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Development Plans

Guidelines for Planning Authorities

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Minister's Foreword

I welcome the publication of these draft Guidelines, which will greatly assist planning authorities in the preparation of city and county development plans. In particular, they will provide help and guidance in incorporating the wide range of legislative and policy requirements that are relevant to the development plan review and variation processes.

Since the previous version of these Guidelines was published in 2007, there have been many significant changes to our planning system. We now have a National Planning Framework which sets out the overall 'big picture' strategic objectives for our planning system to deliver. These objectives have been incorporated into Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies for each of our three Regional Assembly areas, operating at the regional tier of our planning system and in turn, are being applied in more detail at a local level by each of the thirty-one planning authorities.

The Office of the Planning Regulator has also been established to oversee the plan-making process and ensure that there is policy consistency across the system. These draft Guidelines will assist in coordinating the approach taken by the planning authorities and the Office of the Planning Regulator, to ensure that there is a strong link between national, regional and local planning policies. The purpose of this is to secure the best possible outcomes for our citizens and our Country as a whole, by having integrated planning objectives that can be matched by investment and lead to decision-making that delivers the right development in the right place at the right time.

The preparation of a development plan is a significant function of local democracy, through which important choices about the future development of an area are decided and detailed by local communities and their elected city or county councillors. These draft Guidelines will support robust and accountable plan-making process that are accessible and transparent, and that enjoy the full confidence of citizens and other stakeholders.

I am confident that these draft Guidelines will assist in improving the quality of our development plans and indeed the wider planning and development of our communities, resulting in places to live, work and visit that we can all be proud of. They are being issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 and it is my expectation that they will be finalised later this year, after a period stakeholder consultation.

Thank you.

Mr. Peter Burke T.D.
Minister of State with responsibility for Local Government and Planning

1 Purpose of the Development Plan

1. Purpose of the Development Plan

1.1 The Purpose of the Development Plan in the Planning System

Within the Irish planning system, the county or city development plan is the principal planning strategy document for the development of a local authority area over the six year statutory time period of the plan. The development plan gives spatial expression to the physical, economic, social and environmental needs of the community, in order to support and regulate new development, enhance valued assets and amenities and protect the environment.

Section 10(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended (the Planning Act) states that:

"A development plan shall set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area of the development plan and shall consist of a written statement and a plan or plans indicating the development objectives for the area in question."

Further to this, the key role of the development plan can be summarised as:

1.2 The Changing Context for Plan-making

The plan-making function of a planning authority now operates in a changing policy, institutional and regulatory framework which reflects the continually evolving nature of public administration and governance, the planning system and society in Ireland. These changes continue to have an important impact on the preparation, adoption and implementation processes for the development plan. Some of the key contextual changes since the Development Plans Guidelines were first issued in 2007 include:

Change in Administration and Governance Structures

- Reforms to Local Government in 2014, including the amalgamation of town councils into county structures and their overall consolidation into 31 local authorities nationally, which have facilitated the integration of local government functions and services;
- Establishment of 3 regional assemblies in 2014 as the intermediate planning tier between national and local governmental, with statutory spatial and economic planning responsibilities;
- Establishment of the National Transport Authority (NTA) in 2009, Irish Water (IW) in 2013 and the Land Development Agency (LDA) in 2018;
- Establishment in 2019 of the independent Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR), to evaluate each county and city development plan at plan preparation stage. This is to ensure alignment with proper planning and sustainable development and related national and regional policies and objectives and to ensure consistency within the plan hierarchy;
- The decision, further to local plebiscite, to establish a Directly Elected Mayor (DEM), for Limerick City and County, with the DEM to have a lead role in the preparation and presentation of the county development plan.

Structural Change in the Plan Hierarchy

- Introduction of Core Strategy planning legislation in 2010, to require the provision of a coherent strategic policy direction within a development plan that must have internal and external policy consistency;
- Adoption of a National Planning Framework (NPF) on a statutory basis in 2018, setting out national planning objectives and outcomes to 2040, underpinned by ongoing alignment with public capital investment through the National Development Plan (NDP);
- Development and adoption by 2020 of three statutory Regional Spatial & Economic Strategies (RSESs) to provide the regional expression of national planning policy and set strategic policy requirements for city and county development plans;
- Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) for each of the five cities in Ireland, embedded in the three RSES;
- Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies (MATS) prepared by the National Transport Authority (NTA), for each of the five cities in Ireland;
- The introduction of Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) in 2014 to set out high-level economic and community goals and objectives to coordinate the economic and social development functions of each local authority;
- Putting in place by 2020, a clear hierarchy of statutory plans - from the NPF at the national level, to the 3 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs) at the regional level, 31 individual city and county development plans at planning authority level and a larger number of more detailed local area plans.

Regulatory and Legislative Change in the Planning System

- Further to structural changes described above, legislative changes to amalgamate previous county and town development plans and produce a single development plan to cover the entire administrative area of the local authority in each case;
- Publication of a range of new and updated statutory planning guidelines issued under Section 28 of the Planning Act, addressing matters such as Flood Risk Management, Sustainable Residential Development (both 2009), Retail Development (2012), Local Area Plans (2013),

Apartments (2015-20) and Building Height (2018);

- Section 28 planning guidelines that set out a Housing Supply Target (HST) methodology for planning authorities, that are directly relevant to development plan preparation, were issued in 2020;
- The introduction from 2017 for a temporary period to 2022, 'Strategic Housing Development' (SHD) legislative provisions that enable large scale residential development proposals to be determined by An Bord Pleanála in the first instance;
- Further obligations arising from the transposition of the EU Habitats Directive, including the application of appropriate assessment to the planning process;
- Further EU Legislative developments including the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive mandating the creation of a National Marine Planning Framework and associated regulatory system, and the Water Framework Directive.

Broader Societal Change

- Ongoing demographic change, with an estimated 15%, or 650,000 person increase in Ireland's population between 2007 and 2021, to 5 million people;
- A need to plan for a projected continuation of population growth at a similar, rate of increase, to include additional housing, employment, infrastructure and amenities;
- An increasingly older population, with the proportion of people aged over 65 set to rise markedly, as this did not change significantly between 2007 and 2021;
- Enhanced governmental and legislative commitment to addressing climate change as a key national strategic priority, targeting emissions reductions to achieve net zero carbon by 2050;
- Rapidly evolving digitalisation, including improved systems to assemble, evaluate and monitor change nationally, including the social, economic and environmental impacts and outcomes of physical development;
- Increased expectations regarding the quality and frequency of information provided through multiple dissemination channels.

These significant changes combine to result in a transformed political, administrative, legislative and societal contexts within which planning authorities must produce a statutory development plan. Given that development plans are produced only every six years, there is a need for a fundamentally different approach to the preparation and adoption of development plans to that which operated previously to reflect profoundly changed circumstances.

1.3 Balancing National Policy and Development Plan Formulation

A primary focus of the development plan is to ensure that the plan that is adopted has been informed by the relevant plans and strategies of the Government and other statutory public agencies, but has also been influenced by an understanding and analysis of the local context of the area for which it has been prepared. In this way, the development plan can be described as a process that seeks to combine the wider national or 'top-down' priorities with more locally generated 'bottom-up' approaches to policy development, in a structured manner.

A fundamental task at the heart of the development plan process is to achieve a critical balance between national and local priorities in the common good, and to formulate agreed objectives in compliance with national and regional policy, that are supported by the elected members and the wider community.

The National Planning Framework (NPF)

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is Ireland's long-term national-level planning strategy. The NPF sets out the overarching policy and planning framework for the social, economic and cultural development of the Country to 2040.

The NPF is based on projected national population growth of around 1 million additional people by 2040 and the related requirement for the provision of more than 550,000 new homes and 660,000 new jobs nationally over that time period. Balanced regional development, urban and rural growth, sustainable infrastructural investment, environmental resource management, decarbonisation and other key strategic policies are encapsulated by the 10 National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF.

The NPF strategy incorporates National Strategic Objectives of:

- Securing balanced regional development by **Growing Ireland's Three Regions** - Achieving balanced growth between the three regions, with the majority of the growth to be outside of Dublin and its suburbs.
- **Supporting the Capital** – in particular the future growth and success of Dublin as Ireland's leading global city of scale through addressing infrastructural bottlenecks, improving citizen's quality of life and increasing housing supply in the right locations.
- A critical challenge to driving regional growth and development is **Creating Cities of Scale** - Targeting the ambitious growth of Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford to 2040 and realise their significant potential to become regional drivers.
- The full extent of the NPF as a national strategy is to be achieved by **Supporting Rural Growth** - Reversing town/village and rural population decline, by encouraging new roles and functions for buildings, streets and sites. Managing housing needs arising in rural areas and promoting new economic opportunities.
- Irrespective of whether an urban or rural context, **Securing Compact and Sustainable Growth** - Tackling the damaging and inefficient pattern of urban sprawl through favouring compact forms of development that focus on consolidating the footprint of our existing settlements with new development.

Coastal planning authorities must also consider the policies and objectives of the National Marine Planning Framework 2021 as they apply to their coastline and seek to provide an integrated policy in the development plan at the important coastal interface between the terrestrial and marine planning systems.

Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies (RSESs)

As a core function of the three Regional Assembles, each must prepare a RSES that provides a more detailed regional application of overarching national policy and sets development priorities in population, settlement, economic, transport and other terms for their regional assembly area. The subsequent preparation of county and city development plans must be aligned with the RSES and ensure that the policies and objectives are consistent between the two.

The development plan provides the opportunity for the identified national and regional planning policy objectives to be considered in greater detail and applied at a local city or county level. It is the task of the development plan process to ensure that local context, circumstances and spatial variation are properly accommodated in the plan. For instance, utilising local knowledge and analysis to identify opportunities for town regeneration, employment growth and development of amenities are significant policy areas for 'bottom up' inputs to be captured in the plan process.

Climate Action

National government policy commits Ireland to the key strategic challenge of addressing harmful greenhouse gas emissions. There is now a strong statutory and institutional framework for climate action, setting out how Ireland intends to achieve its international and European commitments, and transition to a low-carbon society. The National Climate Action Plan and local authority climate actions plans will become increasingly important statutory considerations in the preparation of development plans.

The Climate Action Charter, signed in October 2019 on behalf of all 31 local authorities, includes a commitment for the local authorities to;

> 'exercise our planning and regulatory roles to help improve climate outcomes in the wider community and beyond the public sector, by developing and implementing robust evidenced based policy and standards on climate action, through appropriate and relevant adaptation and mitigation measures'.

The development plan has a key role in climate action through its capacity to promote sustainable settlement and transport-led development strategies in urban and rural areas, in particular in relation to the location, layout and design of development. The pattern whereby development in Ireland is generally located at the edges of cities and towns, primarily on greenfield sites which are difficult to provide with an effective public transport network, has resulted in very high levels of car dependence and infrastructure and service deficiencies. This dispersed pattern, that extends the physical footprint of settlements to accommodate the car, works against creating high quality places and has resulted in a significantly higher carbon footprint than the EU average, in part due to higher transport and energy demand, mostly based on fossil fuels.

A renewed focus on more sustainable growth through compact urban and rural settlements, supported by accessibility to transport, jobs, services and amenities is key to reducing greenhouse emissions, inefficient land and natural resource consumption and environmental degradation. The NPF includes targets for housing growth within existing settlements in order to support this shift in the pattern of development. The translation of this compact growth agenda into the development plan is a key task for development plan preparation.

The development plan also has a key role in support of other aspects of climate action. Transition to a low carbon economy requires a shift from predominantly fossil fuels to predominantly renewable energy sources. Accordingly, there is a need to address the spatial development of technologies such as wind, solar, hydro, ocean and bio energy projects, to make use of available resources and generate electricity in appropriate locations.

The role of sustainable transport modes is also a key aspect, to ensure the enhanced provision of high quality infrastructure for walking and cycling. Similarly, adaptation measures to deal the expected impacts of climate change, including flood risk management and coastal erosion are also critical considerations for the development plan.

1.4 The Legislative Basis for the Development Plan

The legislative basis for the preparation, adoption, variation and implementation of a development plan is set out in Part II, Chapter I (sections 9-17) of the Planning & Development Act, 2000 (as amended) - 'the Planning Act'. These provisions address content requirements and mandatory objectives, as well as procedural requirements and responsibilities, including timelines and public consultation procedures.

The legislative context for the development plan includes a number of distinct roles and critical considerations, that together, are greater than the sum of their individual parts, especially when those parts are viewed reductively, as individual, legal process requirements. The key challenge is to ensure that all are applied in concert to achieve a coherent and integrated outcome to the plan-making process for the whole planning authority area i.e., an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Role of the Council Executive/Directly Elected Mayor

From a strategic standpoint, it is the chief executive of the planning authority, together with his/her staff, who assists the elected members in preparing the development plan. The Council Executive advises on the fulfilment of statutory obligations, the content of the plan, conducts the various consultation exercises, reports in relation to submissions made and addresses inputs from the elected members. The Council Executive is responsible for the overall production and delivery of the development plan as a key statutory function.

A directly elected mayor for Limerick is being established by statute and the future mayor will have a direct role in the preparation of the development plan.

Elected Members as Decision-Makers

The adoption of the development plan is the responsibility of the elected members of the planning authority (county or city councillors) and is a reserved function under Section 12 of the Planning and Development Act. The mechanisms and timelines for elected members to engage formally in

the plan preparation process are also set out in the Act, including opportunities to propose and shape emerging plan policies. The decision-making role of the elected members and the stages of the process are addressed in detail in Chapters 2 and 3 of these guidelines.

In issuing strategic directions and making the development plan, the elected members of the planning authority are restricted to considering the proper planning and sustainable development of the area to which the plan relates, the statutory obligations of any local authority in the area and any relevant policies or objectives for the time being of the Government or any Minister of the Government

Ministerial Planning Guidelines

These guidelines and all other statutory planning guidelines issued by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage under Section 28 of the Planning Act are a material consideration in the development plan preparation process. In particular, th ese draft Development Plan guidelines replace the previous 2007 Development Plan Guidelines.

Planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála are required to have regard to guidelines issued under Section 28 of the Planning Act and are also required to apply any specific planning policy requirements (SPPRs) of guidelines, in carrying out their functions[1]. Accordingly, where SPPRs are stated in this or other statutory guidance documents, they take precedence over any conflicting policies and objectives of existing development plans.

Core Strategy

There have been frequent legislative amendments to the Part II, Section I of the Planning and Development Act. Of particular importance are the amendments made in 2010 that incorporated 'core strategy' requirements into the development plan process, to strengthen the overall development framework. The principal purpose of this amendment was to ensure consistency both within and external to the plan in relation to national and regional policy.

The core strategy preparation is now a key determining factor in the development plan preparation process. The coherence of the plan core strategy is highly indicative and the integrity and robustness of the plan and is addressed in detail in Chapter 4 of these guidelines.

Mandatory Objectives

The requirements of the Planning Act with regard to the content of development plans are set out in Section 10(1) specifying that the development plan shall consist of a written statement and a plan or plans indicating the development objectives for the area in question.

There are certain objectives that are mandatory in nature and must be included in the development plan. These mandatory objectives are concerned with the zoning of land, urban renewal, the provision of amenities, infrastructural services provision and climate change amongst others, as well as heritage, architectural and environmental protection. They are set out in Section 10(2)(a-p) of the Planning Act and are addressed in detail in subsequent chapters of these guidelines.

[1] S.28(1C) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended)

EU Directives

While spatial planning policy and legislation remains a national competence for each EU member state, there are a range of EU Directives that must be considered when formulating planning and land-use policies through the development plan preparation process.

EU Directives are normally translated into Irish law by means of statutory regulation, which set out any particular obligations on the planning system, including requirements to be integrated into the development plan. EU Directives that relate to the development plan include:

- Major Accidents ('Seveso') Directive 2012/18/EC
- Floods Directive 2007/60/EC
- Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC
- Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC
- Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive 91/271/EEC
- Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive 2001/42/EC

Many of the requirements of these Directives are incorporated into the mandatory objectives to be included in the development plan under Section 10 of the Act. However, it is the responsibility of planning authorities to ensure that the appropriate planning and land-use-related aspects of these Directives that interact with the development plan system are properly reflected in the plan preparation processes.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Further to Directive 2001/42/EC on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), an SEA is mandatory for plans that are prepared for 'town & country planning' and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in the EIA Directive. This clearly includes county and city development plans and the mandatory requirement for SEA of specific development plans is stated in the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No 436 of 2004), as amended.

There is an important obligation on the planning authority, as the 'competent authority' in preparing the development plan, to carry out an environmental assessment of the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan. An 'Environmental Report', which describes the likely significant effects on the environment as a result of the implementation of the development plan, must be made available alongside the draft development plan during the period of public consultation. After the development plan is adopted then an 'SEA Statement' is published which includes a description of how the SEA has informed the adopted version

The SEA process is one that parallels and informs the development plan preparation process and is an important tool in policy formulation. In this regard it is important that environmental considerations are integrated into the development plan preparation process from the early stages[2].

Habitats Directive Appropriate Assessment (AA)

Planning authorities have obligations under the Habitats Directive[3] and the undertaking of Appropriate Assessment as part of the development plan process including the publication of the Natura Impact Report in tandem with the draft Development Plan.[4] The earliest stages of preparing a development plan will include a consideration as to whether a full AA is required (referred to as 'AA Screening') and requires a determination as to whether there is a likelihood of significant effects on 'European Sites[5]'. Development plans that are deemed to pose such a likelihood of significant effects on European sites are required to undergo an AA. The results of the AA are published in a Natura Impact Report which must be made available alongside the draft development plan during the period of public consultation. Prior to the plan being adopted, a

[2] S.28 Planning Guidelines issued by the Minister on Strategic Environmental Assessment provide guidance to planning authorities in carrying out the SEA procedures in tandem with the development plan process.
[3] As implemented by Part XAB of the Planning Act.
[4] *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland, Guidance for Planning Authorities*, DEHLG, 2009.
[5] Sites designated under the EU Birds and/or Habitats Directives, as defined in the Planning Act.

determination must be made by the Planning Authority that the development plan will not result in any adverse effects on the integrity of any European site, either on its own or in combination with other plans and projects.

Planning authorities will also need to undertake appropriate exercises as part of their plan preparation process to fulfil their obligations under the Floods Directive and the Water Framework Directive.

Differentiation between the Development Plan and other Statutory Codes
The statutory elements and remit of the development plan are set out clearly in the Planning & Development Act. In preparing the development plan, planning authorities must exercise caution not to inappropriately stray into the operation of other statutory codes and regulatory regimes that relate to the development sector, but are outside the remit of a county or city development plan. This is applicable to policy or objectives for non-planning functions governed by other legislation and regulations.

In particular, there is a legal distinction between planning and the operation of Building Regulations under the Building Control Acts, such that development plans are not empowered to introduce new or bespoke localised standards for the construction of buildings that are governed by the Building Regulations at a national level.

Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR)
The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018 is the legislative basis for the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR - 'the Office') to evaluate and assess the development plans, including draft development plans and variations to development plans, during their preparation and making, in order to provide observations and recommendations to planning authorities on those plans.

The legislation also makes provision for the OPR to inform the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage where, in the opinion of the Office, a plan is not consistent with its observations and recommendations, especially where, it is the opinion of the Office that this would affect the overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area concerned.

