



Laois County Council
Comhairle Chontae Laoise

PORTLAOISE DRAFT LOCAL AREA PLAN

2018 – 2024

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1 INTRODUCTION

This Portlaoise Draft Local Area Plan 2018 – 2024 (LAP) has been prepared in accordance with the requirements and provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (hereafter referred to as ‘the Act’). The Draft LAP sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Portlaoise, in the context of the Laois County Development Plan 2017 – 2023 and the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 – 2022. The Draft LAP has also been informed by Ministerial Guidelines issued pursuant to Section 28 of the Act, together with EU requirements regarding Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA).

The Draft Local Area Plan comprises a written statement and accompanying maps. The written statement shall take precedence over the map should any discrepancy arise. In the full interpretation of all objectives for Portlaoise, it is essential that both the County Development Plan (CDP) and the Draft LAP are read together. Where conflicting objectives arise between the CDP and the Draft LAP, the objectives of the CDP shall take precedence. It should be noted that the general development management standards applicable to the plan area are included in the CDP, while policies and objectives that are specific to Portlaoise are included in the Draft LAP.

2 LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Sections 19 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires that an LAP be prepared in respect of an area which –

- (i) Is designated as a town in the most recent census of population, other than a town designated as a suburb or environs in that census,
- (ii) Has a population in excess of 5,000, and
- (iii) Is situated within the functional area of a Planning Authority which is a County Council.

The CSO Census 2016 confirmed that Portlaoise has a total population of 22,050 persons. An LAP is therefore statutorily required for Portlaoise.

Section 20 of the Act sets out the process for the making of a Local Area Plan as illustrated in the follow diagram:

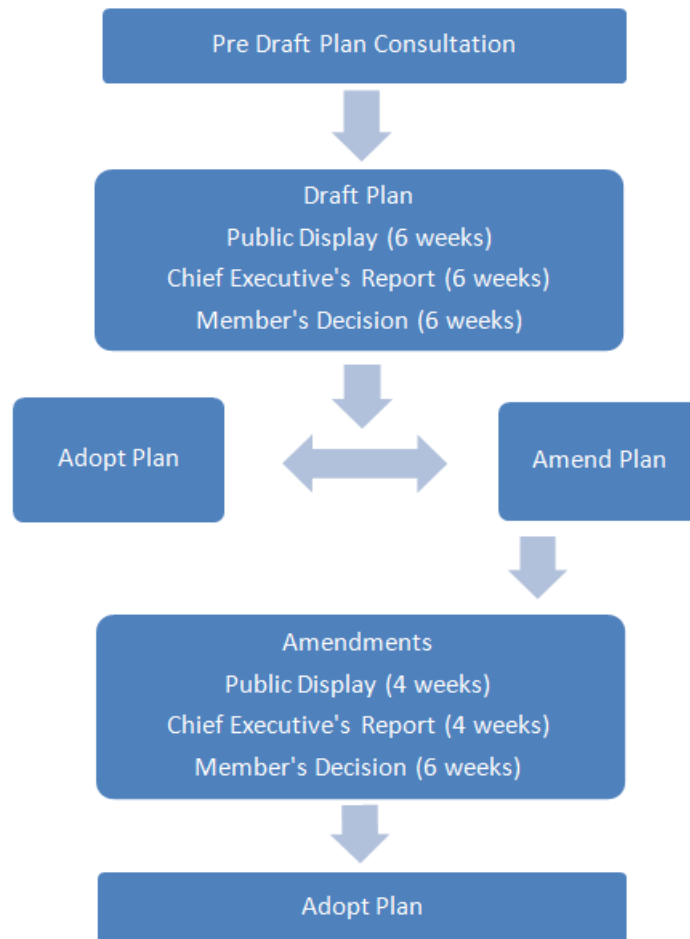


Figure 1: LAP Process

In accordance with Section 19 and 28 of the Act the Draft LAP is subject to the following environmental considerations:

2.1 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required in accordance with the SEA Directive (DIR 2001/42/EC). SEA is a formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan, policy or programme. SEA is mandatory for plans for areas with a population of 5,000 or more and is therefore required for the Portlaoise Draft LAP.

Minogue and Associates, Environmental Consultants have been appointed by Laois County Council to undertake the SEA as part of the preparation of the Draft LAP. In this regard, an SEA Environmental Report has been prepared informing the likely environmental impacts of implementing the policies and objectives of the plan and integrating relevant environmental considerations into the plan. The SEA Environmental Report (SEA ER) accompanies this Draft LAP. Mitigation measures recommended in the SEA ER have been incorporated into this Draft LAP. This report sets out the likely environmental consequences of decisions regarding the location and type of developments within the plan area, mitigation measures to offset potential adverse effects of the plan and monitoring proposals.

2.2 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

Appropriate Assessment (AA) is required in accordance with Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the EU Habitats Directive (DIR 92/43/EEC). AA is a focused and detailed impact assessment of the implications of the plan or project, alone and in combination with other plans and projects, on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site in view of its conservation objectives.

Minogue and Associates, Environmental Consultants have been appointed by Laois County Council to undertake Appropriate Assessment as part of the preparation of the Draft LAP.

Following screening for AA, it was determined that the Portlaoise Draft LAP is likely to have a significant impact on areas designated as a Natura 2000 site, therefore a Natura Impact Report must be prepared. The mitigation measures identified in the Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (Natura Impact Report) have been incorporated into the Plan.

2.3 STRATEGIC FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) is required in accordance with *“The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities”* as amended by Circular PL2/2014. The primary purpose of the SFRA is to determine flood risk within a particular geographical area and to support planning decisions in relation to developing the plan.

3 OTHER PLANS & GUIDELINES

The Draft LAP has been prepared having regard to national, regional and local policy documents, in addition to Guidelines issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended), including the following:

- Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework (2018)
- National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020 (NSS)
- Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 - 2022 (2010)
- Laois County Development Plan 2017 - 2023
- Laois Local Economic and Community Plan 2016 – 2021
- Local Area Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2013)
- Manual for Local Area Plans (2013)
- Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)
- Our Sustainable Future, A Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland (2012)
- Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future 2009 - 2020 (2009)
- Building on Recovery; Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016 - 2021 (2014)
- Rebuilding Ireland – Action Plan for Housing the Homelessness (2016)
- National Climate Change Adaptation Framework; Building Resilience to Climate Change (2012)
- National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2009 - 2020 (2009)
- National Renewable Energy Action Plan (2010)
- Government Policy Statement on the Strategic Importance of Transmission and Other Energy Infrastructure (2012)
- Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012)
- National Cycle Policy Framework
- Water Services Strategic Plan, A Plan for the Future of Water Services
- Water Supply Project Eastern & Midlands Region
- Eastern and South Eastern River Basin Management Plan (2009 - 2015)
- National Broadband Plan 2012
- Laois Heritage Plan 2014 - 2019
- Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (1999)
- Architectural Heritage Protection – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011)
- Actions for Biodiversity – Ireland’s National Biodiversity Plan 2011-2016 (2011)

4 PORTLAOISE IN CONTEXT

Portlaoise is the principal town and administrative centre for the County of Laois. Portlaoise is strategically located at a national, regional and local level. The town is located on the M7/M8 National Motorway Network which enables easy access to Cork, Limerick and Dublin including Dublin Airport and Port. The N80, National Secondary route extends through Portlaoise and provides access to Carlow, Waterford and Rosslare to the south and Tullamore, Mullingar and Athlone to the north. Portlaoise is also located on the Dublin to Cork railway line, which provides a high degree of rail connectivity nationally.

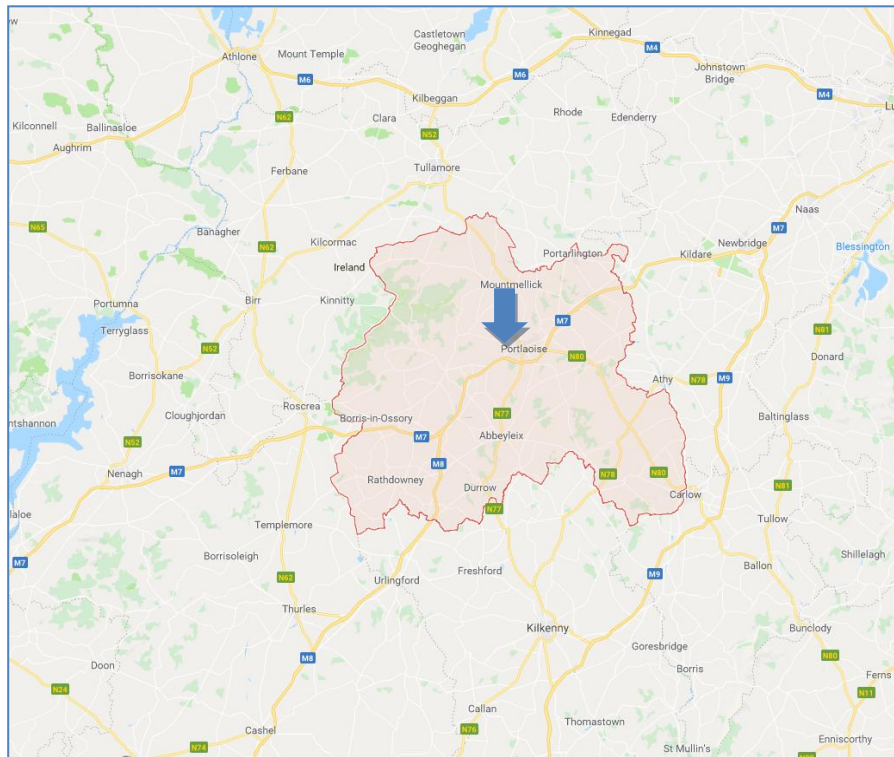


Figure 2: Portlaoise, Co. Laois

Portlaoise is the largest source of non-agricultural employment within the county and is dominated by the services sector with employment in Central (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform) and Local Government, the E.S.B., Eir, An Post, Education and the Health Service Executive. The Togher National Enterprise Park consists of a 121 ha. land bank on the southern outskirts of the town.

Portlaoise has experienced considerable urbanisation and expansion in recent years. Due to its proximity to Dublin, Portlaoise has experienced significant population growth, which has in turn placed an even greater demand on the town’s infrastructure, in particular education, housing, recreational amenities and services.

5 HISTORY OF PORTLAOISE

The present town grew around the old fort, the construction of which commenced in 1548 under the supervision of Lord Deputy Sir Edward Bellingham, who was anxious to fortify Leix following his repression of the natives and the exiling of their Chieftains earlier in the year. The fort was built primarily for military and political purposes. The fort is situated on rising ground southeast of the river Triogue and with the Esker ridge forming a natural defensive barricade to the east, made it of strategic military importance. In 1570 a charter of Queen Elizabeth I raised the town of Maryborough to the rank of Borough. In 1922 the town was renamed Portlaoise.



Figure 3: Undated Map of Maryborough



Figure 4: Ordnance Survey First Edition, 1839

6 URBAN FORM

The urban form of the town is dominated by a linear Main Street, terminated on each end by a Square, Market Square to the west and Lower Square to the east. The construction of the inner relief road James Fintan Lalor Avenue, facilitated the southern expansion and development of the town. The opening of Portlaoise By-Pass in 1997 had a significant effect on the physical environment and future development of the town with 65% of through traffic removed. In addition, travel time to Dublin was reduced to less than an hour with the opening of the Heath-Mayfield section of motorway in 2004. The historical core of the town is focused on a zone of archaeological interest around Church Street/Church Avenue wherein lies the Courthouse and the remaining portions of the Fort Protector.



Figure 5: Google Earth Image 29/9/15

The town centre area contains a large number of Protected Structures and is designated as an Architectural Conservation Area, reflecting its special architectural interest. The Built Heritage of the town is discussed in further detail in the Built and Natural Heritage chapter of this Draft LAP.

Portlaoise is constrained to the east and northeast by the Portlaoise Aquifer Protection Zone, which provides the public water supply for the greater Portlaoise and Mountmellick area. The motorway provides a physical boundary to the south east and south. The Dublin/Cork Railway line intersects the town in a North/East-South/West direction.

7 SPATIAL PLANNING POLICY

The Irish spatial planning hierarchy is set out in the following diagram:



Figure 6: Planning Hierarchy

7.1 PROJECT IRELAND 2040 NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK

“Project Ireland 2040” is the Government’s overarching policy initiative to make Ireland a better country for all of us, a country that reflects the best of who we are and what we aspire to be. Project Ireland 2040 is informed by the Programme for a Partnership Government 2016, which recognizes that economic and social progress go hand in hand, and is made up of the “Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework” (NPF) and the “National Development Plan 2018-2027” (NPD).

The NPF replaces the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002-2020. The NPF in conjunction with the NDP is the Government’s plan to cater for the extra one million people that will be living in Ireland, the additional two thirds of a million people working in Ireland and the half a million extra homes needed in Ireland by 2040.

Project Ireland 2040 seeks to achieve ten strategic outcomes, building around the overarching themes of wellbeing, equality and opportunity. The ten shared National Strategic Outcomes and Priorities of the National Development Plan will ensure a consistent approach between planning objectives under the NPF and investment commitments under the NDP. The Ten Strategic Outcomes and Priorities are outlined in the following diagram:



Figure 7: National Strategic Outcomes

As a strategic development framework “Project Ireland 2040” sets the long-term context for our country’s physical development and associated progress in economic, social and environmental terms and in an island, European and Global context. “Project Ireland 2040” will be followed and underpinned by supporting policies and actions at sectoral, regional and local levels.

7.2 PROJECT IRELAND 2040 NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2018—2027

Under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund Portlaoise has been identified as a location with potential to receive funding for an urban design and renewal initiative. The Urban Regeneration and Development Fund comprises a purse of €2 billion with the aim of achieving sustainable growth in Ireland’s five cities and other large urban centres. This will be achieved by putting in place a centrally managed mechanism to drive collaborative, co-ordinated and complementary packages of investment between Departments, agencies, Local Authorities and

other public bodies in pooling their assets and working with local communities and the private sector to transform our cities and towns.

7.2.1 REGENERATION DEMONSTRATION PROJECT - PORTLAOISE

The aim of this project is to focus on regenerating the original town centre and main street areas and how they relate to the expanded town, with a view to creating more attractive, desirable places that people want to live and spend time in. The Demonstration Project will be initiated on a community and locally led urban design and renewal initiative. The national Regeneration and Development Agency, with investment from the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund and wider community and local businesses, will create and deliver a new vision for the centre of Portlaoise, to show how the best quality planning, urban design and implementation can create a rejuvenated town. There will be a particular focus on self-sustaining and community-driver renewal.

7.2.2 OTHER STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE/INVESTMENT IDENTIFIED FOR PORTLAOISE

Transport Regional and Local Roads:

- Portlaoise Southern Distributor Road will be progressed over the course of the National Development Plan.

Health:

- Mental Health project in Portlaoise for a 40 bed Residential Unit.

Courts Service:

- Provision of a new or refurbished Courthouse for Portlaoise.

Prison Service:

- Modernisation or replacement of the historic E Block in Portlaoise Prison.

7.3 REGIONAL PLANNING GUIDELINES FOR MIDLAND REGION 2010 – 2022

The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 - 2022 (MRPGs) identifies Portlaoise as a *'Principal Town'* within the Southern Development Area (SDA). The SDA borders the South East Region and the Mid West Region and encompasses County Laois, excluding Portarlington. Portlaoise is the largest urban centre and economic driver in the south Midlands. Portlaoise's primacy within the context of County Laois has been emphasised within the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023.

The Core Strategy in accordance with the provisions of the Act requires the correlation of the population targets of the MRPGs with housing land requirements of the settlement hierarchy. The Core Strategy is set out under the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023.

