 5 that ultimately will link to the Ardmore Road (refer to maps 2 & 4). This avenue shall have an urban street character, with development fronting onto both sides and suitably overlooked, as opposed to a traditional estate distributor road. In order to provide for an urban streetscape to front onto the western side of the North South avenue, adjustment of the alignment, which is shown in an indicative form in the plan, will be necessary. The precise alignment of this north south avenue shall be determined at development management stage.

Development adjacent to the existing fort within this area, will be respectful of this national monument and have a minimum impact on its heritage features. An appropriate buffer shall be provided around the existing ring fort located to the Southeast of the site to provide protection from new development. This area can be used as functional public open space. This buffer shall be landscaped in order to protect residential amenity and views from the fort. A public pedestrian access to the fort shall be considered as part of the development of the surrounding site.

Housing types should comprise a mix of typologies and dwelling size to accommodate a broad range of household compositions. Any new development will have to provide connections to adjacent existing and new developed areas.

**POLICIES**

- The area shall accommodate residential development at a medium density similar to surrounding developments.
- Any new development shall provide connections to adjacent existing and new developed areas.
- Development shall front onto the north-south avenue from the Dublin road to the Ardmore road
- Housing types shall comprise a mix of typologies and dwelling sizes to accommodate a broad range of household compositions.
- A buffer shall be provided around the existing ring fort in accordance with the Department of the Environment Requirements.

**CONTROLS**

Building Density:	25-35 units per ha
Building Height:	maximum of 2 storeys

**6.8 Area No. 5 – Neighbourhood Centre and Primary School.**

This area will encompass land North and South of the Ardmore Road. It is proposed that this will accommodate the new neighbourhood centre and Primary School for the area and will comprise a mixture of uses such as commercial, retail, community, educational and residential. The area comprises 5.56 hectares of land. This location has been selected due to its centrality, accessibility and proximity to the ring-fort and proposed neighbourhood park.

For the commercial area the built form will comprise perimeter blocks with internal open space provision to the rear.

It is envisaged that the density of development around the neighbourhood centre will be medium to high, consisting of buildings with a maximum height of 3 storeys with mixed used development at ground floor and office/residential on the upper floors. This type of facility will ensure viability and vitality is retained within the area during the day and night time.

Parking will be provided within the internal space or below ground level if necessary. Additional parking provision will be in the form of parallel parking on adjacent streets.

The area to the south of the Ardmore Road is reserved solely for a new primary school and associated grounds. To the west of the Primary School site, an area for residential development has been reserved.

**POLICIES**

- The area shall accommodate a mixture of uses such as commercial, retail, community, primary school and residential.
- One single level convenience store with a net sales area of *circa.* 1,200 sqm. shall be permitted within the proposed Neighbourhood Centre. Individual shops for food and non-food retail (i.e. pharmacies, dry-cleaners, etc) should be integrated with the anchor store in a street type format. These shops will face the street with traditional street frontages.
- The development shall include connections from Area 4 (and ultimately from the Dublin Road) to areas 7 & 8, and from Area 6 to Area 9 (refer to Map No.6).
- The area to the south of the Ardmore Road is reserved for a new primary school.
- The residual plot to the west of the Primary School within Area 5 shall be zoned for residential use.

**CONTROLS**

Plot Ratio:	0.75 sqm/sq.m
Building Height:	minimum 2 storey maximum 3 storey (school 1 to 2 storey)
Plot Ratio for School:	0.40sqm/sq.m
Residential Density:	35-40 per ha

**6.9 Area No. 6 – Civic, Community and Leisure Uses**

This area is considered an appropriate location of Civic, Community and Leisure uses. The area comprises 3.65 hectares and encompasses an area of archaeological significance. It is an appropriate location for these designated uses due to its proximity to the proposed Neighbourhood Centre, Primary School and Neighbourhood Park.

It is necessary that the area comprising the ring fort national monument is protected, with the area to the East of this site to be developed preferably for the provision of community, recreational, cultural and leisure uses. The Planning Authority will require that a building of high quality contemporary design be provided on this site in view of its open aspect and strategic location.

Any new facility shall have space for off-street parking and/or suitable drop-off and collection points and also space for an outdoor play area. The grouping of childcare facilities, if at all possible close to or within other educational and/or community facilities is preferred.

The main avenue serving this area will provide footpaths on both sides of the streets for safe accessibility for both pedestrians and motorists. Avenue width will be 20m between property boundaries allowing 4m for each of the 2 lanes of traffic. Pavement width will be 2m including a 1m strip encompassing trees/green strip adjacent to the kerb. Parallel parking will be provided within a 2m wide area adjacent to the kerb on both sides (see Road Infrastructure Map No.6).

**POLICIES**

- Civic uses such as community, recreational, cultural and amenity uses will be considered for the site.
- As part of developing the site, adequate car parking must be provided. Access arrangements must consider all aspects of safety and any additional community facility.
- In addition, direct cycle and pedestrian access will be provided to the adjacent neighbourhood park.
- Any development shall provide connections to adjacent existing and new developed areas as indicated on the Plan.
- Protection of monuments and their settings in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government.

**6.10 Area No. 7 – Neighbourhood Park**

The Neighbourhood Park is a fundamental component of the overall Plan and the main focus of the new neighbourhood centre and school. The open space designation has evolved from the existing earthwork at Ardmore. This earthwork is included on the Record of Monuments & Places. The park will comprise 7.03 hectares and will provide a much needed recreational feature for the population of the area. The earthwork is located within a prominent position which is distinctive to the area and is visible from a number of surrounding locations. This has the potential to provide a unique living and working environment for the local and visiting communities.

**POLICIES**

- The area will accommodate a Neighbourhood Park.
- The Park will be a Public Amenity which will allow for both active and passive recreational including walking, cycling and informal ball and play games.
- The Park will be funded by a Development Contribution Scheme and the provision of a percentage of open space from each development (refer to implementation section).
- The earthwork will be protected and additional recreational space will be provided around this heritage feature. Any future works in the area will have minimum impact on the recorded site in accordance with the Department of Environment Guidelines.
- All developments must be sensitive to this natural amenity and take advantage of its prominent setting by providing frontage towards the Park.

**CONTROLS**

- Contributions towards the acquisition and detailed landscaping of this area shall be required by the Council.

### 6.11 Area No. 8 – Park Housing Development

It is anticipated that this will become an attractive living area, within close proximity to the Neighbourhood Park and Mixed Use Neighbourhood Centre. The area comprising 3.92 hectares will be used for residential development of medium density.

The built form will be in compliance with the Plan guidance. It is anticipated that this area, due to its close proximity to the neighbourhood centre and parklands, could accommodate town houses and/or apartments of 2-3 storeys as this is a scale consistent to the mixed use and recreational areas. It is recommended that Residential Development is built in perimeter blocks with all facades either facing the neighbourhood park or a new streetscape. Parking or private open space will be to the rear of the buildings.

There will be on street parking provision provided on the adjacent avenue. The avenue will also provide footpaths on both sides of the streets for safe accessibility for both pedestrians and motorists.

Street width will be 18m between property boundaries allowing 4m for each of the 2 lanes of traffic. Pavement width will be 3m including a 1m strip encompassing trees/green strip adjacent to the kerb. Parallel parking will be provided within a 2m wide area adjacent to the kerb (refer to Road Infrastructure Map No. 6).

#### **POLICIES**

- The area shall accommodate residential development at a medium density.
- Any development shall provide connections to adjacent existing and new developed areas as indicated on the Plan.
- The development shall include two avenues from Area 5 to Area 11, and ultimately to the Boardstown Area and from Area 7 to Area 9 (see Map No. 6).
- The built form will be consistent with the layout in the masterplan comprising perimeter blocks with internal open space provision to the rear.
- Building types shall comprise a mix of typologies and dwelling sizes to accommodate a broad range of uses and household compositions.
- Parking will be provided within the internal spaces or below ground level if necessary. On street parking will also be provided.
- Cycle parking will be provided and located close to the entrance of the buildings, ideally overlooked by passing pedestrians and, if possible, sheltered.

#### **CONTROLS**

Building Density:	density 30-40 units per ha
Building Height:	maximum 3 storey minimum 2 storey

### 6.12 Area No. 9 – South-Western New Residential Area

This area is suitable for the accommodation of new residential developments and community uses. This site which comprises c. 8.74 hectares will be developed in two separate ways. The established residential dwellings along the Ardmore Road will be respected and therefore new dwellings replicating these dwellings will be developed backing on to the existing dwellings. This will provide a more suitable transition into the new development areas south of Ardmore Road. It is intended that this housing type

could be marketed as self-build plots. These dwellings will be of similar size, scale and have large front and back gardens reflecting the character of the existing Ardmore residences.

