

**Westmeath County
Council**

**Milltownpass
Village Plan
2004-2010**

Adopted October 2004

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Preamble

The principal zoning plans for the County are substantially completed with residential and other major land use zonings in place. Whilst the focus for major and large-scale development attention should be concentrated on these lands, priority villages such as Milltownpass still play an important role in the sustainable and consolidated development of the rural community. It is not the intention of this Plan to promote major growth within Milltownpass but growth, which will consolidate the village and allow its appropriate and measured expansion in accordance with the services and facilities it provides.

1. Strategic aim of Milltownpass Village Plan:

To provide a plan for the consolidated and sensitive development of Milltownpass to cater for its development needs of the settlement's population and its role in servicing the surrounding area for the next 6 years, while maintaining and enhancing the village's character and sense of place.

1.1 Policy Context

Milltownpass was scheduled as a priority settlement in the Settlement Strategy of the County Development Plan 2002-2008. This plan will provide for the sustainable and orderly development of the village.

Whilst the local area plan will provide detailed local policies and objectives for the village it should be noted that the County Development Plan 2002-2008 offers more detailed and additional guidance regarding development control planning standards for issues such as layout and design of residential developments, archaeology and car parking requirements etc. This Plan has been prepared in consultation with the local community.

2. Profile of Milltownpass

2.1 Location

Milltownpass is located on the main N6, Dublin to Galway road and is situated 45 miles (73km) from Dublin and 91 miles (146km) from Galway. There is a T Junction in the village with a local road L1005 leading to Mullingar. Milltownpass is situated approximately 10 miles from Mullingar.

2.2 Description

Milltownpass is a small settlement, bisected by the current N6. Milltownpass has a small village core with a traditional street frontage, however as one moves out of the village the pattern of development becomes dispersed and uncontained. Milltownpass has elements of a charming village streetscape but uncharacteristically has a significant number of commercial employment developments (Bennett's, Skyclad, Wright's), which in parts detract from the overall amenity streetscape. There are a number of high quality vernacular structures within the village.

2.3 Population

The estimated current domestic population is 204. Milltownpass is not a census town/village so there are no exact population figures for the village. The population is estimated on the basis of the number of residential units in the village and the average household size. Committed residential planning permissions for Milltownpass have a population equivalent of 42 persons. Therefore, the short-term projected population including permissions is 246 people. It is recognised that the village and its functions serve a large rural hinterland whose population is not included within these figures.

2.4 Existing Village Functions

Milltownpass has 2 Pubs, 2 Shops, a RC Church, a primary school, a GAA pitch and Club House. For a village of its size Milltownpass has a significant employment base including Bennett's Construction offices and yard, Leo Wright's Joinery and Sky Clad.

Milltownpass is deficient of a playground or formal children's play area. Milltownpass has the advantage of having its GAA pitch in the village centre. There are also large tracts of open space between the village and the school, which provides useful open amenity space.

Milltownpass is a service centre for the surrounding hinterland and serves the following functions commercial, residential, recreational, religious, educational, community and employment.

3. Infrastructure

3.1 Water & Sanitary Services

Milltownpass is serviced by the public mains water supply. Milltownpass is served by individual septic tanks. The current population equivalent is 328, however a proposed sewerage scheme will allow for a population equivalent of 1000 P.E. The proposed scheme is 100% grant aided under the DoEHLGs Water Services Investment Programme and the Department has recently approved the design. It is proposed to discharge effluent from the proposed wastewater treatment plant through an outfall into Milltown River, which flows in a North South direction through the village of Milltownpass. The river is part of the river Boyne catchment, which is designated as a salmonid river. The Eastern Regional Fisheries Board have indicated that they regard the Milltown River a salmonid nursery.

3.2 Roads-Public Transport-Movement

Milltownpass is bisected by the N6, the main Dublin to Galway road. The proposed N6 motorway is to be located south of Milltownpass which will impact significantly upon the village as the nearest accessible links to the new motorway will be via Rochfortbridge and Kinnegad. The local road L-1005-0 connects Milltownpass to Mullingar. The Dublin-Galway bus route currently services Milltownpass and there are buses every hour to Dublin/Galway.

The closest rail link would be accessed at Mullingar, however it would be beneficial if Killucan Station were reopened to provide an additional more accessible link to the rail network.

Footpath coverage of the area is limited to the village; it is unsafe for people walking outside of the village area. There are currently no cycle paths serving the area.