The MRPGs envisages Portlaoise as having strong national development potential, as a major transport hub and distribution centre. Major road and rail infrastructure investment has taken place maximising the accessibility of the town. Future development of the SDA will require the strengthening and consolidation of the existing infrastructure that forms an important element in the prosperity of the region. Existing strengths should be built upon, including opportunities in transport based industries such as freight and logistics.

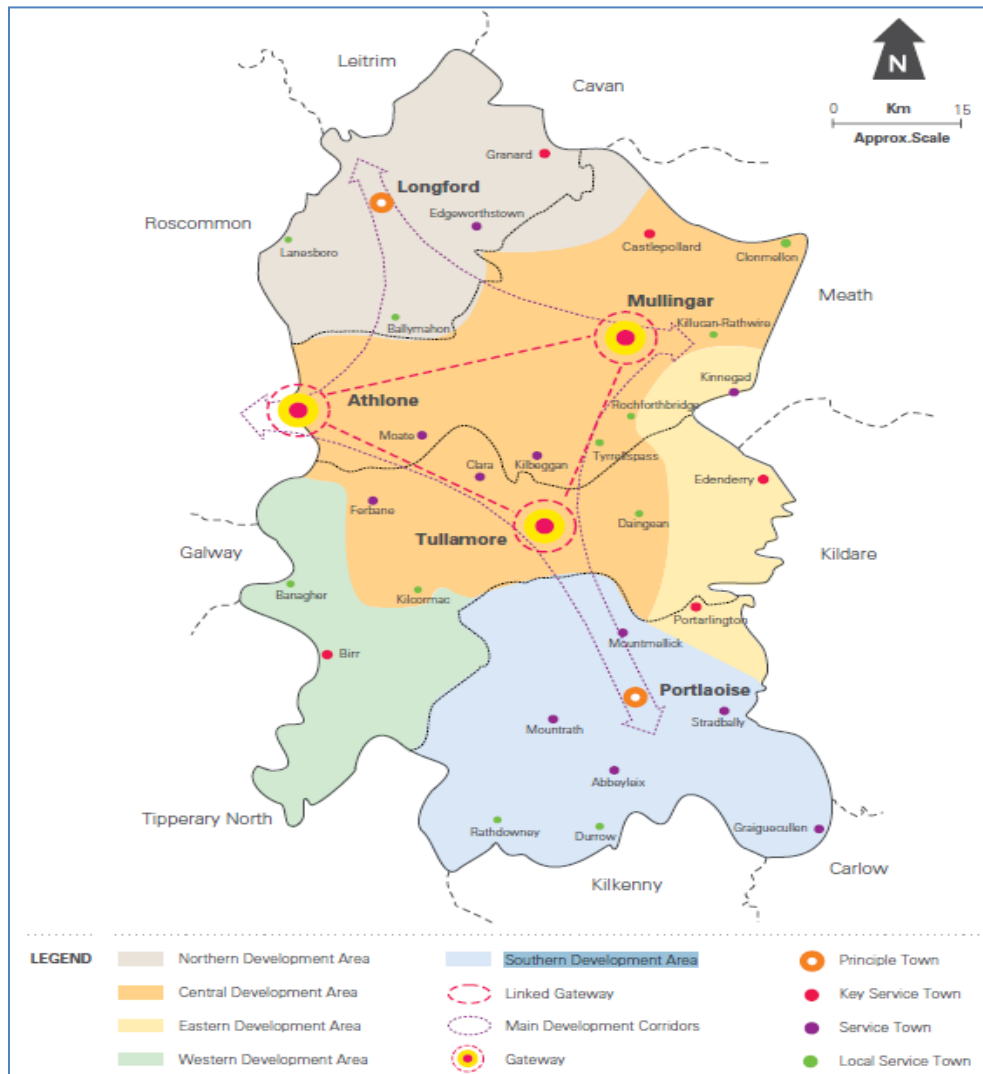


Figure 8: Portlaoise in the context of the Midlands Region

The allocation of serviced land at Togher Inland Port as a National Enterprise Park for enterprise, employment and industrial uses in the immediate vicinity of national strategic transport infrastructure represents a unique opportunity to develop a cluster of complementary enterprises and a diverse economic base for the county and the region. This fulfils objectives set out within the MRPGs, in particular the following:

EDP6:	<i>Priority should be given to targeting the development and support the progression of the logistics and distribution sector, in particular the development of the 'Togher Inland Port' in Portlaoise.</i>
EDO4:	<i>Facilitate the development of the 'Togher Inland Port' at Portlaoise through the delivery of the provisions of the Togher Masterplan ensuring that employment and enterprise opportunities are fully maximised through promotion and relevant interagency collaboration.</i>
SDA P6:	<i>Fulfill the potential of Portlaoise and Togher Inland Port to become a major transport hub and distribution centre, by building on its strategic location at the intersection of key national road and rail routes.</i>

The ability of the lands at Togher to service the needs of large Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) should be maximized and will be developed during this plan period.

7.4 REGIONAL SPATIAL AND ECONOMIC STRATEGY

Since the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) were published in 2010, a new administrative structure at regional level has been developed as directed by the Local Government Reform Act 2014. The Local Government Reform Act included the abolition of eight Regional Authorities and the creation of three Regional Assemblies. County Laois now forms part of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) along with eleven other counties. This area further comprises three Strategic Planning Areas with Offaly, Laois, Westmeath and Longford forming part of the Midland Strategic Planning Area. The EMRA are responsible for the preparation of a new Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) which will replace the RPGs.

The RSES will identify the Eastern and Midland region's key strategic assets, opportunities and challenges and set out policy responses to ensure that people's needs – such as access to housing, jobs, ease of travel and overall well-being are met, up to 2030 and beyond. In this regard, the RSES will set a new regional context to guide and control the development of County Laois.

The RSES will include:

- **A Spatial Strategy** for the future location of employment, housing and retail development along with supporting infrastructure and services, in a way that enhances the potential of our cities and towns and best protects our environment and our people from the impacts of climate change;

- **An economic strategy** with strategic policies to boost competitiveness and support a strong future economy and the creation of high-quality jobs for sustained prosperity;
- **A Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP)** to plan for the future sustainable growth of the capital city region as set out in the National Planning Framework.

On publication of the RSES, Laois County Council will undertake a review of the LAP, as necessary, in order to update and ensure compliance with the strategic approach adopted therein. In the interim the Draft LAP has been prepared in consistency with the existing RPGs as outlined above.

8 DEVELOPMENT VISION & STRATEGY

The Draft Local Area Plan for Portlaoise is underpinned by a strategic vision which is intended to guide the future growth of the town. The objectives outlined below combine to form a coherent development strategy to 2024 and beyond. These goals cover economic, social and environmental dimensions. The strategic vision recognises the potential of Portlaoise to align with the key growth objectives set out in higher order spatial plans and to take advantage of the strategic location of the town both regionally and nationally. Delivering on these objectives will result in an enhanced quality of life for all citizens.

The strategic vision is based on the role of Portlaoise as defined in the settlement strategy of the Laois County Development Plan 2017 - 2023 and the aspirations of the people and stakeholders in Portlaoise. The vision statement reads as follows:

“To fulfil the role as Principal Town, by providing for low carbon, sustainable and consolidated growth in a coherent spatial manner, protecting and maximising opportunities presented by the unique natural and built environment for green and public modes of transport, recreation and employment opportunities, while delivering an exemplar quality of life for residents”.

Portlaoise will become a place for its people, where residents, workers and visitors alike will come to enjoy a place that is inclusive, accessible and sustainable from a social, economic and environmental perspective. The Draft LAP and overall vision for Portlaoise is underpinned by a number of interlinked strategic aims as illustrated in the diagram below. These interlinked strategic aims will be realised through the chapters of the plan.



Figure 9: Strategic Aims

8.1 KEY PLAN OBJECTIVES

This Draft Local Area Plan is based on a number of general goals which are designed to improve the quality of life of the citizens of the town and surrounding hinterland and which the council will endeavour to implement during the period of the plan. The development of Portlaoise over the lifetime of this plan shall be focused on employment generation, the consolidation of the town centre and the provision of community and social services.

The following are specific objectives in relation to the delivery of the Strategy:

1. To support and facilitate sustainable intensification and consolidation of the town centre and in established residential areas;
2. To promote balanced economic development and employment ensuring a diverse range of economic sectors are developed and supported;
3. To promote and support the development of an enterprise and employment campus at National Enterprise Park/Togher Area. Development shall be plan led and subject to a masterplan prepared in conjunction with this Draft Local Area Plan;
4. To support and facilitate development on zoned land based on the policies and objectives of the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023;
5. To focus new residential development into brownfield sites;
6. To protect, conserve and enhance the built, natural and cultural environment, through promoting awareness, utilising relevant heritage legislation and promoting good quality urban design;
7. To require the preparation and assessment of all planning applications in the plan area to have regard to the information, data and requirements of the Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Report, SEA Environmental Report and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Report that accompany this Draft LAP;
8. To require projects to be fully informed by ecological and environmental constraints at the earliest stage of project planning and any necessary assessment to be undertaken, including assessments of disturbance to habitats and species, where required.

On the basis of the above it is the key policy of the Council to:

1. Implement the development strategies for Portlaoise in order to be consistent with, and in accordance with policies of higher tier plans;
2. Support strategic enterprise and employment opportunities at other appropriate locations in Portlaoise and environs, having regard to proper planning and sustainable development and relevant development control standards;
3. Facilitate and promote Portlaoise’s role as a “*Principal Town*” as designated in the MRPGs and Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023;
4. Monitor and manage the delivery of population and housing in Portlaoise, in line with national, regional and county level objectives, through the development strategy in this plan and also through the development management process. To cooperate with the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly as part of the monitoring and review approach;
5. Implement the policies and objectives of the Portlaoise Public Realm Strategy “2040 and Beyond: A Vision for Portlaoise”.

8.2 TOWN CENTRE – KEY OBJECTIVES



Figure 10: JFL Public Realm Improvements & Public Transport Facilities



Figure 11: River Triogue Blueway



Figure 12: Redevelopment of Opportunity Sites



Figure 13: Redevelopment of The Laneways

8.3 CORE STRATEGY

The Core Strategy for County Laois is set out under Section 2 of the Laois County Development Plan 2017 – 2023. Section 19 (2) of the Act requires that:

“A Local Area Plan shall be consistent with the objectives of the Development Plan, its Core Strategy, and any Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy that apply to the area of the plan...”

8.4 FUNCTION, POPULATION AND SCALE OF PORTLAOISE

As set out under the National Spatial Strategy, Midland Regional Planning Guidelines and the Core Strategy of the Laois County Development Plan 2017 - 2023 Portlaoise is designated as a Principal Town within the settlement hierarchy. Portlaoise is also designated as a National Transport Node in the MRPGs. In this regard, it is anticipated that Portlaoise will attract social, administrative functions and economic activity and will also act as a significant focus for future population growth.

	Persons 2002	Persons 2006	Persons 2011	Persons 2016	% Change 06-16
County Laois	58,774	67,059	80,559	84,697	26.3
Portlaoise	12,127	14,613	20,145	22,050	45

Table 1: Population statistics for County Laois and Portlaoise between 2002 and 2016 (Source: CSO)

County Laois has experienced significant population growth in the past decade, growing by 26.3% over the ten year period between 2006 and 2016. In the same ten year period, Portlaoise experienced a significant population growth rate of 45%. The proportion of the county’s population living within Portlaoise has grown steadily over this period, rising from 21% in 2006 to 26% in 2016.

The tables below present a breakdown of the population of Portlaoise. Portlaoise benefits from a relatively young population, with 54.3% of the population below 35 years of age, compared to 47.1% elsewhere in the State. Portlaoise has a lower proportion of middle-aged and older residents, with just 16.1% of the population aged 55 or older, compared to 24% elsewhere in the State.

Portlaoise also benefits from an ethnically diverse population, as can be seen from the table below, with 23% of its population being non-Irish. Of particular note, is that almost 15% of the population is made up of EU nationals excluding the UK.

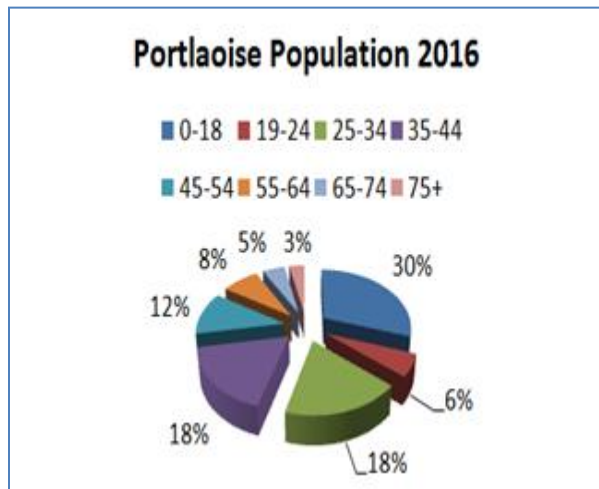


Table 2 Population by age cohort
(Source: CSO Census 2016)

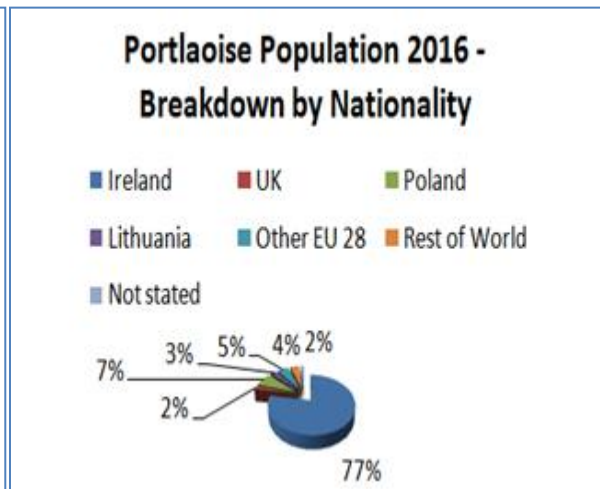


Table 3: Population by Nationality
(Source: CSO Census 2016)

Population targets for County Laois and for Portlaoise for the period up to 2022 are set out within the MRPGs. Owing to significant and sustained population growth in County Laois, and in particular in Portlaoise, these population targets have been exceeded and revised targets have been agreed as part of the CDP. These revised targets provide for County Laois to grow to 89,790 by 2023 and for Portlaoise to grow to 25,382 persons over the same plan period. For Portlaoise, this equates to a projected requirement for an additional 1,824 households over the six-year period up to 2023.

	County Laois	Portlaoise
CSO Population 2011	80,559	20,145
Projected Population 2023	89,790	25,382
Projected Increase	9,231	5,237
Projected Increase in Households 2023	3,216	1,824
Density (Per ha.)		35
Housing Land Requirement to 2023 (Including 50% headroom)		78
Area (ha.) zoned for Residential		78

Table 4: Core Strategy Table of Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023

As the Draft LAP covers a six-year period up to 2024 it is necessary to extrapolate the projected growth by a further year, in order to provide a projected population at the end of the lifetime of the Draft LAP. Applying an average growth of housing construction over the six years, this equates to a further 304 houses in year 7 and a total of 2,128 additional houses for the period up to 2024.

As can be seen from the Core Strategy Table above, the CDP identifies a requirement for 78ha. of land in order to accommodate planned growth, equating to an average density of 35 units per hectare.

8.5 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

8.5.1 HOUSING / RESIDENTIAL LAND AVAILABILITY

The Draft LAP identifies approximately 67.81ha. of undeveloped residentially zoned land, located within and adjacent to established residential areas within the town. The housing capacity of these lands is estimated to be approximately 2,373 residential units, based on a density of 35 units per hectare. Over the lifetime of the Draft LAP, priority for residential development should be given to the development of these lands to consolidate the built up area of the town.