South of this development there is a substantial area of land for new development. This development will comprise residential development of medium density of 30-40 dwellings per hectare. The built form will be a traditional block form built around a grid street pattern with all dwellings overlooking the streetscape and private open space to the rear.

The built form and grid-like layout will be in accordance with the Plan. All developments must also be sensitive to the adjoining linear open space area which runs along the Canal.

As the site will be developed in two separate ways there will be a requirement for separate controls.

#### **POLICIES**

- The area shall accommodate residential development at a medium density.
- Any development shall provide connections to adjacent existing and new developed areas as indicated on the masterplan.
- The built form will be consistent with the layout in the masterplan.
- Building types shall comprise a mix of typologies and dwelling sizes to accommodate a broad range of uses and household compositions.
- Parking will be provided within the internal space and on street.
- An access to serve the Secondary School shall be provided as part of the development of the northern portion of Area 9, in Phase One of the development of this area. (ie Area 9)
- Private open space shall be provided to the front and rear of dwellings
- Housing types shall comprise a mix of typologies and dwelling sized to accommodate a broad range of household compositions.

#### **CONTROLS for new dwellings adjacent to existing Ardmore Road Dwellings:**

Building Density: (infill development)  
Building Height: maximum 2 storey

#### **CONTROLS for remainder of dwellings:**

Building Density: 30-40 units per hectare  
Building Height: 2 storey

### **6.13 Area No. 10 Secondary School Site**

The area, comprising 4.20 hectares, is adjacent to the proposed linear park, adjoining new residential areas, and it is easily accessible within close proximity to the proposed neighbourhood centre.

Due to this site's strategic location and size, the site is suitable to accommodate a secondary school (requiring a minimum of 4 hectares) which would also be available as a community facility. There is also sufficient space for the facilitation of playing fields.

Given the long-term development of the area envisaged in this plan, and the expansion of Mullingar it is considered prudent to identify a site suitable for a secondary school within the plan area. Uses which compliment the principle educational use, such as community, recreational, cultural and amenity uses will also be appropriate for the site.

The location of childcare facilities close to or within other educational and/or community facilities is a preferred option. In the case of providing such facilities, these will have to be in accordance with the Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2001.

From the Guidelines for Post Primary Schools a secondary school, accommodating 1000 pupils requires approx. 5,190 sq.m. In addition to this requirement, the school will need space for hard play areas and playing pitches, resulting in a further additional requirement of 3.7 hectares. The total area required would be approx. 4 hectares including playing fields.

Vehicular access to the school site shall be provided through area 9 which can be carried out during the first phase of the development of the Plan. As part of developing the site, drop-off and collection facilities and adequate car parking must be provided. Car parking provision may be shared during off-peak time with community uses and users of the adjacent public open space. Pedestrian access points shall be provided from the Ardmore Road to the School, as indicated on the plan.

In addition, direct cycle and pedestrian access will be provided to the adjacent linear open space along the canal thus permitting pupils to travel along a largely designated cycle/walking route.

#### **POLICIES**

- The site shall accommodate a secondary school to be provided in consultation with the Department of Education & Science and local school authorities.
- Any new development shall provide connections to adjacent existing and new developed areas as indicated on the Plan
- Pedestrian access points shall be provided directly from Ardmore Road
- Road link to be provided in conjunction with development of area No. 9 (Refer to Section 6.12)

#### **CONTROLS**

##### **School & Community Facilities**

Building Height: maximum 2 storey minimum floor to ceiling height of 2.7m  
 Overall Plot Ratio: maximum of 0.20 sq.m/sq.m (gross)

#### 6.14 Area No. 11 – Linear Open Space Area

This area comprising 8.64 hectares will respect the existing Open Space zoning in accordance with the County Development Plan 2008 - 2014 which has zoned the area along the canal for open space. This area will be protected from development that would have a negative impact on the integrity of the zoning. The area will therefore be reserved as a linear open space associated with the Canal and will connect with that which forms part of the secondary school site. Pedestrian and cycleway links through the linear open space area will be available along the Canal which will also connect the established development of Boardstown with the new Ardmore/Marlinstown area. The western end of this area can be included within the secondary school site and reserved for open space and recreational purposes associated with the school use.

##### **POLICIES**

- Reserve lands for open space use
- Landscape area as part of school site development

##### **CONTROLS**

- Development which is incompatible with open space zoning shall not be permitted

#### 6.15 Area No. 12 – New Residential Development South of Neighbourhood Park

This area of 13.67 hectares can accommodate three different layouts of housing. The first is the medium density terraced houses within a crescent form. The dwellings in the terrace nearest the Neighbourhood Park will overlook this amenity with private open space to the rear. An additional terrace will back onto this with open space to the rear and frontage towards a new street. The rear of these properties will be served by a private laneway. No single aspect housing shall be permitted at this location. This pattern will be repeated to the south of this development, in a semi-detached crescent, as indicated in the Plan. There will be a buffer area provided around the existing ring fort located to the southeast of the site to provide protection from new developments. This buffer shall be landscaped in order to protect residential amenity and view from the fort. A public pedestrian access to the fort shall be considered as part of the development of the surrounding site.

The second style of housing will be low density housing with spacious front and rear back gardens. These types of dwellings will be located towards the IDA lands and surrounding the protected ring fort. This low density style of development will provide a low impact transition from the urban style of housing to a more rural type of setting. It is intended that this housing type could be marketed as self build plots. The dwellings nearest the IDA lands will overlook a new streetscape and have their rear back gardens towards the IDA lands.

The third type of dwelling will be low to medium density built around a traditional grid street layout. The row of dwellings nearest the neighbourhood park will overlook this amenity while a row of additional dwellings will back onto this development with dwellings overlooking a new street. This type of development will be mirrored on the opposite side of the street. It is imperative that any development surrounding the Ardmore House will be sensitive and respectful of this dwelling and its setting.

**POLICIES**

- The area shall accommodate residential development at a medium density.
- Any new development shall provide connections to adjacent existing and new developed areas as indicated on the masterplan.
- Housing types shall comprise a mix of typologies and dwelling sizes to accommodate a broad range of household compositions.
- Parking will be provided within the internal space. On street parking will also be provided.
- Any development around Ardmore House shall respect its setting and curtilage.
- A 30m buffer shall be provided around the existing ring fort located to the Southeast of site to provide protection from new developments. This buffer shall be landscaped in order to protect residential amenity and views from the fort. A public pedestrian access to the fort shall be considered as part of the development of the surrounding site.

**CONTROLS**

Building Density:	Medium-low density 20-25 dwellings per hectare. Terraced 30-40 units per hectare, self build plots – 10 to 15 dwellings per acre.
Building Height:	maximum 2 storey

**6.16 Area No. 13 – New Residential Area West of Industrial Zoned Lands**

This area of land comprises 13.9 hectares for residential development. The dwellings will be of a medium residential density and will be of traditional perimeter built form. This will comprise rows of dwellings with frontages towards the street and private open space to the rear, constructed around a traditional grid street layout. Additional public open space will be provided as an integral part of the development. The open space will be landscaped and located within the developments in accordance with the Plan guidance. Housing types shall comprise a mix of typologies and dwelling sizes to accommodate a broad range of household compositions.

To the northeast of the area, there will be provision for low density (10-15 dwellings per hectare) housing with spacious front and rear gardens which are more similar in size and scale to the houses located off the Dublin Road.

**POLICIES**

- The area shall accommodate residential development at a medium density.
- Any development shall provided connections to adjacent existing and new developed areas as indicated on the masterplan.
- The built form will be consistent with the layout in the masterplan comprising perimeter blocks with internal open space provision to the rear.
- Building types shall comprise a mix of typologies and dwelling sizes to
- Accommodate a broad range of uses and household compositions.
- Parking will be provided within the internal space. On street parking will also be provided.
- Public open space provision shall be provided in accordance with the plan requirements.

**CONTROLS****Building Density:**

Medium density 25-35 dwellings per hectare (to the northeast of the area, there will be provision for low density- 10-15 dwellings per hectare)

Building Height Maximum - 2 Storeys

**6.17 Area No. 14 – Industrial Area**

This site comprises 9.57 hectares and shall provide enterprise and employment uses. The new bypass provides an attractive location for light industrial technological accommodation, being in close proximity to a new residential expansion area and Mullingar Town with high quality accessibility.

Due to its strategic positioning the area shall accommodate high quality design light Industrial/Technological developments which will present a positive image at the entrance of Mullingar. These landmark enterprises will raise the profile of not only Ardmore/Marlinstown but Mullingar as a gateway town.