1.5 The Development Plan and Investment

The development plan is now at the heart of a plan-led system whereby public capital investment programmes and priorities are aligned to support the adopted development strategy. This principle has been established through Project Ireland 2040 comprising both the National Planning Framework (NPF) as the State's national spatial development strategy and the National Development Plan (NDP) as the capital investment programme to support delivery at all levels of the planning hierarchy.

This alignment of spatial planning and capital investment is intended to ensure a coordinated approach to investment in public infrastructure in a way that tie in with national and local spatial priorities. The development plan must therefore reflect and respond to programmed significant national infrastructural investment by the State. For example, making provision for appropriate new development along a new transport corridor like an urban metro or a rural greenway. In tandem, the development plan should seek to influence infrastructural investment to support a well devised and coherent core strategy element such as an identified regeneration or enterprise area with capacity for significant future development is identified.

Planning authorities should approach the development plan with a clear focus on the delivery of expected development outcomes. Achieving desired outcomes will, in part, be determined by the programmed investment decisions of both the public and private sectors and this needs to be fully considered in the development plan process. For example, seeking to prioritise development at a location where there is an obvious deficit in services and/or infrastructure and without a clear commitment and timescale for resolution is unlikely to be appropriate. Spatial development priorities need to be realistically set out in the development plan and supported by a transparent evidence base.

This approach however, does not exclude strategies to prioritise sustainable development that requires new investment to ensure delivery. The development plan should seek to facilitate sustainable development objectives. For example, a residential or employment site that requires enabling water services or road infrastructure, located centrally within a settlement or adjoining a public transport node, thus supporting compact growth, sustainable transport and regeneration planning objectives, would be appropriate to prioritise for both planning and investment purposes.

1.6 Planning from an Evidence Base and Monitoring the Outcomes

The process of preparing a county or city development plan must be informed by local experience of planning over time. This means that the current plan-making exercise needs to be realistically informed by the delivery and outcome of previous plans and planning objectives for the area. It is also important to ensure that the impact of development plan policy and objectives can be measured and will be sufficiently tracked into the future to inform policy choices applicable to subsequent plans.

An approach that emphasises establishing a clear evidence base at the outset of the plan-making exercise is paramount – this must set out a robust and consistent process for a development plan that consists of:

1 A clear and transparent analysis of an existing baseline of plan-related information with a focus on an examination of the effectiveness of previous plans in achieving their stated objectives, including analysis of environmental monitoring data required under the SEA Directive;

2 The identification of strategic policy choices for the plan, followed by their consideration and the subsequent policy decisions;

3 The provision of defined indicators in the plan with an on-going programme of monitoring to measure the outcomes of the plan against its stated objectives.

In this way, the development plan and its implementation can be seen as a more dynamic and responsive process, whereby desired outcomes are a brought into sharp focus and progress towards their achievement can be properly examined and reported on in a manner that serves to inform future spatial decision-making.

This approach is underpinned by statutory requirements set out Section 15 of the Planning Act, which state that "It shall be the duty of a planning authority to take such steps within its powers as may be necessary for securing the objectives of the development plan". This Section of the legislation also includes an obligation on the chief executive of the planning authority (to be amended to also include a Directly Elected Mayor), to report to the members of the authority on the progress achieved in securing the objectives of the development plan.

1.7 Guiding Principles for Quality in Plan-making

While an individual county or city development plan will include development policy and objectives to reflect the particular nature of the subject local authority area, in preparing a development plan, there are certain underlying principles that should be observed and integrated into the preparation process that can promote the overall quality of the plan. Building on the function, context and legislative basis of the development plan as set out at in this Chapter, these ten guiding principles must be reflected in the plan preparation process:-

1) **A Vision for the Area** - the development plan affords an opportunity for the planning authority to strategically examine and consider the economic, social and environmental context of the area and to formulate policy objectives for future growth, renewal and protection. At the heart of a development plan should be a concise and accessible core development strategy to achieve quality planning outcomes and which enjoys broad community support.

2) **Stakeholder Engagement** - For a development plan to be effectively implemented, it needs to be formulated on the basis of strong engagement with the elected members of the local authority and also with diverse public and sectoral interests, from the outset. Purposeful engagement by all in the plan preparation process is essential to establishing the quality, relevance and robustness of the plan and its subsequent implementation.

3) **A Strategic, Balanced Approach** - The development plan has a relationship with multiple and complex public policy areas such as housing, climate change, employment and enterprise, transport, water services, social infrastructure, conservation, heritage and environmental protection. The wider national and regional policy context must therefore be assimilated into the local spatial framework of the development plan in a strategic and balanced manner. In seeking to address local considerations, the plan preparation process must formulate policy to achieve objectives without fundamentally departing from wider strategic public policy objectives.

4) **The Integration of Sustainable Development and Climate Change Priorities** - The development plan process must play a significant role in establishing more sustainable patterns of development which tackle the sources of climate change. The reduction in Ireland's carbon footprint, creation of less energy and travel-intensive formats of development, facilitation of energy generation from low carbon sources and the adaptation of communities to the effects of climate change are key strategic tasks that a development plan can seek to address.

5) **The Structured Management of Change** - Projected economic and population growth trends must be supported by significant new infrastructural development across all sectors. The development plan can ensure that new development is promoted and spatially structured to achieve a high standard of benefit to citizens and quality in design together with an enhanced sense of place, that is a key advantage in attracting talent and investment.

6) **Renewal: Regenerating Existing Communities and Places** - The development plan must focus on regeneration to a much greater extent than before in order to achieve more vibrant and sustainable urban and rural communities. As well as identifying opportunities for development that can give new purpose and function to existing places, sites and buildings, there is a need to address the evolving needs of communities, in response demographic change and digitalisation, but also to address the legacies of rapid overdevelopment in some instances, or decline or relative deprivation in others.

7) **Protection: Environmental and Heritage Assets** - The development plan must safeguard cherished and valued assets in the built and natural environment by setting out clear policies for their protection that are widely understood by all. Plan policies should provide for their long-term protection, rehabilitation, where necessary and sustainable use, where appropriate. This requires co-ordination with other development objectives, such as compact growth and urban or rural regeneration that can incorporate sufficient flexibility to enable consideration of development proposals with an overall sustainable outcome.

8) **Alignment of Place and Investment** - For planned development objectives to be realised, they need to be supported through public capital investment in infrastructure and services. The development plan is the key spatial framework in which local authority spatial development and investment priorities are identified and aligned.

9) **Delivery and Monitoring** - Plan objectives must be actively pursued by the local authority through all of its functions and resources, with a dedicated, permanent system of plan monitoring established to measure progress. This means that development plan policies and objectives must be measurable, with information on progress and outcomes available to inform subsequent plan formulation.

10) ***Clarity and Focus*** - The development plan written statement must be in plain English (and Gaeilge equivalent), and focus on planning matters relevant to the area of the plan that can principally be addressed within the six-year duration of the plan. It is unnecessary for development plan written statements to be excessively long, multi-volume documents comprising many hundreds of pages. There is no requirement to extensively reiterate national, regional and local policy, legislation or guidance documentation - background studies and reports, may be appended separately. It should be an overall aim to seek to focus and prioritise policies and objectives and where possible.

2 Plan Preparation

2. Plan Preparation

2.1 The Production of a Development Plan

The importance of the development plan and the influence it brings to bear on the work of the local authority as well as its significance for the communities to which it relates, must be reflected in a robust and structured approach to the review process.

Highlighting the relevance to the whole community and securing local support for the development plan are important goals of the plan preparation exercise. Ensuring buy-in to the plan preparation process by the elected members of the planning authority and the wider public can be achieved through effective stakeholder engagement via a variety of communication and participation mechanisms.

Elected members of the planning authority in their role as decision-makers at each stage of the plan review process, and the executive staff of the local authority in their plan preparation role, must work collaboratively to produce a quality plan that can most effectively support the delivery of desired outcomes for citizens.

Undertaking the production of a statutory development plan is a critical responsibility for all planning authorities and involves the allocation of significant resources and organisational commitment. The relevant provisions of the Planning Act provide a framework for making a development plan and this chapter provides guidance for completing the key stages of the plan preparation process.

2.1.1 Stewardship of the Review Process

The preparation of a new development plan is known as a 'review process'. This is because all local authorities have a development plan in place that must normally be reviewed every six years. The review process is required to formally commence no later than four years after adoption of the previous development plan and must normally be completed within two years thereafter. There are legislative provisions that allow for such longer periods as appropriate in certain circumstances. This is addressed in Section 12(14) of the Planning Act.

Throughout the two-year review period, the executive of the Council is tasked with the management of the entirety of the new development plan preparation and consultation process. With the range of associated work streams, reporting duties, consultation events and compliance checks in an increasingly complex legislative context, the role of the executive is multifaceted when reviewing a development plan. This serves to highlight the importance of adopting an 'All of Council' approach and the value of project management to deliver the new plan.

2.2 The Development Plan Team

Delivering a successful plan review will require the planning authority to adopt a multidisciplinary and collaborative approach from the outset. The level of data collection and analysis before, during and after the plan process will require the presence of a permanent plan preparation and review/policy function within the planning authority planning team, to collect and maintain key datasets for the purpose of plan-making, plan monitoring and plan review.

The review process will encompass many technical areas of work including a Housing Strategy, reviewing the Record of Protected Structures and all environmental assessments, where required. These technical elements of the plan review are relevant to the work of other many sections of the local authority. All of the complex and resource intensive tasks related to the review process must be accomplished within statutory timeframes. It is essential, therefore, to treat the overall process as a project that requires a robust project management methodology and structure.

Careful project management will be necessary to devise a broad timetable for the entire review programme that will encompass both the preparatory phase and statutory deadlines within the process. The overall timetable can then be sub-divided into a series of discrete tasks (data collection and analysis, public and external agency consultation, preparation of the draft text and maps etc.), each with their own timeframes.

The development plan team will need to reflect the range of skills and expertise required to deliver a successful plan review, which aside from generating technical material, will also require a range of enabling components, such as the procurement of services, communications and media, as well as corporate support to assist in enabling the elected members interact with the process at every stage.

Approximately one year ahead of the plan review commencing, a dedicated project manager, who in normal circumstances will typically be a Director of Services or the relevant Senior Planner, should be formally appointed to lead the development plan review. The position of the Project Manager should be such that they are empowered to allocate the necessary staff and other resources within the local authority to report to the elected members and to the management team, to liaise effectively with other sections of the Council and to lead engagement with external stakeholders.

At a minimum, the core Development Plan Team should comprise technical and administrative staff including:

- A Project Manager at Director of Services or Senior Planner level;
- At least one wholly dedicated Senior/Senior Executive Planner, who is not also fulfilling the Project Manager role;
- A sufficient number of other professional planners with a range of planning policy and development management experience;
- A dedicated GIS/Data/Analytics Resource;
- An administrative lead and associated team.

In addition, the core team should also have the following competencies and/or have staff resources from other sections of the local authority allocated, and/or external consultants (where considered necessary) procured, to lead and co-ordinate inputs in order to meet the requirements of the review in relevant areas such as:

- Conservation, heritage and/or landscape;
- Housing Strategy, including overall demand/supply and tenure;
- Climate adaptation and mitigation, which may include renewable energy;
- Enterprise and employment, including tourism;
- Retail, including non-city/town centre formats and the impacts of digitalisation;
- Community facilities and amenities, which includes leisure and recreation;
- City/town centre regeneration and urban design;
- Roads and transportation, which must include sustainable travel;
- Drainage and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA);
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA);
- Appropriate Assessment (Habitats Directive) (AA);
- Water Framework Directive Assessment (WFDA) ;
- Any other specialist technical assessments that may be required on an individual local authority basis, for example in relation to aviation, quarries, or 'Seveso' sites.

Capacity in respect of some of the above may be available within the development plan team or the wider planning section. In many other cases, inputs will be co-ordinated or provided by colleagues from the relevant section of the local authority. In all cases, resources and responsibility should be identified and agreed at the outset of the plan review process, within the planning department and at local authority management team level.

Where the necessary resource capacity or required skills are not available within the local authority, the use of consultants may be appropriate, although secondment or shared service arrangements may also be considered and are encouraged.

2.2.1 Cross-Authority Group

In addition to the core development plan team, an overall multidisciplinary team should be formed from senior officials from the various departments/sections of the local authority, for example housing, community, transport, environment and the Local Enterprise Office (LEO), to reflect the areas of responsibility detailed above. By assembling this collective expertise, the plan review process will benefit from a range of experience and knowledge as well as provide a forum for coordinated strategy development in response to issues and challenges that arise during the review process.

There is also scope for the Cross-Authority Group to form part of or align with the wider Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Steering Group for the purposes of SEA and Appropriate Assessment (AA).

The administrative oversight of the development plan review is critical, as every aspect of the process and the content of the material being produced by the planning authority is subject to prescribed legislative requirements and timelines, public decision making in a political forum and wider public scrutiny, with several opportunities for submissions to be made. Sufficient administrative capacity throughout the process, that is aligned and integrated with the technical team, is required to co-ordinate the range of interactions, inputs and outputs described above.

2.3 The Role of Elected Members

Each key stage of the plan review process is ratified by the elected members who, in their role as planning authority, have the primary statutory responsibility to make the development plan under Section 12 of the Planning Act. In this role, the members are central to the process, as both policy-makers and as decision-makers.

The range and detail of the material presented to councillors for their consideration can be highly technical and complex. All policy and decision-making must relate to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area to which the plan relates, and also the statutory obligations of any local authority and any relevant policies or objectives of the Government. Coupled with the role of representing the often diverse views of local communities, all of this makes the review process a challenging task.

It is therefore incumbent on the development plan team and the local authority executive, to ensure that clear information and regular updates are provided for councillors. Ongoing liaison and briefing is required at key stages of the process in order to support the central policy-making role of the elected members. Plan documentation must be supplied in a timely manner and in an easily digestible, user-friendly format.

In the same manner in which a cross-authority group is recommended at official level, a local authority development plan sub-committee may also be facilitated. The purpose of such a committee would be as an interface between the elected members and the council executive and development plan team. It would need to include representation from of all council political groupings and sub-areas, with a mandate from and clear lines of communication and dissemination to all elected members, in order to operate effectively.

Broader engagement with the elected members is required and will need to be planned and scheduled. This should utilise a combination of fora, including specific development plan plenary or area meetings, updates to regular scheduled meetings and more specific briefings, especially on specialist topics. Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) of the Council may also prove useful, particularly in contributing to relevant sectoral issues which may have already been discussed and considered by the SPCs, outside of the plan review term.

Specific plenary (or at the initial two stages only, area) meetings must be arranged at the following six stages. Additional briefings/workshops or updates to regular scheduled council meetings on a plenary or area basis may also assist the process:

1) Initial consultation and engagement with elected members in the period before the review process commences should facilitate discussion and debate of Working Papers and the Baseline Report, with an opportunity for elected members to discuss particular issues or policy areas for consideration in the Issues and Options Paper.

2) Delivery of a dedicated workshop or similar, involving elected members and local authority staff from each department at the outset of the plan review. A forum such as a workshop can provide the opportunity to present the technical working papers and the Baseline Report to elected members and other local authority staff as well as to consider the 'Issues and Options Paper' prior to finalisation.

3) Issuing of directions to the Chief Executive (to be amended to also include a Directly Elected Mayor - DEM) regarding the preparation of the draft development plan (S. 11(4)(d)). These directions must be strategic in nature, consistent with the draft core strategy as well as taking account of the statutory obligations of the Local Authority and any relevant policies or objectives of the Government or of any Minister of the Government. The Chief Executive (or subject to amendment, DEM) is obliged to comply with these directions, where valid. To ensure that the process is focused and strategic from the outset, only proposed directions that are appropriate to this stage of the process should be considered. It is recommended that the development plan team would be available to provide assistance to elected members in formulating the wording of directions to ensure that they are strategic and relevant to enable them to be considered as valid.

4) Consideration of the initial draft development plan as prepared by the Chief Executive (or subject to amendment, DEM), (S. 11(5)(b)) and amendments to the draft plan (S. 11(5)(c)). This is a critical opportunity for elected members to contribute to the content of the draft development plan, prior to public display of the draft. It is also the first time that land zonings may be considered in the review process. This stage may typically require a series of dedicated development plan plenary council meetings, with proposed amendments to the Chief Executive's initial draft plan made by way of motions from councillors.

5) Consideration of the Report of the Chief Executive on submissions received further to public display of the draft development plan (S. 12(5)) and associated environmental assessment documentation and the making of Material Amendments to the draft plan (S. 12(6)). This is the opportunity to make changes related to submissions made on the draft plan, which will be set out in the Chief Executive's Report and will include recommendations whether to include, or include subject to modifications, or not include, the content of the submissions. As above, this stage may typically require a series of dedicated development plan plenary council meetings.

6) Consideration of the Report of the Chief Executive on submissions received on the material alterations to the draft development plan (S. 12(9)). This is similar to the above stage of the process, but any further modifications must be minor in nature, and may not affect a European site, increase a land zoning or add/delete a protected structure. Irrespective of whether there are, or there are not modifications at this stage, this is the point at which the Council may decide to adopt, or 'make', the development plan.

2.4 Purposeful Public Consultation

The way in which information is exchanged and communicated has changed substantially since the Planning Act was introduced and it continues to change[6]. While the provisions of the legislation relating to notifications during each stage of the development plan preparation process focus on newspaper notices and written correspondence, it is clear that modern digital methods of communication also need to be embedded into the review process.

For many reasons, it can be a challenge at various stages of the plan review process to engage the public, but it is critical that broad public participation is targeted to the greatest possible extent, as all parts of the local authority's administrative area and all citizens will be covered by the new development plan.

With up to three public consultation stages in the plan review process at pre-draft, draft and material amendments stage, the public consultation sessions will differ in length, nature and purpose at each stage. Well-considered and presented consultation material is essential to generate interest and engagement.

The success of public engagement should not be measured by the number of submissions received, particularly as a consultation phase can often be dominated by a single issue that generates significant public interest.

While the pre-draft consultation phase offers the opportunity for debate and discussion of big-picture, strategic themes, it is important to inform people of the wider context in which the development plan sits. National and regional plans, strategies and policies will, to some degree, exert an influence on the direction that development plan policy will take and it is an important part of the review process, particularly at pre-draft stage, to make this as clear as possible and to manage expectations around what a development plan can deliver.

- It is recommended that planning authorities explore innovative and creative ways of engaging with sectors of society who may not readily participate in the planning process. This includes children and younger people, particularly in light of the requirement that specifically entitles children, or groups or associations representing the interests of children, to make submissions or observations on plans. Working with libraries, or a representative sample of schools in an area may provide a useful pathway for engagement;
- The Public Participation Network (PPN) of the Local Authority is also a key resource in identifying stakeholders and groups who may have particular sectoral or thematic interests in the plan-making process. The development plan team should engage with the Community and Voluntary Forum within the Local Authority to consider what range of established networks can be readily accessed to consult with the public. Although targeting those who have already engaged in a planning process, at the outset of the plan review it would be of benefit to inform those who have made submissions in respect of recent planning processes during the life of the plan that is now subject to review, such as local area plans or part 8 proposals. This may be particularly appropriate where it is considered that previous submissions related to planning matters wider than the scope of an individual Local Area Plan or Part 8 proposal.
- Given the importance of social media, it is necessary to employ and manage social media to share information and updates on the plan review.