8.5.2 TOWN CENTRE CONSOLIDATION

The Draft Local Area Plan has been prepared in the context of a longer term vision for Portlaoise. The Draft LAP identifies five opportunity sites to accommodate growth during the plan period. Site specific details for each site are set out under the Town Centre Revitalisation chapter of this plan. A sequential approach will be taken to the development of the town, with lands closer to the town centre being developed prior to zoned lands on the periphery so as to avoid “*leapfrogging*”. Such an approach is essential to underpin the sustainable delivery of population, employment development and consolidation of the town centre over the plan period. This approach will adhere to the priority phasing outlined earlier in this chapter.

Consolidation, brownfield and infill development will also be promoted on appropriately zoned land within the plan area which accords with the policies and objectives set down in this plan.

8.5.3 PORTLAOISE PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY “2040 AND BEYOND: A VISION FOR PORTLAOISE”

The Public Realm Strategy sets out a vision for the future development of Portlaoise town centre. Improvements to the public realm through a program of infrastructural works will provide a safe, attractive, and comfortable place to live, work and visit. Infrastructural improvements will prioritise pedestrians through measures such as traffic calming, street maintenance and traffic management in the historic town centre.

8.5.4 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development underpins all chapters in this Draft Local Area Plan. The aim of the plan is to capitalise on Portlaoise's location on the motorway and rail networks and proximity to the Greater Dublin Area. The zoning and servicing of land at Togher for National Enterprise Park for enterprise, employment and industrial uses, in the immediate vicinity of national strategic transport infrastructure, represents a unique opportunity to develop a cluster of complementary enterprises and more generally a larger, more robust and diverse economic basis for the town, county and region.

8.5.5 KEY INFRASTRUCTURE

Future development proposals are contingent on key infrastructure. Currently capacity exists in the Foul Sewer Network, Waste Water Treatment Plant and Public Water Supply. In the short term the Southern Orbital Connector will be delivered and will help alleviate traffic congestion in the town centre. This plan includes objectives for the delivery of a Northern Orbital Route and a number of key internal relief roads including links between:

- The Dublin Road and Borris Road;
- Rathleague and Meelick;
- The Stradbally Road and Dublin Road through St. Fintan's land.

8.5.6 ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE PROTECTION

The environmental sensitivities of the county identified in the SEA process for the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023 have informed the Core Strategy and the role it identifies for Portlaoise. The Draft LAP responds to environmental factors, including wastewater infrastructure constraints, areas at risk of flooding etc. It also acknowledges the importance of built and natural heritage as an environmental and economic (including tourism) resource and includes significant objectives for its conservation and enhancement.

9 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Portlaoise is an expanding vibrant town with a skilled workforce and the required infrastructure to promote inward investment and the creation of more local jobs. Laois County Council is committed to facilitating the creation of employment within the town and this plan provides the appropriate framework for development through the provision of adequately zoned lands and policies which support economic development. The zoning objectives for each of the land-use zones provide agility to respond to the demands from those looking to invest in Portlaoise. This plan sets the right conditions to secure inward investment and interest in Portlaoise as a business location and firmly embeds an economic development agenda into all other goals making their successful delivery more achievable.

The Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023 sets out the strategic context for economic development of the County as informed by the **Laois Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021** which should be read in tandem with this chapter. Portlaoise is identified as the driver for economic development for the County, reflecting its designation as the Principal Town and position at the top of the County Retail Hierarchy.

The **Local Enterprise Office** has been fully integrated into the Local Authority. In addition to the LEOs enterprise function it delivers the economic function of the Council and has a lead role in implementing the economic dimensions of the Laois Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 and delivering local and regional initiatives within the Midland Action Plan for Jobs. The LEO provides a range of services for persons seeking to set up or grow a business. The LEO works with a range of stakeholders to support employment opportunities including the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, local and regional development agencies, existing businesses and individuals.

The services provided by LEO allow for a broader and deeper approach to job creation through opportunities presented by the not so traditional sectors for example green economy, tourism, creative services /industries and cloud computing. The LEO contributes significantly to building pathways to employment and enterprise in Portlaoise by:

- Facilitating client meetings;
- Providing high quality, integrated information and support to new and expanding businesses;
- Providing training, mentoring and support;
- Enabling access to start-up finance;

- Collation and quarterly update of a Property Database for all industrial, commercial and retail premises that are for sale or let in the town, enabling business owners to research and identify suitable property;
- Collaborating with Portlaoise Library Services on Library Supports for business schemes;
- Working with schools to introduce young people to the potential of working in business and promoting an enterprise culture.

Laois Partnership Company was formed in 2008 to offer one unified structure for the delivery of economic, social and cultural services to small businesses, community groups and individuals. This work is largely delivered through initiatives including The Rural Development Programme (previously LEADER), Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP), DSP Job Club, Community Employment Schemes, Tus Programme, Rural Social Scheme, Services to the Elderly Programme (LSTEP), National Childcare Schemes, Back to Education Initiative, the Local Community Development Programme (previously LDSIP) and other complementary programmes.

An established measure of the employment “health” of a settlement is a measure called the “**Jobs Ratio**”. This is the relationship between the number of people in the labour force and the number of jobs in any defined area. A healthy area is considered to be one where the jobs ratio is around 70%. While not all towns will be able to reach this level, it is considered reasonable that the plan should aim to increase the jobs ratio proportionately to accord with the town’s characteristics and level in the County settlement and employment hierarchy.

As indicated in Census 2016 the total labour force within the settlement of Portlaoise is 10,736 persons, representing approximately 27% of the labour force in the county (39,609 persons). Given an indicated resident worker population of 8,438, Portlaoise has a jobs to resident workers ratio of 0.997.

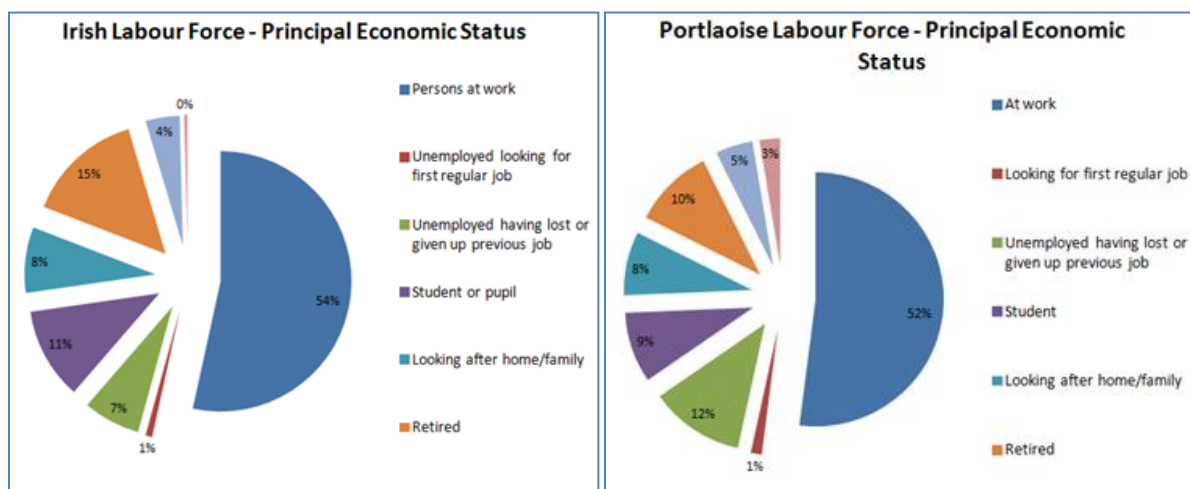


Figure 14: Labour Force by Principle Economic Status (Source: Census 2016)

The majority of workers commute to work by car (5,724 persons) and have a commute of under 15 minutes (5,022 persons), while 1,672 workers have a commute of over 1/1.5 hours. The majority of the “at work” population are employed in professional services, commerce and trade and public administration. The Census indicated that the majority have professional, skilled trades and elementary occupations. Employment levels in the Portlaoise labour force are broadly similar to the rest of the State, with 52% of residents in employment, compared to 54% nationally. However, the proportion of the labour force either unemployed or seeking their first regular job at 13% is significantly higher than the national rate of 8%.

The fostering of key services, community infrastructure and improvements to the public realm of the town centre will facilitate the attraction of employment generating activities to the town. In addition, Portlaoise’s location on the motorway and rail networks and proximity to the Greater Dublin Area in conjunction with the zoning and servicing of employment generating lands, including a land bank at Togher is of major benefit to attracting economic development to the town. The zoning and servicing of land at **Togher** for a **National Enterprise Park** for enterprise, employment and industrial uses, in the immediate vicinity of national strategic transport infrastructure, represents a unique opportunity to develop a cluster of complementary enterprises and more generally a larger, more robust and diverse economic basis for the town, county and region.

A Masterplan was prepared for the Togher National Enterprise Park in 2009/2010 in conjunction with the Department of the Environment, Planning and Local Government and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (formerly National Roads Authority). The Council prepared the Masterplan to guide the development of key sites within the Togher/ Clonminam area. The Council are now seeking preparation of a new Masterplan for the Togher lands that will develop and deliver the most effective presentation (layout and design), land management and traffic modelling associated with the site.

With respect to **tourism** Portlaoise is served by four hotels, three with conference facilities and a number of B&Bs and guest houses. Given Portlaoise’s location on the road and rail network, the town provides an option as a tourist base for the attractions located in the wider county. A number of heritage sites and the Dunamais Theatre and Centre for Arts within the town provide an opportunity as tourist attractions within their own right. The enhancement of the visitor experience is needed to increase dwell times in the town and the Council will work with the relevant agencies to enhance the tourism offer.

Economic Development: Strategic Aim:

To promote, facilitate and enable economic development and employment generation activities in appropriate locations and in a sustainable manner.

Objectives: It is an Objective of the Council to:

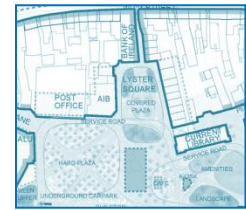
- ED O1:** Facilitate the future sustainable development of Portlaoise so as to optimise the benefits of its location, in accordance with the National Planning Framework and the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines;
- ED O2:** Promote balanced and sustainable economic development and employment, ensuring that a diverse range of economic sectors are developed and supported;
- ED O3:** Promote employment opportunities by facilitating development on appropriately zoned lands;
- ED O4:** Facilitate the provision and expansion of all services and infrastructure which would contribute positively to the attraction of the town to economic development;
- ED O5:** Develop Togher as a National Enterprise Park;
- ED O6:** Improve the existing built environment of the Togher/Clonminam Area;
- ED O7:** Facilitate the improvement and expansion of established enterprises and industries;
- ED O8:** Facilitate the improvement and expansion of Portlaoise Enterprise Centre;
- ED O9:** Facilitate and promote the provision of incubator units for start up businesses and SMEs;
- ED O10:** Provide opportunities for an IT Ecosystem centred on the SIRO high speed broadband capacity;
- ED O11:** Facilitate development of Former Bank of Ireland Branch Office/ Prison Officers' Club, Bank Place as an IT Hub / creative cluster;
- ED O12:** Accommodate small employment generating activities at first floor level and vacant ground floor commercial premises on the Main Street;
- ED O13:** Support the continued operation and reasonable expansion of non conforming uses subject to maintenance of existing environmental, visual and residential amenity;
- ED O14:** Identify opportunities to improve the tourism product in cooperation with relevant statutory agencies, private providers and community groups;
- ED O15:** Facilitate the provision of standardized tourism signage and interpretation facilities for tourist attractions;

ED O16: Promote Portlaoise as a tourist destination.

Policies: It is the Policy of the Council to:

- ED P1:** Develop Togher, as a National Enterprise Park, focused in particular on trade warehousing, distribution, logistics and other uses associated with the transport industry. Other suitable uses include offline motorway services, retail warehousing, offices and conference facilities, leisure uses such as hotels, catering and indoor sporting facilities. Provision is also made within Togher for the development of significant heavy, light and ICT industry uses as well as general enterprise uses. In order to deliver the Togher National Enterprise Park, an implementation programme will be developed to include direct marketing campaigns to drive economic development;
- ED P2:** Support strategic enterprise and employment opportunities at other appropriate locations in Portlaoise and environs, having regard to proper planning and sustainable development and relevant development control standards;
- ED P3:** Facilitate the continuity of and encourage the expansion of established enterprises and to promote start-up enterprises, having regard to the protection of the amenity value of neighbouring properties;
- ED P4:** Co-operate with IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, the Local Enterprise Office and other agencies, organisations and individuals in promoting enterprise in Portlaoise;
- ED P5:** Support the further development of broadband in Portlaoise and to facilitate the development of Portlaoise as an E-Commerce centre;
- ED P6:** Encourage, in co-operation with the Local Enterprise Office and Laois Partnership, the development of further small to medium scale industries and services;
- ED P7:** Create an integrated and sustainable public and private transport system to move people and goods efficiently within and through Portlaoise;
- ED P8:** Develop high quality business infrastructure.

10 TOWN CENTRE REVITALISATION



The traditional town centre of Portlaoise was the focus for retail, commercial and residential development. Market pressures have impacted on the town centre with retail and commercial leakage to an area to the south of the traditional core. Vacancy rates in the core are an issue and require attention. The town centre has the capacity to stem this leakage through the development of key opportunity sites and by improving the attractiveness of the public realm. This plan seeks to redevelop the town centre as the focus of commercial, retail and residential development within the town. The Portlaoise Public Realm Strategy in conjunction with a focus on consolidating the town centre will help revitalise the town and provide the framework for channelling development into brownfield sites.

The Main Street of Portlaoise and the neighbouring streets formed the traditional shopping centre of the town. However, over the past 10 years the **retail** focus has migrated to developments at the Laois Shopping Centre, Kylekiproe, Abbeyleix Road, Fairgreen and Kilminchy. Simultaneously, the Main Street and neighbouring streets have suffered stagnation and decline with a number of vacant units evident. While the two retail areas are relatively proximate and served by adequate car parking, a sense of disconnect for pedestrian traffic is apparent given the separation created by the dual carriageway of James Fintan Lawlor Avenue.

The **traditional town centre** presents an opportunity to create diversity and distinctiveness in Portlaoise's retail offer, as well as to provide attractive, pedestrian friendly connections between it and the new retail areas. In order to rebalance the traditional town centre as a viable and vibrant centre, the Main Street should be retained as the centre of commercial activity that delivers a range of services and functions. The development strategy for the town centre as set out below, recognizes the potential of the traditional town centre as a focus for employment generation, retail use and residential development where appropriate. The creation of an attractive urban environment is critical to attract new businesses to the town centre, this issue has been addressed through the publication of the Portlaoise Public Realm Strategy "2040 And Beyond: A Vision for Portlaoise" as outlined in the following chapter.

Improvements in the town centre public realm, specifically accessibility and integration, offers opportunities to create stronger nodes that provide a better experience and diversity of retail, as well as high quality food and drink and other complementary uses.

The retail planning policy context for the Draft LAP is informed by the Guidelines for Planning Authorities: Retail Planning (2012) and the retail hierarchy identified for Laois in the MRPGs. As set out in the Laois Retail Hierarchy Portlaoise is identified as a Major Town Centre, for which it is an action to *“reinforce and grow high order retail functioning with particular emphasis on historic core defined by the Primary Retail Area. Enhance the retail appeal of Laois by strengthening retail functions of Portlaoise”*.

Residential development will be encouraged in the town centre to contribute to the vitality of the core and to encourage economic development and further retail expansion. Existing brownfield sites will be prioritised to deliver dwellings in the town over more peripheral sites. Innovative design and layout and a mix of tenure will be encouraged in all residential developments.