The adjacent IDA serviced site is also a good incentive to attract investment into this area. The IDA, being a high profile service provider, is anticipated will attract significant inward investment into the area, giving rise to employment generation. It is envisaged that the future development of these lands shall be to the same standard as the IDA lands. This site shall therefore provide all necessary infrastructures such as access roads, water and sewerage, internal roads and public lighting and public facilities.

Any type of development falling under the remit of Part 11 'Major Accidents Directive' of the Planning and Developments Regulations, 2001 shall not be permitted.

Access throughout the site will be important throughout the development. This will ensure permeability and reduce the need to travel. A number of new streets will be required to link the site with adjoining industrial and residential developments. Any future development should provide public transport facilities such as a bus shelter and cycle lanes similar to the IDA site. All of the buildings within this area will front the main access road and, where applicable, enhance the corners of the site.

An area of landscaped open space will be provided to the front of the development along the new bypass road. This buffer will ensure a transition from the road infrastructure to the Industrial Development Area/ Technological Park.

**POLICIES**

- The area shall accommodate enterprise and employment uses.
- There shall be no retail provided in this area
- The site shall provide for all necessary infrastructure such as access roads, water and sewerage, internal roads and public lighting and public transport facilities.
- Public transport facilities such as a bus shelter and cycle lanes similar to the adjacent IDA site shall be provided.
- An area of landscaped open space will be provided to the front of the development along the new bypass road.
- A childcare facility should be provided within industrial estates and business parks in accordance with the Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2001.
- Parking will be provided within the sites in accordance with the Westmeath County Development Plan standards.

**CONTROLS**

Plot Ratio:	maximum of 0.50 sqm/sqm (gross)
Building Height:	1-3 storeys

**6.18 Area No. 15 Established Residential Area (Within Linear Park)**

This is not an identified character area as above however, it does warrant policy for its future development. These dwellings currently hold an Open Space zoning the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008. This zoning is imperative for the strategic development of the linear park which will be of benefit to the future residents of Ardmore/Marlinstown and also Mullingar. Therefore it is extremely important that the future use of this area is maintained in its open space use.

**POLICIES**

- Retain open space use.
- Respect established uses within the open space area.

**6.19 Land Use Table**

Permitted land uses will comply with the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014 and the Land Use Zoning Matrix.

**6.20 Transportation and Movement****Road Infrastructure:**

While some traffic theories advocate for arboreous urban structures in order to decrease the amount of junctions and therefore “improve” traffic circulation, other more sustainable theories believe that such structures prevent soft transport modes (walking and cycling) and public transport to work efficiently by increasing travel distances and reducing the overall connectivity of the area.

The Plan provides a hierarchy of avenues and streets for the movement and transportation of people within this area. The main avenues will be wide enough to accommodate a sharing of road space for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists ensuring the use of several modes of transport.

The backbone of the network will be formed by new avenues running from North to South and from East to the proposed neighbourhood centre. This first one will link the old Dublin Road with Boardstown road, via a new bridging point and the second one will connect the new N52 bypass to this new route. A network of interconnected streets and local streets emanating from these will complete the basic movement structure.

Two new bridges are proposed (see Map No. 6). In the longer term a vehicular access bridge will be required in order to link the main North-South Avenue with the Boardstown Area. A pedestrian and cycle bridge across the Canal between Area 2 and the Town Centre will be required as a key infrastructure provision connecting new developments with established developments.

Any new development within this area shall have to open up and provide linkages to surrounding developments as prescribed in the Plan and be in accordance with the hierarchy of avenues and internal streets outlined in the Local Area Plan.

It is recommended that junctions will be of a design to encourage lower speeds and to allow for the safe movement of the more vulnerable road users. In order for this to work safely, vehicular speeds must be kept low.

On roads in the vicinity of the schools, it is recommended that the Council assign a special speed limit of 30kph, in accordance with guidelines issued by the Department of Transport. In other cases raised junction tables may be provided to slow traffic and to provide easier crossing conditions for pedestrians and mobility impaired.

Access to the development area shall be provided solely from the existing roundabout on the N52. All planning applications for development accessing off the N52, via this roundabout shall be accompanied by a transport and traffic assessment and a road safety audit.

Where development proposals are brought forward within the zone of influence of existing national roads or of planned new national roads, the developer shall identify and implement noise mitigation measures. These measures shall be in accordance with the requirements of SI. No. 140 of the Environmental Noise Regulations 2006, and the costs of implementing same shall be borne by the developer.

The UK Department of Transport 'Manual for Streets', should be referred to as the guidance document and recommended design standards for roads and transportation will be employed.

## **POLICIES**

- The Plan area will be developed in accordance with the masterplan and hierarchy of avenues and internal streets outlined in the Plan.
- Any new development within the area shall have to open up and provide linkages to surrounding developments as prescribed in the masterplan.
- It is recommended that junctions will be of a design to encourage lower speeds and to allow for the safe movement of the more vulnerable road users (i.e. pedestrians, cyclists and mobility impaired people).
- It is recommended that the council assign a special speed limit of 30kph to all streets (as defined in the masterplan), in accordance with guidelines issued by the Department of Transport. (in vicinity of schools).
- There shall be no direct access onto the N52, other than via new service road to be constructed off the existing roundabout.

## **CONTROLS – Refer to Map 5**

### ***Level I- Avenues:***

- Design speed = 50kmph
- Width = 20m from between property boundaries (2 x 4m carriageway + 2x 2m parallel parking strips + 2 x 4m footpaths including a 2 x 1m strip encompassing trees/green strip adjacent to the kerb (see cross section type A-1 for residential areas and A-11 for neighbourhood centre in page 78).
- Adequate forward visibility = 50m
- Pedestrian Crossings: Adequate crossings to be provided at each junction.
- Traffic Calming Measures = to be provided close to school (area No.5) and Neighbourhood centre (area No. 5).
- Type of Traffic Calming: both horizontal and vertical.
- Spacing of measures = 100-120m
- Tree Planting along the Avenues: average spacing between 10-12m. Where possible, always use native species. The following is a list of possible trees native to Ireland that may suit the urban environment: Downy Birch, Rowan Mountain Ash, Silver Birch, Whitebeam spp.
- Lighting: Adequate lighting shall be provided to create a safe environment at night.

### ***Level II – Streets:***

- Design speed = 30kmph
- Width = 18m from between property boundaries (2 x 4m carriageway = 2 x 2m parallel parking strips + 2 x 3 m footpaths including a 2 x 1m strip encompassing trees/green strip adjacent to the kerb (see cross-section type B in page 78).
- Adequate forward visibility = 30m
- Pedestrian Crossing: adequate crossings to be provided at each junction.
- Traffic Calming = YES
- Type of Traffic Calming = Horizontal
- Spacing of measures = 100 -120m
- Tree planting along the streets: average spacing between 8-10m where possible, always use native species. The following is a list of possible trees

native to Ireland that may suit the urban environment: Rowan-Mountain Ash, Whitebeam spp.

- Lighting: adequate lighting shall be provided to facilitate in creating a safe environment at night.

### **Level III – Local Streets:**

- Design Speed = 30kmph
- Width = 16m from between property boundaries (2 x3m carriageway + 2 x 2m parallel parking strips + 2 x 3m footpaths including a 2 x 1m strip encompassing trees/green strip adjacent to the kerb (see cross section type C in page 78).
- Adequate forward visibility = 30m
- Pedestrian Crossings: adequate crossings to be provided at each junction.
- Traffic Calming: YES
- Type: Horizontal
- Spacing of measures = 60 80m
- Tree planting along the local streets, average spacing between 8-10m where possible, always use native species. The following is a list of possible trees native to Ireland that may suit the urban environment: Rowan-Mountain Ash, Whitebeam spp.
- Lighting adequate lighting shall be provided to facilitate in creating a safe environment at night.

### **Junction typology:**

The list below summarises the preferred options for road/street intersections.

The use of staggered junction is to be discouraged due to negative impact of soft – modes

The use of roundabouts shall be restricted to external connections with the main roads. Detailed design should be such that movements for pedestrians and cyclists are provided for in a safe manner.

### **Preferred junction typology**

Avenue – external road: roundabout

Avenue – avenue: t/4 arm-signalled junction

Avenue – street : t/4 – arm – junction

Avenue – local street – t/4 – arm-junction

Street – external road: t-junction

Street – local street: t/4-arm junction

### **Parking Standards:**

Parking provision will be required to comply with car parking and cycle provision standards of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014 (see appendix)

The provision of extensive areas of hard impermeable surface is considered undesirable. Innovative proposals with regard to the provision of permeable car parking surface materials shall be encouraged.