[6] The Planning and Development, and Residential Tenancies Act, 2020 provides for a public or online meeting to be held at the initial strategic consultation stage

2.4.1 Communications Approach

To further support the basic legislative requirements and to reflect more modern means of communication, it is recommended that a communications strategy/approach is agreed within the local authority before the review commences, that considers the following:

- Obligations set out in legislation;
- Interaction with the public;
- Advertising approach;
- Interaction with the media (tv, newspaper, radio).
- Accessible formats;
- Online presence and interaction;
- Management of Social Media;
- Translation;
- Environmental footprint.

A well thought-out communications approach to a development plan preparation process will ensure transparency, raise wider awareness and generate discussion and debate of the relevant issues. The range and variety of consultation methods employed by each Local Authority to engage with the public will require the allocation of supporting resources, particularly at stages 1 and 2 of the plan-making process where statutory administrative and technical tasks must be prioritised.

A good example of this is where a local authority has the capacity to formally launch the review of a plan to enhance media coverage and generate additional interest, supported by the wider corporate policy team[7]. There are other measures that can work well to increase awareness including the production of an electronic or written newsletter that may be issued periodically to provide an update on the review.

The planning authority will be reliant on Corporate Services and ICT departments of the local authority to devise the strategy as well as to deliver it. The overall objective is to ensure that information on the development plan is up-to-date, readily available and can be easily accessed by members of the public throughout the review process.

[7] https://clarechampion.ie/ennis-plan-maps-opportunities-for-the-future/
https://www.echo.ie/tallaght/article/an-opportunity-to-shape-south-county-s-future

2.4.2 Online Presence

An online presence of the development plan preparation process can often be the single most accessible way to retrieve information about the review from one place. Having the development plan review available to view online from the outset of the process is important as it allows access to information and updates as well as participation in the process. Local authorities can consider how best to develop an online presence either through the home website of the Council or through a dedicated separate website.

A dedicated online portal for the development plan review can provide a useful interface for accessing and updating information as well as interacting with the different stages of the plan review process, including the viewing of and making of submissions online. Accepting, recording, storing and responding to online submissions requires careful consideration and must be supported by ICT technical expertise.

In addition to the core material of the review being available to access online, the promotion and awareness raising associated with a review process can be further supported through social media presence. Again, local authorities can consider using existing social media accounts to share information. The production of audio-visual material such as videos may prove a useful aid to assist in summarising the issues for consideration during stage 2, setting out the main points of what the draft plan includes at stage 3 and/or advising on how to engage in the submissions process as part of public consultation.

The use of online and social media platforms does not alone replace or substitute the provisions of the Planning Act in relation to notifications and issuing of plan documentation material. It is the case that the option of on-line public consultation is now provided for at the initial pre-draft consultation stage at the outset of the process, but it is recommended that in normal circumstances, at least one or more public meetings also be held to facilitate the greatest possible level of participation. The extent to which this may be necessary should be considered in consultation with the elected members and form part of the public consultation strategy.

Once the development plan is adopted, it should continue to have a dedicated online presence where information can be supplied and updated, such as any variations to the plan and the monitoring and evaluation processes.

In relation to data protection as it applies to each of the public consultation stages, each local authority should be aware of their obligations under the Data Protection Acts 1988 -2018 (as amended) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). As required under Article 13 GDPR, local authorities should ensure that they inform individuals about the processing of personal data at each consultation stage. This could be done through a Privacy Statement that is provided to anyone making submissions or observations as part of the Development Plan review process. More information on the requirement to provide transparent information when processing personal data can be found on the website of the Data Protection Commission.

Further information on ways to engage with the public in the review process is available from the Office of the Planning Regulator entitled 'Increasing Public Engagement in Local Authority Development Plans – A Communications Toolkit'.

2.5 Stakeholder Engagement

It is important that the development plan is considered with due regard to the policies and programmes of government departments and agencies, including in particular investment programmes.

It is the responsibility of the planning authority to ensure national policy and programmes are fully considered, including through direct engagement with the relevant stakeholders at an early stage in the process. Consultation with key stakeholders should be arranged during the Preliminary Stage (Stage 1 below), before formally inviting submissions at Pre-Draft Stage (Stage 2, also below).

In line with Section 11(3) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 the planning authority shall consult with the providers of energy, telecommunications, transport, other relevant infrastructure as well as providers of education, health, policing and other services. Whilst many of the providers are listed as prescribed bodies, the Planning Authority shall also undertake additional engagement to further discuss how best to reflect sectoral priorities as they apply to the Planning Authority's administrative area.

For example, relevant transport elements of the development plan should be considered in consultation with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) stakeholders in order to develop a clear understanding of the strategic development options for transport/access and movement that are available at the outset of the process.

Water Services Infrastructure

A key task in preparing development plans is ascertaining the position w ith regard to water services provision. Engagement between Irish Water and planning authorities throughout the process of preparing development plans is therefore critically important. Plans set the context for local planning decisions, the phasing of development and the servicing needs of an area and as such, should be informed by up-to-date information and the views of Irish Water at each stage of the plan review process.

The planning authority must therefore engage with Irish Water prior to the formal review process commencing i.e. during Stage 1, before the publication of the public notice. A '*S tatement of Capacity*' will be provided by Irish Water for each individual local authority containing the broad strategic water and waste water capacities present (both at county and at settlement level) and the relevant infrastructural investments programmed by Irish Water in its Investment Plan.

The 'Statement of Capacity' issued by Irish Water at Preliminary Stage shall include the following information:

- Wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) treatment capacity available at settlement level – relative to current demand;
- Water supply treatment capacity available at Water Resource Zone/Water Supply zone level and the settlements that are served - relevant to current demand;
- Major known constraints in relation to networks in key settlements;
- Spatial extent of current networks captured in IW GIS (in agreed format/extent);
- Indication of general areas of the settlement which would be challenging to service within the life of the plan based on current assets (focusing mainly on urban areas);
- Planned upgrades of treatment capacity or major network constraints with available time lines indicated – from current Capital Investment Plan.

Irish Water statutory commentary at Pre-Draft, Draft and Proposed Alteration Plan Stages shall appropriately include:

- Confirmation of WWTP Treatment capacity available at settlement level – relative to current demand and planned core strategy;
- Confirmation of Water Supply treatment capacity available at Water Resource Zone/Water Supply zone level and the settlements that are served - relevant to current demand and planned core strategy;

- Major known network constraints in key settlements;
- Planned upgrades of treatment capacity, major network constraints and planned network extensions with timelines indicated – from current Capital Investment Plan/programmes;
- High-level review of zoning proposals in settlements including availability of network in proposed zoned areas, indication of areas of the settlement that may be challenging to serve within the life of the plan.

2.5.1 Provision for Education

In a similar manner, planning authorities should ensure co-ordination with the Department of Education in relation to school provision to serve new or future residential areas. Engagement in relation to schools provision as part of the plan review process shall take place ahead of the formal plan review commencing and should seek to identify the need for new schools as well as the expansion of existing schools.

2.5.2 Role of the Regional Assembly

The Planning Act requires that all City and County Development Plans and variations are consistent with the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES).

The regional assembly will then consider whether the draft is consistent with the RSES and can issue formal recommendations to the relevant local authority where necessary as to what amendments, in the opinion of the Regional Assembly, are required in order to ensure that the development plan is consistent.

The planning authority and the regional assembly should engage throughout the plan preparation process to ensure that regional-level policy and objectives are clearly incorporated into the development plan process from the outset.

2.6 Adjoining Planning Authorities

The policies and objectives of adjoining planning authorities must also be considered and where appropriate, reflected in the development plan. While the administrative area of each city and county sets the geographic parameters for the statutory applicability of the plan, in reality, environment and settlement don't align with such boundaries. There are many examples where it is evident that a co-ordinated joint approach across administrative boundaries would create more effective land use policy.

In particular, careful consideration should be given to locations where the established geographic extent of towns and other settlements extends across two or more local authority areas. There are many locations where local authority administrative boundaries cut across well-established large and/or significantly expanded settlements, some of which are defined by a natural geographical feature like a river. This a varying extent, this applies to all five cities and their suburbs, as well as to many towns of all sizes, including Athlone, Blessington, Bray, Carlow, Carrick-on-Shannon, Drogheda and Portarlington.

Accordingly, in making a development plan, Section 9(4) of the Planning Act requires a planning authority to coordinate the objectives of its development plan with those of the plans of the adjoining local authorities. While the Act also enables each planning authority to determine whether it may be inappropriate or not feasible to do so, proper consideration must be given to the objectives of adjoining planning authorities, especially where settlements extend across administrative boundaries. In this regard, further to Section (9)(5) and (5A) of the Planning Act, submissions received from an adjoining planning authority are an important statutory part of the development plan process.

It is therefore relevant to highlight that a planning authority may, by agreement with another planning authority or at the direction of the Minister, prepare a development plan that includes the environs of another planning authority under section 9(3)(a) of the Act. In addition, the Minister

may require specified coordination between two or more planning authorities in the preparation of their development plans under section 9(7).

Furthermore, Section 10(6) of the Planning Act makes it clear that a planning authority may not include a development objective the responsibility for the effecting of which would fall on another local authority, without having first consulted with the other local authority.

Early engagement at the preliminary stage is key to achieving coherent policy alignment. In consideration of the options for the interface between development plans, whether related to cross-boundary matters or the co-ordination of plan objectives, there should be early and detailed consultation between the planning authorities involved that may also include the relevant Regional Assembly/ies, the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) and/or the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

2.7 Plan Design and Presentation

The succession of statutory deadlines during the plan preparation process can create a pressurised project timeline, but it is important not to lose sight of the requirement for there to be a quality output at the end of the process. The nature of the development plan as a strategic policy document for an entire county or city area should also mean that content should focus on key priorities in a legible and user friendly manner.

There has been a tendency in the preparation of some development plans to include a policy or objective for numerous possible development scenarios, leading to extremely lengthy written statement documents. Documents of this scale can be very difficult to use for the public and can lack a strategic focus, often getting lost in a level of detail more suited to local area plans or restating, at length, material from other guidance or policy documents.

Planning authorities should be aware of this tendency and strive to keep their development plan strategically focused and concise in nature.

2.7.1 Written Statement

Local authorities should aim to streamline the content of the written statement of a development plan with a view to improving legibility and providing clarity. The use of appendices documents to contain ancillary material such as environmental reports or lists of protected structures should provide the opportunity to keep the focus in the written statement on setting out high-level, strategic policy guidance.

The function of the written statement is to state policies and objectives clearly and provide supporting information and explanation. The material should:

- Be presented in a coherent, well-structured manner and written in a simple, jargon-free style;
- Be easy for readers to grasp the meaning and content quickly and find the relevant parts without difficulty;
- Include a comprehensive index and glossary of any legal and technical terms used; and,
- Provide details of topics covered - a short list of chapter headings, while useful in providing a general overview, is not sufficient in this regard.

It is recommended that the Written Statement is accompanied by an 'Executive Summary'. Including a Glossary of Terms in the Draft Plan can assist the general public in understanding the terms used in the plan and its accompanying strategies.

Graphs, charts and engaging infographics provide a simple clear means of highlighting some of the key aspects of the plan displaying quantitative data and trends and should be used to set the scene and provide background material, particularly demographic, population, housing and transportation trends. Relevant photographs should be used throughout the written as they provide a visual context to support policies and provide highlights in the text.

2.7.2 Visual Tools

Maps

High quality maps are a vital component of the development plan - Chapter 10 details the type and nature of geographic information systems that a planning authority should develop in order to produce, update and distribute development plan maps as part of a wider competence in spatial data systems.

Users of a development plan will generally focus their initial attention on the plan maps in order to ascertain information on the impact and extent of zoning and specific objectives. The hard-copy maps must be at a scale which allows for a clear and easy understanding of their content. A scale in the range 1:5,000 – 1: 10,000 is generally suitable for urban areas. In rural areas a greater range of scales will be appropriate, depending on the context.

For zoning maps, precision is vital and both scale and presentation must be designed to ensure clarity. All maps should be oriented with north towards the top of the page and with the point north clearly shown.

The zoning map(s) should illustrate relevant policies and specific objectives, defining sites for particular developments, land-uses and areas to which specific development control policies will be applied Such maps must be up-to- date, clear and make appropriate use of colour.

In consultation with the general public, the quality of information dissemination can be greatly enhanced by the use of presentations incorporating maps, photographs, graphs and charts.

Many local authorities make their statutory plan maps available online as interactive webmaps[8] and this should be the standard that all local authorities meet. Web-based GIS software allows for the inclusion of multiple layers of mapping to be presented to the end-user (such as flood maps, heritage designations, architectural and archaeological designations etc.) which can be blended with the core development plan layers. This software also allows for a very clear visual representation of what the development plan comprises and in particular for assisting the understanding of its spatial impact.

Once the development plan is made by the elected members, the planning authority must provide digital mapping to the Department as soon as is practicable, to align with the plan coming into force 6 weeks after it is made (See Chapter 10).

Graphics

Graphics are best used to support and explain points made in the text. However, they can also be valuable for their own sake in providing visual variety and interest. Infographics should be of good quality and in colour. Although necessary as part of the development plan core strategy (Chapter 4 below), the extensive use of tables of figures should be avoided in the written statement, being more appropriate to background topic papers and survey reports.

Graphs and charts provide a clear means of displaying quantitative data and trends. Relevant photographs including aerial photographs should be used throughout the written statement to provide a visual context to support policies and provide highlights in the text.

Printing

Due to the increase in documentation that is now required to support and accompany a development plan, local authorities are encouraged to reduce printing costs and instead utilise digital publishing channels for dissemination of information and documents, where possible.

[8] https://dlrcocouncil.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index html?appid=3d17e5bd5780468daf0c6acc1ecacd5f

3 Plan-Making Process

3. Plan-Making Process

3.1 Stages in the Development Plan Review Process

While the statutory lifecycle of a plan is six years, including a two-year review process, it is necessary for preparatory work to begin at least one year prior to the formal commencement of the plan review, which, under Section 11(1) of the Planning Act, must normally be initiated not more than four years after the making of the current development plan.

Reviewing a development plan over a two-year period is a complex and resource intensive process, for both the executive and the elected members of the planning authority. In effect, the development plan making and review process is a continuous cycle, whereby once the plan has been adopted, it is then subject to on-going monitoring activity to assess how it is being implemented and whether the plan objectives are being achieved. This includes the preparation of a Chief Executive's Report to the Council as Planning Authority, not more than two years after the making of the plan.

The extent to which progress towards the achievement of development plan objectives is monitored and reported on and preparatory work is undertaken prior to the review process, will be a factor in assisting the process once notice of the plan review has been given. For the purposes of these guidelines, there are 5 stages to the development plan- and making process, further detailed below:

1. Preliminary;
2. Pre-Draft;
3. Draft Plan;
4. Material Alterations;
5. Adoption and Immediate Post-Adoption.

For the purposes of these guidelines, there are 5 stages to reviewing and making a development plan:

STAGE	TIMELINE
Stage 1 **Preliminary** Measured from at least one year before the commencement of the development plan review	**Up to 52 weeks in advance of commencement** Preparation of: a. Baseline Report b. Cross-sectoral engagement c. Issues and Options Paper d. Scoping for SEA and other environmental assessments as appropriate
Stage 2 **Pre-draft** Measured from the time the notification of the commencement of the plan review is published up to when the draft plan is finalised by the elected members (s. 11 inclusive)	**By Week 46 after commencement** - Notice of intention to review the existing plan, normally not later than four years after it was made. - Minimum 8 weeks initial public consultation period. - Within 16 weeks from date of notice, prepare and submit a report of the Chief Executive (CE) on the initial public consultation to the elected members as the planning authority. - Not later than 10 weeks after CE's report is submitted, the elected members may issue directions to the CE. - Within 12 weeks of receipt of directions, the draft development plan is prepared and submitted to elected members for consideration. - Within 8 weeks of draft development plan being submitted to elected members, amendments may be made by resolution and the draft plan must be finalised.
Stage 3 **Draft Plan** Measured from the time the draft is being prepared for public consultation up to the consideration of the Chief Executive's Report on submissions received on the draft plan (s. 12(1) to s 12(6) inclusive)	**By Week 82 after commencement (+36 weeks)** - Within 2 weeks of the draft plan being finalised by the elected members, prepare the draft development plan and publish notice of a minimum 10-week public consultation period on the draft Plan and associated environmental assessment documentation (including the (SEA) Environmental Report and the (AA) Natura Impact Statement. - Within 22 weeks of the date of notice, prepare and submit a report of the Chief Executive (CE) on the draft plan public consultation to the elected members as the planning authority. - Within 12 weeks of the CE's report being submitted to elected members, they must consider the draft and the report of the CE and may, by resolution, amend or make the development plan.
Stage 4 **Material Alterations** Measured from when any decision is made to amend the draft plan by elected members up to the consideration of the Chief Executive's Report on submissions received on the material alterations (s 12(6) to s 12(10) inclusive)	**By Week 99 after commencement, or later subject to SEA/AA (+17 weeks or more)** - Within 3 weeks after the passing of any resolution to amend the draft plan, publish notice of material alterations with a minimum public consultation period of not less than 4 weeks. + Within the 3-week period, a determination is to be made on the requirement to carry out SEA and/or AA on the material amendments. Within 2 weeks of the determination, the Chief Executive specifies the period required to facilitate the assessment. - Within 8 weeks from date of notice of any material alterations, prepare and submit the report of the Chief Executive (CE) on the material alteration public consultation to the elected members as the planning authority. - Within 6 weeks of the submission of the CE's report, to the elected members, they must consider the report of the CE and make the development plan and in doing so, may, by resolution, make non-material modifications to the material alteration(s)
Stage 5 **Adoption and Immediate Post-Adoption** Elected members make the plan (s. 12(6) or (10) and s.11 to s. 12(12) inclusive and s.12(17))	- Publication of notice of the making of the plan, after a resolution of the Council, as planning authority, to make the plan under either Section 12(6) or (10). - Publication of the SEA Statement and Appropriate Assessment Conclusion Statement. - The Plan comes into effect 6 weeks after the resolution is made.

3.2 Stage 1: Preliminary Stage

Stage 1: Preliminary - measured from one year before the commencement of the development plan review up to the time the notice to review is published.

Evidence-based policy making is based on the premise that policy decisions should be better informed by available information and should include rational analysis. This is now an intrinsic part of the plan-making process and requires the identification of key evidence and data for the development plan and its incorporation into the policy formation process.

Commencing at least one year before formal notice of review, the preliminary phase involves:

- Data gathering and analysis;
- Preparing Technical Working Papers;
- Compiling a Baseline Report;
- Cross sectoral engagement.

3.2.1 Data Gathering and Analysis

Baseline data collection should focus on the mandatory and discretionary objectives set down in the Planning Act and on the scoping and preparation of the requisite environmental reports. This task is important, as a well-established database will inform the plan review and the monitoring of the plan once it is made.

As part of the preparation of the Technical Working Papers and the Baseline Report, it will be necessary to determine what information is required, what is available, how up-to-date it is, and what further work is required. While collection of new information may prove necessary, extensive existing data will be available from:

- Within the planning section and other departments of the local authority, neighbouring authorities and regional assemblies;
- Government Departments, State and Semi-State bodies, including the Central Statistics Office; designated environmental authorities (SEA Directive) and other agencies with environmental monitoring data for the existing plan period (for example the Environmental Protection Agency, National Biodiversity Data Centre etc);
- Local business organisations, Chambers of Commerce, and
- Community based organisations, partnerships and other local groups/associations.

