

20th October 2017

Cathaoirleach and Each Member of Westmeath County Council

RE: Proposed Variation Number 2 to Athlone Town Development Plan 2014 – 2020 to include a new Framework Plan for the Lissywoolen South Area

Dear Cathaoirleach and Members,

The Athlone Town Development Plan 2014 – 2020 consists of a primary document and a number of local area plans for discreet parts of the town. One of these local area plans was prepared for the Lissywoolen South area, which includes the lands from the Regional Sports Centre to Garrycastle and the lands occupied by the Community College, the Marist College and the old St Mel's Park. This local area plan was prepared and adopted by Athlone Town Council in 2007/2008 and contained innovative policies for the development of the area such as the concept of live work zones, which were considered appropriate at the time. However, the area has not developed in the meantime, due primarily to the economic conditions that have prevailed.

However, there remains an extensive undeveloped land bank East of the Athlone Town Football Stadium, much of which is in state ownership. These lands are located within close proximity to various amenities and services and are relatively close to Athlone town centre. The lands are serviced and have the capacity to deliver significant housing development, at a time when such development is urgently required in the town. This potential has been recognised by Government, in that the Council is in receipt of a grant of €1.4 million, being 75% of the cost of the new east-west road from Brawny to Garrycastle as part of Rebuilding Ireland's Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF).

It is considered that the existing Local Area Plan requires amendment to allow these lands to be fully developed in the current and foreseeable economic environment. In this context, it is proposed that a variation to the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014 2020 would be made to simplify the development objectives for the area. I attach a synopsis of what is intended and it is proposed that this new Framework Plan would be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment before it is formally advertised under Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

It is important that this area would develop in an orderly fashion and that a sustainable mix of housing types and tenures would be achieved. In this regard, it is intended that a maximum of 30% of new housing to be provided shall be social housing. It is further intended that community facilities would be provided in tandem with the development of housing units and that each of the development areas would be subject to masterplanning.

It is intended that this variation would be subject to the statutory process as soon as possible and that a report would be brought before you for your consideration in the first quarter of 2018.

Yours sincerely,



Deputy Chief Executive

Westmeath County Council

Proposed Variation No. 2 to the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020 to include a new Framework Plan for the Lissywollen South Area

The Lissywollen South area is located strategically and immediately east of Athlone town centre. It comprises approximately 81 hectares in area. This Framework Plan presents an opportunity to provide an updated development scheme to inform how this strategic land bank, parts of which are located less than 1km from the town centre, should be developed in line with best practice in sustainable urban planning, to meet the needs of all existing and future residents. This Plan will provide site frameworks aimed at kick-starting the development of a substantial and sustainable residential community in the Plan Area. There are 20 ha of land zoned for residential development in the Plan, the development of which is essential in realising the population targets prescribed for Athlone in the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022.

The aim of the Framework Plan is to provide a coherent urban structure with distinct identity and to integrate new and existing communities successfully. This Plan provides for the creation of a number of distinctive Character Areas.

The plan strategies provide the basic overall structure and the planning and design rationale for the plan. They are driven by the vision and principles and form the basic structure under the following headings:

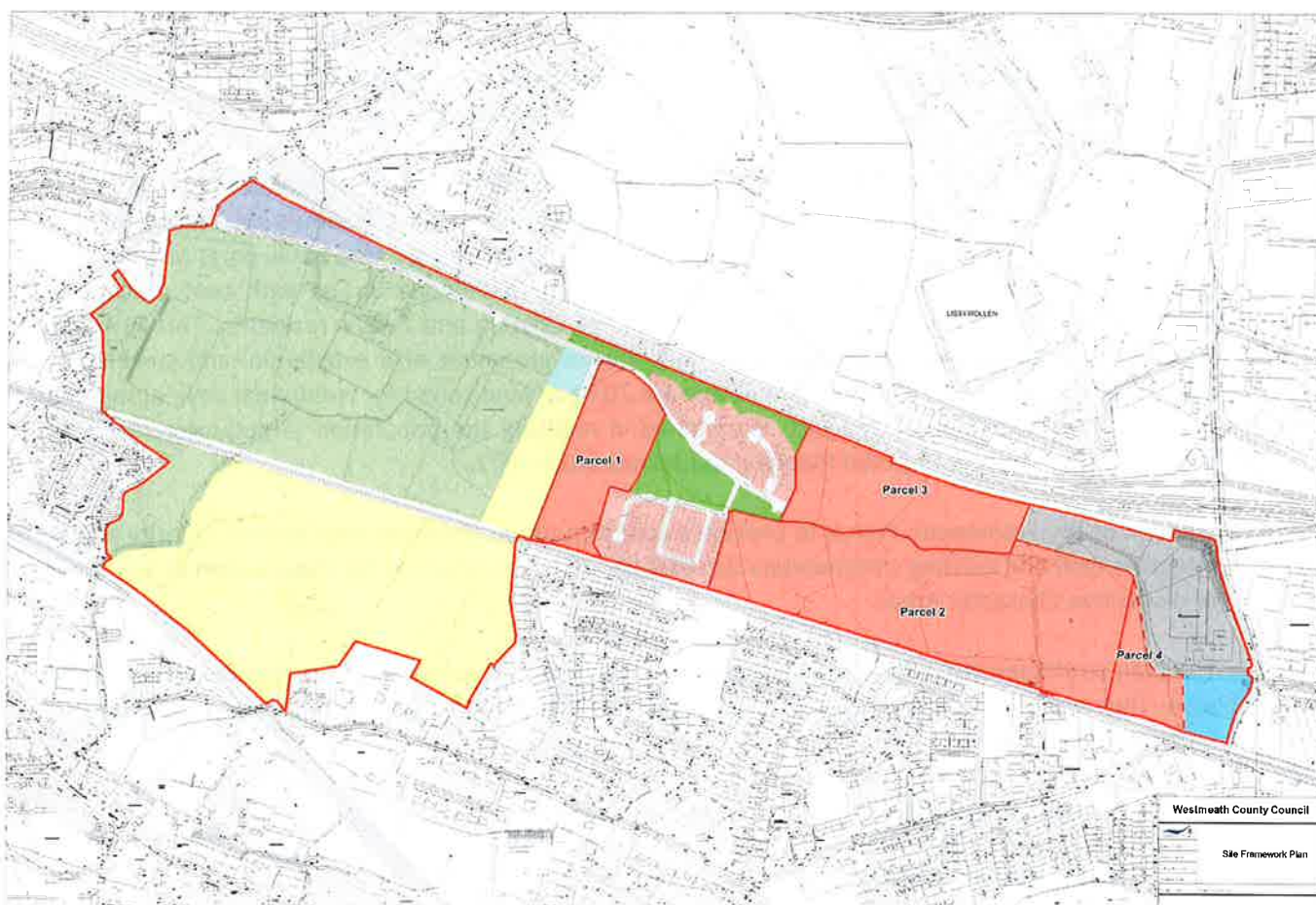
- :: Land use and function
- :: Landscape Framework
- :: Access and movement

The indicative development capacity for the area is 600-700 residential units. The framework plan is based on retaining positive elements of local heritage and character and providing for a robust and adaptable framework.

A Site Framework Strategy is provided for each of the four distinctive parcels of land which are zoned for residential development in the plan. The key objectives for each development parcel derive from the overall plan strategies set out above. The landscape Framework & Access Strategy shows the location of green corridors, facilities and existing and proposed access routes that any future development proposals will be expected to incorporate.

It will be a requirement of this Framework Plan that a Master Plan be prepared by the applicant(s) for each of the residential zoned development parcels to demonstrate how the objectives of the Lissywollen South Framework Plan may be achieved, and in particular, how the overall scale of development is to be delivered over time.

The Master Plans shall have regard to the thematic objectives under the Strategies above and the Guiding Principles and Key Site Objectives for each of the development parcels. The key site objectives refer to a range of issues such as urban design, density, land-use, public realm and open space, community facilities and infrastructure.