Town Centre Revitalisation: Strategy Aim:

To support the sustainable long-term growth of Portlaoise, in accordance with the Core and Retail Strategies of the Laois County Development Plan 2017 – 2023 and the Portlaoise Public Realm Strategy “2040 and Beyond: A Vision for Portlaoise: A Strategy for a Better Town Centre”.

Objectives: It is an Objective of the Council to:

- TCR 01:** Improve the quality, vitality and vibrancy of the town centre through the implementation of the Portlaoise Public Realm Strategy *“2040 and Beyond: A Vision for Portlaoise: A Strategy for a Better Town Centre”*;
- TCR 02:** Promote the town centre as a priority location for commercial, civic, social and cultural development and sustainable consolidation;
- TCR 03:** Promote the consolidation of the town centre through the use of brownfield and backland sites without compromising streetscapes;
- TCR 04:** Encourage and facilitate the reuse and regeneration of derelict and vacant sites and disused buildings, especially upper floors;
- TCR 05:** Facilitate the redevelopment of strategic sites within the town centre such as the Convent, CBS and Parish lands, Fort Protector lands, the Maltings Site, and Main Street for a mixture of uses that will contribute to vitality of the central core area;
- TCR 06:** Renew, consolidate and develop the existing fabric of the town by achieving a high quality of design in new development and refurbishments;
- TCR 07:** Ensure the type, quantum and location of future retail floor space is consistent with

the requirements and recommendations of the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023, relevant regional policy frameworks and national planning guidelines;

TCR O8: Guide retail development, in accordance with the sequential approach to sustain and strengthen the town centre;

TCR O9: Promote an appropriate mix of day and night time uses;

TCR O10: Create attractive and secure pedestrian and cycling links.

Policies: It is the Policy of the Council to:

TCR P1: Encourage retail development within the existing town centre. Proposals which would undermine the vitality and viability of the town centre will not be permitted. The sequential approach to retail development set out in the *“Retail Planning - Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2012”* will be strictly enforced;

TCR P2: Promote the reuse of existing town centre buildings through appropriate design and adaptation;

TCR P3: Prohibit the proliferation of uses in the town centre which would detract from the amenities of the area or the vitality and viability of the town centre;

TCR P4: Promote living over the shop and conversion of town centre buildings into housing units;

TCR P5: Regenerate the town centre in accordance with *“Portlaoise 2040 and Beyond A Vision For Portlaoise, A Strategy For A Better Town Centre”*;

TCR P6: Encourage the maintenance of original shopfronts, or the reinstatement of traditional shopfronts where poor replacements have been installed;

TCR P7: Ensure new shopfronts have regard to existing shopfronts and complement the existing character particularly in the Architectural Conservation Area;

TCR P8: Prohibit internally illuminated fascias or projecting box signs. Concealed strip or flood lighting of fascias and traditional hand painted signs lit by spotlight may be an acceptable alternative.

10.1 2040 AND BEYOND: A VISION FOR PORTLAOISE: A STRATEGY FOR A BETTER TOWN CENTRE



A high quality town centre is proven to enhance the setting of historic buildings and spaces, improve the image of a centre and to make the town a more attractive and vibrant place. In this regard, the Public Realm Strategy sets out a vision for the future development of Portlaoise Town Centre. The strategy raises awareness of the town’s evolution and fabric and informs urban planning through guiding opportunities for public and private investment.

The Strategy’s Vision states that

“Portlaoise Town Centre will become a place for its people, where residents, workers, and visitors alike will come to enjoy a place that is inclusive, accessible, and truly sustainable from a social, economic and environmental perspective. It will be an exemplar town centre where businesses thrive and the pride of the population is reflected in its public spaces”.

The Public Realm Strategy sets out a range of guiding principles, outcomes, key interventions and policies focusing on public spaces, buildings and walkways in a way that acknowledges the unique characteristics and heritage assets that the town possesses, but also provides the foundation for the future development of a thriving town centre. The policies of the strategy are organized under the following key actions:

- The creation of a Low Carbon Town Centre;
- The Delivery of a Walkable Town Centre;
- The “Greening” of Portlaoise Town Centre;
- Exposure of Cultural Heritage within Portlaoise Town Centre;
- Accommodating Living in Portlaoise Town Centre;
- Provision for Working in Portlaoise Town Centre.

The strategic policies and interventions of the Public Realm Strategy have been incorporated into all of the various chapters of this plan. In this regard, it is therefore not considered necessary to duplicate such policies and interventions within this chapter.

New and improved infrastructure plays an essential role in the overall Public Realm Strategy. A connected town centre which is accessible, with a high quality public realm, good pedestrian permeability and a network of open and civic spaces can stimulate urban growth and attract inward investment. This will assist in growing and supporting the town centre’s residential, retail and employment base.

Improvements to the public realm through a program of infrastructural works will help change perceptions of Portlaoise Town Centre, so that people consider it a safe, attractive, and comfortable place to live, work and visit. Infrastructural improvements will prioritise pedestrians through measures such as traffic calming, street maintenance and traffic management in the historic town centre. Measures would also support the creation of a town centre that is more easily navigable by those with mobility impairments through the provision of wider footways and the removal of unnecessary street furniture.



Figure 15: Views from the 3D model, existing and proposed

10.2 OPPORTUNITY SITES

Five potential opportunity sites for re-development have been identified which would contribute to the renewal, enhancement and regeneration of the particular areas of the town in which they are located. These areas have been identified for various reasons such as dereliction, under utilisation of land and lands that would be readily adaptable for new uses.

The site areas or boundaries have not been identified definitively and can be modified to include other key sites. Additionally, other opportunity sites not listed can be presented for appraisal under similar criteria. Some of the sites may be owned by different parties and would require an element of site assembly for a coherent development strategy to progress. This approach to re-development will be encouraged over a piecemeal approach.

The Convent, CBS and Parish lands represent an opportunity to address the loss of the vibrancy and vitality of the schools from Portlaoise town centre. The importance of finding sustainable replacement uses and regenerating these sites will facilitate the continued growth of one of Ireland's fastest growing towns for future generations. The sites represent a significant opportunity to arrest the decline of the residential population while addressing other infrastructure deficiencies such as the Railway Station car parking.

10.2.1 OPPORTUNITY SITE 1: LYSSTER SQUARE



Figure 16: Lyster Square

Zoning: Town Centre

Comments:

- Brownfield retail site;
- Large amount of surface car parking;
- Prime location for redevelopment of lands fronting onto James Fintan Lalor Avenue;
- Located within Portlaoise Architectural Conservation Area;
- No Protected Structures within the site;
- Located within Archaeological Zone;
- Public realm improvements would be beneficial and should be consistent with the Guiding Principles for Lyster Square as outlined in 2040 And Beyond: A Vision for Portlaoise;
- Landscaping proposals including tree planting and “greening” of the area;
- Development could be intensified to provide a key landmark or gateway building;
- Care should be taken that any building addresses the extensive street frontage available and be designed to an exceptional standard. Development shall comprise a high quality design, fine grained active frontage blocks providing a strong built edge to the surrounding public thoroughfare. New buildings should be permanent, timeless and contemporary structures. Car parking should be provided to the rear of the building or within the structure itself.

10.2.2 OPPORTUNITY SITE 2: FITZMAURICE PLACE INCLUDING THE SCHOOLS SITES



Figure 17: Fitzmaurice Place including Schools

Zoning: Town Centre

Comments:

- Former school sites (Convent Lands and CBS) occupy a substantial portion of the lands;
- Site also includes Laois County Council yards;
- Fort of Maryborough is located within site – archaeological issues need to be addressed;
- Located within Portlaoise Architectural Conservation Area;
- Both schools are Protected Structures;
- Conservation principles shall be taken into account in new design;
- Interventions for this area, as described under “Fort Protector a Heritage Quarter” and “The Convent, CBS and Parish Lands” in the 2040 And Beyond A Vision for Portlaoise, should be considered and reflected in development proposals;
- River Triogue flows through the Convent Lands, which shall be incorporated in a sensitive manner and include provision of a Greenway/Cycle Path;
- A Masterplan has been prepared for the Convent Lands which if implemented, would bring substantial benefits to the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre;
- A portion of the site is located within Flood Zone A.

10.2.3 OPPORTUNITY SITE 3: CENTRE POINT, MOUNTRATH ROAD



Figure 18: Centre Point

Zoning: Residential 2

Comments:

- Brownfield retail site with a disused petrol station located at Mountrath Road, with access also from Harpers Lane;
- Extensive surface car park;
- Prime location for redevelopment;
- Not located within an Architectural Conservation Area;
- No Protected Structures within the site;
- Public realm improvements would be beneficial and should seek to maximise green and blue infrastructure through landscape design;
- Development could be intensified to provide a key landmark or gateway building;
- Care should be taken that this building addresses the extensive street frontage available and be designed to an exceptional standard. Development shall comprise a high quality design, fine grained active frontage blocks providing a strong built edge to the surrounding public thoroughfare. New buildings should be permanent, timeless and contemporary structures. Car parking should be provided to the rear of the building or within the structure itself.

10.2.4 OPPORTUNITY SITE 4: THE MALTINGS SITE, MOUNTMELLIK ROAD



Figure 19: The Maltings Site

Zoning: Residential 2

Comments:

- Brownfield site;
- Planning Permission previously granted (now expired) for a substantial mixed use development;
- Prime location for redevelopment adjoining the N80 and Portlaoise Railway Station;
- Large amount of surface car parking on site;
- Extensive site curtilage available and cleared for redevelopment;
- Not located within an Architectural Conservation Area;
- Public realm improvements would be beneficial and should seek to maximise green and blue infrastructure through landscape design;
- Development could be intensified to provide a key landmark or gateway building;
- Care should be taken that this building addresses the extensive street frontage available and be designed to an exceptional standard. Development shall comprise high quality design, fine grained active frontage blocks providing a strong built edge to the surrounding public thoroughfare. New buildings should be permanent, timeless and contemporary structures. Car parking should be provided to the rear of the building or within the structure itself.

10.2.5 OPPORTUNITY SITE 5: FORMER BANK OF IRELAND BRANCH OFFICE/ PRISON OFFICERS' CLUB, BANK PLACE



Figure 20: Bank Place

Zoning: Town Centre

Comments:

- Brownfield site;
- Prime location for redevelopment of lands in close proximity to the Main Street and Portlaoise Railway Station;
- Located within Portlaoise Architectural Conservation Area;
- Two Protected Structures are located within the site;
- Located within Archaeological Zone;
- Public realm improvements would be beneficial;
- Development could be intensified to provide a key landmark building;
- Development shall comprise a high quality design, fine grained active frontage blocks providing a strong built edge to the surrounding public thoroughfare. New buildings should be permanent, timeless and contemporary structures. Car parking should be provided to the rear of the building or within the structure itself.

11 KEY INFRASTRUCTURE



The sustainable social and economic growth of Portlaoise is dependent on the satisfactory provision of key infrastructure associated with the provision of services for new developments both residential and commercial. Key infrastructural provision will support the economic development of the town and needs to be undertaken in a plan led manner.

Portlaoise's infrastructure must keep pace with modern demands. In this regard, the provision of high quality infrastructure networks and environmental services is fundamental to ensuring the long term physical, environmental, social and economic development of the town.

Irish Water is responsible for the provision and operation of public water and wastewater services across the country. Laois County Council delivers water services in accordance with a Service Level Agreement. The Water Services Strategic Plan (WSSP) was published in 2015 by Irish Water, which sets out strategic objectives for the delivery of water services over a 25 year period and a context for investment and implementation plans. Irish Water and Laois County Council will work jointly to identify the water services required to support planned development in line with national and regional planning policies for inclusion in the Irish Water Capital Investment Plans.

Within the settlement of Portlaoise 6,912 households are connected to the public mains water supply and 6,887 households are connected to the public sewer system.

The Portlaoise Wastewater Treatment Plant has the capacity to cater for a population equivalent of 39,000. The River Triogue acts as the receiving waters for this plant. Currently there is capacity in the waste water treatment plant and public water supply. However, extra capacity is required to implement the policies and objectives of this plan.

Adequate storm water drainage and retention facilities are necessary to accommodate surface water run off from existing and proposed developments. Sustainable Drainage Systems can contribute to surface water retention and a reduction in the potential for flooding by acting as natural drainage.

Portlaoise is served by a high capacity electricity system and gas network. Within the settlement 5,615 households have broadband internet services. The high speed broadband network upgrade is being implemented by SIRO, which will give significant economic and social advantage to Portlaoise as a place to set up internet based businesses.

EU Directive 2009/29/EC on the Promotion of **Renewable Energy Sources**, establishes a binding target of 20% of overall EU energy production from renewable resources by 2020, as well as a binding 10% minimum target for energy from renewable resources to account for 16% of total energy consumption by 2020. In line with these commitments, Ireland's target for electricity from renewable energy sources is 40% by 2020. Low carbon technologies present an economic opportunity and green technology development is emerging as a major field of innovation and growth. Both Councils recognize the importance of developing renewable energy resources in the interest of delivering the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework.

Key Infrastructure: Strategic Aim:

To enable development in line with the capacity of supporting infrastructure and to require the timely provision of infrastructure needed for the planned development of lands.

Objectives: It is an Objective of the Council to:

- KI 01:** Facilitate economic and social development through the provision of infrastructure and optimise the return of infrastructure investment;
- KI 02:** Promote and encourage the development of the critical mass of Portlaoise and to enhance its strategic location on the National and Regional road and rail network;
- KI 03:** Phase growth in line with the capacity of supporting infrastructure;
- KI 04:** Facilitate Irish Water in the maintenance, expansion and upgrading of wastewater disposal and water supply infrastructure;
- KI 05:** Ensure a good quality of life, through maintaining and improving waste water treatment and water supplies and to minimise the adverse impacts of development on the environment, through policies for the management of wastes and emissions;
- KI 06:** Seek compliance with the standards and requirements of Irish Water in relation to water and wastewater infrastructure;
- KI 07:** Protect both ground and surface water resources and to work with Irish Water to develop and implement Water Safety Plans to protect sources of public water supply and their contributing catchments;
- KI 08:** Require all new developments to include proposals for Sustainable Drainage Systems;
- KI 09:** Maintain, improve and enhance the environmental and ecological quality of surface waters and groundwater in accordance with the National River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021 (DHPLG) and associated Programme of Measures;

KI O10: Ensure developments will not adversely impact on the status of waterbodies in accordance with the Water Framework Directive and National River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021 (DHPLG);

KI O11: Facilitate, promote and encourage the expansion and improvement of telecommunications, broadband, electricity and gas networks infrastructure subject to proper planning and sustainable development.

Policies: It is the Policy of the Council to:

KI P1: Protect both ground and surface water resources and to work with Irish Water to develop and implement Water Safety Plans to protect sources of public water supply and their contributing catchment;

KI P2: Work with Irish Water on developing and upgrading the water supply schemes so as to ensure an adequate, resilient, sustainable and economic supply of piped water;

KI P3: Work with Irish Water on upgrading the wastewater treatment plant in line with the projected future growth of the settlement of Portlaoise;

KI P4: Promote and support the implementation of Irish Water's Eastern and Midlands Region Water Supply Project;

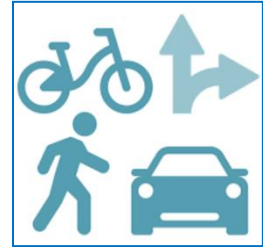
KI P5: Assess all applications in the context of available and sufficient public infrastructural facilities, the protection of Surface Water and Groundwater Resources;

KI P6: Promote public awareness and involvement in water conservation measures by households, businesses and industries and supports the implementation of Energy Efficiency solutions in Water and Waste Water Systems;

KI P7: Promote and encourage the harvesting of rainwater to meet non-potable water needs;

KI P8: Co-operate with and facilitate the work of national telecommunications, broadband, electricity and gas network providers in the improvement, expansion and provision of energy and communication infrastructure subject to proper planning and sustainable development.