### **POLICIES**

- Any parking provision will be required to comply with car parking and cycle provision standards of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008 - 2014

### **CONTROLS**

Refer to section 7.10 of Westmeath County Development Plan 2008 - 2014

**Public Transport:**

It is an objective of the Council to see public transport being provided within Mullingar Town and the surrounding areas and therefore provision will be made to accommodate the movement of people between the Local Area Plan and the existing town centre by means of public transport modes. A variety of transportation and movement options including walking and cycling will encourage a more sustainable approach to travel.

The provision of public transport for the existing residents of the Ardmore – Marlinstown area is currently unviable given the low population density of the area. The increase by approx. 4,500 persons of the population of the area will allow for successful provision of public transport for residents of the area. It will also provide an important service connection to the IDA and Technological Parks. It is likely that any successful new bus service would operate, not only through this newly developed quarter of the town, but also through other developing quarters of the town, (such as Robinstown) as well as existing more mature areas.

It is premature to map out the exact route that a bus service would take and where bus stops will be located prior to the provision of an overall network in the town. The future provision of bus-stops will require the provision of both bus-shelters and cycle parking facilities. Bus bays, cages, shelters and waiting areas would be at attractive locations and designed in accordance with best practice.

**POLICIES**

- It is an objective of the council to see public transport being provided within Mullingar Town and the surrounding areas.
- The future provision of bus-stops will require the provision of both bus-shelters and cycle parking facilities. Bus bays, cages, shelters and waiting areas would be attractive locations and designed in accordance with best practice.

**Cycling and Walking:**

The Local Area Plan will encourage environmentally friendly modes of transport by providing a highly permeable expansion of the town. Such permeability translates into shorter trip distances by foot or by bike compared with travelling to the same destination by private car. Reduced trip distance is one of the key determinants for encouraging and walking and cycling.

The permeability of the area is enhanced further by the provision of dedicated traffic free routes through the proposed Canal side and Neighbourhood Park and the provision of a dedicated pedestrian/cycle bridge over the canal. These elements will encourage not only commuting trips but also trips for leisure users. Facilities for walkers and cyclists can be enhanced by the provision of dedicated signage and links to other cycling-friendly routes through Mullingar. The density, permeable layout, and mixed-use nature of development within a compact neighbourhood centre will also facilitate short trips suited to walking and cycling.

The Plan provides for abundant tree-planting along the avenues and the provision of many internal roads with curved alignments. Both of these elements can help to encourage slower vehicle speeds through the visual narrowing of the carriageway and the reduction of sight distances respectively.

The proposed location of two schools within the area offers an opportunity to propose a 30kph speed limit in their vicinity. This will offer safety benefits for all road users and especially for school pupils.

Pedestrian needs have been integrated in the design of the streets hierarchy ensuring shared provision with motorists. The provision of a new pedestrian and cycle link across the canal to the northwest of the study area will ensure that the new expansion area will be connected to the established areas and the Town Centre. An additional pedestrian and cycle link through the Canal side park in the southwest of the study area, will also connect the established development of Boardstown with the new Ardmore/Marlinstown area.

The Plan also promotes medium and higher residential densities in close proximity to the new proposed neighbourhood core and central park area which will reduce the need to travel and encourage more pedestrian and cycle travel.

## **POLICIES**

- The area shall be pedestrian/cycle friendly.
- Junctions shall be of a design to encourage lower speeds and to allow for the safe movement of the more vulnerable road users (i.e. pedestrians, cyclists and mobility impaired).
- All streets and avenues will use designs standards from the DoT "Manual for Streets".
- All development shall provide both direct and safe links with adjacent pedestrian and cycle facilities to ensure that a permeable layout is provided.

### **Mobility Management Plans:**

A Mobility Management Plan (MMP) consists of a package of measure put in place by one organisation or a group of organisations (e.g. within an office park or industrial estate) to encourage and support more sustainable travel patterns among staff, visitors and customers. This applies in particular to Area 14 and the IDA industrial estate.

The requirements for the submission of a MMP will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Account will be taken of the location, scale of development, the precise nature of the uses proposed and the anticipated impact on the surrounding area, in terms of congestion and the existing and proposed transport network.

**CONTROLS*****Pavements Alongside Avenues***

Width – 4m including a 1 m strip encompassing trees/green strip adjacent to the kerb. Parallel parking and footpaths on both sides of the avenues.

**Pavements along Streets**

Pavement width-3 metres including a 1 metre strip encompassing trees/green strip adjacent to the curb

**Standards for segregated walking/ cycling facilities alongside the Royal Canal**

Width: 3.00 metres Surface: Hard (bit-mac)

Junction with vehicular roads: Apply standard as indicated in “provision of Cycle Facilities- National Manual for Urban Areas”, Dublin Transportation Office and Department of the Environment and Local Government”.

Signage: Dedicated cycle/ pedestrian signage.

Lighting: Adequate lighting shall be provided to facilitate in creating a safe environment at night.

**POLICIES**

Mobility Management Plans (MMP) will be required as part of major development applications of an industrial or commercial nature.

**6.21 Social Infrastructure****Social and Community Facilities:**

The provision of social and community facilities are integral to the development of any new neighbourhood. Traditionally physical infrastructure has been developed first with social and community infrastructure being provided later or sometimes not at all. This tends to result in isolated and segregated communities.

Basic provision such as adequate and usable open space, education, childcare, retail and other facilities such as health centres, community centres, library etc must be achieved in tandem with the development of all physical infrastructure.

There are a number of community facilities required for the successful development of the Plan area, and lands have been reserved in the plan for this purpose. The Council shall encourage the provision of the facilities and will look favourably on their accommodations within the appropriate areas.

**POLICIES**

The Council will encourage and assist, where appropriate, in the provision of social and community facilities within the Plan area.

## 6.22 Open Space Provision:

Open Space Provision will be in accordance with the Plan and the County Development Plan 2008-2014 standards. This Plan has adequately planned for both passive and active open space. This is in the form of Residential open space, Public open space within the neighbourhood park, the civic areas, the protection of the Ringforts, buffer areas and the linear park. The total open space provision within the Plan is 36.19 hectares comprising 18.33 ha for the linear park and 17.86 ha within the Residential area. This equates to 16.92% of the total area, which is in keeping with the Planning Guideline requirements (minimum of 15%) for open space provision within a LAP.

The Westmeath County Development Plan 2008 - 2014 the Council has recognised the potential of the Royal Canal 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.

To achieve accessibility, quality and value effectively, open space and recreational facilities must be located and designed on a hierarchical basis according to the needs of a defined population. For Open Space hierarchy provision refer to Map No 5.

The hierarchy of open space is provided within three categories as follows:

- Class I – Strategic Open Space
- Class II – Local/Neighbourhood Parks
- Class III – Public Open Space
- Class IV – Buffer landscape

**Class I** – Strategic Open Space will be reserved within Area No. 11 as indicated in the County Development Plan. This area will service the entire plan and the wider town area.

**Class II** – Local Park. These will include the Canal side adjacent to the area No. 1 and 2 and the neighbourhood park in Area No. 7. The first one acts as a fundamental link between the town centre and the strategic open space in Area No. 11. The second park will be located at the core of the plan area beside the neighbourhood centre as indicated in the Plan (Map No. 2).

**Class III** - Informal/ Public Open Space will be provided within the majority of character areas. These areas will be landscaped and will provide an informal amenity for the surrounding neighbourhood area.

**Class IV**- Buffer landscape will be provided in areas No. 4, 12 and 14. In areas No. 4 and 12 the buffer will protect the existing Ringforts and in Area No 14, the buffer will act as a transition from the N-52 and the industrial area, this buffer will also help to integrate the industrial area within the surrounding countryside.

**POLICIES**

- The plan area shall accommodate a hierarchy of public open spaces which include a neighbourhood park (Area 7), lands along side the Royal Canal (Area 1, 2, and 11) and a series of smaller informal/ casual open spaces and the buffer landscapes (See Map No. 4).
- All development shall provide a minimum of 15% of the total gross area for open space provision. The locations of this contribution shall be in accordance to the open space hierarchy shown on Map No. 4 and shall be agreed with the Council prior to commencement of development.
- Where appropriate a financial contribution in lieu of open space provision will be required, in accordance with the provisions of the Planning & Development Acts 2000-2007. Such a requirement may also be imposed where appropriate in the case of higher-density developments to conform with the master plan layout
- All open spaces shall be landscaped to high quality standards

**CONTROLS**

Open Space provision will be in accordance with the plan layout and development contributions towards the cost of provision of same will be required in lieu of non-provision of lands.