General Development Principles applicable to all Character Areas.

Grain

The urban grain will vary across the plan area. Naturally, the educational, sports and recreation uses will require larger building footprints/floor areas, and therefore, will be broad in terms of grain. The business park will need to provide flexibility in terms of footprints. It is envisaged that footprints here would range between medium and large giving a medium to broad grain pattern. The supporting mixed use area will need to provide for a mix of employment and living, and typologies here should be mixed and diverse. The grain of this area will therefore be fine to medium. Brawny will be reinforced in terms of residential development and additional local services. The grain here will continue to be fine.

Continuity and enclosure

The urban structure reflects the overall function of the area. The educational, sports and recreation uses will be set in a structured, landscape-dominant environment. Continuity and enclosure of building form will not be appropriate here. However, the relationship between pavilion buildings and the landscape will be important. Buildings in these areas may contribute to continuity of frontage on the East West Avenue and the new north-south avenue. In the other areas, continuity and enclosure is of particular importance in defining the main routes and space structure and bringing unity to the structure of the different character areas. It is important that areas of open space are fronted by development to allow for passive supervision.

Landscape

The overall strategy for landscape is reflected in Landscape Framework & Access Strategy Map. The landscape is a unifying element which will assist the successful integration of new development at this location and therefore due regard must be given to the protection of mature treelines, hedgerows located within the plan area and along the railway corridor. The landscape structure also facilitates the provision of SUDS and associated biodiversity.

Scale and density

Scale and density derive primarily from considerations of context and urban design qualities. Scale and height derive from the following considerations:

- ✓ The location of the area outside the town centre and the subsidiary function of the area to the town centre reflected in overall scale and prominence.
- ✓ The need to maintain a human scale of buildings and spaces which would indicate that building heights should not exceed 4 storeys in any case.
- ✓ The need to set a realistic context building height, which is suitable to the perimeter block and achieves a proper continuity and enclosure of streets and space.
- ✓ The potential for higher landmark buildings where they can provide for greater identity or urban legibility and not compete with the dominance of town centre.
- ✓ To achieve sustainable densities without over development.
- ✓ To need to reflect the prevalent pattern of residential development in area which is 2/3 storey.

A minimum residential density of 35 units per hectare shall apply across the Framework Plan area. Higher densities may be permitted in areas adjoining public open spaces, or in the context of student accommodation, which may be provided in the mixed use area at Garrycastle or adjacent areas zoned residential in the context of a masterplan.

The issue of building heights will be subject to detailed design assessment to accompany any planning application which will be required to address other safeguarding criteria such as protection of residential amenity, visual amenity and overshadowing.

Due regard shall be taken of the guidance contained in the 'Sustainable Residential Developments in Urban Areas - Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2009'.

Childcare Provision








The level of childcare facilities provided for within the Lissywollen South area is an important element in providing an adequate community service. There is a need to facilitate the provision in suitable locations of sustainable, fit-for-purpose childcare facilities in residential, employment, and educational settings, taking into account the existing provision and emerging demographic trends in an area. Such provision shall be carried out in accordance with the Childcare Facilities Guidelines 2001.