12 TRANSPORT AND MOVEMENT



While the overarching rationale for the making of a local area plan is to guide land-use, the integration of good land use planning with transportation is a key that can unlock significant improvements in the quality of life, in ways that are tangible to many in the town, who have long identified car dependency and commuting as being a major drawback to living in the area. Reducing the need to travel long distances by private car, and increasing the use of sustainable and healthy alternatives, can bring multiple benefits to both our environment and communities.

Portlaoise is centrally located in the Midlands of Ireland and in close proximity to the Greater Dublin Area. Portlaoise has strategic road links to the entire country via the M7 and M8 motorways, the N77, N78 and N80 National Secondary Roads and a network of regional and local roads. The town is also located on the railway line connecting the south and west to Dublin. National and local bus routes also provide services in the town. Portlaoise is therefore easily accessible to the Greater Dublin Area, Dublin City, the M50, national airports and ports. The accessibility of the town provides key advantages for the attraction of economic and residential development.

The Council will continue to provide for all components of the transportation system which are within its own remit and will encourage and facilitate the development of those other elements provided by external agencies, such as the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII, made up of the former NRA and RPA). In addition the strategy and objectives of this plan are required to be consistent with the transport strategy of the NTA.

The improvement of transport infrastructure in the town is a key element of sustainable development and achieving a low carbon economy. At present traffic congestion is an issue which needs to be addressed. Vehicles dominate many of Portlaoise's streets and largely unrestricted vehicle movement is detrimental to a vibrant and livable environment. This impacts negatively on the quality and type of activities that can be accommodated in the town centre and the attractiveness to and safety of pedestrians and cyclists.

As indicated in Census 2016 as shown in the chart below, 9,093 persons (66.9%) use private transport as the mode of travel to work or school every day in the settlement. This compares to 1,197 persons (8.8%) for public transport and 1,994 persons (14.7%) for green modes. The key to getting people out of their cars and into public transport is to have a reliable, convenient, frequent and fast public transport service available and opportunities for pedestrian and cycle

linkages, that bring people to the places they want to go. While Laois County Council is not itself a public transport provider, and cannot force providers to deliver services in any particular area, this plan can put in place the necessary policy framework to encourage and facilitate the improvement of public transport. Limiting and/or removing vehicles at certain locations would benefit the public realm in terms of air quality and noise, and make the town centre a more attractive place to work, live and visit. In addition, there is an identified need for upgrades and new vehicular, pedestrian and cycle connections to improve the accessibility to existing residential estates, the town centre and educational facilities.

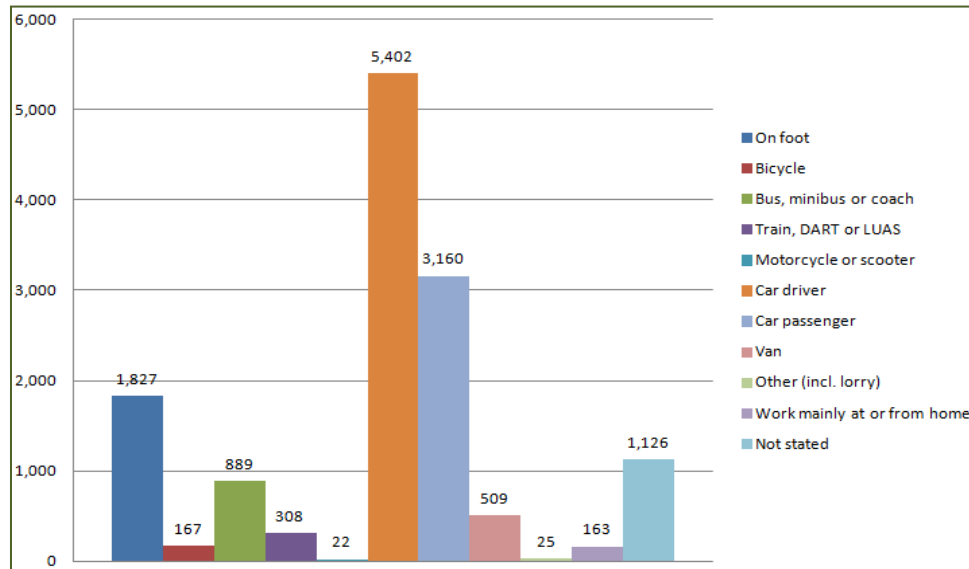


Figure 21: Commuting by means of travel to work, school or college (CSO 2016)

In order to achieve more sustainable travel patterns, a significant focus on reducing car dependency and increasing the permeability of the town is required. The benefits of reducing reliance on the car and improving the permeability of towns for cyclists and walkers, can be summarised as follows:

- Reduced dependency on fossil fuels, pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions;
- Increased levels of exercise with consequent health and fitness benefits;
- Builds social capital in neighbourhoods through increased social interaction;
- Higher numbers of pedestrians and cyclists increase levels of passive supervision making places safer;
- Reduced congestion on roads makes public transport more viable and;
- Reduced expenditure leakage to larger towns benefits local businesses.

A key aim of this Draft LAP is therefore to promote **compact, connected neighbourhoods** based on street patterns and forms of development that will make walking and cycling, especially for local trips, more attractive in line with national policy such as the “*Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future*” (2009) and “*Ireland’s First National Cycle Policy Framework*” (2009) promote

sustainable travel movements and encourage people to find alternative ways to travel reducing car dependency.

In accordance with the “**Permeability** Best Practice Guide” (NTA, 2015), the key principles for maintaining and providing permeability within the plan area for the lifetime of the plan are as follows:

- Origins and destinations, such as schools and shops, should be linked in the most direct manner possible for pedestrians and cyclists;
- Greater priority should be given to pedestrians and cyclists;
- The physical design of links should be fit for purpose in terms of capacity and security;
- Junctions in urban and suburban areas should cater for pedestrians and cyclists safely and conveniently.

A vehicle strategy will be an important enabling mechanism of the Public Realm Strategy. The aim of the strategy is to reduce traffic in the town core, where possible, create a safe environment and serve pedestrian desire lines to and from key nodes, particularly the historic town centre, the shopping area at Kylekiproe, as well as open and civic spaces. Consideration has been given to the removal of on-street parking and the appropriateness of one-way systems to provide the safest possible environment for all users.

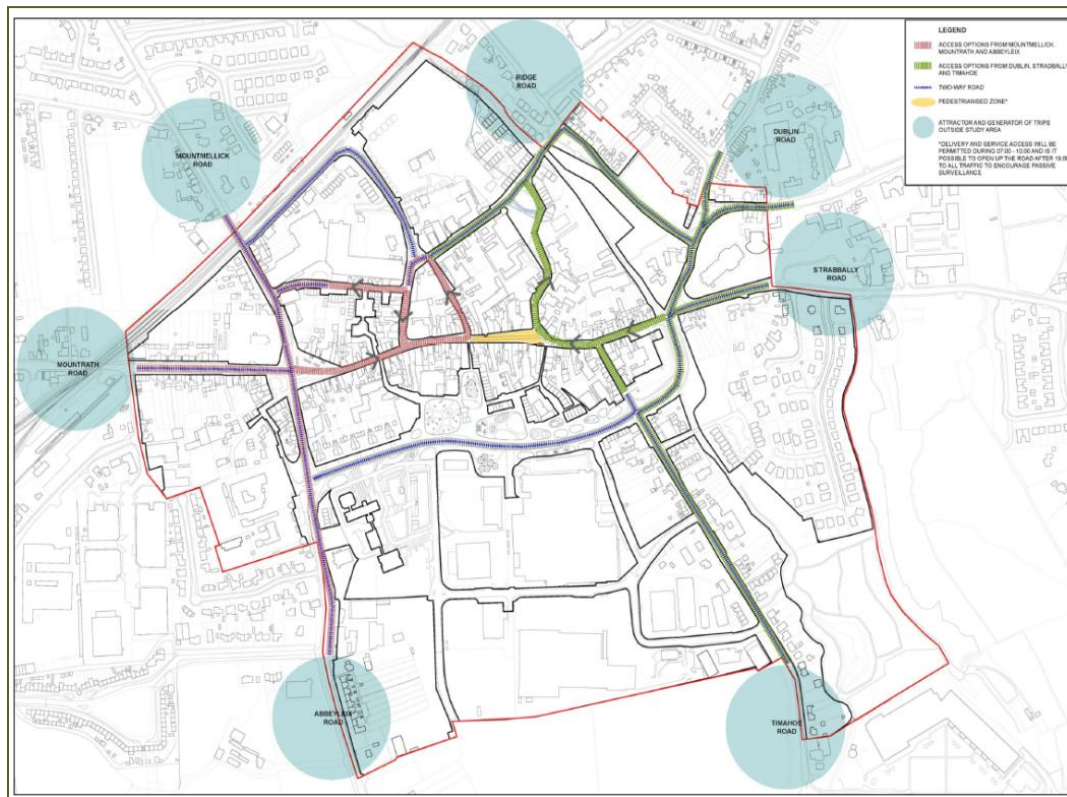


Figure 22: The proposed traffic cells of the Portlaoise Public Realm Strategy

Transport and Movement: Strategic Aim:

To promote and facilitate a sustainable transport system that prioritises and provides for walking, cycling and public transport facilities while ensuring sufficient traffic management.

Objectives: It is an Objective of the Council to:

- TM O1:** To cooperate with NTA and other relevant transport planning bodies in the delivery of a high quality, integrated transport system;
- TM O2:** Facilitate the economic and social development of the town through the provision and efficient use of transport infrastructure;
- TM O3:** Cooperate and facilitate Irish Rail, Bus Eireann and private operatives in the provision and frequency of public transport services, operation of services and facilities;
- TM O4:** To facilitate the provision of a “park and ride” on the CBS lands to serve Portlaoise Railway Station which incorporates car parking and a bus stop/terminus;
- TM O5:** To facilitate the provision of a “park and stride” adjacent to Lismard Business Park to serve the neighbouring school campuses;
- TM O6:** To promote the development of a transport interchange on James Fintan Lalor Avenue including bus stops and facilities in conjunction with the NTA;
- TM O7:** Encourage, promote and facilitate a modal shift towards more sustainable forms of transport in all new developments;
- TM O8:** Promote sustainable and compact forms of development which reduce reliance of private car based transport;
- TM O9:** Concentrate people intensive development in areas easily accessible to public transport;
- TM O10:** Significantly reduce carbon emissions through interventions at James Fintan Lalor / Lyster Square;
- TM O11:** Improve the pedestrian experience by reducing car dominance on James Fintan Lalor Avenue;
- TM O12:** Improve pedestrian links, based on desire lines, from Main Street through Laneways and between the old and new shopping areas;

TM O13: Seek a 40% increase in bicycle use by 2040;

TM O14: To investigate, in conjunction with Irish Rail, the reopening and reuse of the Togher train line from Portlaoise Railway Station as part of the overall development of the Togher National Enterprise Park.

Policies: It is the Policy of the Council to:

TM P1: Improve and provide pedestrian linkages, cycle networks and permeability including blueways and greenways throughout the town;

TM P2: Examine the feasibility of introducing clear, direct pedestrian routes between the shopping areas, and provide pedestrian access across James Fintan Lalor Avenue and Lyster Square;

TM P3: Provide adequate, secure and dry bicycle parking facilities at appropriate locations;

TM P4: Ensure all footpaths provide access for disabled and mobility impaired persons;

TM P5: Facilitate and implement appropriate measures to reduce or manage traffic associated with schools to regularize vehicular movements and alleviate congestion;

TM P6: Reserve all lands for future relief roads free of development in conjunction with the requirements of the Roads Authority;

TM P7: Complete the inner relief road system for Portlaoise including the links between the Timahoe Road and the Abbeyleix Road, the Dublin Road and the Borris Road, Rathleague and Meelick and the Stradbally and Dublin Road;

TM P8: Provide for improvements to the national road network, including reserving corridors for proposed routes, free of development, so as not to compromise future road schemes;

TM P9: Prevent inappropriate development on lands adjacent to the existing national road network, which would adversely affect the safety, current and future capacity and function of national roads and having regard to possible future upgrades of the national roads and junctions;

TM P10: Ensure that any development permitted along national roads is in accordance with the *Spatial Planning and National Roads—Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoECLG, 2012)* or any updated version;

TM P11: Facilitate a limited level of new accesses or the intensified use of existing accesses to

the national road network on the approaches to or exit to Portlaoise that are subject to a speed limit zone between 50 kmh and 60 kmh otherwise known as the transition zone. Such accesses will be considered where they facilitate orderly urban development and would not result in a proliferation of such entrances, leading to a diminution in the role of these transitional zones. The Council will have regard to the nature of the proposed development and the volume of traffic to be generated by it and the implications for the safety, capacity and efficient operation of the national road. A Road Safety Audit, prepared in accordance with the *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (NRA, 2010)*, shall be submitted where appropriate.

13 HOUSING



This Draft LAP aims to balance the provision of good quality housing that meets the needs of a diverse population, in a way that makes Portlaoise a good place to live now and in the future. To meet the housing needs of Portlaoise to 2024 and beyond is an important element of this plan. Adequate housing provision is essential for the creation of an environment to attract business and enterprise to the town and this plan provides the quantum of zoned lands to meet this demand. The quantum of zoned lands is in compliance with the Core Strategy of the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023.

The Portlaoise Public Realm Strategy aims to enhance the quality of life of residents and the ability of the town centre to attract occupiers and investment. There is a need to create a high quality public realm that connects to a network of open spaces, parks and squares and makes the town an attractive place to live. Suitable locations for housing must offer a critical mass of development capable of creating the capacity to provide the improvement in amenity and setting that will make town living more attractive to young and old alike.

As the principal town of the County, Portlaoise is required to cater for new housing to serve population growth and new household formation, in accordance with the population targets of the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines and the **Core Strategy** of the Laois County Development Plan 2017 – 2023. In accordance with the Core Strategy, the town of Portlaoise has a projected requirement for an additional 1,824 households over the six-year period up to 2023. The Core Strategy identifies a requirement for 78ha. of land in order to accommodate planned growth, equating to an average density of 35 units per hectare.

Type of accommodation	Households	Percentage
House/Bungalow	6,541	87.72%
Flat/Apartment	767	10.29%
Bed-sit	5	0.07%
Caravan/Mobile Home	5	0.07%
Not stated	139	1.86%
Total	7,457	

Table 5: Households by accommodation type (CSO Census 2016)

Type of Household	Households	Percentage
One Person	1,741	23%
Couples without children	1,316	18%
Couples with children	2,736	37%
Single parent families	894	12%
Other	770	10%
Total	7,457	

Table 6: Households by composition (CSO Census 2016)

As set out in the tables above the Census of 2016 recorded a total of 7,457 households in Portlaoise, with the majority of households (87%) accommodated in houses built since 2001 (3,468). There are 4,133 owner occupied households within the settlement. The majority of these households (37%) comprise couples with children.

To cater for the projected population growth of the County, the **Housing Strategy** is set out under the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023, and should be read in tandem with this chapter. It is the policy of the Council to implement the provisions of the Housing Strategy in accordance with Section 95 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

The Housing Strategy has identified a housing need in Portlaoise. Therefore, in accordance with the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015, the Planning Authority will employ Site Activation Measures including the Vacant Site Levy to bring forward vacant and/or underutilised sites in Portlaoise for the supply of housing.

The previous LAP period (2012-2018) identified **unfinished housing developments** as a legacy issue. However, the majority of these estates have now been largely resolved due to successful collaboration and cooperation from a number of key stakeholders.