3.2.2 Compiling a Baseline Report

It is critical to both the review process and the longer-term monitoring of development plans that a robust Baseline Report is prepared by the planning authority at the outset of the review, at the same time as the Technical Working Papers are prepared. The Baseline Report is a key output of the preliminary stage of the plan review and should be commenced and completed in the year before the statutory review notice is published in order to:

- Provide a comprehensive evidence base for discussion and debate on policy options and alternatives for the elected members and wider stakeholders;
- Present a strategic overview of trends and patterns across a number of development policy areas;
- Present an emerging draft Core Strategy as part of a number of Core Strategy options;
- Report on the implementation of previous plans (including the core strategy) to inform future development strategy;
- Provide for greater transparency in decision making;
- Provide the context for an Issues and Options Paper.

Baseline Report Approach

The Baseline Report will reflect on a ten-year timeline as a means to establishing the impact of policies, established patterns a nd emerging trends over t he course of t he previous development plan cycle (six years) and the current development plan cycle (three years+).

The planning authority must assess the extent to which the current and preceding plans have performed in achieving their objectives. This is an exercise that requires interaction with other departments within the local authority to understand where policies and objectives can be retained, amended or deleted.

It is essential that the whole planning team including development management planners contribute to the evaluation, in particular how recent and previous land use policies and objectives have been applied and in assessing the outcomes delivered.

The Baseline Report will in particular:

- Review the implementation of the current plan (at least three years) as well as the previous development plan (six years) to provide a substantial timeline on which to base its analysis.
- Analyse and present trends in relation to population and demographics; housing, employment, transportation, retail and commercial development, climate action, environment and heritage, physical Infrastructure, social and community infrastructure including parks and open space.
- Provide an evaluation of the existing Core Strategy - This is a crucial step in preparing a new Core Strategy and should form part of the baseline report, setting out progress towards population, housing and other targets over the lifetime of the plan. Housing completion data at settlement level and by settlement type (and where available, population data), will be necessary to compare housing targets with the actual outturn.
- This evaluation exercise should also assess the performance of the Core Strategy, against the stated targets. There may be a background context to certain settlements such as delays in the delivery of critical enabling infrastructure or a significant slow-down in the housing market and these should be explored in the accompanying commentary. The rate of growth in lower tier settlements or in rural areas should also be clearly indicated.
- Data should also be presented on rural housing trends. An analysis of planning application and commencement notice data, as well as other datasets such as An Post's 'Geodirectory' can be used to provide data on rural housing development activity. It is intended that rural housing trends should be monitored on a spatial basis to identify spatial development patterns and assess the implementation of the rural housing policy of the development plan as part of the core strategy evaluation exercise.
- As Core Strategies will be presenting data on employment and enterprise zonings, the evaluation phase of the process should include data on the rate of take-up of existing employment zonings in the Core Strategy. A variety of datasets are available, such as the CSO's 'Workplace Zones' or POWSCAR, which can provide time-series data on spatial employment trends.
- Provide detailed spatial analysis of development patterns through the use of planning application data, Part VIII[9] Local Authority developments, housing completion data, commercial development data, etc.
- Provide a strategic infrastructural assessment of the area with a particular focus on the capacity of existing critical infrastructural assets, their spatial distribution, potential to support additional development and any planned investment. The assessment should specify enabling infrastructure, for example wastewater network or treatment infrastructure, roads or public transport capacity and in the case of enabling social infrastructure, schools provision and community facilities.
- Include a summary on monitoring the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the previous plan.

[9] Development by, on behalf of, or in partnership with Local Authorities - Article 80(1) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

- Where the analysis indicates policy intervention is required, provide a summary of core policy areas that will need to be addressed in the review process.

The Baseline Report should be published and made available to view as part of the pre-draft consultation phase in the form of supporting information. Elected members should also be circulated with copies of the Baseline Report and briefed ahead of formal commencement of the review process.

3.2.3 Scoping for SEA

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) scoping can also begin before the start of the formal two-year review process, as the existing plan, coupled with the baseline report and working papers, will provide a reasonable indication of the nature of the area and of major development issues.

3.3 Stage 2: Pre-Draft - Commencing Review and Drafting the Plan

Stage 2: Pre-Draft - measured from the time the notice of the commencement of the plan review is published up to when the draft plan is finalised by the elected members (section 11 inclusive). By week 46.

The Pre-Draft stage of the plan is a critical period for drawing together the evidence base and the views of citizens and the elected members, which will underpin the policy content of the development plan. The Pre-Draft stage includes specific provisions inter alia for: -

- An initial notification to the public indicating that the existing plan is to be reviewed and a new plan prepared;
- Additional public consultation activities;
- Preparation of a report by the Chief Executive outlining the Chief Executive's opinion on the issues raised in public consultation and including recommendations on policies to be included in the development plan;
- The making of directions to the Chief Executive by the members of the planning authority regarding the preparation of the development plan;
- Screening/scoping exercise for SEA and AA.

3.3.1 Setting the Scene – The Issues and Options Paper

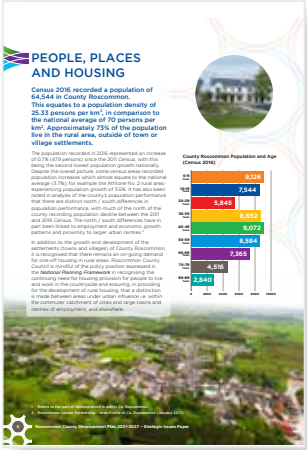
From an early stage, public and political engagement must focus on the strategic direction that the new plan may take. Without a clear statement of the relevant issues that can be linked to distinct and achieveable strategic options, it will be difficult to devise a coherent set of detailed policies and objectives.

SPPR DPG 1
A single, over-arching and concise 'Issues and Options Paper' shall be published to accompany the initial notification that a development plan is being reviewed and shall include core strategy options for public consultation purposes.

At the outset of the review process, this requirement relates to the need for pre-draft core strategy options for consultation purposes, aimed at generating debate and discussion. The paper should seek to present a number of alternative Core Strategy options, advise that the core strategy will evolve over the course of drafting the plan and highlight what emerging policy issues will inform a draft Core Strategy.

The information and analysis included in the Technical Working Papers and the Baseline Report should be reflected in the Issues and Options Paper to ensure that strategic issues presented in the paper are grounded in reliable data and sound analysis. The 'Issues and Options Paper' is an ideal mechanism for focusing attention on strategic issues at the initial stage of the review process.

The Issues and Options Paper presents an opportunity to publish key information on strategic issues and invite public submissions on differing policy approaches. It should seek to engage members of the public in the plan making process, with infographics, maps and images used, to bring the issues to life and to present data in an easy-to-understand manner. Examples below include extracts from Issues Papers prepared by Roscommon County Council and Tipperary County Council.



The following are sample questions in relation to themes that may be set out to address issues, trends, drivers and options in the plan area:

What are the steps that need to be taken to enable the regeneration of some of our towns and villages?

How can the different types of housing need be met and where should future housing be located?

How can we encourage more sustainable modes of transport and improve sustainable mobility?

What role should towns and villages in rural areas play in catering for the county's future growth?

How can the rural parts of the county close to urban areas be protected from development pressures that are likely to arise to accommodate further population growth?

What opportunities exist that can benefit economic development in the county and how can the development plan best capture and support these?

How best can the development plan address climate change in an effective way?

It is important that consultation at the pre-draft stage should focus on "the big picture". The structure of the plan review process is such that there is a progression from broad strategy to greater detail, reflecting the structure of the plan itself.

For this reason, submissions at this stage relating to zoning of particular land for any purpose, are excluded and cannot be considered[10].

[10] Section 11(2)(bc) of the Planning Act

3.3.2 The Chief Executive's Report on Pre-Draft Submissions

The time period from formal initiation of the review to submission of the first Chief Executive's Report to elected members is 16 weeks. The Chief Executive's Report at Pre-Draft stage will take a strategic, big-picture focus and may not refer to proposals for the zoning of land, even if raised in submissions.

The Report should seek to thematically group and summarise the submissions received, rather than report a response for each individual submission. It is also necessary to give the opinion of the Chief Executive to the issues raised, together with a recommendation on the policies to be included in the draft plan.

This is generally applicable except for any submissions received from the relevant Regional Assembly and the National Transport Authority (as a requirement of the Planning Act in the case of Local Authorities in the Greater Dublin Area). The Chief Executive's Report must specifically summarise and address the issues raised in any such submissions, and outline recommendations as to the manner in which they should be addressed in the draft development plan.

Given that the legislation requires separate consideration of the submissions of the Office of the Planning Regulator or the Minister at later stages in the process, it is recommended that planning authorities also separately address the issues raised in any submissions from the Office or the Minister at Pre-Draft stage, and similarly outline recommendations as to the manner in which they should be addressed in the draft development plan.

SPPR DPG 2
The Chief Executive's stated recommendations on policies to be included in a development plan as part of a Report on Pre-Draft stage submissions, shall include a 'draft core strategy', consistent with Section 11(4)(d) of the Planning Act.

3.3.3 Issuing of Directions to the Chief Executive

The elected members of the planning authority may issue directions to the Chief Executive (to be amended to also include a Directly Elected Mayor - DEM) regarding the preparation of the draft development plan, within 10 weeks of receipt of the Chief Executive's Report on Pre-Draft Submissions. These directions must be strategic in nature, consistent with the draft core strategy as well as taking account of the statutory obligations of the Local Authority and any relevant policies or objectives of the Government or of any Minister of the Government.

The Chief Executive (or subject to amendment, DEM) is obliged to comply with these directions, where valid. It is recommended that the development plan team would be available to provide assistance to elected members in formulating the wording of directions to ensure that they are strategic and relevant to enable them to be considered as valid.

3.3.4 Preparation of a Draft Development Plan

There are a further 12 weeks after receipt of directions in which the development plan team must complete the Draft Development Plan for submission to the elected members of the planning authority. The members then have 8 weeks to consider the initial draft plan submitted by the Chief Executive, including the making of amendments by the members to that draft plan.

This is the critical opportunity for elected members to contribute to the content of the draft development plan, prior to public display of the draft. It is also the first time that land zonings may be considered in the review process. This stage may typically require a series of dedicated development plan plenary council meetings, with proposed amendments to the Chief Executive's initial draft plan made by way of motions from councillors.

3.4 Stage 3 - The Draft Development Plan

Stage 3 Draft Plan - measured from the time the draft is being prepared for public consultation up to the consideration of the Chief Executive's Report on submissions received on the draft plan (s. 12(1) to s 12(6) inclusive). By week 82.

In broad procedural terms, the preparation of Draft Plan stage includes provisions inter alia for:

- Submission, by the Chief Executive, of a draft development plan, the SEA Environmental Report, other environmental reports, to the members for their consideration;
- Consideration by the members of the draft plan submitted by the Chief Executive, including the making of amendments by the members to the initial draft submitted by the Chief Executive, and
- Sending notice and a copy of the draft plan to specified bodies and public display of the draft plan and environmental report and invitation of submissions.

The logistics of organising Council meetings where potentially large numbers of submissions from the public and also motions from the elected members must be considered and deliberated upon, in a time-pressured environment is very challenging.

The Draft Plan stage commences with preparing and giving notice and a copy of the draft plan to specified bodies and public display of the draft plan and environmental reports and an invitation of submissions within a specified period.

The publication of the draft plan signifies a major milestone in the plan review process and is the result of a significant collaborative effort between the public, elected members and the Executive. The Draft Plan generates reaction, commentary and in-depth observations which are expressed through submissions received, often numbering in their thousands.

The Draft Plan consultation phase involves the presentation of a very significant amount of documentation including accompanying strategies that will be published with the plan such as the Environmental Report (SEA) and the Natura Impact Statement (AA). Much of this material may be of quite a technical nature and Planning Authorities must consider strategies for making the development plan as accessible and legible as possible.

It is also a requirement of the legislation that all written submissions or observations received by a planning authority at the Draft Plan Stage be published on the website of the authority within 10 working days of its receipt by that authority.

All submissions should be handled systematically with clear logging, acknowledgment and filing protocols in place, particularly as some of these accompanying documents will have their own consultation stream associated with the publication of the draft plan[11]. In the case where submissions do not directly relate to the development plan but are for the attention of the local authority, the planning authority should endeavour to maintain a record and forward onto the relevant department for follow-up.

Written submissions or observations received by a planning authority shall be published on the website of the authority within 10 working days of its receipt by that authority.

In accordance with Section 12 (8A)(b) of the Planning Act, where the planning authority is of the opinion that the submission or observation is vexatious, libellous or contains confidential information relating to a third party in respect of which the third party has not, expressly, or impliedly in the circumstances, consented to its disclosure, the submission shall not be published or shall or if already published, shall be withdrawn.

The value of the wider Multidisciplinary Team can come into effect at draft plan stage as the demands on the process multiply and intensify. Technical, administrative, corporate and ICT business units across the Local Authority will be relied upon to ensure all of the moving components of the plan review are progressing simultaneously.

[11] The Record of Protected Structures and Strategic Environmental Assessment as examples.

3.4.1 The Chief Executive's Report on Submissions on the Draft Plan

In relation to the Chief Executive's Report on submissions received, the report is required to provide both a summary of the submissions received and to provide a framework and structure for the Council meetings where the Development Plan will be deliberated.

In addition to listing the persons or bodies who made submissions or observations and providing a summary of those, the report must specifically deal with the recommendations, submissions and observations made by the Minister, where the notice under paragraph (a) of subsection (2) was sent before the establishment of the Office of the Planning Regulator.

The report shall give the response to the issues raised, taking account of:

- any directions of the members of the authority or the committee under section 11(4) ,
- the proper planning and sustainable development of the area,
- the statutory obligations of any local authority in the area and any relevant policies or objectives of the Government or of any Minister of the Government and, if appropriate, any observations made by the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands under subsection (3)(b)(iv).

Given the sometimes substantial volume of submissions received (running into many thousands in some counties); the planning authority should give careful consideration to ensure the preparation of a workable and functional report. A recommended approach is to thematically group and summarise the submissions received and provide responses and recommendations on these grouped themes rather than to include a detailed response for each individual submission received.

The response should indicate the validity of consideration in the review process, any relevant current policy position and its record of implementation if applicable. The Chief Executive's recommendation shall be clearly and succinctly worded for consideration by the elected members.

Issues raised in submissions received from the Minister, the relevant Regional Assembly and the National Transport Authority (in the case of local authorities in the Greater Dublin Area) must be addressed in the report and issue a recommendation.

The structure of the Chief Executive's report should also ensure that the submission of the OPR and the Chief Executive's response to the issues raised, is presented at the start of the document. The Chief Executive's report is required to be published on the website of the planning authority within 5 working days.

3.4.2 Effective Council Meetings

A concise and well-structured Chief Executive's Report will be a useful foundation for the meetings. Many local authorities have also held workshops/information sessions with elected members in relation to the drafting of motions for the development plan, which have proved useful in ensuring, for example, that Motions are not ruled out of order at meetings or address issues that cannot be accommodated in the development plan.

Due to the technical and environmental assessments that are likely to be required to fully consider the implications of amendments to the development plan that may be sought by motion, the best practice approach is that the motions from elected members be submitted a minimum of 10 days in advance of the Council meeting, be precise and give direction.

This advance notice period is essential in allowing technical (including environmental) assessments to be made in order to give elected members the full range of information to reach a decision on a particular motion. Allowing the requisite time to fully evaluate the impact of the amendment will allow its credibility to be tested as well as protecting the integrity of the elected members' decision-making powers. Formal protocols in this regard should be instigated through the Standing Orders of the Council and other agreed operational mechanisms.

The resolution(s) of the Council must be carefully and clearly worded to account for clarity in decision-making and in interpretation.

While time constraints may mean that lengthy council meetings are held to consider the plan at the various stages of its review, these are not encouraged as they can compromise good decision-making. Where the business of the Council meeting cannot be concluded by 10pm or shortly thereafter, a further meeting shall be scheduled, save for exceptional circumstances where elected members agree to extend the meeting with a strong likelihood that business will be concluded. Under no circumstances should meetings continue into the next day (beyond midnight).

3.5 Stage 4 - Material Alterations

Stage 4 Material Alterations - measured from when any decision is made to amend the draft plan by elected members up to the consideration of the Chief Executive's Report on submissions received on the material alterations (s 12(6) to s 12(10) inclusive). By week 99, or later subject to SEA.

Material alterations, allow for elected members to amend the draft plan having considered the Chief Executive's Report on submissions received. The material alterations stage includes specific provisions inter alia for: -

- A notification to the public indicating that the draft plan is to be materially altered including reference to the likely significant effects on the environment and the availability of the proposed alterations for inspection.
- Additional public consultation for up to 4 weeks.
- Preparation of a report by the Chief Executive outlining the Chief Executive's opinion on the issues raised in public consultation on the material amendments.

The Material Alterations made to the Draft Plan by the elected members together with the Addenda to the Environmental Assessment Reports (where required) on the proposed changes are placed on public display for a period of 4 weeks.

Following this public consultation period, submissions are summarised in the Chief Executive's Report on the proposed material alterations together with the Chief Executive's Response and Recommendation(s).

The Chief Executives Report on the proposed material alterations are considered by the elected members. Further modifications to the material amendments can be considered at this stage, but only if they do not involve an increase in the area of zoned land or an addition or deletion from the record of Protected Structures (S. 12(10)(c)).

3.6 Stage 5 – Adoption and Immediate Post-Adoption

Stage 5 – Making the Plan – when the members make the plan (s. 12(6) or (10) to s. 12(12) inclusive and S.12(17)). By week 105, or later, subject to SEA.

Making the Development Plan

Having considered the Chief Executive's Report, the elected members may 'make' the development plan in accordance with Section 12 (6) or (10) of the Act. The resolution recorded must be clear and precise as to the decision of the Council in making the plan.

Prior to the adoption of the Draft Plan, the planning authority must clearly set out the outcomes of the AA process so that elected members are assured that the Plan is compliant with the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive.

Article 8 of the SEA Directive requires that the Environmental Report, the opinions expressed by the environmental authorities and the public, and the outcome of any transboundary consultation, must be taken into account during the preparation of the plan and before its adoption. These items need to be recorded in any resolution of the Council accordingly. However the legal requirement to publish the SEA Statement applies after the adoption of the Plan (note the contrast to the AA requirements which require a statement to be made before adoption).

Once the elected members have made the Development Plan in accordance with Section 12(6) or (10) of the Act, as amended, further work still remains to be undertaken to comply with the legislation. Notice of the making of the plan must be published in a newspaper circulating in the area and must issue to the Minister, the OPR, prescribed authorities, adjoining planning authorities, An Bord Pleanála and any local community development committee.

It is a specific requirement that the planning authority notify the Office of the Planning Regulator within 5 working days of the making of a development plan or a variation to a development plan and send a copy of the written statement and maps.

A development plan that has been made must also be made available for inspection. In order to ensure that there is clarity in respect of the plan that was made within a reasonable timeframe, it is a requirement that an interim version of the adopted development plan (written statement and maps), be made available and published within 5 working days of the adoption date.

This interim plan adoption 'decision document', must be made available for inspection in advance of publication of the final version of the plan that will come into force, where it is not possible to publish the actual final version within the 5 working day timeframe.