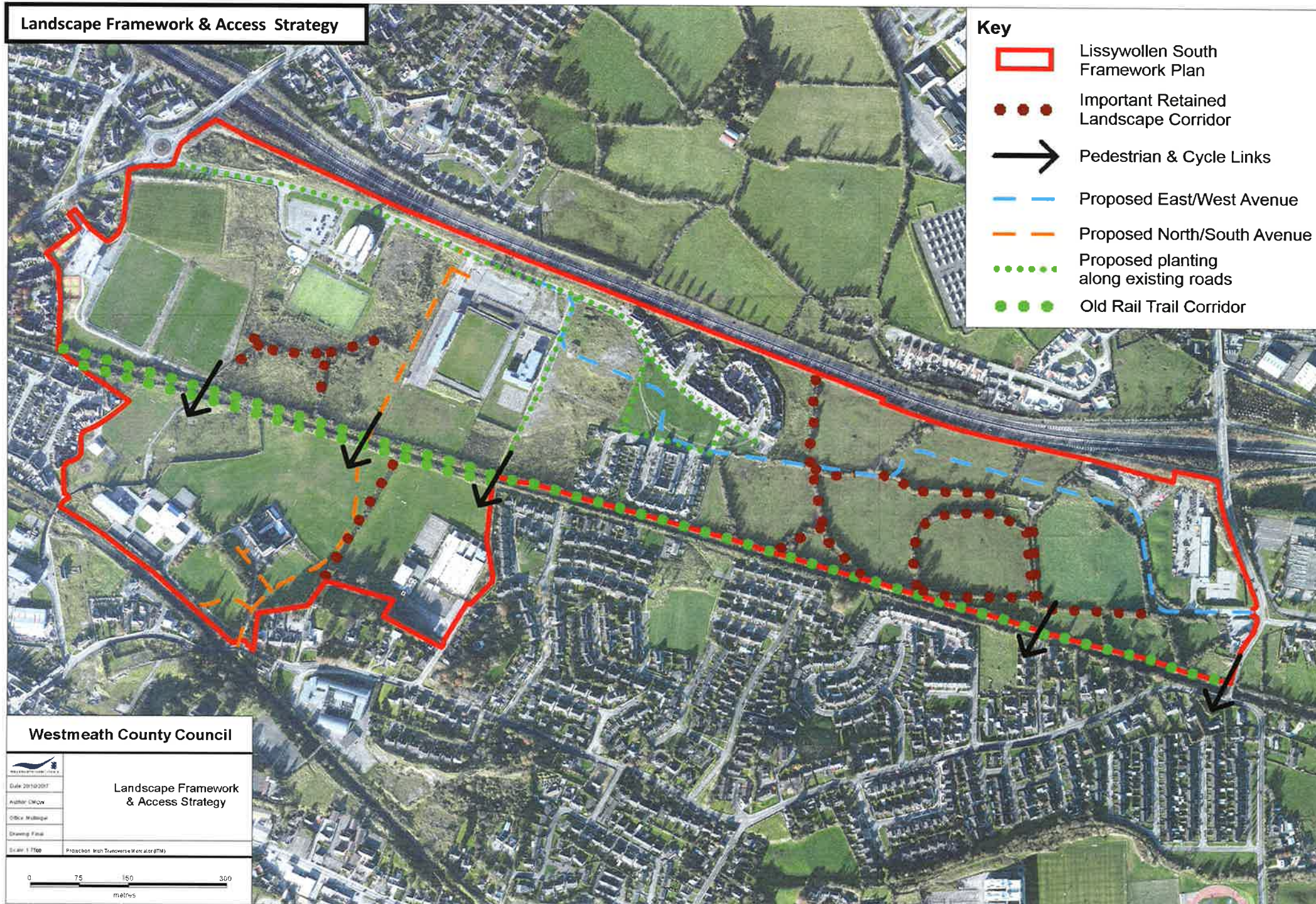
Roads

All new streets, routes and spaces must be designed to be memorable places, have a high standard of amenity and must adhere to the guidance set out in Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, 2013 (DMURS).

Landscape Framework & Access Strategy

Key

-  Lissywollen South Framework Plan
-  Important Retained Landscape Corridor
-  Pedestrian & Cycle Links
-  Proposed East/West Avenue
-  Proposed North/South Avenue
-  Proposed planting along existing roads
-  Old Rail Trail Corridor