Following economic recovery **new residential development** will become a key issue for the growth of Portlaoise during this plan period. This plan places a strong emphasis on providing quality residential developments in the existing built envelope of the town. The Town Centre zone presents significant housing opportunities through redevelopment of brownfield, infill and backland type developments. A number of key opportunity sites have been identified within/ adjacent to the town centre which is in close proximity to public transport infrastructure and are suitable for higher density developments. However, these areas are insufficient in size to accommodate the total projected population growth. Therefore, greenfield sites have also been identified which are suitable for new high quality residential developments.

In order to ensure the delivery of high quality housing in a sustainable manner residential development will be required to:

- Be located in places that can support sustainable development, places which support growth, innovation and the efficient provision of infrastructure, are accessible to a range

of local services, can encourage the use of public transport, walking and cycling, and help tackle climate change;

- Increase residential density through a range of measures including reductions in vacancy, re-use of existing buildings, infill development schemes, area or site-based regeneration and increased building heights;
- Be delivered where homes and the appropriate supporting services can be delivered more efficiently and effectively at least cost to the State in the long-run;
- Have an excellent standard of design, layout and finish;
- Provide an appropriate mix of tenure types;
- Compliment the character of Portlaoise.

Portlaoise may be suitable for **apartment development** subject to local determination, having regard to the following broad proximity and accessibility considerations:

1) Town Centre:

Generally suitable for small to large scale (will vary subject to location) and higher density development (will also vary), that may wholly comprise apartments, and includes:

- Sites within walking distance (i.e. up to 15 minutes or 1,000-1,500m) of the town centre;
- Sites within reasonable walking distance (i.e. up to 10 minutes or 800- 1,000m) to or from high capacity urban public transport stops;
- Sites within easy walking distance (i.e. up to 5 minutes or 400-500m) to or from high frequency bus services or where such services can be provided.

This range of locations is not exhaustive and will require local assessment that further considers these and other relevant planning factors.

2) Remainder of the town:

Generally suitable for limited, small-scale (will vary subject to location), higher density development that may wholly comprise apartments, or residential development of any scale that will include a minority of apartments at low medium densities and includes:

- Sites in suburban development areas that do not meet proximity or accessibility criteria.

These areas require local assessment that further considers these and other relevant planning factors.

While the provision of apartments may not be required below the 45 dwellings per hectare net density threshold, they can allow for greater diversity and flexibility in a housing scheme, and allow for increased overall density. Accordingly, apartments may be considered as part of a mix of housing types in a given housing development at any urban location.

In accordance with the specific planning policy of the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (March 2018) the quantum of **car parking** or the requirement for any such provision for apartment developments will vary, having regard to the location in the town that may be suitable for apartment development, broadly based on proximity and accessibility criteria as set out in the Guidelines.

A number of **Housing Protection Areas** in the town centre have been identified on Grattan Street, Coote Street and the Timahoe Road. Within the Housing Protection Areas any change of use from residential use will be strictly resisted. These protection areas are necessary to ensure a vibrant town centre and to maintain and facilitate an increase in the residential population.

The need for **Nursing Homes** and residential care homes in the town is anticipated to grow into the future and these facilities should be integrated wherever possible into the established or planned residential areas where residents can avail of reasonable access to local services. In determining planning applications for a change of use from a residential dwelling or other building to a nursing home the following will be considered:

- Whether such a use would not give rise to a traffic hazard and off-street car parking;
- The proximity to local services and facilities;
- Whether the size and scale is appropriate to the area.

Housing: Strategy Aim:

To deliver new residential development, to support the existing community infrastructure, recreation and amenity facilities and provide new facilities in tandem with new housing.

Objectives: It is an objective of the Council to:

- H 01:** Ensure that sufficient zoned land is available at appropriate locations to cater for the envisaged population growth of the Core Strategy;
- H 02:** Promote and encourage the development of the critical mass of Portlaoise and to enhance its strategic location on the National and Regional road and rail network;
- H 03:** Facilitate the provision of housing in a range of locations to meet the needs of the population, with particular emphasis on facilitating access to housing to suit different household and tenure needs, in a sustainable manner;
- H 04:** To ensure compliance with the provisions of Part V of the Act (as amended) and to integrate such housing so as to prevent social segregation within residential developments;
- H 05:** To utilise the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 (Vacant Site

Levy) to facilitate the appropriate development of vacant sites (residential zoned lands) that are in need of renewal or regeneration;

- H O6:** To encourage the sequential development of sustainable serviced residentially zoned lands in a sustainable manner subject to compliance with relevant Department Guidelines and Development Management Standards of the Laois County Development Plan 2017 - 2023;
- H O7:** To promote a higher density at appropriate locations, particularly close to the town centre and public transport facilities;
- H O8:** To encourage appropriate housing development on infill and brownfield sites subject to preservation of existing residential amenity, the provision of a high quality design respecting the established character, density and layout, compliance with all traffic safety, quantitative and qualitative standards of the Laois County Development Plan 2017 - 2023;
- H O9:** To promote the efficient use of the Convent, CBS and Parish Lands for residential and other uses;
- H O10:** To promote the reoccupation of vacant residential stock within Portlaoise Town Centre, including 'Living Above the Shop' units;
- H O11:** To increase the residential population of Portlaoise Town Centre in accordance with the objectives of the Public Realm Strategy;
- H O12:** To ensure an appropriate and sustainable mix of dwelling types, sizes and tenures to cater for all members of society, including homeless persons, the elderly, disabled and travellers;
- H O13:** To ensure provision of lifetime adaptable homes that can accommodate the changing needs of a household over time;
- H O14:** To identify, acquire and provide suitable sites, accommodation and facilities for the housing and resettlement of travelling families;
- H O15:** To secure the provision of social infrastructure, community and recreational facilities in tandem with residential development;
- H O16:** To maintain residential use of structures located in the Housing Protection Areas and resist any change of use.

Policies: It is the Policy of the Council to:

- H P1:** Ensure that sufficient zoned land is available at appropriate locations to cater for the envisaged population growth of the Core Strategy;
- H P2:** Require all new residential developments to be consistent with the Core Strategy of the Laois County Development Plan 2107-2023 and the settlement strategy of this plan;
- H P3:** Promote and encourage the development of the critical mass of Portlaoise and to enhance its strategic location on the National and Regional road and rail network;
- H P4:** Facilitate the provision of housing in a range of locations to meet the needs of the population, with particular emphasis on facilitating access to housing to suit different household and tenure needs, in a sustainable manner;
- H P5:** To require the creation of sustainable communities and high quality residential areas at appropriate locations with a mix tenure and adequate amenities and facilities and to meet the standards and guidance of:
- Sustainable Residential Development In Urban Areas, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DEHG (2009);
 - Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018);
 - The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, DTTS and DECLG (2013);
 - The development management standards of the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023;
 - Technical Guidance Document L – Conservation of Fuel and Energy – Dwellings.

14 COMMUNITY SERVICES & CULTURE



Community services and facilities of a social, sporting, educational, and amenity value are crucially important to provide opportunities for participation, for health and to attract inward investment. This plan provides for the expansion of existing community services and facilities and development of new services. This plan also puts an emphasis on promoting and developing a stronger cultural dimension in the town. Culture plays a key role in ensuring that communities are mixed, sustainable and dynamic. Developing and promoting culture in Portlaoise will maximise the physical, social and economic benefits of the cultural offer. Promoting cultural development shapes the identity of the town and helps set it apart in terms of its distinctiveness.

The creation of sustainable and vibrant communities requires the provision of and access to education, childcare, health and support services, recreation and leisure facilities and a good quality built environment to create a sense of place. The Council is committed to the provision, upgrade and expansion of community facilities and social infrastructure in conjunction with private, public and voluntary organisations.

The **Local Community Development Committee** (LCDC) was established in 2014 by Laois County Council and performs a role in developing, coordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development through the Local Economic and Community Plan 2016 – 2021 (LECP). The LECP is central to promoting economic and local community development in the county over a six year period.

The provision of good quality **childcare and educational facilities** is important to support the development of sustainable communities and to support economic development. There are approximately 25 no. preschool facilities in Portlaoise, including a variety of full day care facilities, sessional services, preschool, crèche facilities, Montessori and after school facilities. The requirement for additional preschool facilities will be based on the capacity of existing facilities and additional requirements arising from new residential development.

There are 7 no. primary schools and 4 no. secondary schools in Portlaoise. The Council has sought and will continue to work with the Department of Education and Skills to identify and develop sites for new schools as necessary. In this regard, the plan includes for the zoning of land for new schools and expansion of existing educational facilities. Portlaoise College provides Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses. The requirement for additional primary and secondary educational facilities will be monitored having regard to the development of residential land

during the lifetime of the Draft LAP. The Council will facilitate and promote the development of third level educational facilities in the town.

Laois County Council adopted the **“Laois Age Friendly County Strategy 2016-2021”** in 2016. The strategy sets out a number of aims and actions so that the county will be where older people are supported to live independently in safe and secure homes and communities, suitable for their physical and social needs, with improved health and quality of life, where older people are enabled to participate in economic, social, political and community life and continue to grow, develop and contribute to society and build upon existing services and supports.

Portlaoise library is currently located in Lyster Square. A Part 8 application has been approved for the redevelopment of the vacant Shaws stores premises on the Main Street for a new library to serve the town.

Portlaoise is the main centre of **health care** in the county. The Midland Regional Hospital is located in Portlaoise. There are a number of public, voluntary and private agencies responsible for the provision of healthcare facilities, with the Health Service Executive being the primary agency.

Portlaoise is served by **emergency services** including An Garda Siochana, the Ambulance Service, the Fire Service and Civil Defence etc.

Community Services & Culture: Strategic Aim:

To deliver, facilitate and support the provision of a broad range of high quality community, educational and cultural facilities and infrastructure to meet the needs of the population.

Objectives: It is an Objective of the Council to:

CSC 01: Facilitate the provision of social infrastructure and to provide access to new and existing community and social facilities;

CSC 02: Facilitate the improvement and provision of community facilities, library and emergency services in appropriate locations;

CSC 03: Facilitate the improvement and provision of educational, childcare and healthcare facilities in appropriate and accessible locations;

CSC 04: Facilitate implementation of the Laois Age Friendly County Strategy 2016-2021;

CSC 05: Promote the amenities and ensure the accessibility of arts and cultural facilities within the ownership of Laois County Council;

CSC O6: Facilitate the roll out of community policing and neighbourhood watch schemes.

Policies: It is the Policy of the Council to:

CSC P1: Ensure provision of sufficient zoned lands to allow for expansion of existing and provision of new educational facilities;

CSC P2: Facilitate the development of and expansion of services, amenities and facilities to cater for all society members, ages and community groups;

CSC P3: Facilitate the development of primary, second-level, third-level outreach, vocational and lifelong learning facilities and digital capacity for distance learning including fourth level education, lifelong learning and up-skilling generally;

CSC P4: Ensure the provision and implementation of primary and secondary education facilities in concert with the planning and sustainable development of residential areas in order to maximise the opportunities for use of walking, cycling and use of public transport.

15 BUILT HERITAGE



Portlaoise’s built heritage is a key and distinctive asset which can be used to promote a positive image of the town. The built heritage is a unique resource and represents an irreplaceable expression of the richness and diversity of the town’s past. The vernacular architecture makes a strong contribution to the character of the town. This plan seeks to protect, preserve and enhance the built heritage for the benefit of future generations. This plan along with the Portlaoise Public Realm Strategy “2040 and Beyond A Vision for Portlaoise” seeks to develop the public realm within the town and develop a more ventilated town centre by developing greenways and cycleways. The development of the River Triogue greenway is an important project to provide a cross town walking corridor.

The **historic town centre** is centred on the remnants of the Fort Protector on Church Street which dates from the mid sixteenth century. The town is characterized by features of architectural and archaeological interest. The conservation of the architectural heritage of Portlaoise is a key guiding principle of the “2040 and Beyond A Vision for Portlaoise”. Improved design in the public realm will emphasise the historical form of the town. Historic routes such as Pepper Lane and Lyster Lane will be interpreted as entrances into the town. Emphasizing these narrow lanes will upgrade their importance and enrich the hierarchy of spaces in the town centre, as well as strengthening the connection between old and new. These routes connect into the Lower Square, notable as the original market place of the town, and will reinforce its primary importance in the public realm. The Market Square, as a large market place, will reclaim its role as the principal open space and public venue in the town. Streamlining design in the public realm to eliminate clutter and to design street surfaces, landscape features and traffic management interventions, not in isolation from the surrounding built environment, but in deference to it, will present the historic architecture of the town to best effect.

Portlaoise Historic Centre has been designated as an **Architectural Conservation Area (ACA)** as set out under Appendix 2 of the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023 and should be read in conjunction with this plan. An ACA is a place, area, group of structures or townscape, taking account of building lines and heights that is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. The designation is a driver for sustainable and sensitive development, the aim of which is not ‘*preservation*’ but managed development that enhances the character and heritage of the town. Contemporary design should reinforce the historic character within the ACA, and should take its cues from the historic setting in terms of scale and design. High quality architectural design will add to the built heritage and complement the receiving historic environment.

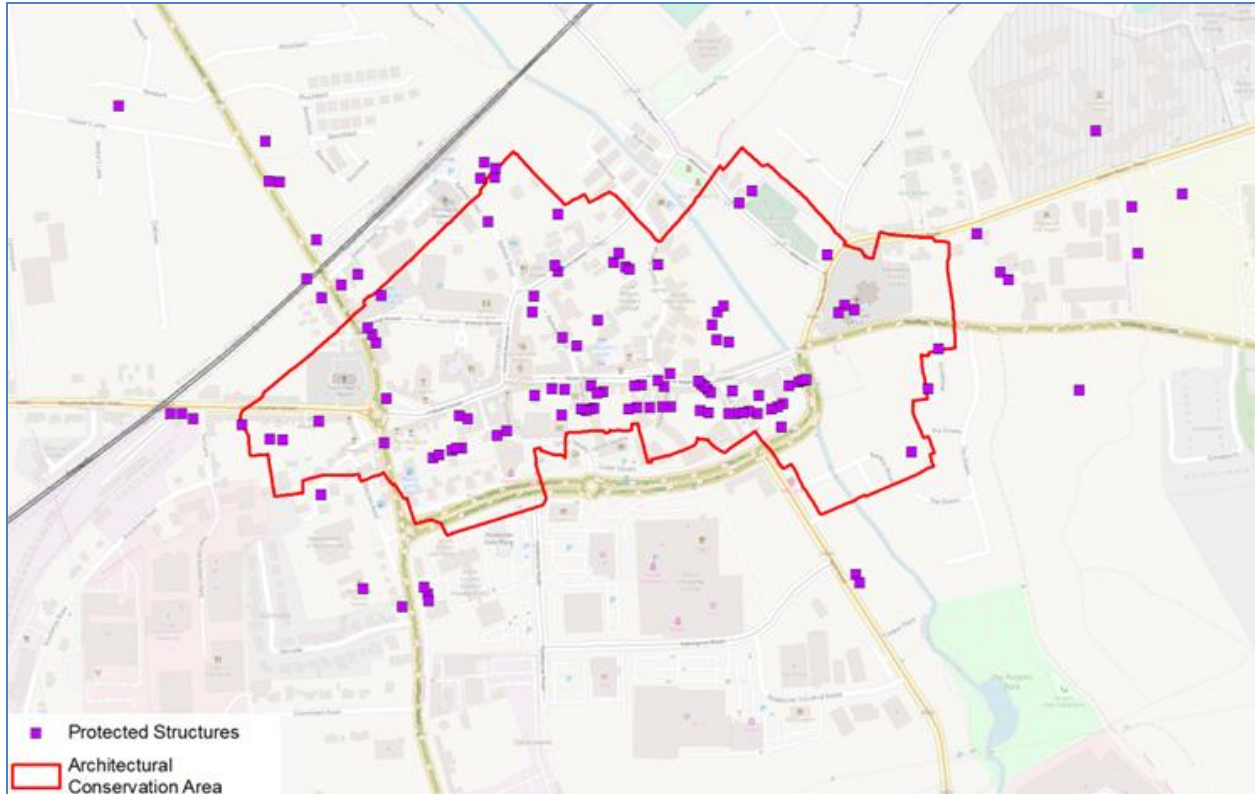


Figure 23: Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Area Portlaoise

The **Record of Protected Structures (RPS)** is set out under Appendix 1 of the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023 and should be read in conjunction with this plan. The RPS includes structures of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. There are approximately 78 no. Protected Structures within the development boundary of Portlaoise. In addition, there are approximately 25 no. archaeological monuments listed in the Record of Monuments and Places. A zone of archaeological significance has also been identified within the plan area.