**6.23 Natural Heritage**

The plan area has a diversity of natural habitats including hedgerows, woodlands and grasslands. Even small stretches of hedgerow or individual trees can be important parts of the natural environment and should be protected where necessary. Increasing urban and rural development impact on hedgerows and detract from their associated wildlife and landscape values. Habitats cannot exist in isolation, there is a need to recognise the importance of ecological corridors or eco-nets that connect them. Therefore the Council will seek to manage, protect and enhance the natural heritage, where possible, of the plan area. Trees provide great amenity value in the landscape and area also an important wildlife habitat. Trees in urban setting add colour, texture and structure to townscapes. Trees and their setting are under pressure from building and road development. The Council will normally not grant planning permission for development that requires the felling of sound mature trees.

**POLICIES**

- To manage, protect and enhance the natural heritage where possible of the plan area. Where natural features are in danger from development, the Council will exercise its development control power to protect the environment.
- To protect and conserve ecological networks and to prevent loss and fragmentation of ecological corridor where possible.
- To protect streams by reserving land along their banks for ecological corridors, where appropriate and discourage culverting or realignment.
- To protect the amenity of the canal, its boundaries and to provide for the creation and maintenance of public access along the Linear Park and the Canal.
- Development shall not involve the removal of trees and areas of soft landscaping between the building line and the boundary of the road or footway, unless the Council require so.
- To require the provision of acceptable mitigation measures in order to minimize the risk of flooding and negative impacts to water quality (including run-off, erosion and sedimentation).

**CONTROLS**

Hedging or other boundary treatment in new developments shall be in keeping with those traditionally found in the area.

**6.24 Schools:**

There is a requirement for one primary school and one secondary school within the plan area, suitable sites have been identified for both. Area No. 5 has been recommended for the primary school and community uses. Area No. 10 is reserved for the accommodation of a new secondary school. The site is of sufficient size to facilitate ancillary recreational uses also. Both primary and secondary schools will be designed in accordance with the Planning Guidelines produced by the Department of Education and Science and the development of these sites will be subject to consultation with the department and local school providers.

**POLICIES**

- A primary and secondary school shall be provided within the plan area.
- Areas 5 & 10 are the most appropriate locations for school provisions (see policies and controls for areas 5 & 10).
- Safe cycling and pedestrian linkages to the schools shall be provided.
- School shall be provided in accordance with the Planning Guidelines produced by Department of Education and Science.
- To encourage clustering of school, community and open space facilities and to consider dual use school and community facilities where appropriate.

**6.25 Childcare:**

The grouping of childcare facilities, if at all possible close to or within the same building as other educational and/ or community facilities, is preferred. Consideration of childcare facilities provision should be raised as early as possible in pre planning discussions for larger housing developments.

The provision of such facilities shall be in accordance with the Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authority, 2001.

Any new facility shall have space for off-street parking and /or suitable drop-off and collection points for children and also space for an outdoor play area.

**POLICIES**

- The Council will seek to ensure the adequate provision of childcare facilities within the plan area.
- The Council shall require the provision of childcare facilities as stipulated in the Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2001.
- Alternative arrangements such as grouping or association of childcare facilities with other educational/ community facilities will be encouraged.

**CONTROLS**

A standard of one childcare facility providing for a minimum 20 childcare places per approximately 75 dwellings shall be applied to residential developments.

The grouping of childcare facilities, if at all possible close to or within the same building as other educational and/ or community facilities, is preferred.

**6.26 Retail:**

Retail provision for the new neighbourhood centre will be in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2005 and the County Retail Strategy for Westmeath 2007. The Ardmore/Marlinstown Area has been identified as a suitable location for the development of a neighbourhood centre, in both the Westmeath Retail Strategy 2007 and the Mullingar Town Plan 2008-2014.

One supermarket comprising a single level, self service store selling mainly food, with a net sales area of less than 1,200 square metres often with car parking, will be required for the plan area. The suitable location for this supermarket shall be within the neighbourhood centre (Area No. 5). This should be implemented with a full range of accompanying facilities and services, in accordance with the provisions of the Westmeath County Development 2008-2014.

**POLICIES**

- The Council will seek to ensure the adequate provision of retail facilities within the designated Neighbourhood Centre.

**CONTROLS**

Retail provision will be in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2005 and the County Westmeath Retail Strategy 2007

**6.27 Water & Wastewater Infrastructure**

The Council is responsible for the supply of water, collection, treatments and disposal of all wastewater originating in the area and for dealing with surface water collection and disposal in urban areas. With the rapid urban expansion, the town of Mullingar needs to improve its water supply network and both foul and surface water infrastructure.

**POLICIES**

- The council will only permit development within areas adequately serviced with water, drainage, wastewater infrastructure, electricity and telecommunications.

The required infrastructural arrangements for Ardmore/ Marlinstown area will include the following:

**6.28 Water Supply and Conservation:**

The existing water main system serving Ardmore/ Marlinstown area and its hinterland will need to be extended to serve the proposed lands. A network analysis will be carried out to facilitate the proposed development envisaged in this plan. Improvements will therefore be made during the life of the plan in order to ensure that the water supply will adequately service the developable lands.

This Local Area Plan advocates the efficient use of water as a limited resource. Water conservation implies the planned protection, improvement, and wise use of water as a limited natural resource. Water Conservation means controlling, managing and planning for the wise use of our water resource.

**POLICIES**

- The Council encourages the efficient use of water as a limited resource. Conservation is an essential element in the Council's Water Management Strategy, even where adequate supplies exist, so as to ensure optimal use of natural resources.
- Extension to existing water distribution systems will be provided where resources permit. Where such services are required, development levies shall be payable by developers to meet the Council's cost in the provision of services benefiting the Development.

**Surface Water:**

The disposal of surface water in built-up areas is a fundamental issue in determining individual land-use planning proposals. Development reduces surface permeability by replacing natural ground with hard surfaced areas. This reduces the amount of water

infiltrating into the ground and increases surface run-off. Any build up area, therefore, needs to be drained to remove excess water. Traditionally this has been done using underground pipe systems designed to carry water away as quickly as possible and thus prevent flooding locally. This increases the speed of run-off and can change the flooding regime of the catchment. The alternation of natural flow patterns in terms of increases in both the total quantity and peak flows of run-off through the extension of built development can lead to problems elsewhere within the river catchment, particularly flooding downstream. Increased flow rates can also cause erosion and damage stream and streamside habitats. Water quality issues are also important because pollutants from built-up areas are washed in to rivers or groundwater, harming fish and wildlife and being difficult to clean up. The plan area will be served by single systems for both surface water and sewerage. In the case of surface water, the piped network will be complemented as appropriate with the provision of attenuation and storm water retention ponds where appropriate.

Continuing to drain build-up area without taking these water issues into consideration is not a sustainable long- term option.

Flood risk and other environmental damage can be managed by minimizing changes in the volume and rate of surface run-off from development sites through the use of sustainable drainage systems.

The LAP supports and encourages the introduction of sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) These use techniques to control surface water run-off as close to it's origin as possible, before it enters a watercourse, SUDS can be designed to function in most urban settings, from hard surface areas to soft landscaped features and can be classified as:

- Prevention methods
- Filter Strips and Swales
- Permeable surfaces and filter drains
- Infiltration Devices

#### **POLICIES**

- The council supports and encourages the introduction of sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS)
- In relation to surface water treatment attenuation ponds may not be suitable within residential areas for safety reasons. Alternative measures shall be considered.
- To assess development proposals in areas at risk of flooding, in accordance with the "Planning System & Flood Risk Management – Consultation Draft Guidelines for Planning Authorities" DoEHLG 2008, and as superseded.

#### **Sewerage:**

Part of the plan area has recently been serviced by the construction of Phase 1 of the Marlinstown extension to the Mullingar Sewerage Scheme The upgrade of the Clonmore sewerage treatment plant which is currently underway will address capacity issues for the plan area in to the future.

**POLICIES**

- Extension to existing wastewater collection systems and existing water distribution systems will be provided where resources permit. Where such services are required, development levies shall be payable by developers to meet the Council's cost in the provision of services benefiting the Development.

**6.29 Energy**

The Council are aware of the need to promote more energy efficiency in the design of buildings. This results in a decrease on natural resources, less demand on artificial materials that impact on the environment, a decrease in emissions and a more healthy and sustainable environment. The Council recognises recent Government policy in this area and therefore encourage a greater awareness of energy and eco-efficiency in new design. The plan promotes the use of reuses and local material in addition to encouraging design flexibility so that buildings are designed or adapted in ways which allow for as many uses and as much flexibility of use as practicable.