Westmeath County Council



Date: 2010/2017

Author: CWOW

Office: Mullingar

Drawing Title

Scale: 1:1000

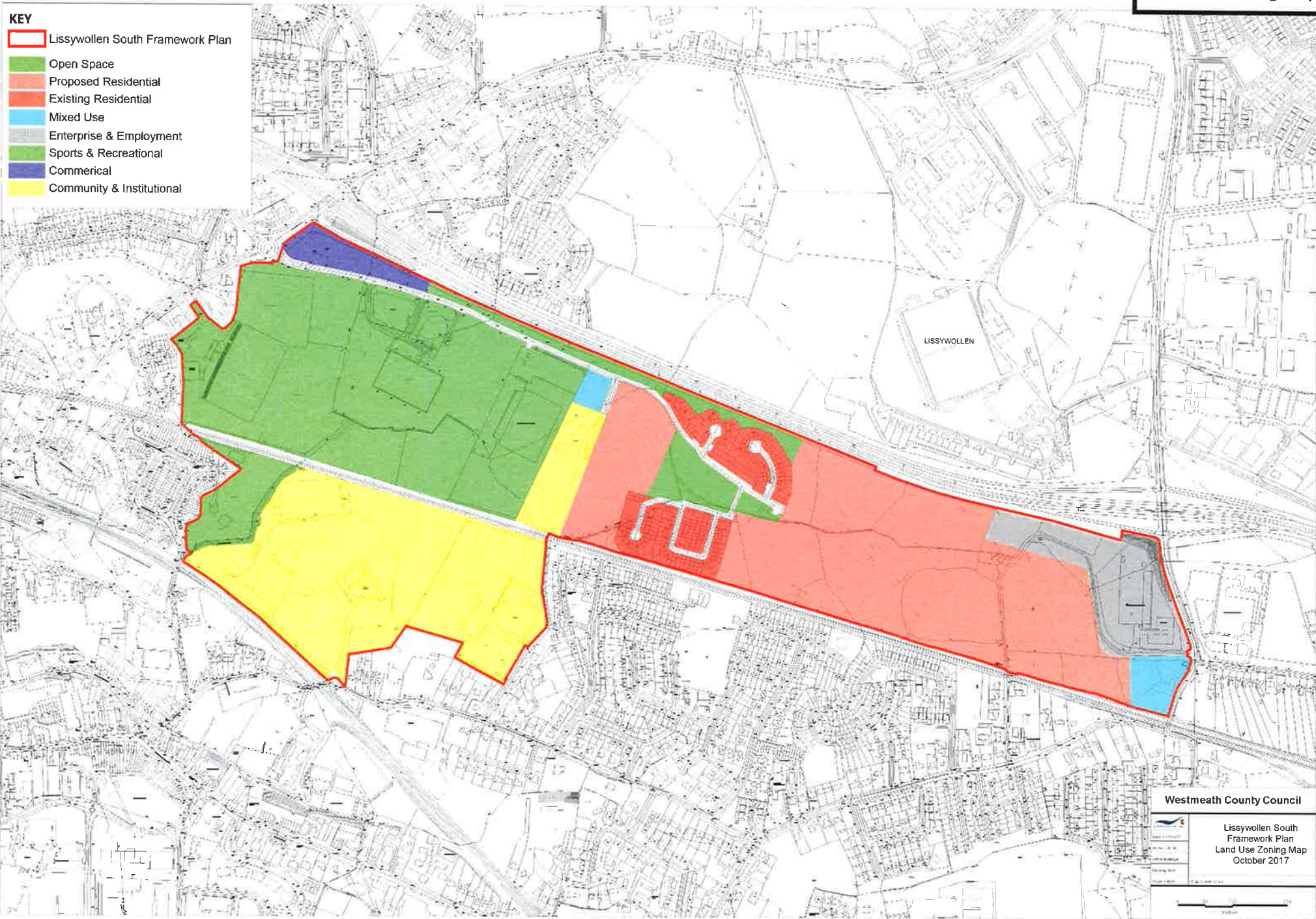
Landscape Framework
& Access Strategy

Projection: Irish Transverse Mercator (ITM)

0 75 150 300
metres

KEY

- Lissywollen South Framework Plan
- Open Space
- Proposed Residential
- Existing Residential
- Mixed Use
- Enterprise & Employment
- Sports & Recreational
- Commerical
- Community & Institutional



Westmeath County Council



Lissywollen South
Framework Plan
Land Use Zoning Map
October 2017