A **Conservation Plan for the Fort Protector** has been prepared by Laois Heritage Society which aims to create a policy framework to guide all future decisions on the development of the Fort to enable its eventual restoration as a heritage site. A properly presented Fort site would promote the regeneration of the town centre and could become an important place for the interpretation of the history of the Midlands. The proposal for an 'Old Fort Quarter', has the potential to promote understanding of the Fort and its historical significance, and make it accessible to visitors.

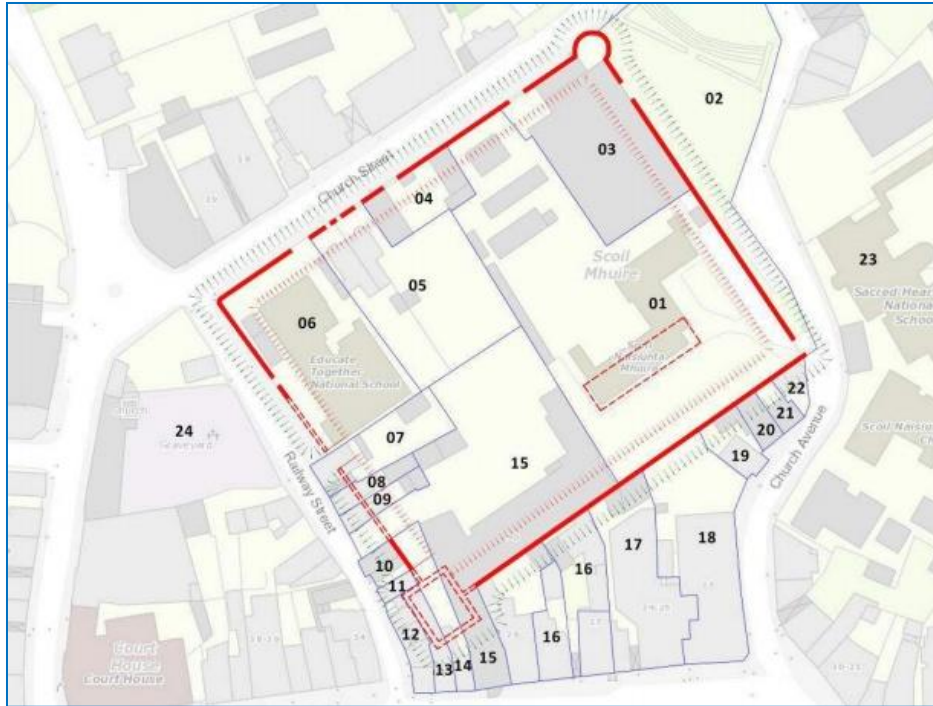


Figure 24: Overlay of Fort remains on contemporary map, dashed lines represent features for which no above ground features remain (Fort Protector Conservation Plan Phase II)

Built Heritage: Strategic Aim:

To protect, conserve and manage the built heritage of the town and to encourage sensitive and sustainable development to ensure its preservation for future generations.

Objectives: It is an Objective of the Council to:

- BH 01:** Protect, conserve and enhance the built environment, through promoting awareness, utilising relevant heritage legislation and promoting good quality urban design;
- BH 02:** Conserve, protect and enhance the built heritage of Portlaoise, including the Architectural Conservation Area, all Protected Structures and attendant grounds, Recorded Monuments and Places and the Zone of Archeological Significance in accordance with best conservation practice;
- BH 03:** Positively consider proposals to improve, alter, extend or change the use of protected structures so as to render them viable for modern use, subject to consultation with suitably qualified Conservation Architects and / or other relevant experts, suitable design, materials and construction methods;
- BH 04:** Ensure all development works on or at the sites of protected structures, including any

site works necessary, shall be carried out using best heritage practice for the protection and preservation of those aspects or features of the structures / site that render it worthy of protection;

- BH O5:** Support the re-introduction of traditional features on protected structures where there is evidence that such features (e.g. window styles, finishes etc.) previously existed;
- BH O6:** Strongly resist the demolition of protected structures, unless it can be demonstrated that exceptional circumstances exist;
- BH O7:** Consider the change of use of protected structures, provided that it can be shown that the structure, character, appearance and setting will not be adversely affected or where it can be shown it is necessary to have an economic use to enable its upkeep;
- BH O8:** Ensure the protection within Architectural Conservation Areas, of all those buildings, spaces, archaeological sites, trees, street furniture, views and other aspects of the environment which form an essential part of their character, as set out in their character appraisals;
- BH O9:** Ensure the design of any development in Architectural Conservation Areas, including any changes of use of an existing building, should preserve and / or enhance the character and appearance of the Architectural Conservation Area as a whole;
- BH O10:** Promote schemes for the conservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of Architectural Conservation Areas;
- BH O11:** No development in the vicinity of a feature included in the Record of Monuments & Places (RMP) will be permitted which seriously detracts from the setting of the feature or which is seriously injurious to its cultural or educational value;
- BH O12:** Ensure archaeological assessment is carried out as required and promote 'preservation in situ' of archaeological remains and settings in developments that would impact upon archaeological sites and/or features;
- BH O13:** Protect previously unknown archaeological sites and features, including underwater sites, where they are discovered during development works;
- BH O14:** Facilitate public access to National Monuments in State or Local Authority care;
- BH O15:** Facilitate the linking of the Fort site to the Old St Peter's Churchyard and to the Ridge Burial Ground.

Policies: It is the Policy of the Council to:

- BH P1:** Ensure heritage assets that are the focus for tourism development are appropriately managed and their special interest conserved from potential adverse effects from visitors or development in general and that best practice standards in relation for the environmental management of tourism enterprises are adhered to;
- BH P2:** Support and promote, with the co-operation of landowners, public access to heritage sites and features at appropriate locations whilst ensuring heritage related development does not result in negative impacts on the fabric or setting of Laois's heritage assets;
- BH P3:** Support and promote, with the co-operation of key stakeholders, the development of the Fort of Maryborough in Portlaoise and ensure that any development will not result in negative impacts on the fabric or setting of the site;
- BH P4:** Support the implementation of Ireland's Ancient East by facilitating the provision of visitor information in line with the policies and objectives with respect to heritage sites, and integrating the objectives of Ireland's Ancient East with transport programmes in the County;
- BH P5:** Encourage and support the provision of foreign language interpretation interventions in order to ensure the appropriate interpretation and appreciation of the county's heritage asset.

16 NATURAL HERITAGE



This chapter considers the natural heritage of Portlaoise which includes the Natural Environment, Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure. Similar to Built Heritage the Natural Heritage is a key and distinctive asset which can also be used to promote a positive image of the town. The natural heritage of Portlaoise is a material asset which should be protected and enhanced.

With respect to the **Natural Environment** of Portlaoise there are no European designated (EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC) Special Areas of Conservation or Special Protection Areas located within the plan boundary. The Ridge of Portlaoise extends to the north and south of the town along the Triogue River. The main habitats and species comprise the esker ridge and disused gravel pits, ash and hazel woodlands with species rich grasslands and are protected under the Wildlife Amendment Act, 2000.

Green Infrastructure is the physical environment within and between our towns and villages, comprising a network of multi functional open spaces, including formal parks, gardens, woodlands, green corridors, waterways, trees and open space. Green Infrastructure includes all environmental resources such as air and water quality and provides vital amenity and recreational spaces for communities, thus contributing to the health and quality of life of residents and visitors to the town.

The River Triogue provides a nature corridor extending through the centre of the town between the People's Park in the south and the Linear Park in the north. Connected green spaces provide the greatest benefit to biodiversity in an urban context. There are also several artificial ponds and lakes in Portlaoise, the majority of which are associated with housing developments. Some of the artificial water bodies have developed a good diversity of species.

In addition to ecological benefits, the existing parks and amenity open spaces in Portlaoise provide a focal point for active and passive recreation. Playgrounds and outdoor gyms are located at People's Park and Portlaoise Leisure Centre. There are also a number of walking tracks, sports grounds and clubs located in the town.

In addition to the above the surrounding agricultural lands, Togher Woods, Sports Fields (Portlaoise GAA and Portlaoise Rugby Club) have quality of life benefits for the local community. The benefits of this infrastructure are wide ranging and include:

- The creation of a community and a sense of place;
- Encouraging physical activity through the use of walkways and cycle paths;
- Access to nature and the environment;
- The creation of a pleasant environment to attract business and inward investment;
- Climate Change adaption.



Figure 25: Portlaoise Leisure Centre and Playground

A wide diversity of species, habitats, ecosystems and landscapes make up the **biodiversity** of Portlaoise. The Portlaoise Local Biodiversity Action Plan was published in 2015.

Biodiversity is the diversity of life, the diversity of all the organisms that occur on Earth – everything from birds to bugs to mammals to trees to reptiles to lichens to fish to mosses to amphibians to algae and everything in between! The term biodiversity includes genetic diversity i.e. the differences within species e.g. the differences from one person to the next.

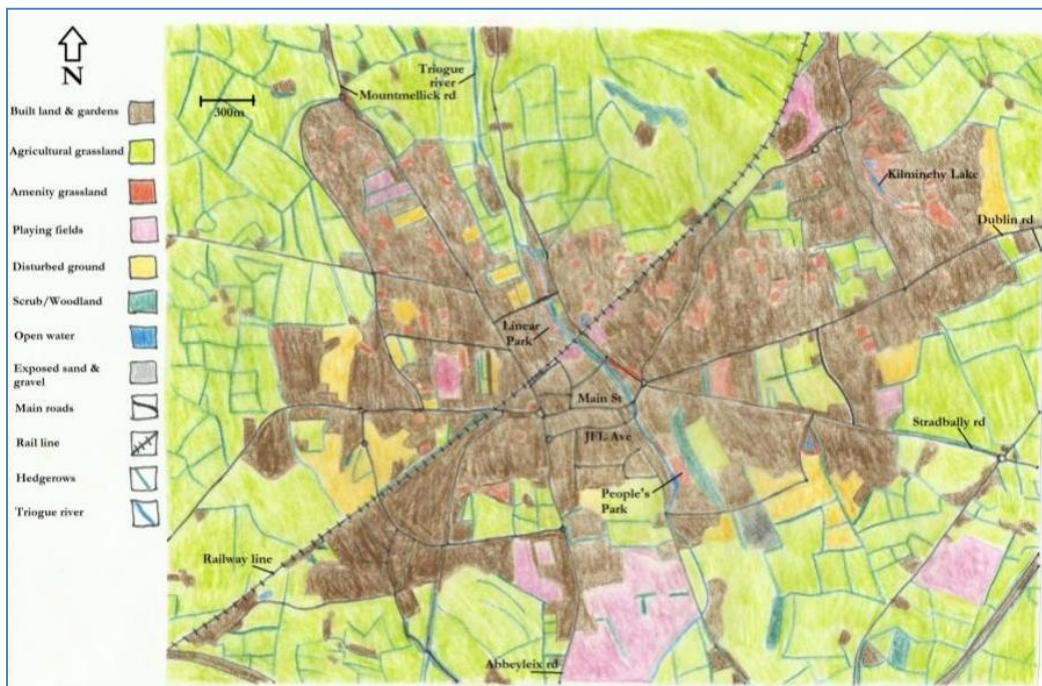


Figure 26: Portlaoise Habitat Map (Biodiversity Plan)

Humans are an integral part of the Biodiversity of Earth and our actions can affect it in both a positive and negative way. Ecology deals with the inter-relations between organisms and the places in which they live. This can refer to human beings' dealings and interactions with both the habitats and species around them. A habitat is the type of area where an organism or a number of organisms are at home.

There is potential to conserve and enhance biodiversity in Portlaoise through the Planning system. Individual planning applications can provide or retain hedgerows, landscaped areas, retention or planting of trees and preservation of trees etc.

Natural Heritage: Strategic Aim:

To protect, enhance, create and connect natural heritage, green spaces and high quality amenity areas throughout Portlaoise for biodiversity and recreation.

Objectives: It is the Objective of the Council to:

- NH O1:** Identify, protect and conserve natural heritage sites, nationally designated conservation sites and non designated sites in co-operation and consultation with the relevant statutory authorities;
- NH O2:** Seek integration of all elements of existing green infrastructure into new developments, prevent fragmentation and mitigate potential impacts on the existing green infrastructure network;
- NH O3:** Require the preservation and maintenance of suitable mature trees, hedgerows and natural heritage features in new developments;
- NH O4:** Seek to preserve, protect and maintain trees of special amenity, conservation or landscape value;
- NH O5:** Carry out and require the planting of native trees, hedgerows and vegetation in all new developments;
- NH O6:** Open up visual and physical access via the River Triogue from People's Park as a continuous pedestrian and cycle link through the town centre, and potentially through the Convent Lands having regard to ecological considerations including protected species and habitats;
- NH O7:** Reconnect the Triogue Linear Park with the residential areas to the north of the Town Centre;
- NH O8:** Identify, protect, conserve and enhance wherever possible, wildlife habitats, stepping

stones, corridors and features;

NH O9: Provide recreational amenities such as playgrounds and outdoor gym equipment within existing areas of open space;

NH O10: Protect environmental quality and implement site appropriate mitigation measures with respect to air quality, greenhouse gases, climate change, light pollution, noise pollution and waste management;

NH O11: Maintain riverbank vegetation along watercourses and ensure protection of a 20m riparian buffer zone on Greenfield sites and maintain free from development;

NH O12: Facilitate the work of agencies redressing the issue of terrestrial and aquatic invasive species.

Policies: It is a Policy of the Council to:

NH P1: Ensure heritage assets that are the focus for tourism development are appropriately managed and their special interest conserved from potential adverse effects from visitors or development in general and that best practice standards in relation for the environmental management of tourism enterprises are adhered to;

NH P2: Develop a greenway/blueway walking and cycling route along the River Triogue;

NH P3: Support and promote, with the co-operation of landowners, public access to heritage sites and features at appropriate locations whilst ensuring heritage related development does not result in negative impacts on the fabric or setting of the town's heritage assets;

NH P5: Support the implementation of Ireland's Ancient East by facilitating the provision of visitor information— in line with the policies and objectives with respect to heritage sites; and integrating the objectives of Ireland's Ancient East with transport programmes in the County;

NH P5: Protect environmental quality in Portlaoise through the implementation of European, National and Regional policy and legislation relating to air quality, greenhouse gases, climate change, light pollution, noise pollution and waste management.

17 FLOOD MANAGEMENT



Flooding is a natural process that can happen at any time in a wide variety of locations and the severity of which is set to increase due to climate change. Flooding from rivers and prolonged, intense and localised rainfall can also cause sewer flooding, overland flow and groundwater flooding. Flooding has significant impacts on human activities as it can threaten lives, livelihoods, housing, transport, and public service infrastructure and commercial/industrial enterprises. The impacts of flooding can be significant and wide reaching and include health, social, economic and environmental affects. Developments in inappropriate locations can exacerbate the problems of flooding by accelerating and increasing surface water run-off, altering watercourses and removing floodplain storage.