4. Development Profile

Milltownpass has so far been unaffected by large-scale suburban commuter driven residential development, unlike neighbouring villages of Rochfortbridge and Kinnegad. However, in 1999 a development of 229 houses and 3 No. Apartment blocks (Council ref: 99-1250) was withdrawn. In 2000 a development consisting of 8 semi-detached and 19 detached houses (Council ref: 00-531) was refused based upon the following reasons:

- 1 The development was unsustainable because it would encourage commuter driven development.
- 2 The development in the absence of a village plan, in conjunction with the lack of public services by reason of its location and scale would not be compatible with the development of the village and would not be an appropriate form of development for the village. The proposed development would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and development of the area and 2.1 of the 2002 County Development Plan
- 3 The layout of the development, including the disposition of public open space, which is suburban in nature would be detrimental to the residential amenities of future residents and contrary to the proper planning and development of the area

In the last six years 1998-2004 limited development has taken place within the village of Milltownpass. There has been an average of 1-2 new houses each year within the confines of the village. Much of the developments have been on existing structures or the demolition of existing structures and the construction of new ones. There have also been a significant number of applications in relation to works on industrial units and school facilities

The majority of applications for new houses have been outside the village limits. In the last six years 1998-2004 there has been 26 applications for single one-off houses outside the confines of the village extending to a 2-mile stretch along the roads out of Milltownpass, 21 have been granted and only five refused. In the last six years there has been an average 3.5 new houses granted each year along the 2 mile stretch, which is double the figure for developments within the village centre.

Since 1980 there have been fifty houses granted within a two-mile radius of the village centre whilst there were 22 houses granted within the village centre. There were two developments in the rural hinterland of Milltownpass to every one development within the village centre.

5. Proposed Development Strategy

5.1 General Strategy

Milltownpass is typically a rural settlement with limited facilities and services. Apart from the two previously mentioned applications the village has not come under significant pressures for residential development and the lack of appropriate services to absorb a large scale of growth has allowed the village to resist rapid commuter-driven development. However, due to its location on the N6 large-scale commuter driven development is a potential threat to the character of the existing village.

As stated in the “Preamble” many of the Counties principal zoning based plans catering for the major residential zonings in the County have been prepared and it is considered that the objective and general strategy for Milltownpass is to facilitate development at a scale and a pace which is suited to the relatively low existing population levels.

The proposed sewerage facilities, when completed will be able to accommodate a population equivalent of 1000 P.E. (persons equivalent), the services proposed are expected to serve until 2020. It would not be appropriate to allow the provision of this facility to determine the population growth of the village as other factors are equally important such as a good range of commercial and community/institutional facilities and the development of the rural settlement in a sustainable manner. However, it is felt that considering the existing level of population in the village, the County’s “settlement strategy” and other principal areas of development and population growth throughout the County the capacity of the treatment plant is a useful measure to assess the appropriate growth within the village.

It is considered that Milltownpass could not absorb rapid and sudden large increases in population.

Development will be encouraged which will consolidate the village structure and streetscape providing for a sustainable increase in population and appropriate employment expansion. It is the principle objective to reverse the trend of dispersed and ribbon development, which has been extending out of the village and undermines the fabric of a consolidated village structure.

5.1 Detailed Strategy

Due to Milltownpass’s established pattern of development and resultant village form, a sensitive approach will be adopted to its growth. A strong emphasis on a design approach will be adopted for Milltownpass’s development especially in reinforcing and consolidating

its streetscape whilst, logical and sensible extensions to the existing village built form will be sought. Design reference for future development will be taken from the character and detailing of existing established structures and patterns of development, which do not allow easy access (by foot) back into the centre of the village will be discouraged.

If development is to take place it will be encouraged to respect and reflect, not only the village's character buildings, but also open spaces and natural features of local importance.

It is also proposed to focus development primarily on developing and consolidating the village streetscape by reflecting the established village design, detailing and finishes on new development. Extensions to the village into "greenfield" areas will be confined primarily to 'backland' or 'mews' type developments.

To further help maintain the character of the rural settlement it is proposed that existing hedges and trees be retained as part of any new developments. The existing field patterns shall be used to define the future development growth pattern of the settlement. Rear lanes shall be retained as future 'green links' to act as linkages from the village to the countryside, and to provide linkages between developments, and to serve settlement-wide permeability.

Boundary walls where used will be consistent with character of the village, and will be supplemented by hedges and trees as necessary.

The Plan identifies a development limit, which has been selected and designated on the basis that it will provide an adequate and appropriate supply of development sites within the plan timescale to allow the village to grow in accordance with the services that are available.

The following policies will need to be applied to all new development within the village to ensure certainty and consistency and in the interests of orderly planning and sustainable development.

Policy 1: Outside the designated development area development will normally be restricted to that required for the purposes of agriculture or that required to meet the social and economic needs of the village community. Development appropriate for the enjoyment of the scenic and natural environmental qualities and character of the countryside and other developments having a rural character may also be acceptable.

To guide and control new development, a development limit has been defined. In general terms development is acceptable within this area identified on the accompanying plan but outside, in order to maintain the character of the countryside and the consolidated nature of the village, development will be strictly controlled. In effect only those types of development, which draw on the character of the countryside itself, its beauty, culture, history and wildlife will normally be permitted. The limits will not preclude the development of local need housing outside of these limits as defined within the County Development Plan or those developments that benefit the local economy and supply of employment opportunities having regard in the first instance to the visual qualities and character of the village and the open rural aspect of the surrounding countryside.