**POLICIES**

- The Council encourages the efficient use of energy as a limited resource. Energy efficiency through building, design techniques, construction and materials is an essential element in the Council's policy to reduce energy waste.
- The use of sustainable energy sources will be encouraged within the plan area.
- Policies pertaining to waste disposal, electricity and gas shall be as per the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014 and the Mullingar Town Plan 2008-2014.

## 7.0 Implementation

One of the principal aims of the Local Area Plan is to develop the study area in a coordinated and efficient manner to ensure the provision of all necessary physical and social infrastructures within a suitable timeframe. The Plan describes how 15 designated areas should be developed. The controls provided will ensure that the development will be in accordance with the Plan principles. Phased implementation of the Plan will ensure that the necessary support infrastructure (i.e. roads, open spaces, community facilities etc.) will be provided as required.

The Council has powers which can help achieve some aspects of the plan, such as compulsory acquisition powers which may be used, if required, to facilitate site assembly or to secure the realisation of objectives contained in the Plan. The Council can also require developers to contribute to the achievement of the specific objectives of this plan, including those relating to the provision of physical and social infrastructure, within their individual development proposals.

In order to fund the support infrastructure to fully implement this Plan, it will be necessary to establish a specific General Contribution Scheme for the benefiting area. This area is shown on Map Number 7 and includes zoned lands outside the Plan area to the north and east as these areas will also benefit from such infrastructure. A General Scheme is required as the supporting legislation does not allow the Council to establish a Supplementary Scheme for the provision of parks and open spaces. Pending the adoption of this new contribution scheme, contributions in respect of public infrastructure and facilities benefiting the development, will be levied by the Planning Authority, on the basis of the established General and Supplementary Contribution Schemes for the town of Mullingar.

The Plan is a long term blue print for the development of the Ardmore/ Marlinstown area over a period of approximately 15 years. On this basis, it is expected that Phase I will be completed by year 7 and that Phase II may commence when Phase I is 80% completed. The Council will be available to liaise with landowners in relation to phasing arrangements in order to secure implementation of the plan.

The following table outlines the phasing plan for the development of the area:

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Area (refer to map No. 4)</b>
<b>Phase I</b>	<b>Areas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 10, 13 and 14</b>
<b>Phase II</b>	<b>Areas 6, 7, 8, 9 and 12</b>

## 8.0 Environmental Assessment Report

### 8.1 Introduction

The Planning and Development Act 2000 19 (4) (a) states:

‘a local area plan shall contain information on the likely significant effects on the environment of implementating the plan’

This legislative requirement preceeded the 2001 EU Directive. On 5<sup>th</sup> June 2001, the European Council adopted Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (“the SEA Directive”) (EU, 2001). The EU Directive on SEA requires the carrying out of an environmental assessment of plans and programmes which are likely to have significant environmental effects and which set the framework for future development consent of projects which are subject to EIA or where an assessment is necessary due to the likely effect on sites governed by the Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC).

The formal preparation of this plan commenced in May 2004 with the presentation of an “issues paper and working draft” to the Mullingar Area Members. This formal commencement was prior to the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 coming in to operation on the 21<sup>st</sup> of July 2004. As a result the formal preparatory assessment of the plan is not required.

The methodology for the Environmental Report is as follows

- Scoping
- Baseline Study
- Environmental Assessment
- Overall findings

### 8.2 Scoping

This exercise examined relevant plans and guidelines at national, regional and local level for compatibility with the Ardmore/ Marlinstown LAP.

Sustainable Development- A Strategy for Ireland, 1997 and making Ireland’s Development Sustainable, Review, Assessment and future Action 2002.

The previous Strategy aimed to secure the transition, over time, to an environmentally sustainable society and economy. This was to be achieved by applying principles of sustainable development methodically to policy- making and to integrate them into decision making process.

Sustainable development is where:

“Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable- to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”

The follow up 2002 report- Making Ireland’s Development Sustainable, examined the change in Ireland since 1992 towards good environmental management, within the framework of the National Sustainable Development Policy. The report, as well as stating an account of relevant milestones over the past decade, also identified current

environmental trends (including pressures on the environment) and the need for fuller integration between environmental and economic/ sectoral policies. The report also set out priorities for sustainable development policy and action in the period to 2023.

In overall terms, sustainable development is not solely about Government and what it will do; rather it is about all parties involved- Government, Social Partners, NGO's, individual citizens- in their different roles and capacities making the right decisions and taking the right actions, in partnership with each other.

Westmeath County Council is committed to placing sustainable development principles at the heart of its decision- making with the public participation as one of the most fundamental aspects of this exercise.

The principles of sustainability have been embodied in the preparation and production of this Local Area Plan. With regards to spatial planning and land use, the LAP recognises the quality and character of the study area. The Masterplan has been designed to protect and minimize impact on the natural environment. The integration of the Royal Canal, Linear Park and Neighbourhood Park within the new plan area ensure that new development will respect the new environment and local amenities.

In terms of the built environment, the plan promotes more flexibility in the residential zoning. This is to incorporate a mixture of uses suitable to a new neighbourhood centre such as retail, commercial, educational and community. By accommodating a number of mixed uses within close proximity to each other, the need for vehicular travel is reduced.

The Masterplan prescribes a built form for the plan area which is permeable and legible, increasing accessibility to all facilities and providing a layout which is user friendly for any further public transport plans. Higher densities are promoted in proximity to the new neighbourhood centre allowing for a more compact urban form. Energy efficiency in building design and construction, in addition to sustainable drainage and water systems is advocated in the development of physical infrastructure in the study area. In general, the Masterplan objectives have been driven by the principles of a healthy environment, a prosperous economy and an inclusive society. The Ardmore/ Marlinstown Local Area Plan 2008-2023 is consistent with the objectives of the national sustainable development strategies.

### **National Climate Change Strategy, 2000**

The strategy aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as part of achieving the targets agreed under the Kyoto Protocol. The LAP has aimed to promote sustainable use of energy efficiency in buildings and construction and through sustainable drainage and water systems. Mixed-use development is advocated in the new neighbourhood centre reducing the need to travel and the use of private transportation hence resulting in an overall reduction in carbon monoxide emissions. Cycle and pedestrian routes form part of the integral transport and movement hierarchy for the study area. Higher residential densities are promoted around the neighbourhood centre further reducing the need to travel. The overall Masterplan layout is permeable and legible allowing for ease of movement for any future public transport provision. The efficient use of land ensures a reduced energy waste. The Ardmore/ Marlinstown LAP 2009-2023 is consistent with the strategy.

### **Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas 2008**

The importance of qualitative standards and layouts has also been emphasized throughout character areas including the provision of open space. This is evident through the policies and controls provided in Section 6 where design and layout have been prescribed to ensure the quality living and amenity requirements of residents and the local environment are achieved. The approach to the overall masterplan of the area is informed by the requirement to create a sustainable community, wherein a range of densities and typologies apply, and supporting social community and physical infrastructure are provided in tandem with residential development.

The provision of new social and physical infrastructure is recommended in the LAP. The Ardmore/ Marlinstown LAP 2009-2023 is consistent with the guidelines.

### **Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2000 and the Westmeath Retail Strategy 2007**

The Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities provide a framework to guide the preparation of Development Plans and to assess planning applications for retail development. An objective of the framework is to support the continuing role of town and centres. The key challenge identified arising from the Westmeath Retail Strategy 2007 is to provide the required additional floorspace up to 2014 for the county and beyond in a way which reinforces the existing retail function of the town centre rather than competing with and potentially undermining it. In this LAP Mullingar Town Centre is supported through the provision of complementary retail outlets in the proposed Neighbourhood Centre. The provision of a neighbourhood centre is considered necessary for the sustainable development of the plan area. By locating the majority of retail facilities within the mixed-use centre, local needs will be addressed while reducing the need for travel. The provision of retail outlets will be in accordance with the guidelines. The LAP controls comply with these guidelines and so are consistent with the document.

### **Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014**

Under the County Development Plan 2008-2014 the Council will seek to ensure the cohesive and coherent development of existing and proposed settlements. An appropriate emphasis will be directed at achieving quality in new developments, whilst conserving the County's heritage and environment, as well as improving existing development. 'Design inputs' shall be promoted to occur at the beginning of the development process. Policies and guidance will enable and enhance the capacity of urban and rural environments to absorb new development. The LAP is compatible generally with the overall strategic objective and policies of the County Development Plan. With regard to the Mullingar Town Plan 2008-2014 the LAP is consistent and compatible with the policies and objectives of this plan, which form a part of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008 – 2014.