In addition to the OPR, the interim plan adoption decision document must be circulated to the Minister and other bodies as required under Section 12(12)(c) of the Planning Act, within the same 5 working day timescale.

SPPR DPG 3

To ensure clarity in respect of a development plan that was made within a reasonable timeframe, where a planning authority makes a development plan it shall publish a notice within 5 working days of the plan adoption date, stating that an interim plan adoption decision document is available for inspection, should it not be possible to publish the final version of the plan within that timeframe.

SPPR DPG 4

Where a planning authority makes a development plan, an interim plan adoption decision document, or, the final version of the plan, shall be circulated to the Minister and other bodies as required under Section 12(12)(c) of the Planning Act, within 5 working days of the plan adoption date.

There are further requirement for notifications to issue to owners of protected structures where their structure has been either added to or deleted from the RPS. It is recommended that where possible, that this would normally be undertaken within five working days of adoption of the development plan. The Development Plan has effect six weeks after the date it is made and remains in place for six years from the date made.

In the event of the elected members failing to make the development plan within the normally applicable timeframe[12], the legislation provides for the Chief Executive to make the plan provided that all aspects of the plan that had already been agreed by the members of the planning authority is included as part of that plan.

3.7 Post-Adoption SEA and AA Requirements

In relation to SEA, as soon as may be following adoption of the plan, a planning authority must make available a statement which summarises the following[13]:

(a) how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan,

(b) how

(i) the environmental report prepared pursuant to article 13C,

(ii) submissions and observations made to the planning authority in response to a notice under section 12(1) or (7) of the Act, and

(iii) any consultations under article 13F.

have been taken into account during the preparation of the plan.

(c) the reasons for choosing the plan, as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with, and

(d) the measures decided upon to monitor, in accordance with article 13J, the significant environmental effects of implementation of the plan.

There is a similar requirement to publish a determination relating to the AA that may have been undertaken. Under Article 6.3 of the Habitats Directive the determination (often termed an 'AA Conclusion Statement') must state as to whether or not the Draft Plan would adversely affect the integrity of a European site. However as stated in Section 3.5, this determination must have been made prior to the adoption of the Draft Plan.

[12] Section 12(14) (b) of the Planning Act.

[13] S.I. 436 of 2004 Article 13I(1)

3.8 Plan Evaluation and Assessment Role of the Office of the Planning Regulator

The OPR will provide statutory observations in line with the requirements of Section 31(AM) of the Planning Act during the development review process and each submission from the OPR must be dealt with separately within each of the Chief Executive's Reports.

The OPR will provide the relevant planning authority or regional assembly with observations and recommendations with regard to how a draft plan should address legislative and policy matters including consistency with:

- the National Planning Framework;
- regional spatial and economic strategies;
- planning guidelines issued by the Minister under Section 28 of the Planning Act, including any 'specific planning policy requirements';
- policy directives issued by the Minister under Section 29 of the above Act; and,
- any other relevant legislative and policy matters.

Upon receipt of such observations and recommendations, planning authorities should endeavour to address these and amend their development plan accordingly. In addition, the planning authority must document how such observations have been addressed in the relevant reports of the Chief Executive prepared as part of the plan making process taking account of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Where, in the making of a plan or strategy either under section 12(6) or section 12(10) of the Planning Act, the recommendations of the OPR have not been implemented, the Chief Executive must give notice to the OPR and set out the reasons for not doing so. Where the OPR considers that the adopted plan is not in compliance, it may issue a notice to the Minister recommending the issuing of a direction (under Section 31 of the Planning Act) requiring the planning authority to take specified measures in relation to the plan.

3.8.1 Role of the Minister in Direction Process

On receipt of the notice from the OPR, the Minister shall consider the recommendation included therein and if in agreement, will proceed to issue the draft direction under section 31 of the Planning Act. The direction process under S31 provides for public consultation and review of the initial draft direction before the final decision on the direction is made by the Minister.

Where the Minister disagrees with the notice from the OPR, the Minister will state his or her reasons and lay such reasons before the Houses of the Oireachtas.

3.9 Variation of the Development Plan

During the lifetime of a development plan, planning authorities may wish to adjust the objectives and policies of a development plan in order to take account of different circumstances or issues unforeseen at the time of the original making of the development plan. For these reasons, Section 13 of the Planning Act provides the facility for the making of a variation to the development plan. The decision to initiate the statutory process of varying a development plan is an executive function.

Elected members may submit a resolution to the Chief Executive of the planning authority to request a report on a proposal to initiate a process to consider the variation of the development plan. The motion to request the Chief Executive to initiate varying the plan must be supported by three quarters of the members of the planning authority. In responding to such a motion, the Chief Executive is required to prepare a report on the proposed variation within four weeks and if he or she considers the proposal is not justified, is required to outline reasons for not initiating the variation process in writing.

In making a variation, members are restricted to considering the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and any relevant policies or objectives for the time being of the Government or any Minister of the Government. As such, a variation should be undertaken primarily for the purpose of making necessary policy change and should not be used to address proposals that may be more appropriately dealt with as part of the development management process.

In the case of a variation to a development plan, the requirement to consider if a Strategic Environmental Assessment and/or Appropriate Assessment are required must be considered in accordance with article 13K of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended (for SEA screening) and article 177U of the Planning Act (for AA screening).

In making a variation to the development plan, the proposed variation and the other parts of the plan must continue to be internally consistent i.e. a proposed variation should also incorporate any necessary adjustments to other relevant parts of the plan.

Planning authorities should maintain a consolidated version of the plan, incorporating all adopted variations, both in hard copy in the offices of the planning authority and on their website.

3.9.1 Material Contravention Procedure

Section 34 (6) of the Planning Act establishes the “material contravention” procedure, whereby planning authorities may decide to grant permission for development proposals that would otherwise materially contravene the development plan.

The material contravention procedure is intended as a mechanism to deal with specific ‘non-conforming’ planning applications, whereas the process of making a variation is intended to facilitate the adjustment of the objectives and content of a development plan that would then apply across the full range of functions of a planning authority including the consideration of planning applications.

4 Core Strategy

4 Core Strategy

4.1 Purpose of the Core Strategy

The preparation of the core strategy of the development plan is one of the most important elements of the plan making process. This section outlines the factors to be considered in preparing the core strategy and how the outputs of the core strategy should be presented in the development plan.

In summary, this section sets out:

- Statutory Requirements - what the Planning Act requires of planning authorities in the preparation and drafting of a core strategy;
- Core Strategy - The content of the core strategy, including relevant tables and spatial data;
- Devising the Settlement Hierarchy - which factors must be considered in setting out the broad settlement strategy for a County or City;
- Economic/Retail Strategy - How the core strategy process should address employment and retail land-use requirements.

The core strategy is intended to give spatial expression to the housing, population, land and employment parameters of the development plan and for this reason, spatial data is at the heart of the core strategy. As development planning becomes more data-driven, the value of spatial data is critical to all stages of the planning process in supporting transparent and evidence-based decisions. From the core strategy to zoning decisions, to planning permission and commencement of construction, the planning system must incorporate data collection and analysis at all stages.

This begins at the core strategy stage. It is a requirement that the spatial data underpinning the core strategy should be standardised and published by the planning authority, in tandem with the development plan (see Chapter 10).

4.2 Statutory Requirements

Section 10(1A) of the Planning Act requires that the development plan includes a core strategy which:

"shows that the development objectives in the development plan are consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Planning Framework and the regional spatial and economic strategy and with specific planning policy requirements specified in guidelines under subsection (1) of section 28".

Each required element of a development plan core strategy, is specified in Section 10(2A) of the Planning Act. A core strategy must:-

a) Demonstrate the consistency of the housing strategy and the development plan with national and regional spatial strategy and policy;

b) Take account of national and regional housing and population targets;

c) Provide details of areas **already** zoned for residential use or mixed-use that includes residential development, in hectares and housing unit numbers;

d) Provide details of areas **proposed** to be zoned for residential use or mixed-use that includes residential development, in hectares, together with details of how such proposals accord with national policy for phased development;

e) Demonstrate that in setting out retail objectives, the planning authority has had regard to any statutory guidelines under section 28 that relate to retail development;

f) For **county** development plans, set out a settlement hierarchy that includes details of projected population growth of all urban and rural settlements and rural areas together with details of road and rail infrastructure;

g) For **city** development plans, provide details of the city centre, areas designated for significant development during the period of the plan, the availability of public transport within certain catchments, and retail centres in that city;

h) For **city and county** development plans, set out a settlement hierarchy and provide details in accordance with **both** f) and g) above

The key elements of the core strategy, are therefore to:-

1) Demonstrate consistency with national and regional spatial strategy and policy, which must include an emphasis on compact growth and the proportionate development of settlements based on the availability and activation of serviced land;

2) Provide detailed analysis of existing and proposed land use zonings, with a particular focus on residential development, and

3) Set out a settlement hierarchy for a county development plan, a city development plan, or a city and county development plan, as appropriate.

4.3 The Core Strategy and National and Regional Policy

The overall population projection for a county or city is a primary development plan input which provides the strategic development context. The National Planning Framework (NPF) and associated NPF Roadmap 2018[14] document provide overall strategic projected population target ranges for each local authority area.

These NPF projected population targets are incorporated into the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs) adopted by each of the three Regional Assemblies and form the broad population parameters for each local authority development plan preparation process.

However, although population targets are appropriate for medium and long-term planning, they are difficult to incorporate into six-year statutory development plan cycles which have variable review and commencement dates. In particular, there is an insufficient opportunity to monitor and analyse population change as development plan timescales generally do not coincide with recent data on population - as measured by the Census of Population, undertaken by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), every five years.

In order to address the shorter-term requirements for development plan preparation, monitoring and review, particularly with regard to housing, statutory guidelines for incorporating housing supply targets into development plans[15] were issued under Section 28 of the Planning Act in 2020.

The 2020 housing supply target methodology guidelines are based on work undertaken by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), which further developed population projections to provide a nationally integrated and standardised evidence base for local authorities to estimate overall housing demand for the period of each county or city development plan.

The underlying basis for the housing supply target methodology guidelines also comprises the default scenario for Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) to be undertaken to inform local authority housing strategies and development plans.

Accordingly, the development plan must set out a clear housing supply target for the relevant six-year (i.e. quarter-to-quarter) plan period consistent with the prescribed methodology in the relevant issued guidelines.

[14] Implementation Roadmap for the National Planning Framework, DHLGH, July 2018.
[15] Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DHLGH, December 2020 (or the 'HST Guidelines').

4.3.1 Population and Housing in the Core Strategy

In devising the Core Strategy for its development plan, the planning authority must address both population and housing targets in a consistent and integrated manner:

- **Population**: National and regional population targets and the projected population growth of cities, towns, villages and rural areas'.
- **Housing**: The proposed number of housing units to be included in the area to meet the housing supply target for the planning authority consistent with the prescribed methodology under the HST s.28 Guidelines

In meeting these statutory obligations in the Core Strategy, the below approach is to be followed:

a) Using the specified methodology in the HST Guidelines, a Housing Supply Target for the specific 6-year development plan period is derived for the planning authority area. This HST figure is broadly consistent with, and can be used effectively as the housing expression of national and regional population targets.

b) The HST housing target should then be apportioned across the settlement hierarchy and rural areas of the planning authority through the Core Strategy formulation process of the development plan.

c) In preparing the settlement hierarchy, the HST housing figure is the definitive target figure to be used to apportion growth to a settlement or rural area.

d) The projected population growth of cities and towns within the hierarchy, can then be derived from this housing target figure, and represented in the Core Strategy table as an illustrative population target for the settlement.

e) A 'rule of thumb' calculation can be used to derive a population figure from the housing target. The targeted change in population of the plan area from the date of the most recent Census to the end of the development plan period, may be divided by the targeted change in housing numbers for the equivalent period. Any such calculation must take into account any housing, and therefore likely population delivered to the beginning of the plan period, in accordance with the housing supply target methodology.

f) The sum of housing supply targets for settlements and rural areas must combine to total the overall HST figure for the county and the sum of population targets for settlements and rural areas must combine to be at a broadly consistent point within the overall national and regional population range for the county, for the relevant 6-year plan period in each case.

While previous practice to derive housing requirements was to multiply projected population targets by average household occupancy rates, the model that underpins the Housing Supply Target (HST) methodology both nationally and for each local authority area is based on a combination of factors that include population change, including inter-county and international migration, influenced by employment and house prices.

Further to this, household demand is calculated on the basis of household formation arising from headship rates by individual age cohort. A quantum of housing obsolescence has also been factored in. The HST model outputs are broadly consistent with average household occupancy levels across the whole stock, but result in relatively greater levels of household formation per head of population growth, than would be apparent based on applying targeted population growth to average household occupancy rates.

This more accurately reflects the changing nature of housing demand, in particular the need to meet the demands of smaller households in some cases and also the fact that most family homes developed within a 6-year development plan period do not reach full occupancy within that period.

An example of this approach is provided in Appendix A.

4.4 The Core Strategy and Zoning for Residential Use

In order to give effect to projected population and housing supply targets for the development plan period, the plan core strategy must provide detailed and separate assessments of land *already* zoned and land *proposed* to be zoned for residential development.

This must be set out in accordance with the settlement hierarchy identified in Section 4.5 below for each settlement with more than 1,500 persons at the last Census. This approach should also be applied to all rural settlements of less than 1,500 persons that include zoned residential or residential and mixed-use development land. Only rural settlements that do not include zoned residential development land should be aggregated with rural areas outside villages and towns for core strategy projected population and housing purposes.

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The development plan core strategy requirements set out in Section 10(2A)(c) and (d) of the Planning Act must be applied to each individual settlement where any land is zoned for residential purposes or a mixture of residential and other uses, including any applicable rural settlements with a population under 1,500 persons, and presented in clear, tabular format.

This requires the provision of settlement and *site-level* information on housing and mixed-use development land, that goes beyond broad, settlement-based targets for housing.

Lands within the ownership of the local authority are to be considered as part of the overall analysis of zoning lands for residential use, requiring joint consultation and coordination between the planning and housing sections.

4.4.1 Land/Sites Already Zoned

The development plan review process is an opportunity to take stock of land already zoned for residential purposes or a mixture of residential and other uses. This must be set out in the plan core strategy. It is critical to note that Section 10(8) of the Planning Act makes it clear that there is no presumption in law that land zoned for any purpose in a development plan shall remain so zoned in any subsequent development plan.

Extant Planning Permissions
In undertaking an analysis of the area of land in hectares zoned for residential development in each settlement and the proposed number of housing units to be included in the area in accordance with Section 10(2A)(c), regard must be had to any extant planning permissions for residential development. The current and anticipated rate of housing delivery, both in relation to the site in question and the settlement as a whole also needs to be considered. Accordingly;

- A site with a planning permission that has yet to commence may be regarded as having equivalent potential to any other zoned and serviced site for core strategy calculation purposes.
- A site with a planning permission that has commenced, should not be wholly excluded from core strategy calculation purposes unless almost fully built-out. A reasonable estimate should be made of housing delivery from the permission that is likely to occur during the plan period. This should be informed by recent levels of housing output and local market absorption rates on a whole settlement basis, also allowing for a progressive increase in output.

Land and sites already zoned for residential purposes may be regarded as providing a baseline, or starting point to meet projected population and housing targets, especially in cases where planning permission has already been granted, based on the presumption that land subject to planning permission is already serviced or serviceable.

Should it be the case that there is a surplus of well-located zoned and fully serviced land to meet population and housing supply targets already zoned for development in any local authority area when reviewing a development plan, it is recommended that a phased approach be taken to prioritise and rank the preferred sequence of development of such sites.

However, in cases where land is zoned and has remained undeveloped and unserviced through one or more development plan cycles, with no prospect of being serviced within the six-year life of the development plan that is under preparation, alternative approaches must be considered:- (i) alternative zoning objectives or (ii) discontinuing the objective (See Appendix A).

4.4.2 Land/Sites Proposed to be Zoned

Estimating requirements for land and sites to be zoned for residential or a mixture of residential and other uses must follow on from an assessment of whether the amount of land already zoned is adequate to meet the housing needs of the area. The rate of take-up and build-out of such land over a preceding period of at least 6-10 years is an important consideration in this regard.

Such analysis must also consider trends and projections in respect of rural housing output and infill development/building refurbishment, as well as whether land already zoned may be serviced or serviceable within the six-year life of the plan.

It is not the purpose of the planning system and the development plan process to facilitate the hoarding and speculation of serviced development land. However, it is recognised that there is a need for some degree of competition and choice in the residential development land market.

Accordingly, in considering whether to zone additional new land and sites for residential (or a mixture of residential and other uses) to meet housing need, planning authorities must ensure that the development plan core strategy makes adequate provision for zoned and serviced sites that will come forward during the six-year life of the development plan, while also considering and factoring in the proportion of projected housing need to be met on unzoned land in rural areas.

4.4.3 Ensuring Sufficient Provision of Housing Lands/Sites

In providing housing sites for development within settlements, it may be necessary to zone more serviced land and sites for residential (or a mixture of residential and other uses), than would equate to meeting precisely the projected housing demand for that settlement. This approach recognises that a degree of choice in development sites to be provided locally is desirable to avoid restricting the supply of new housing development through inactivity on a particular landholding or site.

In making provision for housing within settlements in the core strategy of a development plan, in certain instances a planning authority may therefore provide zoned residential sites in addition to those required to meet the settlement housing supply target. This means that a planning authority, after identifying the site/land requirements to meet the housing supply target for that settlement, may also identify additional sites/lands to ensure sufficient choice for development potential is safeguarded.

Where the planning authority considers it necessary to employ this mechanism for '**Additional Provision**' of residential lands in a particular settlement, it must be clearly set out in the core strategy. In proposing the extent of any such additional landholdings, the planning authority must take into consideration all of the following:-

a) There is no automatic presumption of Additional Provision land or sites to meet housing supply targets in any development plan. The extent of any Additional Provision must be comprehensively identified, quantified and explained in the core strategy and shall not exceed 20-25% of the required quantum of zoned land and sites in settlements in any planning authority area as a whole, for any six-year plan period;

b) Housing supply and population targets for the relevant six-year development plan period, and the location and level of servicing of lands already zoned for development, in accordance with 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 above;

c) The need to ensure a minimum of 30% of all new residential development in settlements outside cities and 50% in cities and their suburbs, must comprise brownfield or infill development within the boundary/built footprint of the existing built-up area[16];

d) Any parts of strategic and sustainable development sites that will be phased and built out over a longer period than the six-year development plan (such as large-scale urban regeneration areas, transport-led development sites or SDZs) may be included over and above as Additional Provision lands (per section 4.4.4 below);

e) Additional Provision must not comprise land and sites that are not serviced or serviceable within the six-year plan period (save for the exception of strategic and sustainable development sites in section 4.4.4);

f) The location of zoned lands and sites within the settlement must be consistent with sequential development patterns, town centre first principles, proximity to services and facilities and the need to reduce carbon emissions;

g) Additional Provision must be phased in a clear sequence of priority to facilitate development management decisions and development monitoring by the planning authority and An Bord Pleanála

h) Additional Provision must be compatible with the core strategy regarding the proportion of projected housing demand to be met on unzoned land in rural areas

Accordingly, on a settlement basis, the precise extent to which zoned lands and sites in excess of that required to match the agreed housing supply target are provided, is to be determined by the planning authority. Such proposals will be assessed and evaluated by the Office of the Planning Regulator in accordance with these Guidelines.