Policy 2: Development, which will adversely affect the setting of the village, will not be permitted. Where development is likely to form the edge of the village, an integral and substantial landscaping scheme incorporating peripheral planting will normally be required.

The interface between the village and the countryside is sensitive and requires careful treatment. Any new development should protect and enhance the setting of the village and landscaping proposals can ensure the integration of new development into the village, screen views, and provide shelter and enclosure.

Policy 3: Within the designated development areas development will be permitted where it involves infilling, conversion, residential development, the use of derelict or underused land or premises and where the development meets all of the following criteria:

- 1. It will not result in the loss of land of recreation or amenity value;**
- 2. It will not have an adverse effect on areas or buildings of historic or architectural importance, or sites of nature conservation value or archaeological importance;**
- 3. It will provide an acceptable residential environment;**
- 4. It will not be on a site where there is an unacceptable risk to the health and safety of residents through contamination, pollution or risk of pollution;**
- 5. It will not damage the character and amenity of existing residential areas;**
- 6. It will not create unacceptable problems; and**
- 7. It will not result in the loss of or damage to spaces identified as being of importance.**

As well as the village having the capacity to absorb additional housing development the appearance of development and its impact upon both the rural setting and the distinct character of the village will be of paramount importance. Where the village's particular character, visual appearance or integrity can best be enhanced by development it will be generally supported but the village's capacity to absorb additional development will be carefully monitored to ensure it is not to the detriment of the character and intrinsic rural feel of the village.

5.2 Residential Development Strategy

Milltownpass is not considered an appropriate centre for large volumes of residential development but residential development would be recommended on an appropriate scale as suggested by the identified development limit.

A development limit has been identified within which residential development will focus on consolidating existing street frontages, a number of infill sites and some opportunities to extend and develop behind the main frontages, which could be developed with respect to the traditional village format. Any developments in proximity to natural features such as the river should address the particular features.

To avoid confusion regarding social and affordable housing the lands within the proposed “**village development limit**” will be considered as zoned lands in respect of Section 96 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended 2002). The **village development limit** defines the extent of zoned lands and these lands are zoned for various uses. The lands located within the village development limit intended for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses have been zoned as a guide to developers and to ensure that the provisions as regard to social and affordable housing of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) apply.

Original buildings and derelict buildings should be retained and reused where possible and would, where buildings are considered to be of merit, be considered a preferable form of development to demolition and redevelopment.

5.3 Retail/Commercial

There will be a general presumption in maintaining existing services and that appropriate commercial and retail expansion and increase of facilities will be allowed in line with the needs of the settlement. Any retail proposals must have regard to the Adopted Retail Strategy

within the County Development Plan. The main street presents such opportunities and within the identified commercial core proposals identified on the map and in the following text:

CC1

A site has been identified as appropriate for infill development. The site total's 0.4 acres and could possibly be developed for mixed uses.

CC2

The Planning Authority has identified this site for redevelopment. Currently Sky Clad are located on this site and if they were to move the site could be redeveloped for mixed use purposes.

CC3

This site has been identified as suitable for mixed-use street frontage infill development.

5.4 Light Industry/Employment

As previously stated, Milltownpass has a significant light industrial and employment base for the size of the settlement. Provision will be made for the appropriate expansion of such existing employment uses with respect to the rural character of the village, residential amenities of neighbouring occupiers, environmental implications and the road network.

Proposed employment development or expansion, which takes place outside of the development limit, will be considered in light of Policies 1 & 2 in the Detailed Strategy above.

It must be remembered that whilst the existing employment opportunities should be facilitated within the immediate locality any new large-scale employment development would, in line with the County Development Plan "Settlement Strategy", be directed towards the principal towns.

5.5 Community/Recreational

It is proposed to allow for the future expansion of the school, community and institutional facilities by having specific zonings for them. The zonings are indicative only but the policy will be that, their land needs will take primacy over other uses.

It is an objective of the plan to identify and develop a walkway to be established along the Milltown River. Any future developments within the village should include as part of their

design and layout a network of pedestrian and cycle links to the commercial core and community facilities.

It is considered appropriate to zone an area for open space adjacent to the GAA, the river and the school to allow for community open space uses, an expanded GAA facility and the potential for a formal children's play area. 0.3 acres west of the school has been reserved for access to recreational and community lands.

5.6 Preservation/Conservation

There are two c1800 houses to the east of the shop within the village, which are listed within the Council's Record of Protected Structures in Milltownpass. There are also a number of character buildings of local importance, which should be retained within any proposed redevelopment schemes and used as design references for village extensions.