### **Housing Strategy for County Westmeath February 2008**

There is a need to accommodate a projected increase of 6,711 additional households in County Westmeath during the period of the housing strategy. The following strategic options were accessed for the future distribution of this scale of housing in the country:

The Housing Strategy aims to concentrate residential development- where possible- in locations where there is access to the main line rail network and where there is easy

access to education, employment and other commercial and community facilities. The need to provide and make use of resources and services requires that a more significant level of housing be provided in the main towns and rural settlements.

The LAP ensures that existing and new housing developments will be within close proximity to school, the neighbourhood centre, neighbour parks, community facilities and employment facilities. The LAP is generally compatible with the overall aims of the housing strategy.

### **8.3 Baseline Study**

To determine the likely and significant effects on the environment, it is important to establish the key environmental issues within the Ardmore/ Marlinstown Area. The study adopts environmental indicators included in the environmental report, which are human health, fauna, flora, soil, water and air, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors.

#### **Human Factors**

Approximately over 50% of the study area has been developed to date. The majority has taken place immediately north and south of Ardmore Road. Recent developments have been of medium density with the more established developments along the Ardmore Road of a low density. The study area has the potential to accommodate further significant residential development. With regards to the impact of development on existing families, the LAP protects existing development through policies and controls ensuring minimum impact on their residential amenity through use of front, rear and side distances, height and mass and landscaping. The existing communities will also benefit from the provision of a neighbourhood centre, park, linear open space, school and community facilities. It is considered that the impact on the existing community will be minimal.

#### **Biodiversity/ Flora and Fauna**

The remaining undeveloped lands comprise mainly agricultural land, the Royal Canal and streams. This type of landscape has the potential to provide an array of plant and animal species. The canal has been designated as a National Heritage Area. There is extensive tree coverage and foliage along the pathway adjacent to the canal. Across the lands there are quite well- defined field pattern bounded with mature hedgerows and foliage. The area close to the Canal is landscaped with dense foliage mainly consisting of trees, bushes and gorse. This type of landscape typically provides habitats for birds, insects and mammal species found in agricultural lands and dense foliage.

The presence of the canal and associated areas generate considerable wetland ecology potential. These areas may support a diversity of plant species and wetland scrub. The extent of the Royal Canal area provides potential for the development of a series of ecotypes along the extent of the river area. Development which is maintained at a distance from the Canal will ensure that this area will continue to attract a variety of wildlife.

The Masterplan has recognized the importance of the biodiversity of the study area and has acknowledged this through its protection in the policies and controls for natural heritage in Section 6.

## **Soil**

The bedrock in the study area is composed of two rock types: the Lucan Formation (otherwise known as Calp Limestone), consisting of a bedded series of limestone and hard cherty beds), and Waulstorian Limestone (which consists of a massive unbedded fossil rich muddy limestones). Outcrops have been recorded including those along the canal, possibly created during its construction.

Quaternary deposits of glacial tills and peats overlay the limestones. The ground on the East side of Saunders Bridge is soft with flooding indicated to be taking place periodically on the east side of the Canal. The soft ground in the area has implications for road and housing construction.

## **Water**

The royal Canal forms an outer boundary of the study area. The potential of this amenity has not been achieved to date however; the LAP will protect and integrate this feature within the overall development of the Plan Area. The Policies and Controls in Section 6 ensure that all new development will be within an adequate distance of the Canal and will be respectful of its presence. The Masterplan prescribes that new adjacent developments will provide frontage to this amenity and natural supervision. The Canal will become an attractive passive recreation integrated with new neighbourhoods and enjoyed by residents and visitors.

## **Air**

At present, just over 50% of the study area is developed so direct air pollution is not a significant problem. Air pollution in Ireland generally occurs from fuel burning fires, emissions from vehicles and from industrial developments. The study area is relatively unaffected by these sources. The LAP however prescribes a built form which is compact and permeable and user friendly for public transport, pedestrians, cyclists and the mobility impaired.

## **Cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage**

There are five national recorded monuments within the Plan Area, four of those occupying a promontory running north to south through the southern Plan area taking advantage of the high ground level. These comprise four ringforts and one earthwork (the Marlinstown graveyard lies outside the study boundary). These existing ringforts and earthwork are historical amenities that form an intrinsic part of the landscape. The Masterplan layout, policies and controls in Section 6 protect all recorded sites and monuments and promote their integration with the expansion area, as open spaces.

### **8.4 Environmental Assessment**

Sustainability appraisal is a technique for examining the environment, social and economic effects of policy with respect to Development Plans and Local Area Plans. It is essential to assess these potential impacts in order to make recommendations which may be taken into account prior or the approval of the Plan. The appraisal forms an integral part of the assessment of the Ardmore/ Marlinstown LAP.

The Planning And Development Act 2000 section 19 (4) (a) states that ‘ a local area plan shall contain information on the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan’. However the aim of the Act is to promote ‘ proper planning and

sustainable development', therefore the assessment has addressed non-environmental issues which are intrinsically linked to sustainable development objectives.

The value and purpose of undertaking sustainability appraisals are as follows:

- To understand the implications of policy or groups of policy.
- To identify the implications of wide-ranging and often conflicting aspects of policy to be taken into account.
- To examine the link between environmental, social and economic policies and their subsequent impacts

### **Appraisal of Plan Policies and Proposals**

A multi-disciplined team has conducted the appraisal of plan policies. Key elements were as follows:

- The use of the appraisal criteria in as the basis for assessment
- The grouping of policies to assess the overall impact of the plan.
- The impact of policy rather than the impact of the activities themselves.
- The appraisal was carried out using the simple method of scoring positive / negative

### **8.5 Overall Findings**

In summary the appraisal was scored positively as it addressed issues of social and economic concern in a coherent and rational manner addressing the needs of the local community. It also advocated protection of the environment, reduction in the consumption of raw materials and an awareness of the need to protect and conserve designated and non-designated sites. The appraisal process and results are detailed below.

The sustainability appraisal has provided a useful basis for improving the policy content of the plan so that it becomes more holistic and addresses wider issues which effect the growth and development of communities overtime.

## Environmental Assessment Report

### Appraisal Criteria

1. Natural Environment
  - Landscape quality
  - Air quality
  - Ground and surface water quality
2. Biodiversity
  - Non-designated areas
  - Habitats
  - Species
3. Social Needs
  - Access to employment
  - Access to social, health, education and amenity facilities
  - Housing availability and affordability
  - Alternative transport modes
  - Affordable health, education and social facilities
  - Access to all facilities/services by the disabled
  - Balance between population, services, employment opportunities and housing
4. Economy and Work
  - Business growth and investment
  - Business and employment opportunities
  - Access to education and training
  - Local employment opportunities
  - Access to employment without prejudice
  - Build on local strengths
  - Support indigenous industries
  - Promote co-operation and communication
  - Supports existing industries and long-term commitments
5. Resource Consumption
  - Consumption of renewable resources (wind, solar, hydro, biomass, forest, animal, water)
  - Consumption of non-renewable resources (energy, land, materials, wildlife, landscapes and seascapes)

### Appraisal Scoring

- + Positive Impact
- Negative Impact
- +/- Both positive and negative impacts
- 0 Neutral

## Appraisal Assessment

<b>Character Areas 1-15 (Policies)</b>		
<b>Appraisal Criteria</b>	<b>Overall Rating</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Natural Environment</b>		
Landscape Quality	+/-	Majority of agricultural land and hedgerows will be lost to development. Policies include the protection of the ringforts and earthworks and their integration and enhancement within the Masterplan layout. The provision of a linear Park along the Royal Canal and a series of open space and landscaping will be provided to ensure the quality of the landscape is maintained.
Air Quality	-	Pollutants generally occurs from fuel burning fires, emissions from vehicles and from industrial developments.
Ground and Surface Water Quality	+/-	Development will inevitably have an impact on the water quality, however sustainable drainage systems and water conservation measures are advocated in the LAP.
<b>Biodiversity</b>		
Nature Conservation	-	In the case of Greenfield development, there will inevitably be a loss of species and habitats however; the Masterplan ensures that this impact will be kept to a minimum by not permitting development within close proximity to the waterway.
<b>Social Needs</b>		
Health	+	Mixed use zoning permits the provision of health facilities within the Neighbourhood Centre. LAP recommends the provision of such facilities within Neighbourhood Centre. LAP promotes reduced travel.
Education	+	Zoning permits the provision of education facilities within Areas 5 & 10
Housing	+	Provision of housing for all. LAP recommends housing types shall comprise a mix of typologies and dwelling sizes to accommodate a broad range of household compositions
Public Open Space	+	Provision of Neighbourhood Park in Area 7, Linear Open space in Area 11 and series of open space throughout the neighbourhoods.
Transport and Accessibility	+	Masterplan layout is permeable and user friendly for public transport, pedestrians, cyclists and the mobility impaired as well as private car users.
<b>Economy &amp; Work</b>		
Employment Opportunities	+	Increased employment opportunities with access to training and education (provision of schools and community facilities) Provision of light industrial/technological uses in Area No. 14 Mixed use zoning in Neighbourhood Centre (Area 5) permits the provision of retail, commercial and community uses which will in turn provide

		employment opportunities
Business Opportunities	+	Supports local enterprises and businesses with mixed use zoning and adequate resources and facilities.
Access to Education & Training	+	Access opportunities for all to facilities and services.
<b>Resource Consumption</b>		
Consumption of Renewables	+/-	Development inevitably requires resources consumption. The LAP provides policies promoting the use of renewable resources, including water conservation and sustainable drainage systems.
Consumption of Non-renewables	+/-	Land and landscaping will inevitably be lost as a result of development however policies to protect significant features are included in the LAP. Energy efficiency design in buildings and more efficient use of land through higher education densities can reduce land wastage.