Development plans will be monitored and evaluated on the basis of their progress towards delivering their housing supply target, the location of new housing and the extent of development of any additional land and sites provision.

For our five cities, their long term growth targets under the NPF provide the strategic context for considering their housing needs and population growth. Each city will include particular urban areas that are considered suitable for significant housing development in accordance with national compact growth objectives and such areas should be clearly identified. These will include areas targeted for redevelopment and regeneration, public transport corridors, SDZs and significant new residential neighbourhoods within the wider city area where public infrastructural investment is focused. Such areas provide a clear locus for future housing development in particular and should be given appropriate policy support.

[16] Per NPO 3 of the NPF

4.4.4 Long-Term Strategic and Sustainable Development Sites

Strategic and Sustainable Development Sites are key development sites that may comprise lands and sites for urban regeneration and/or transport-led development. They may comprise either brownfield/infill or greenfield land and may also be subject to Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) status, or other relevant planning-related designation. Such sites are characterised by:

- their potential for significant residential development to be delivered over a timescale greater than a single six-year development plan period
- their significant scale – generally several thousand new homes as a new urban extension to a City or NPF Regional Centre
- A requirement to be aligned and supported by significant water services, transport and other infrastructural investment. The extended timescale needed to deliver such infrastructure will require certainty in terms of zoning status to ensure such long-term planning and investment.

It is necessary for the development plan core strategy to clearly identify such lands and also the proportion of those land that are *likely* to be developed within the six-year plan period and those that are *not likely* to be developed within the six-year plan period. While the portion of lands likely to be developed must be included in the plan core strategy, the portion that are 'not likely' to be developed within the plan period should be identified by a '*Long-Term* Strategic and Sustainable Development Site' designation, reflecting that they will deliver housing within the subsequent development plan period (ie. more than 6 years).

This is to ensure clarity in respect of scheduled housing development on the site in accordance with identified phasing and servicing constraints for the planning authority or An Bord Pleanála when considering any planning applications for housing development. The portion of any Long-Term Strategic and Sustainable Development Sites that are not likely to be developed within the six-year plan period may be considered as further additional provision over and above the 20-25% threshold figure referred to above.

4.5 Devising the Settlement Strategy

4.5.1 Settlement Hierarchy

The targeted distribution of housing and population within the territory of the development plan of a city or county council, is referred to in the Planning Act as the 'settlement hierarchy'. To more fully reflect the totality of Section 10(2A) of the Planning Act with regard to development plan core strategy, and in particular the consideration of housing, land and population in relation to the settlement hierarchy, the term 'settlement strategy' is also used by planning authorities.

For the purposes of these guidelines, a settlement strategy comprises those elements of Section 10(2A) of the Planning Act that relate to housing, land, population and the settlement hierarchy.

The settlement hierarchy is the defining vision for how the county or city is likely to grow and develop over the lifetime of the development plan, with a clear set of spatial priorities identified. The settlement strategy of the plan is the means by which spatial choices are made and priorities expressed. The totality of the core strategy articulates the detail of this for the local authority area as a whole and for each settlement, in terms of targeted housing provision and land-use zoning proposals.

The settlement hierarchy of the development plan sits within the national and regional planning hierarchy and must reflect this wider context. At the national level, the NPF sets out parameters for growth for the regions, cities, urban areas and rural areas. These parameters are further detailed in the three Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs).

Accordingly, the settlement strategy of the development plan should provide nationally and regionally consistent, as well as additional local direction, on the anticipated future development of all settlements, including in particular, mid-sized and smaller settlements and rural areas. Smaller settlements will be defined in the development plan and should use the equivalent settlement typology of settlements referenced in the relevant RSES and/or as follows:-

Settlement Typology	Defined in:	Population
(a) Cities and Metropolitan Areas	National/Regional Policy	NPF
(b) Regional Growth Drivers		NPF/RSES
(c) Key Towns		RSES
(e) Large Towns	Development Plan	>8-10,000
(f) Medium Towns		4-5,000 - 8-10,000
(g) Small Towns		1,500 - 4-5,000
(h) Rural Areas (settlements)		<1,500
(i) Rural Areas (rural housing)		Dispersed housing

4.5.2 Settlement Strategy – Key Considerations

In formulating a sustainable settlement strategy for the county or city, a holistic, evidence-based analysis is required which examines a range of interrelated factors.

Key Considerations to be examined include:

- Overall Population and Housing Supply Target parameters
- Existing Settlement Structure and Settlement Capacity Audit
- Development Density
- Recent Pattern of Population and Housing Growth
- Local Context

These inputs are set out below:-

Overall Population and Housing Supply Target Parameters

The distribution of housing targets throughout the settlement hierarchy identified in the core strategy (including both the higher-order settlements identified in the RSES and generally smaller settlements identified at development plan stage), is the critical element of settlement strategy in the plan-making process.

The existing (i.e. most up-to-date available) population in each settlement should be clearly set out, with the quantum of new housing targeted for each settlement type also outlined, together with an estimate of what this will mean in terms of additional population per section 4.3 above.

NPF policy on settlement growth includes specific provisions which facilitate significant population growth in settlements in specified circumstances. This responds to situations where smaller settlements have grown rapidly as a result of extensive new zonings, in a manner that could not readily be supported by requisite infrastructure and services.

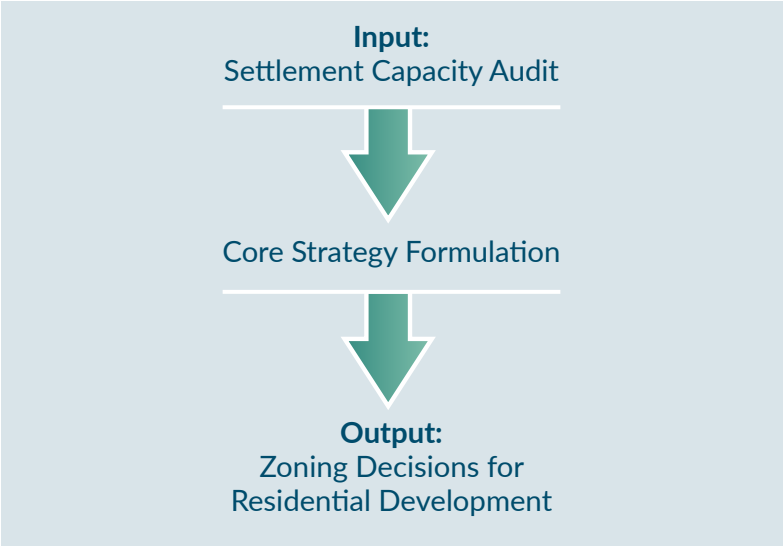
Accordingly, proposals in development plans for extensive new growth targeted at smaller settlements should be made subject to the provisions of NPF NPO9. Any such proposals must include justification and address the provision of infrastructure and services required for any settlements that are to be targeted for growth of this scale. In the interests of clarity and transparency, the core strategy must make clear how much additional zoned land, if any, is proposed to be provided in each settlement.

Existing Settlement Structure and Settlement Capacity Audit (SCA)

The existing settlement structure of the county will form the broad basis of the settlement hierarchy and strategy. The upper tier settlements may be defined in the NPF/RSES, based on their role and scale in the national context. The development plan process requires the identification and classification of the lower tier settlements, based on the local context.

In principle, the greatest proportion of targeted population and housing growth should generally align with the larger settlements, where social and community infrastructure is available at scale and there is also likely to be greater provision of employment and services. There may be other relevant factors, such as proximity to a high quality public transport corridor, which could provide justification for targeting a greater level of growth in one settlement over another.

The distribution of population and housing targets to the various settlements in the settlement hierarchy, including rural areas, will require a rigorous, evidence-based assessment. A comprehensive capacity audit of the land and sites with potential for development at a settlement level, is a prerequisite to inform the drafting of the settlement strategy. The planning authority will need a complete analysis of the capacity of each settlement to accommodate new development in terms of suitable lands and infrastructure within the plan period. This '*Settlement Capacity Audit*' (SCA) exercise accords with Appendix 3 to the NPF, which distinguishes between lands that are 'Serviced' (Tier 1) and those that are 'Serviceable' (Tier 2). This is to ensure that an informed decision can be made as to whether or not to zone land or sites in particular settlements for residential development and to inform the core strategy considerations set out in Section 4.4 above.



The SCA requires an infrastructural assessment of lands within and adjacent to settlements as a key research input to the settlement strategy formulation process. At the most basic site level, this infrastructural assessment must include the following infrastructure categories:

- Road access[1]
- Footpath access[1]
- Cycle access[1]
- Foul sewerage drainage[2]
- Water supply[2]
- Surface water drainage[2]

[1] Including public lighting provision

[2] In terms of capacity at a settlement level and access of sites to the network

Proposals to facilitate housing development through zoning must be firmly grounded in the knowledge that appropriate services are/will be available to enable development within the plan period in order for the core strategy to be realisable in practice.

The SCA exercise must also include an examination of the capacity for new residential development within the Built-Up Footprint of existing settlements in line with compact growth priorities of national planning policy[17]. Therefore the potential for brownfield/infill and mixed use development must also be identified and estimated.

Broad assumptions regarding the residential yield to be delivered on substantial individual sites is required, together with estimates of smaller-scale infill housing growth, such that a robust estimate of overall development potential can be formulated.

In practice, the Settlement Capacity Audit will further develop and update the '*R***esidential Land Availability**' (RLA) dataset[18] previously undertaken by planning authorities in 2014. The RLA spatial dataset which comprises a GIS map layer of all lands with residential development potential will, under the SCA, be enhanced to provide data on development sites within settlements including service status, i.e. whether classified as 'Tier 1 Serviced Lands' or 'Tier 2 Serviceable Lands', as well as potential housing yield estimates.

The **Settlement Capacity Audit** will therefore comprise of:

(i) a table providing, for each settlement >1500 people, or where lands are zoned in settlements of <1,500, existing population, potential housing estimates for

(a) Tier 1 Serviced Lands

(b) Tier 2 Serviceable Lands

(ii) accompanying maps that identify Tier 1 and Tier 2 lands or sites with potential for residential development in the individual settlements, with the existing Built-up Footprint (i.e. CSO Urban Settlement boundary) also indicated.

The purpose of this is to create an evidence base to understand the actual capacity of a settlement to accommodate development and to relate desired growth to actual housing delivery potential. This analysis will ensure that the spatial priorities for development identified are based on evidence that development can occur. For example, in a settlement where significant long-term infrastructural constraints exist, any proposed development must either address or be proportionate to the constraint(s).

This exercise requires consideration of existing zoned land in the first instance in accordance with development plan core strategy requirements set out in Section 10(2A)(c) of the Planning Act and may extend to lands that are not zoned in consideration of lands that may be proposed to be zoned in accordance with Section 10(2A)(d) of the Act. This evidence base will, inter alia, inform the core strategy and settlement strategy in targeting future housing growth on the basis of individual settlements and more broadly in rural areas.

[17] National Planning Objectives 3a-c

[18] Residential Land Availability Survey 2014, Summary Report, DECLG, February 2015.

Development Density

In preparing a core strategy it is necessary to examine the capacity of individual landholdings and sites to accommodate new housing development. Through estimating an anticipated housing yield from a site, it is possible to assemble, in aggregate, the lands needed to achieve the delivery of the agreed housing supply target.

In estimating the housing yield (ie. number of housing units) from sites identified and zoned for housing, planning authorities must make density assumptions consistent with the appropriate density parameters for different scales of settlement as set out in the '*Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, Guidelines for Planning Authorities*' (2009). The content of these Guidelines have been further clarified recently by a Circular Letter[19] to planning authorities. The Department is preparing further detailed guidelines in this regard which will assist in providing an appropriate assessment residential density and therefore an accurate estimate of housing yield from development sites.

Recent Pattern of Population and Housing Growth

The recently experienced rate of growth in settlements will be an important consideration in formulating proposals for future growth designations an d subsequent zo ning. For example, if the output of housing in a settlement has been at a low rate over a sustained period of time, the reasons for this should be examined. The capacity for housing delivery and likely demand for housing should be carefully considered so that housing delivery targets are credible.

If projected growth assumptions are proposed that deviate significantly from historic trends, there should be a clear rationale and justification for this. The extent of rural housing (if applicable) as a proportion of housing output in the relevant area over the medium-term and in comparison to the delivery of housing in settlements, must also be taken into account.

Some settlements, particularly in the environs of cities and metropolitan areas, have experienced very high levels of growth in recent decades. The extent to which there are infrastructural deficits in such settlements, such as in relation to water services, transport, schools and community facilities, should be a key factor when considering additional population/housing growth. It may be appropriate to moderate growth targets in such cases.

There may be an underlying context to the performance of certain settlements such as delays in the delivery of critical enabling infrastructure or a significant slow-down in the housing market. These factors should also be evaluated and in particular, their likelihood of being addressed within the six-year plan period considered. It may also be the case that the rate of growth in lower tier settlements or in rural areas may be significantly higher than that targeted, and any such trends must be clearly indicated.

This type of analysis should have been provided in the Baseline Report (refer to Chapter 3) and will be presented in summary form in the development plan core strategy.

Local Context

In addition to the above, there are a number of additional local context considerations that are likely to be of relevance and will need to be examined in formulating the settlement strategy. These include:-

Rural/Urban Profile

The rural/urban characteristics of the development plan area are a valid consideration. Outside the local authority areas which include significant parts of cities, the aggregate rural population ranges from around 30% to almost 90% of the total. The settlement strategy approach for counties will therefore differ, depending on the existing rural/urban population structure.

[19] Circular Letter NRUP 02/2021, April 2021.

Employment Profile

Trends in employment (number of jobs, the ratio of jobs to resident workers and net commuting flows, etc.) should be analysed when considering the potential location for additional residential zonings and the settlement growth. In general, priority should be given to settlements that already have a significant quantum of employment and/or a realistic prospect of employment growth, so that housing and employment can be spatially aligned.

Conversely, an uncoordinated approach in providing greenfield employment zonings in all settlements, irrespective of servicing, scale or strategy, on the basis that this may provide a more favourable jobs ratio, is discouraged. It is important to have regard to the National Policy Objectives of the NPF,[20] which require local authorities to identify and quantify locations for strategic employment development in suitable areas.

Sustainable Transport Provision

The existing commuting profile of settlements should be carefully examined, together with future planned transport infrastructure. It should be a priority to favour development that supports sustainable modes of transport, including public transport and active modes of travel (walking and cycling) to avoid locking-in unsustainable patterns of car-based commuting, when targeting significant population and housing growth. Enhanced (either existing or planned) public transport capacity serving a settlement should factor strongly in assessing its potential for growth relative to locations/settlements that are not as well served.

Environmental Designation Constraints

Some settlements or areas may have a particularly sensitive receiving environment for development and the formulation of the settlement strategy must reflect any such constraints, including potential impact on designated European sites, and water quality. The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process and in particular, the consideration of alternatives as part of SEA, is central to this. The threat of flood risk is also an important environmental consideration.

4.6 Other Core Strategy Requirements

4.6.1 Core Strategy Diagrammatic Map

Section 10(2B) of the Planning Act requires the principal elements of the core strategy to be represented on a diagrammatic map or other such visual representation. This must include the settlement hierarchy of the county and/or city area, relevant roads, including national roads and inter-urban and commuter rail routes, and may be in schematic form.

For development plans that include all or part of a city area, the diagrammatic map must also identify the city centre, areas designated for significant development, public transport and the location of retail centres. This requirement is intended to give a clear representation of the spatial relationship/interaction between settlement, development, and transportation.

4.6.2 Economic Strategy

The development plan should include an economic strategy chapter. The Regional Spatial Economic Strategies (RSESs) have an economic policy role, with which the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECPs) plan-making process must be aligned. The economic policy set out in the relevant RSES is therefore a framework for the development of the economic strategy of the development plan.

There must be a close interaction and synergy between the development plan and the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECPs). The purpose of the LECPs, as provided for in the Local Government Reform Act 2014, is to set out (for a six-year period) the objectives

[20] National Planning Objectives 10a & 10b

and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of the relevant local authority area.

Accordingly, together with the RSES, the LECPs should provide some very useful baseline information for the development plan about the nature of the local economy, in terms of broad economic activity trends and local specialisations. Many Local Authorities have provided very detailed socio-economic baseline studies as part of the LECPs process and some of these include a spatial element which has particular relevance and usefulness for the development plan making process.

The economic strategy of the development plan should expand on this, with a specific focus on the spatial components of economic activity. The LECPs analysis on sectoral trends should therefore be augmented with a spatial analysis of economic activity, which may, in turn, inform employment and enterprise land use zoning proposals.

The development plan is primarily focused on physical planning issues such as the location of development, the provision of infrastructure and the appropriate use of land. However, this is situated within the context of economic, social and cultural objectives of the wider community, which are now recognised as fundamental to the attraction of enterprise and talent, to foster and drive economic activity.

If the development plan process is to be effective and responsive to the wider objectives of society, account must be taken of the relevant drivers of change. The inputs of specialist agencies and representative bodies working in the economic development sector are therefore relevant. The development plan must be informed by the policies, objectives and relevant strategies developed by agencies such as IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and Údarás Na Gaeltachta, as well as local Chambers and business representative groups.

Examples of synergies between the activities of development agencies and land use policies might include:

- ensuring the requirements of specific sectors are being addressed in land use terms, i.e. both local start-up businesses and foreign direct investment;
- new, emerging technologies/industries and any specific land use planning implications that may arise;
- co-ordination of employment and industrial land provision with other specific infrastructure requirements such as roads and public transport, water services, energy and/or communications;
- planning schemes for Strategic Development Zones designated by Government under Section 166 of the Act.

NPF policy on planning for employment growth recommends particular spatial areas of focus for planning authorities to consider in drafting a county or city scale economic strategy. The critical links between the quality of urban place-making and business investment/ job creation are also reinforced in the NPF. The Economic Strategy of the development plan should highlight the relationship between place-making and economic success and the fact that sustainable enterprise thrives in supportive business environments that enhance competitiveness and productivity with good supporting infrastructure.

4.6.3 Retail Strategy

Section 10(2A)(e) of the Planning Act 2000 (as amended) specifically requires the core strategy of a development plan to show that the planning authority has had regard to any relevant ministerial guidelines that relate to retail development.

The Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012 set out a framework to ensure that retail development is plan-led, to promote city centre vitality through the sequential approach to development, enable good quality development in appropriate locations, facilitate modal shift and to deliver quality design outcomes.

Any provision of significant retail development proposed in development plans must therefore be consistent with the requirements of Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012, or any subsequent update, and where not in conflict with any updated retail guidelines, the retail hierarchy for the Regional Assembly area, as expressed in the relevant RSES.

The core strategy of a development plan should set out clearly the retail hierarchy for the county or city and how this relates to the settlement hierarchy.

Planning authorities should ensure that retail objectives in development plans support placemaking and the regeneration for core town centre areas and NPF strategic policy objectives of increased compact growth.