The **Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities** (2009), Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has informed the preparation of the Draft LAP. There is a history of flooding of the Rivers Triogue and Boghlonge in Portlaoise. The Council will strive to ensure that proper flood risk identification, assessment and management avoidance are integrated with the planning system to safeguard and provide for the future sustainable development of the town.

The Barrow Drainage Board was dissolved in 2014. The Board comprised the Local Authorities of Laois, Kildare and Offaly and was responsible for maintaining the Barrow and its tributaries from its source in the Slieve Bloom mountains to the Horse Bridge in Athy. The responsibilities of the Board were subsumed into the County Councils.

The **Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management** (CFRAM) programme is a medium to long term strategy for the reduction and management of flood risk in Ireland covering seven river basin districts in Ireland. Portlaoise and its environs lie within the South Eastern River Basin District and were identified as an “Area for Further Assessment” (AFA) through CFRAM. A Hydraulics Report and Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) mapping has been completed as part of the CFRAM study which provides the complete assessment of flood risk in the town.

To comply with the EU Floods Directive and in line with the guidelines for Planning Authorities, an assessment of flood risk has been formally taken into account in the preparation of this plan. The objective of ‘*The Planning System and Flood Risk Management*’ guidelines is to integrate flood risk management into the planning process, thereby assisting in the delivery of sustainable development. For this to be achieved, flood risk must be assessed as early as possible in the planning process.

The guidelines states that the core objectives are to:

- Avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding;
- Avoid new developments increasing flood risk elsewhere, including that which may arise from surface run-off;
- Ensure effective management of residual risks for development permitted in floodplains;
- Avoid unnecessary restriction of national, regional or local economic and social growth;
- Improve the understanding of flood risk among relevant stakeholders; and
- Ensure that the requirements of EU and national law in relation to the natural environment and nature conservation are complied with at all stages of flood risk management.

This draft LAP has been crafted to ensure that (a) flood risk is avoided where possible, (b) where avoidance is not possible, less vulnerable uses have been substituted for more vulnerable ones, (c) risk is mitigated and managed where avoidance and substitution are not possible.

The Draft LAP avoids development in areas at risk of flooding and has substituted vulnerable land uses with less vulnerable uses where this is not possible. Where neither is possible, mitigation and management of risks must be proposed. Justification tests were carried out on a number of sites and are detailed in the SFRA report accompanying this Plan. The SFRA has recommended that development proposals for a number of areas within the plan boundary should be the subject of site-specific flood risk assessment appropriate to the nature and scale of the development being proposed.

Flood Management: Strategic Aim:

To manage flood risk in Portlaoise

Objectives: It is an Objective of the Council to:

FM O1: Manage flood risk in accordance with the requirements of The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DECLG and OPW (2009) and Circular PL02/2014 (August 2014);

FM O2: Support and co-operate with the OPW in delivering the South Eastern CFRAM Programme.

Policies: It is the Policy of the Council to:

FM P1: Comply with DoEHLG Guidelines *“The Planning System and Flood Risk Management*

– *Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)*” and any future Guidelines in relation to flood risk;

- FM P2:** Ensure development proposals within the areas outlined on Flood Risk Map are the subject of Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment as outlined in “The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines” 2009;
- FM P3:** Ensure all development on lands identified as being at risk of flooding must demonstrate, through the carrying out of a Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment flood impact assessment and the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, that any flood risk can be adequately managed and the use or development of the lands will not cause unacceptable adverse impacts elsewhere;
- FM P4:** Co-operate with the OPW in relation to the development of the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment (CFRAM) South Eastern River Basin and for the River Triogue and its tributaries in particular and to comply with any guidance and recommendations of this flood risk management plan;
- FM P5:** Incorporate the recommendations of the South Eastern CFRAM into any site specific flood risk assessment undertaken for individual sites/areas;
- FM P6:** Provide an appropriate set back from the edge of the watercourse and proposed developments to allow access for channel clearing/maintenance;
- FM P7:** Adhere to the requirements of the Inland Fisheries and National Parks and Wildlife Service in the construction of any flood alleviation measures;
- FM P8:** Comply with relevant provisions of the Arterial Drainage Act, 1945 and the Arterial Drainage (Amendment) Act 1995.

18 IMPLEMENTATION

This Draft LAP outlines specific policies and objectives for the development of Portlaoise. The overarching policies and objectives of the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023 also apply.

The applicable Development Management Standards are set out under Section 8 of the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023. All proposed developments will be screened on a case by case basis for Environmental Impact Assessment, Appropriate Assessment and Flood Risk Assessment.

18.1 LAND USE ZONING

The purpose of zoning is to indicate to property owners and the general public the types of development which the Planning Authority considers most appropriate in each land use category. Zoning is designed to reduce conflicting uses within areas, to protect resources and, in association with phasing, to ensure that land suitable for development is used to the best advantage of the community as a whole.

The Land Use Zoning Map shows the land use zoning objectives for Portlaoise. The Land Use Zoning Map should be read in conjunction with the Land Use Zoning Objectives and Land Use Zoning Matrix set out below.

Land Use Zoning	Objective & Purpose
Town Centre (Primary / Core Retail Area) Tier 1 lands	<p>Objective: <i>To protect and enhance the special physical and social character of the existing Town Centre and to provide for and improve retailing and commercial activities.</i></p> <p>Purpose: To enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre through the promotion of retail, residential, commercial, office, cultural, public facilities and other uses appropriate in the urban core.</p> <p>To prioritise the development of town centre lands in order to consolidate the development of the town.</p> <p>To encourage the use of buildings and backlands, in particular the full use of upper floors, preferably for residential purposes.</p>

<p>Mixed Use- General Development</p>	<p>Objective: <i>To provide for commercial activities including retail warehousing in accordance with the County Retail Strategy.</i></p> <p>Purpose: To facilitate retail warehousing, defined as large stores specialising in the sale of bulky household goods such as carpets, furniture, electrical goods and bulky DIY items, which generally, cannot be located in the town centre due to their requirements for space and parking facilities. Retail warehousing will be permitted in principle, subject to appropriate scale and nature, provided that such development does not detract from the town centre’s retail function and is in accordance with the County Retail Strategy.</p>
<p>Residential 1 Existing Residential</p>	<p>Objective: <i>To protect and improve the amenity of developed residential communities.</i></p> <p>Purpose: This zone is intended primarily for established housing development. It is an objective on land zoned for Residential 1 to protect established residential amenity and enhance the quality with associated open space, community uses and where an acceptable standard of amenity can be maintained, a limited range of other uses that support the overall residential function of the area, such as schools, crèches, small shops, doctor’s surgeries, playing fields etc.</p>
<p>Residential 2 – New Proposed Residential</p>	<p>Objective: <i>To provide for new residential development, residential services and community facilities.</i></p> <p>Purpose: This zone is intended primarily for housing development but may include a range of other uses particularly those that have the potential to facilitate the development of new residential communities such as open space, schools, crèches, small shops, doctor’s surgeries, playing fields etc.</p> <p>The improved quality of residential areas and the servicing of orderly development will be priority. New housing and infill</p>

	<p>developments should be of sensitive design, which are complimentary to their surroundings and do not adversely impact on the amenity of adjoining residents. No piecemeal development can take place unless it does not conflict with the possible future development of the reserved development areas of the town.</p>
<p>Strategic Residential Reserve</p>	<p>Objective: <i>To provide lands for future development in line with national and regional targets.</i></p> <p>Purpose: The inclusion of such lands will not in any way infer a prior commitment on the part of Laois County Council regarding their future zoning during the review of the subsequent development plan for the plan period 2024-2030. Such a decision will be considered within the framework of national and regional population targets applicable at that time and the proper planning and sustainable development of the County.</p>
<p>Community, Educational & Institutional Services/Facilities</p>	<p>Objective: <i>To protect and provide for local neighbourhood, community, ecclesiastical, recreational and educational facilities.</i></p> <p>Purpose: To protect and improve existing community, educational and institutional facilities and to safeguard their future provision. The land use will provide for local civic, religious, community, educational and other facilities ancillary to neighbourhood uses and services.</p>
<p>Open Space & Amenity</p>	<p>Objective: <i>To preserve, provide for and improve active and passive recreational open space.</i></p> <p>Purpose: The Council will not normally permit development that would result in a loss of open space.</p>
<p>Industrial & Warehousing</p>	<p>Objective: <i>To provide for and improve industrial and warehousing</i></p>

	<p><i>development.</i></p> <p>Purpose: To provide for industrial development, including heavy industry with environmental emissions, including noise and odour and with intensive or hazardous processing. To also provide for light industry, technology related office development and general office development that exceed 400 square metres.</p> <p>Other uses, ancillary or similar to industry and warehousing will be considered on the merits of each planning application and may be acceptable.</p> <p>Where employment is a high generator of traffic, the location of new employment at appropriate scale, density, type and location will be encouraged to reduce the demand for travel. The layout of new employment sites shall have regard to alternative sustainable modes of transport. Any proposed site layout should emphasize the necessary connections to the wider local and strategic public transport, walking and cycling networks. Residential or Retail uses (including retail warehousing) will not be acceptable in this zone.</p> <p>Where any industrial and warehousing land adjoins other land uses, a landscaped buffer zone will be required.</p>
<p>General Business</p>	<p>Objective: <i>To provide for and improve commercial activities.</i></p> <p>Purpose: To provide for commercial activities and acknowledge existing/permitted retailing. This zoning may also be suitable for uses such as institutional/ educational subject to compliance with all relevant planning criteria. Any specific development proposal must have due regard to the location of the site within the wider town context and be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.</p>
<p>Neighbourhood Centres</p>	<p>Objective: <i>To serve the needs of new/existing residential areas.</i></p> <p>Purpose: Neighbourhood Centres are intended to serve the immediate needs of the local working and residential population and complement,</p>

	<p>rather than compete with the established town centre. A mix of appropriate retail, community and recreational development will be permitted. Only limited residential development will be considered in new developments sufficient to ensure the satisfactory working of the neighbourhood centre.</p> <p>The retail element will be controlled so as not to negatively impact on the existing town centre. The largest size of a new convenience store shall be restricted to 300 sq.m in a Neighbourhood Centre.</p>
<p>Enterprise & Employment</p>	<p>Objective: <i>To provide for enterprise and employment activities.</i></p> <p>Purpose: To accommodate commercial and enterprise uses that are incapable of being situated in a town centre location, including low input and emission manufacturing, campus style offices, storage uses, wholesaling and distribution, commercial services with high space and parking requirements. Business Park type development shall be provided in high quality landscaped campus style environments, incorporating a range of amenities.</p> <p>The Togher National Enterprise Park has the potential to be a major boost to the economy of Portlaoise and to contribute to the growth of the County and the Region as a whole.</p> <p>The uses in this zone are likely to generate a considerable amount of traffic by both employees and service traffic. Sites should therefore have good vehicular and public transport access. The implementation of mobility management plans will be required to provide important means of managing accessibility to these sites.</p>
<p>Transport & Utilities</p>	<p>Objective: <i>To provide for the needs of all transport users and other utility providers.</i></p> <p>Purpose: Car parks and commercial development associated with the provision of public transport services are considered appropriate in this zoning. This zoning also provides for and preserves land for the provision of services such as electricity, telecommunications, water, wastewater etc. to the town.</p>

18.2 LAND USE ZONING MATRIX

There are ten different land use zones within the plan area of Portlaoise. The Zoning Matrix set out below provides an indication of the acceptability or otherwise of particular uses in the individual land use zones. The land use zoning matrix is intended to provide general guidance to potential developers and is not an exhaustive list. The reader is advised that an indication that a proposal is “*permitted in principle*” does not imply a grant of planning permission. In this regard, all planning applications for development will be assessed on their merits by the Planning Authority in accordance with the relevant Development Management Standards and Planning Guidelines.

Acceptability	
<p style="text-align: center;">Y</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Will Normally Be Acceptable</p>	<p>A use which will normally be acceptable is one which the Local Authority accepts in principle in the relevant zone. However, it is still subject to the normal planning process including policies and objectives outlined in the Plan.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">O</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Open for Consideration</p>	<p>A use which is open for consideration means that the use is generally acceptable except where indicated otherwise and where specific considerations associated with a given proposal (i.e. scale) would be unacceptable, or where the development would be contrary to the objective for a given area. Not a Material Contravention.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">N</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Will Not Normally Be Acceptable</p>	<p>Development which is classified as not normally being acceptable in a particular zone is one which will not be entertained by the Local Authority except in exceptional circumstances. This may be due to its perceived effect on existing and permitted uses, its incompatibility with the policies and objectives contained in this Plan or the fact that it may be inconsistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The expansion of established and approved uses not conforming to land use zoning objectives will be considered on their merits.</p>

Zoning	Town Centre	Existing Residential (R2)	New/ Proposed Residential (R1)	Community Services/ Facilities	Open Space & Amenity	General Industry & Warehousing	General Business	Neighbourhood Centres	Enterprise & Employment	Transport & Utilities
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Land Use	Acceptability of Land Use									
Apartment	Y	Y	Y	O	N	N	N	Y	N	N
Car Park	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Café	Y	O	O	N	N	O	Y	Y	Y	N
Cemetery	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	O
Cinema	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Community Hall	O	Y	Y	Y	N	N	O	Y	O	N
Craft Industry	Y	O	O	O	N	Y	O	O	Y	N
Crèche/ Playschool	Y	Y	Y	O	N	O	O	Y	O	N
Cultural Uses/ Library	Y	O	O	O	N	N	O	Y	O	O
Dancehall/Disco	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Dwelling	O	Y	Y	O	N	N	N	N	N	N
Funeral Home	O	N	N	O	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Garages, Panel Beating, Car Repairs	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	O	N
Garden Centre	O	N	N	N	N	N	O	N	O	N
General Public Administration	Y	N	N	O	N	N	Y	O	Y	O
Guest House/Hostel/Hotel	Y	O	O	O	N	N	O	N	O	N
Halting Site	N	O	O	O	N	N	N	N	N	N
Health Centre	Y	O	O	O	N	N	O	Y	O	N
Heavy Commercial Vehicle Parks	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	O	N
Hot Food Takeaway	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N
Industry	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	O	N
Industry (Light)	O	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N
Medical and Related Consultants	Y	O	O	O	N	N	O	O	O	N
Motor Sales	O	N	N	N	N	N	O	N	Y	N
Nursing Home/ Sheltered Housing	O	O	O	O	N	O	N	N	N	N
Offices < 100 sq m	Y	O	O	O	N	Y	Y	O	Y	N

Offices > 100 sq m	Y	N	N	O	N	O	Y	O	Y	N
Park Playground	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	Y	O	Y	N
Petrol Station	Y	N	N	N	N	O	Y	N	O	N
Place of Worship	Y	O	O	Y	N	N	N	O	N	N
Playing Fields	N	Y	Y	O	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Public House	Y	N	N	N	N	N	O	O	N	N
Recreational Building (Commercial)	O	O	O	O	N	N	O	O	O	N
Recreational Building (Community)	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	N	O	Y	O	O
Restaurant	Y	O	O	O	N	O	O	Y	O	N
Retail Warehouse	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	O	N
School/Educational Facilities	Y	O	O	O	N	N	Y	O	N	N
Scrap Yard	N	N	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	N
Retail < 100sqm (Comparison)	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N
Retail > 100sqm (Comparison)	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N
Retail < 100 sq m (Convenience)	Y	O	O	N	N	N	Y	Y	O	N
Retail > 100 sq m (Convenience)	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N
Sport/Leisure Complex	Y	O	O	O	N	N	O	O	Y	N
Utility structures	Y	O	O	O	N	Y	O	O	Y	Y
Warehouse (Wholesale)	N	N	N	N	N	Y	O	N	Y	N
Workshops	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N