<b>Transportation and Movement (Policies)</b>		
<b>Appraisal Criteria</b>	<b>Overall Rating</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Natural Environment</b>		
Landscape Quality	+/-	Development requires adequate road infrastructure which will result in a loss of landscape. Policies require planting of trees along the main avenues and streets which will improve landscape quality. The permeable layout promotes the use of public transport, pedestrians, cyclists which will reduce the need for additional road infrastructure and impact on the landscape.
Air Quality	+/-	Traffic will increase within the area increasing pollutants and will have a negative impact on air quality. Policies promote the use of alternative forms of transport to the private car which will reduce the negative impact on air quality.
Ground and Surface Water Quality	+/-	The provision of road infrastructure will increase the number of hard surface within the Plan area this will have a negative impact on surface water runoff and drainage. The LAP promotes water conservation and sustainable urban drainage systems.
<b>Biodiversity</b>		
Nature Conservation	+/-	In the case of road infrastructure provision, there will inevitably be a loss of species and habitats however; the Masterplan ensures that this impact will be kept to a minimum by not permitting development within close proximity to the waterway. Policies promoting walking and cycling will reduce the adverse effect on the natural environment through reduced noise and pollution.
<b>Social Needs</b>		

Health	+	Increased accessibility to neighbourhood centre, parks, employment area and residential areas through permeably layout. Policies promoting walking and cycling will have positive impact on residents health.
Education	+	Adequate access to school sites through provision of hierarchy of roads, streets, cycle ways, and bridges.
Housing	+	Increased accessibility to neighbourhoods
Public Open Space	+	Adequate access to parks and open spaces through provision of hierarchy of roads, streets, cycle ways and bridges.
Transport & Accessibility	0	
<b>Economy &amp; Work</b>		
Employment Opportunities	+	Increased accessibility to neighbourhood centre and employment opportunities and to light industrial/technological sites through provision of hierarchy of roads, streets, cycle ways and bridges.
Business Opportunities	+	Local enterprises and business become more accessible for employees and consumers.
Access to Education & Training	+	Increased access opportunities for all to facilities and services
<b>Resource Consumption</b>		
Consumption of Renewables	+/-	Consumption of renewables will occur in the development of transport infrastructure. The LAP promotes the use of renewable resources, water conservation and sustainable drainage systems.
Consumption of Non-renewables	+/-	Consumption of non-renewables will occur in the development of transport infrastructure. The promotion of public transport, pedestrian and cycle facilities will reduce the need for road infrastructure and use of land resources.

<b>Social Infrastructure (Policies)</b>		
<b>Appraisal Criteria</b>	<b>Overall Rating</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Natural Environment</b>		
Landscape Quality	+/-	Landscape will be lost to provide for the development of social infrastructure however the policies requiring the provision of a hierarchy of open space including a neighbourhood park, a linear park and a series of open spaces within the neighbourhoods is included within the plan. These parks and open spaces will protect and enhance the existing natural environment.
Air Quality	0	Policies promoting the provision of social infrastructure such as schools and open space will have a minimum impact on the air quality of the environment. Some pollutants will occur as a result of traffic however it is not considered that these community facilities will generate significant traffic.
<b>Ground &amp; Surface Water Quality</b>	-	The development of social facilities will increase the number of hard surfaces within the Plan Area. This will have a negative impact on surface water quality. The Plan however requires the provision of a hierarchy of open space and promotes the usage of water conservation and sustainable urban drainage systems.
<b>Biodiversity</b>		
Nature Conservation	-/+	Due to the development of social infrastructure there will be a loss in biodiversity through construction of facilities. However the policies require the provision of a hierarchy of open space including a neighbourhood park, a linear park and a series of open spaces within the neighbourhoods which will all attract wildlife and provide natural habitats. Development will not be permitted within close proximity to the Canal ensuring protection of the ecological habitats along this waterway.  Also contained in Section 6, there are policies for the protection of natural heritage within the Plan Area. Policies include protecting and conserving ecological networks, protecting streams, and preventing the unnecessary removal of trees.
<b>Social Needs</b>		
Health	+	The Council promotes and will assist the provision of community facilities within the Plan Area
Education	+	Two sites have been identified in the LAP for the provision of a primary and secondary school. The Areas identified are Areas 5 & 10. Pedestrian and cycle linkages to these sites will be required as part of the overall development of the Plan Area.
Housing	+	Residential areas will be attractive with accessibility to a quality living environment with the availability of a neighbourhood centre, park and social community facilities within close proximity

Public Open Space	+	Policies requiring the provision of a neighbourhood park, linear park and open space areas within the neighbourhoods will provide a significant and valuable resource of public open space.
Transport & Accessibility	+	The provision of social facilities within close proximity to the main avenues, streets and pedestrian and cycle ways will ensure that commuting is kept to a minimum with a reduction in private vehicle use allowing for a more free flowing transport and movement network.
<b>Economy and Work</b>		
Employment Opportunities	+	The provision of social infrastructure such as childcare facilities, schools, community centres and local shops will all require workers. This will increase the number of job opportunities within the area.
Business Opportunities	+	The availability of a range of community facilities within the Plan Area will attract businesses to locate in the area and avail of such services
Access to Education & Training	+	Provided increased access to facilities
<b>Resource Consumption</b>		
Consumption of renewables	-	Development inevitably requires resource consumption. The LAP provides policies (in Section 6) promoting the use of renewable resources including water conservation and sustainable drainage systems.
Consumption of Non-renewables	-	Land and landscaping will inevitably be lost as a result of development however policies to protect significant features are included in Section 6 of the LAP. Energy efficiency design in buildings and more efficient use of land through higher densities can reduce land wastage.

<b>Physical Infrastructure (Policies)</b>		
<b>Appraisal Criteria</b>	<b>Overall Rating</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Natural Environment</b>		
Landscape Quality	-	Development will have a negligible impact on the landscape however the LAP promotes the use of water conservation and efficient drainage measures, sustainable drainage systems and the efficient treatment and disposal of sewage.
Air Quality	0	
Ground and Surface Water Quality	-	The installation of infrastructure will have an impact on the water system however the impact will be minimal through the implementation of the water conservation measures and sustainable urban drainage systems.
<b>Biodiversity</b>		
Nature Conservation	-	Development of the infrastructure will inevitably have an impact on biodiversity however the LAP has policies in elsewhere (Section 6) to ensure the protection and enhancement of the natural heritage.
<b>Social Needs</b>		
Health	+	Implementation and usage of water conservation measures, sustainable drainage systems and efficient treatment and disposal of sewage will limit the negligible health impacts surrounding residents.
Education	0	
Housing	+	Infrastructure will ensure the adequate treatment of water and waste for households.
Public Open Space	0	The adequate management of water and drainage and treatment of waste for households will ensure that runoff and pollution is kept to a minimum.
Transport & Accessibility	0	The adequate management of water and drainage will ensure minimal impact on road and transport infrastructure.
<b>Economy and Work</b>		
Employment Opportunities	+	Serviced land will be an attraction for businesses and the provision of job opportunities
Business Opportunities	+	Serviced land will be an attraction for businesses
<b>Resource Consumption</b>		
Consumption of Renewables	-	Provision of infrastructure will use water however water conservation and sustainable drainage systems are advocated in the LAP
Consumption of Non-renewables	-	Energy and land will be used in the provision of infrastructure however energy efficiency design and mechanisms in addition to sustainable drainage systems are advocated in the LAP.