Retail Hirarchy
LEVEL 1: **Metropolitan - Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford Cities;**
LEVEL 2: **Regional - Major Town Centres, Regional Drivers & County/Key (Town Centres)**
LEVEL 3: **Sub-Regional - Town and/or District Centres & Sub-County Town Centres (Key Service Centres)**
LEVEL 4 **Small Towns and Villages - Neighbourhood Centres, Local Centres**
Level 5 **Local Shopping - Corner Shops/Small Villages**

4.6.4 Core Strategy Statement

Once formulated, the Core Strategy should include a 'Core Strategy Statement' that sets out clearly:

- Consistency with national and regional spatial strategy and policy, and in particular the total quantum of additional housing and population targeted over the plan period;
- The total quantum of existing and proposed land zoned for residential use;
- The rationale for the settlement hierarchy for a county development plan, or city, or city and county development plan, as appropriate, that addresses each settlement type, including rural areas.

The core strategy statement must include an outline of the rationale behind the distribution of housing and population for each settlement type in the settlement hierarchy. It should be clearly understood by anyone reading the statement how the allocation was arrived at across the various settlement types.

In outlining the rationale for the core strategy, the statement should identify the key issues such as any local infrastructural deficiencies considered in the process and an explanation of any circumstances where new population/housing is targeted for a settlement which would be disproportionate relative to the existing scale of the settlement.

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Further to Sections 10(1A) and 10(2A) of the Planning Act, a development plan core strategy shall include a core strategy statement that sets out:-

- Consistency with national and regional spatial strategy and policy, with particular reference to the total quantum of additional housing and population targeted over the six-year plan period;
- The total quantum of existing and proposed land zoned for residential use to achieve the additional housing and population targeted over the six-year plan period;
- The rationale for the settlement strategy, that informs the settlement hierarchy, which must address each settlement and area type in the hierarchy.

5 Development Plan Objectives - Overview

5. Development Plan Objectives – Overview

5.1 Objectives of the Development Plan

The requirements of the Planning Act with regard to the content of development plans are set out in Section 10(1), which states that:

> **"A development plan shall set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area of the development plan and shall consist of a written statement and a plan or plans indicating the development objectives for the area in question."**

These objectives of the development comprise of:

- Mandatory Objectives that **must** be included in the development plan. These are set out in Section 10(2)(a-p) of the Planning Act and are addressed in detail in Chapters 6-9 of these Guidelines.
- Discretionary Objectives that **may** be included in the development plan. These are described in the First Schedule of the Planning Act, "Purposes for which objectives may be indicated in Development Plan".

There are a number of key factors that should be considered in the selection and drafting of objectives in a development plan.

- **The objective should be relevant and necessary**
  A critical evaluation should be made of all of the objectives in the existing development plan to examine which ones should be carried over to the new plan and which ones may no longer be relevant. An important part of this evaluation process is to identify and remove objectives that are vague or not specific.

- **The objective should be capable of implementation and should be referenced against an indicator for the purposes of monitoring**
  The objective should be framed and worded in a manner that means it is capable of being clearly understood and capable of implementation - a measurable objective that may be linked to data-based indicators or metrics, for example. Planning authorities should aim to select relevant and, where possible, 'action-oriented' objectives.

- **The objective should be consistent with national policy and standards, and any relevant ministerial guidelines.**
  Any objective should be consistent with national guidelines and policies with the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. Particular regard should be had to specific planning policy requirements (SPPRs) of planning guidelines[21]. Existing objectives in development plans may need to be amended to reflect the content and requirements of SPPRs.

- **Objectives should be internally consistent**
  Careful consideration should be given to areas where policy may overlap or give rise to conflict. For example, it may not be possible to implement national policy which seeks a greater level of infill and brownfield residential development within the existing built-up area of settlements, if objectives are inserted into the development plan that require levels of private open space, car parking or residential density appropriate to outer suburban areas only.

- **The objective should not address matters that are the subject of other legislative provisions**.
  Objectives dealing with specific issues that are governed by other legislative codes, including for example, the Building Regulations or the Building Control Acts, should not be included as objectives in development plans. This includes objectives that refer, for example, to specific building standards or methods, such as NZEB, Passive House or Low Carbon Cement.

The planning authority should exercise care and caution in drafting development plan objectives, as the quality of their wording and content will have an impact on the realisation or otherwise of the objective.

[21] within the meaning of Section 28 (1C) of the Planning Act

5.2 Mandatory Objectives

Section 10(2) of the Planning Act sets out the development objectives that **must** be included in the development plan and are therefore 'mandatory' requirements. Mandatory objectives specified in the Act are identified below, grouped by broad theme area and further detailed in the sections of this document as follows:-:

Chapter	Theme	Topic	Mandatory Objective Reference
6	Sustainable Development & Regeneration	Zoning of Land	Section 10(2)(a)
		Transport/Water/Waste Services	Section 10(2)(b)
		Urban Renewal	Section 10(2)(h)
7	Communities and People	Amenities (Development)	Section 10(2)(j)
		Social, Community and Cultural Considerations	Section 10(2)(d)
		Community services	Section 10(2)(l)
		Traveller Accommodation	Section 10(2)(i)
		Gaeltacht Areas	Section 10(2)(m)
8	Environment & Climate Change	Climate Change	Section 10(2)(n)
		Environment	Section 10(2)(ca)
		Major Accidents Directive	Section 10(2)(k)
9	Heritage & Landscape	Archaeological Heritage	Section 10(2)(c)
		Amenities (Natural)	Section 10(2)(j)
		Natural Heritage	Section 10(2)(ca)
		Protected Areas	Section 10(2)(cb)
		Architectural Heritage Policy	Section 10(2)(f)
		Architectural Conservation Areas	Section 10(2)(g)
		Landscape Character, Views, Prospects	Section 10(2)(e)
		Landscape Protection and Management	Section 10(2)(p)
		Rights of Way	Section 10(2)(o)

5.3 Setting Measurable Objectives

Each development plan will address the various mandatory objectives in a manner that is relevant to the circumstances of each county/city. However, it is important that in drafting objectives that a rigorous, evidenced-based approach is followed and that the objective is measurable and capable of being monitored and evaluated. The 'SMART' approach to the development of objectives is recommended – that is, objectives stated in the development plan should be specific, measurable, assignable, realistic and time-related.

SMART Objective Design

- **Specific** – target a specific item for improvement.
- **Measurable** – quantify or at least suggest an indicator of progress.
- **Assignable** – specify who will do it.
- **Realistic** – state what results can realistically be achieved, given available resources.
- **Time-related** – specify when the result(s) can be achieved (with particular reference to the six-year Development Plan timeline)

Development plans will often state an overarching '*Strategic Aim*' or '*Strategic Objective*' which expresses the broad, strategic policy direction for a particular topic. These Strategic Objectives may, of necessity, lack detailed specifics – for example;

> **"To co-ordinate transport and land use planning, reducing the demand for travel and the reliance on the private car in favour of public transport, cycling and walking."**

However, the objectives that set out how this 'Strategic Aim' is to be realised should, where possible, be measurable and capable of being monitored. Further developing a strategic aim or objective, a development plan could set as a more specific objective that "*In line with national 'Smarter Travel' targets, work-related commuting by car will be reduced from a current modal share of 65% to 45%".* This objective is benchmarked against a particular data point (CSO data on mode share) and its impact can be tracked and measured over time, relative to the baseline level for the county.

Not all development plan objectives will be measurable with a simple data metric. It is entirely valid and reasonable for a development plan to set qualitative objectives, for example, to seek a '*high quality of urban design*' or for developments to contribute to a '*sense of place*' while acknowledging that these are not always readily measurable. Qualitative objectives are better suited to performance or criteria-based indicators. In drawing this distinction, planning authorities should endeavour to identify suitable quantitative or qualitative indicators for as many of the objectives of a development plan as possible.

The Planning Act requires the ongoing monitoring of a development plan and these requirements are detailed in Chapter 10 below. It is necessary for the Planning Authority to assess how a development plan is performing. For example, are the development plan objectives being implemented successfully or is the policy direction off-course? Without any measurable objectives, linked to data-based indicators or metrics, the monitoring and evaluation process of the development plan is restricted to a purely qualitative, opinion-based assessment.

5.4 Selecting Indicators

To this end, when drafting objectives, it is therefore recommended that indicators be selected for each objective in the development plan, where possible.

Good examples of the type of indicators that should be considered under the most common development plan themes are outlined below. It is important to consider the suitability of each indicator under a number of criteria: how directly relevant it is to the policy, how timely it is produced, how readily accessible is the data?

According to NESC (2002)[22] skey performance indicators, should be:

1) Easily understandable–simple, clear and relatively easy to interpret;
2) Policy-relevant–relate to the three dimensions of sustainable development and be linked to desired goals;
3) Focused on priority issues–indicators should be issue-driven rather than data-driven;
4) Robust–they should be logically or scientifically robust;
5) Measurable–feasible in terms of current or planned data availability;
6) Subject to ongoing assessment–they should be open to reflect changing objectives, issues and data availability.

Once identified, the indicators should be tested and refined to ensure that they are policy relevant, linked to the objectives and easy to understand and communicate. Only suitable, up-to-date and reliable data which is readily accessible should be used. Where possible, indicators should have targets associated with them to link them to relevant national or EU targets.

Chapter 10 of these Guidelines is concerned with a set of common, broadly-based indicators that will be used to monitor the development plan against a set of key national policy objectives. However, each plan should seek, as part of the process of formulating plan objectives, to devise an additional set of more tailored, bespoke indicators that relate to the specific development plan policies.

[22] NATIONAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL, National Progress Indicators for Sustainable Economic, Social and Environmental Development (February 2002)

Development Plan Objectives: Good Practice Examples

OBJECTIVE
To expand the coverage of high speed broadband to all areas within the Plan area within the lifetime of the Plan.
INDICATOR
Broadband coverage – as measured by the Census/ComReg Broadband Coverage Maps. A baseline level of coverage should be clearly identified at Draft Plan stage and this baseline is monitored over time.

OBJECTIVE
Expand 30 km/h speed limit zones to all residential areas of the City
INDICATOR
Percentage of residential areas covered by speed restriction. Again, a baseline level of coverage should be clearly identified at Draft Plan stage and monitored over time. Also, an ancillary indicator could be a data source such as the Road Safety Authority's 'Free Speed Survey' data on adherence to speed limits in residential areas.

OBJECTIVE
To provide that planning permissions granted for the development of all new schools or for existing schools where 25% or greater expansion in classrooms is proposed, should include a requirement for the provision of cycle paths from the school to join the nearest cycle network, where feasible.
INDICATOR
Number of school schemes (both new and expansions) which are granted planning permission and include the stated requirement for cycle paths.

OBJECTIVE
It is Council policy to encourage the establishment of sustainable residential communities by ensuring that an increased variety of housing and apartment types and sizes are provided within the County.
INDICATOR
Census data on housing mix and size should be used to establish a baseline of the housing characteristics in the County. Local Authority planning and development data on housing schemes granted planning permission and constructed should be monitored to provide an ongoing trendline in relation to dwelling type, size and tenure (if possible) and to establish if the variety of the mix is changing over time.

Development Plan Objectives: Approaches to be avoided

OBJECTIVE
"To ensure the highest standards of environmental protection in the assessment of planning applications for all development proposals"
COMMENT
While the aspiration of this Objective is laudable, it is not at all clear how it can be measured or evaluated. Linking 'environmental protection' to 'development proposals' through a measurable process, such as Appropriate Assessment Screening or the Code of Practice for Wastewater Treatment Systems for Single Houses and then reporting on compliance with these processes would be a more suitable approach.

OBJECTIVE
"It is Council policy to facilitate measured and proportionate mews lane housing development in suitable locations."
COMMENT
Again, while the sentiment of the Objective may be well-intentioned, without a clearer definition of the terms 'measured', 'proportionate' or 'suitable', it is all but impossible to establish the success of this objective over time.

5.5 Non-Mandatory Objectives

The First Schedule to the Planning Act sets out a broader range of 'discretionary' objectives, which **may** be indicated in the development plan, as so determined by the planning authority. These objectives cover a wide array of themes, some of which will likely be included in all development plans and some which may be more relevant to particular local authority areas. Some objectives relate to very specific themes, for example the control of development in coastal areas, which will only be relevant for counties with a coastline.

An important factor that should be considered in the selection and drafting of non-mandatory objectives is that the objective should be both relevant and necessary. The planning authority should carefully consider the range of non-mandatory objectives as set out in the First Schedule and select the most relevant ones for their development plan area.

A critical evaluation should be made of all of the non-mandatory objectives in the existing development plan, with a view to examining which ones should be carried over to the new Draft Plan and which ones may no longer be relevant. Planning authorities should be careful not to unnecessarily include historical objectives from one plan to the next, in circumstances where the content of the objective is no longer relevant or has been superseded by new legislation or planning guidelines in the subject area.

5.6 Local Area Plan Preparation

The provisions of Section 19(1) of the Act set out the circumstances where the making of a local area plan for an area is mandatory (population, designation as a census town, etc.) and where it is at the discretion of the planning authority.

In order to provide clarity in relation to local area plans, it is recommended that the planning authority identify in the development plan where development is to be subject to the making of a local area plan (per Section 10(7) of the Act). This can be most appropriately provided by means of a specific list included with the core strategy. The development plan should provide a rationale for the approach to LAP selection and provide a consistent basis for undertaking such a statutory exercise.

The commitment to produce a large number of LAPs, primarily on the basis that there is an existing or historical LAP in place, should be avoided. The planning authority should instead examine if appropriate objectives and policies can be included in the development plan sufficient to provide a planning framework for the development of more modestly sized settlements.

6 Sustainable Development and Regeneration

6. Sustainable Development and Regeneration

6.1 Focusing on Sustainable Development

The development plan process is an opportunity to focus on sustainable patterns of development that can support and regenerate settlements or all sizes and surrounding rural areas, through utilising mandatory objectives for land-use zoning, infrastructural provision and regeneration. This can proactively bring a focus to improving the sustainability and vitality of settlements, with new development and investment opportunities.

This Chapter provides guidance to planning authorities to consider in unison the strongly correlated mandatory objectives of:

- **Land Use Zoning** under section 10(2)(a) of the Act;
- **Infrastructure** under section 10(2)(b) of the Act;
- **Regeneration** under section 10(2)(h) of the Act;

The Chapter comprises of:

- Initial consideration of each of the three mandatory objectives individually at an overall development plan (county or city) level;
- The required approach to be undertaken by a planning authority in considering them in combination at individual settlement scale, including their relationship with the core strategy and settlement strategy of the plan.

6.2 Mandatory Objective: Zoning

Section 10(2)(a) of the Act requires that a development plan shall include objectives for:

" (a) the zoning of land for the use solely or primarily of particular areas for particular purposes (whether residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational, as open space, or otherwise, or a mixture of these uses) and to such extent as the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, in the opinion of the planning authority, requires the uses to be indicated"

The zoning of land is the primary spatial expression of the strategy of the development plan and is a key element of the plan-making process. This includes zoning for particular types of development (e.g. residential or employment), but also for other important land uses such as recreation, open space and agriculture.

Land-use zoning is therefore about identifying the quantity of land needed for particular use types, the best locations for such land-uses and the acceptability or otherwise of the various classes of land-use within any particular zoning. It also allows for the identification of areas suited to a combination of uses, which is particularly important to facilitate flexibility and mixed-use development, where appropriate, to support compact growth. The provision of land-use zoning within the development plan is intended to provide a degree of certainty and clarity to the community, landowners, developers and investors regarding future development.

In making individual decisions on residential zonings at particular locations and for individual sites and parcels of land, there must be a clear rationale that relates directly to the core strategy of the development plan, based on an analysis of all settlements to identify sites with realistic capacity for development during the plan period, including infrastructural requirements and housing yield potential.

Planning authorities should also be mindful that the relevant provisions of Part V of the Planning Act with regard to social and affordable housing provision apply only to lands zoned for residential development or zoned for a mixture of residential and other uses. Section 95(1) of the Act also requires that sufficient and suitable land is zoned to meet the requirements of the housing strategy.

6.2.1 Zoning in the Development Plan

In formulating a core strategy, as much certainty and clarity as possible is required regarding the location of lands zoned for residential development. A core strategy should apply housing 'targets' to settlements only where a detailed analysis of the housing delivery potential of those settlements has been undertaken and can inform such an approach.

This is to ensure alignment between the intended strategic locations for development and an understanding of the capacity of those locations to deliver such programmed development. It is recommended that in most cases, that land-use zoning decisions should not be deferred to subsequent local area plan processes. This is to avoid a scenario whereby the development plan core strategy may be subject to challenge and effectively undermined in a separate statutory process.

There are clear practical advantages to aligning the core strategy, settlement strategy and principal residential zoning functions in a single, integrated development plan process including:

(i) Transparency and coherence in the decision-making process, with the full extent of residential zoning set out for the six-year period of the development plan;

(ii) Ensuring certainty by avoiding a scenario whereby lands are not zoned or inappropriately zoned in separate statutory processes;

(iii) Providing clarity, especially where there may be a risk due to the time delay in preparing a number of subsequent local area plans; Enabling planning authority resources to focus on plan implementation and monitoring;

(iv) Enabling local area plan preparation to concentrate on detailed planning for layout, design, community facilities, transport, recreational amenities, etc. at a local level.

Accordingly, land-use zoning should principally be undertaken as part of the development plan process in tandem with the preparation of the directly-related core and settlement strategies, informed by a Settlement Capacity Audit.

6.2.2 Consistency in Zoning Objectives

In order for development plans to have coherence across administrative boundaries, a greater degree of consistency is required in the zoning objectives utilised by planning authorities. While there are a relatively small number of core zoning objectives focused on principal land use and development types, such as residential, employment, town centre, agriculture or amenities, these can vary greatly in their wording and remit, especially between different local authority development plans.

When such objectives are compared across planning authority boundaries this results in a degree of ambiguity and confusion in the development priorities for a zoning type, especially when examined on a regional or national basis. This wide variation in zoning objectives also militates against the monitoring of development trends, both regionally and nationally.

Certain zoning objectives can also be overly specific or narrowly devised, which is not appropriate to the general purpose of land-use zoning. From the perspective of an applicant for planning permission, this can give rise to unnecessary variation in the purpose for which certain lands or locations may be zoned, when considering different locations for development and investment.

Accordingly, there is a need for greater standardisation in zoning objectives used development plans in order to enhance consistency, both within local authority areas and across the Country. Appendix B to these guidelines provides a list of zoning objectives that planning authorities may incorporate into development plans which allow for a degree of local variation where necessary, but achieves the required standardization on a national basis.

6.2.3 Sequential Approach to Zoning for Residential Development

In undertaking the zoning function for new residential development at individual settlement scale, planning authorities are required to adopt a sequential approach which reflects the compact growth, utilisation of existing infrastructure and town regeneration national policy objectives of the NPF, furthering developing the Tiered Approach.[23]

The spatial pattern of the growth of settlements, often along radial access routes, characterised by ribbon and low density development, has served to 'lock-in' extremely high levels of car dependence and render settlements too spread out and incoherent to comfortably get around on foot or by bicycle.

In many cases, undeveloped lands and sites have been left idle, even though they may be relatively centrally located with good access and availability of services infrastructure to enable development. This pattern of development has contributed to the decline of town centres and has resulted in a neglected appearance to many towns and other urban areas.

This spatial growth pattern can be changed toward a more compact growth approach through the prioritisation of lands closest to the centres of settlements. Planning authorities are therefore required to utilise a **sequential approach** when considering proposals for land-use zoning, in particular for residential development.

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Planning authorities shall adopt a sequential approach when zoning lands for development, whereby the most spatially centrally located development sites in settlements are prioritised for new development first, with more spatially peripherally located development sites being zoned subsequently.

There is a requirement for clear policy consistency between the development plan core strategy and associated zoning decisions made by the planning authority. The methodology for integrating the core strategy, settlement strategy and zoning function will be through the **Sequential Test for Residential Zoning in Settlements** which comprises:-

STEP 1: As outlined in Chapter 4, the core strategy of the development plan will be formulated and provide a housing unit targets for settlements and rural areas This will be based on a **Settlement Capacity Audit** providing estimates of housing yield for (i) Serviced [Tier 1] lands and (ii) Serviceable [Tier 2] lands in settlements.-

STEP 2: In accordance with the **Sequential Test**, identified lands with potential for new residential development that are situated within or closest to the settlement core (including brownfield, infill and redevelopment sites) shall be zoned to facilitate residential development with/without other land uses as appropriate to fulfill the identified core strategy requirement. This exercise should be based on an assessment of the quantum of housing to be delivered on individual sites or land parcels, such that when aggregated, there is sufficient capacity to deliver the core strategy housing target for the subject settlement.

STEP 3: Where it is necessary to zone serviced, but spatially less central lands (i.e. 'Tier 1' lands) to meet core strategy requirements, these shall be identified and prioritised on a spatially sequential basis (i.e. with those most proximate to the core, given preference, and first zoned for development). As part of this process, estimates of housing yield from such zonings must be considered against **Core Strategy** requirements.

STEP 4: Subsequently, where it is also necessary to zone unserviced, but serviceable, spatially less central lands (i.e. 'Tier 2' lands) in order to meet core strategy requirements, these shall be identified and prioritised on a spatially sequential basis (i.e. with those most proximate to the core, given preference and first zoned for development). Clear estimates of housing yield from such zonings must be considered against **Core Strategy** requirements.

[23] Per Appendix 3 of the NPF

Exceptions to the Sequential Approach

A. While the purpose of the sequential approach is to avoid development 'leapfrogging' to less centrally located areas, there may be exceptional circumstances where it is not possible to achieve sequential objectives. In some cases there may be an identifiable physical or environmental constraint on the coherent spatial growth of a town such as a floodplain or protected site, for example. Such exceptions should be clearly justified and set out in the written statement of the development plan.

B. There may also be circumstances where Tier 2 lands are positioned spatially closer to the core of a settlement than identified Tier 1 lands. In such circumstances, the planning authority will need to carefully examine and weigh up:-
   - the potential for and likelihood of the Tier 2 lands to be developed (including the timeline and certainty over the provision of the required infrastructure); and,
   - the relative geographic distances between available options, with a view to achieving the overall coherent spatial growth of the settlement;
   - the relative contributions that the Tier 1 and Tier 2 lands can make to achieving the core strategy allocation for the settlement.

Specific phasing objectives may be appropriate to permit all or part of the more spatially central Tier 2 lands to be zoned for development – e.g. in tandem with specific regeneration measures/initiative, as part of strategic and sustainable development site.

6.2.4 Sequential Development in a City Context

The five cities are targeted for significantly increased and consolidated population growth as key national strategic planning objectives, as set out in the NPF. This growth is also addressed by the relevant RSES, and the MASP strategies contained therein to achieve a sustainable compact growth model.

While sequential development at the city scale is not comparable to town settlements with a single central spatial focus from which the town has grown historically, city development must also be approached sequentially, taking into consideration multiple opportunities for the intensification of development at appropriate scales relative to context. In a city area, development policy must ensure that the focus of the development plan is on securing a sufficient quantum of infill and brownfield development and regeneration to meet national policy objectives.

As part of this approach, prioritising new development along high quality public transport corridors must be integrated into the policies and objectives of the development plan, in order to support and reinforce public transport investment. Similarly, parts of urban areas identified as specific focus for regeneration, may be appropriate for prioritised new residential development in tandem with programmed investment in new infrastructure and amenities.

6.2.5 Zoning for Employment Uses

Ensuring that the economic or employment strategy of the development plan is translated into the appropriate land use zoning proposals is an important consideration in the plan preparation process. The evidence and rationale underpinning the zoning of land for employment purposes must be clear and strategic in nature. Development plan preparation should include a comprehensive approach to estimating the differing zoning requirements for employment uses.

To this end, the development plan must include a spatial analysis of the existing location of employment in the county or city as a baseline. There are a number of useful datasets from the census - 'POWSCAR' or WorkPlace Zone data - which can be used to create a spatial profile of employment within each planning authority area. The WorkPlace zones also allow for spatial analysis of concentrations of different types of industry/occupation, to inform where employment is actually concentrated.

The development plan should provide an overview of the existing quantum and rate of take-up of zoned employment land, both developed and undeveloped and should also include relevant servicing information. The plan must include a rationale for any requirement to zone additional lands, based on projected population, economic and employment growth and change over the lifetime of the development plan. Differing typologies of commercial /industrial land uses will generate different employment characteristics (e.g. high-intensity commercial office use in comparison to lower intensity warehousing/logistics) and these should be considered in the overall strategic assessment.

Another important consideration is an analysis of where people work. In many local authority areas, a significant proportion of jobs are not located in defined 'employment/ enterprise' land zones. Mixed use town centre and district centre zones l account for a significant amount of employment. This is also applicable to predominantly residential zones, where schools or social and community facilities, or one-off employment uses for example, may be located. Changing trends with regard to hub and/or home-working may impact this further.

Estimating the land-use zoning requirement for employment development may require some flexibility and a strategic, long-term perspective. However, proposed employment zonings must have a credible rationale, particularly with regard to location and type of employment. It should be possible to demonstrate that the quantum of land zoned is not significantly out of step with estimated future demand arising from population, economic and employment growth and change. The economic policy objectives of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy will be instructive in this regard and the development plan must demonstrate consistency with these.

In order to reflect the differing characteristics of employment and economic activity, recommended land use zonings for employment are included in Appendix B to these guidelines. General 'employment' zonings with ambiguous or unclear objectives should not be provided for in a development plan, as they can result in conflicting uses that may give rise to competing operational and environmental requirements.

6.2.6 Supporting Amenities, Facilities and Services

When undertaking zoning decisions, in addition to the provision of strategic and enabling water/drainage/transport and other infrastructure, consideration must also be given to the future availability of (or the capacity to provide) supporting local community and amenity services and infrastructure. This is applicable to employment-related, as well as for new residents and communities, including:

- community facilities;
- medical and health-care facilities;
- schools and childcare;
- public parks and major open spaces;
- recreation and sports facilities;
- public transport.

For some infrastructural provision (e.g. schools), it will be necessary to undertake this analysis at a county/city wide scale as part of the overall development plan preparation process and to strongly relate this strategic provision to the provision at an individual settlement level such that clear requirements and capacities are identified to support planned development locally.

6.2.7 Zoning for Rural Areas

Most county development plans provide for a spatially differentiated rural housing policy, with rural area types defined in accordance with Guidelines on Sustainable Rural Housing (2005). The various rural area types have generally been presented as standalone maps, separate from the land use zoning objectives of the development plan.

Planning Authorities should apply a specific land use zoning designation for areas under significant pressure for rural housing development, specifically areas under strong urban influence and areas subject to holiday second home development pressures. Any such land use zoning designation may be primarily for rural economic or green belt, agricultural, amenity or conservation purposes, or a combination of such uses, with rural housing development permissible in certain circumstances.

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) have prepared a standardised and consistent methodology for identifying different rural area-types, including those under high urban influence. This is presented as a six-way urban/rural classification in *Urban and Rural Life in Ireland*, CSO, 2019 and this should be used to inform the extent of broad rural zoning in development plans.

This will ensure that development plan policies for rural housing development are applicable to all and proportionately related to the overall objectives of the plan. Such an approach is required to enable differentiation between different classes of person based on economic or social need and the general population, in accordance with both established practice in Ireland and in compliance with wider national and EU requirements.

In developing land use zoning and policies for rural areas, it is important to also consider the mandatory development plan objective in respect of climate change action under S.10(2)(n) of the Planning and Development Act, which relates to the promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas to reduce energy demand.

The Department is currently reviewing the *Guidelines on Sustainable Rural Housing* (2005) and preparing updated guidelines which will provide further clarification on this policy area to be included in development plans.

6.3 Mandatory Objective: Infrastructure

The integration of infrastructure planning and provision with new development is a key element of land-use planning. The adequacy of existing provision, optimising the use of existing infrastructure and the need for additional facilities must be taken into account in the preparation of development plans.

Section 10(2)(b) of the Act requires that a development plan shall include objectives for:

"the provision or facilitation of the provision of infrastructure including—

(i) **transport, energy and communication facilities,**

(ii) **water supplies and waste water services (regard having been had to the water services strategic plan for the area made in accordance with the Water Services Act 2007),**

(iii) **waste recovery and disposal facilities (regard having been had to the waste management plan for the area made in accordance with the Waste Management Act 1996), and**

(iv) **any ancillary facilities or services;"**

It is of critical importance that planning authorities have a clear understanding of the infrastructural requirements of their local authority area when preparing city or county development plans. Although planning authorities do not have direct responsibility for the delivery of water services or public transportation infrastructure for example, they are required to engage at an early stage in the development plan process (see Chapter 2 above) with the various infrastructure providers. This is to ensure that the planning authority is fully informed on the overall status of infrastructural provision in the city/county, including at an individual settlement level.

This information is of particular importance where significant proposals for new residential or other forms of large-scale development may be under consideration. Ensuring that sufficient infrastructural capacity is available or is planned to enable new housing or other forms of development is central to the development plan process, and must be assessed together with the provision of community services and amenities or other necessary support services.

In considering and assessing infrastructural capacities and requirements, the planning authority should differentiate between the following classes of infrastructure, including, but not limited to:

- **Strategic National Infrastructure:** comprising of national road infrastructure, utilities networks such as gas and electricity transmission, rail corridors, light rail and metro systems, airports, ports, regional water services infrastructure, flood management infrastructure;
- **Development Enabling Infrastructure:** concerned with enabling local development priorities to be realized – water services provision, treatment and network infrastructure, pedestrian and cycle network infrastructure, local road and bridge provision, public lighting, local parks and recreational spaces, environmental and public realm improvements;
- **Local Community and Amenity Infrastructure:** comprising of supporting infrastructure required for local communities to develop such as educational buildings/school campuses, childcare facilities, community centres, regional and town parks, recreational and sports complexes, medical facilities, shops and retail outlets. Within this category it is important to distinguish between what may be publically and privately funded or provided, but it is necessary to ensure that all relevant community needs are considered;

Planning Authorities should consult directly with the relevant infrastructure providers and maintain this engagement throughout the statutory development plan process. This includes in particular, early identification of those with decision-making responsibility for public infrastructure and services not directly provided by the local authority. With regard to the specific requirements of the Planning and Development Act, the following should be noted:

6.3.1 Transport

The strategy, policies and specific objectives of the development plan should take an integrated approach to land-use planning and transportation. Sustainable transport considerations are a critical element in the formation of settlement strategy, the overall pattern of development and the reduction in transport emissions necessary to address climate change. Transport policies and objectives will be informed by national and regional strategies and guidelines including in the five cities, by the relevant National Transport Authority (NTA) transport strategy for the city and surrounding area.

At the scale of the planning authority area as a whole and for individual settlements, land-use zoning for development should support the achievement of sustainable travel patterns, reducing reliance on private car usage and promoting public transport and active modes (cycling, walking). Baseline travel data should be presented in the plan, outlining existing commuting and travel to school/college patterns.

Modal split data is sourced from the most recent available Census (the 'workplace zones' and/or 'POWSCAR' datasets should also be used). This provides a baseline from which trends can be examined and the plan strategy developed. It should also form the basis for indicators to be used to assess the implementation of transportation objectives over the lifetime of the development plan.

For all larger settlements, and in particular those with more than 10,000 population, a transport assessment should be undertaken to support the integration of transport and land-use policies and the achievement of sustainable transport at a local level. The approach advocated in the '*Area Based Transport Assessment*' advice document by the NTA provides a structured means of developing local transport policy.

Objectives should be stated to drive the implementation of sustainable transport policy through the development management system, for example requiring the use of

Mobility Management Plans and Workplace Travel Plans for significant developments. Increased share for walking and cycling modes can be achieved through improvement in local infrastructure and the development plan should prioritise the integration of such improvements with planned new development.

6.3.2 Energy and Communications

The development plan written statement must support the timely provision of energy and communications (including broadband) infrastructure. This means ensuring, through liaison with key infrastructure providers at an early stage of the development plan process, that the plan identifies and safeguards key sites and corridors for infrastructure development, such as electricity transmission lines, gas pipelines and communications installations.

Where sufficient information is available, the proposed location of energy and communications infrastructure development, and/or at least safeguarded route corridors, should be and identified on development plan maps to inform the development management process. The implications of development plan policies and objectives not only for the siting and/or route of energy and communications infrastructure, but also for the achievement of targeted national or regional energy or communications performance targets, must be given full consideration in the development plan process.

Development standards should also make express reference to provision of underground service ducting as part of major new housing or commercial developments to facilitate future provision or enhancement of sustainable energy and telecommunications infrastructure where this may be required, without undue future disturbance of roads. This may include provision for district heating, where considered viable based on prior investigation/research.

6.3.3 Water Supply and Wastewater Facilities

The development plan should clearly align future development proposals with water supply and wastewater treatment infrastructure capacity. Where enhancement of infrastructure is required to support development, it should be clearly set out whether this is already programmed, or whether this is planned or deliverable within the life of the development plan, together with the latest known timelines.

To inform this, there must be comprehensive engagement between the planning authority and Irish Water, as the statutory water services infrastructure provider, to ensure that there is a transparent and realistic assessment of current and future planned capacity for water services infrastructure to support new development.

This engagement must be at the initial stage of the development plan process through the preparation of the 'Statement of Capacity' by Irish Water for the planning authority concerned as detailed in Chapter 2. The classification process for 'Tier 1' and 'Tier 2' lands as set out in Appendix 3 of the NPF will be informed to a large degree on the availability and capacity of water supply and wastewater services.

6.3.4 Waste Management and ancillary facilities and services

Waste management in Ireland is regulated by the Waste Management Acts, 1996 to 2011, which require Local Authorities to prepare detailed plans for the management of waste. Under the Waste Management Acts, a Development Plan is deemed to include the objectives of the Waste Management Plan for its area.

In 2012, the Government's blueprint for a circular waste economy, as set out in '*A Resource Opportunity – Waste Management Policy In Ireland*', established a new framework for the provision of effective and efficient waste management services through the establishment of three waste management planning regions: the Eastern-Midlands Region, the Southern Region and the Connaught-Ulster Region. Each of these regions has produced a regional waste management plan that provides the strategic policy content of the constituent local authorities within each region.

Therefore relevant policies and objectives in the Development Plan can assist in underpinning the objectives of the Regional Waste Management Plan and the successful implementation of waste management policy. Examples of policy areas that such objectives may cover include:

- Facilitating the implementation of national legislation and national and regional waste management policy having regard to the waste hierarchy
- Supporting the transition from a waste management economy to a green circular economy
- Prevention and minimization the generation of waste
- Promote re-use, recycling and repair activities and facilities
- Promote the use of clean technology and minimisation of hazardous waste production in industrial activities and development

6.4 Mandatory objective: Regeneration

Section 10(2)(h) of the Act requires that a development plan shall include objectives for:

" (h) the development and renewal of areas, identified having regard to the core strategy, that are in need of regeneration, in order to prevent—

(i) adverse effects on existing amenities in such areas, in particular as a result of the ruinous or neglected condition of any land,

(ii) urban blight and decay,

(iii) anti-social behaviour, or

(iv) a shortage of habitable houses or of land suitable for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses;"

This objective relates to the need to identify areas that are in need of regeneration, to bring derelict, redundant and/or under-utilised land, sites and buildings back into active use, and to address housing need. It directly aligns with the principles of compact growth/town centres first and sustainable development by supporting the urban fabric and the re-use of existing resources and reducing the need for green-field development.

Development plan policies for the achievement of regeneration should seek to directly address the issues of population decline, lack of investment and physical dereliction, in an integrated and cross-cutting way, through a number of policy areas including:-

- Integrated land-use and socio-economic measures to address the physical, economic, social, and environmental problems associated with dereliction and decay;
- Measures to overcome substantive barriers to development such as new infrastructure provision, environmental enhancement and site assembly;
- The promotion of a multi-sector partnership approach involving the planning authority, other public agencies and wider local business and community interests;
- Sufficient flexibility in the application of zoning and development management policies and standards (e.g. enabling compatible mixed uses, reduced car parking requirements), to ensure that development plans actively promote rather than inhibit regeneration; and
- Guidance on the remediation of any contaminated lands.

The designation of 'regeneration areas' in the development plan is also a requirement for the implementation of the Vacant Site Register under the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act, 2015. Regeneration areas should therefore be identified in the written statement and on the relevant development plan maps. The consideration of vacant sites and use of the vacant site levy is a key planning mechanism further detailed below.

The Identification of 'regeneration areas' should be coordinated with the identification of 'Settlement Consolidation Sites' in section 6.4.2 below. In having regard to the core strategy of the development plan, regeneration areas and settlement consolidation sites are included within the 'strategic and sustainable development sites' classification. While it is generally preferable that the development of regeneration areas would be facilitated within the six-year period of the development plan, they may be identified as long-term strategic and sustainable sites where there are significant barriers to development.

6.4.1 Planning for Compact Growth

The National Planning Framework seeks to achieve more compact and sustainable growth through consolidating a greater share of future development within the existing built footprint of settlements, to include new homes, businesses and amenities. The NPF sets national targets for brownfield/infill housing development in the five cities (50%) and all other settlements (30%) to support the regeneration of existing urban areas.

NPF compact growth objectives together with Town Centres First principles are focused on the reuse of previously developed buildings and land and building up 'infill' sites, especially those that are centrally located in settlements at all scales. The development plan process has a strategic role to play in facilitating new development and investment in settlements so that it can support the provision of new homes in areas of greatest housing demand as well as people living closer to employment, recreational opportunities and other services.

Ensuring that a significant portion of new development reflects the compact growth and town centres first agenda is also a key dynamic in addressing climate change, through reducing dependence on car-based transport, the extent of green-field land consumption and costly and inefficient infrastructure provision and use.

In formulating a framework for development, the development plan process must therefore ensure that there is a close correlation between the identification of lands and sites for development with infrastructural capacity and spatially-focused investment, while ensuring that a substantial element of future growth contributes to the regeneration of cities, towns and villages.

Further to setting out a hierarchy of settlements in the core strategy it is essential that the development plan process addresses development planning at a settlement level to ensure the inclusion of tailored policies, objectives and actions for consolidation and growth to arrest and reverse the issue of dereliction and decline in settlements, where relevant.

6.4.2 Settlement Consolidation Sites

In larger settlements and in particular those with a population of greater than 10,000 people, there will normally be certain development sites of relative strategic scale and importance located within the existing built-up area such that they have a critical role to play in achieving the core strategy and, in particular, the NPF policy objectives for consolidation and compact growth. These 'Settlement Consolidation Sites' will be:

- located within the existing built-up area and in many cases be within or adjoining the core city or town centre of the settlement;
- have the potential to deliver significant housing provision or commercial or employment and/or mixed-use development;
- have the potential to generate wider regeneration of the existing built-up area and in particular the core city or town centre area.

These development sites need to be specifically identified in the development plan as '**Settlement Consolidation Sites**'. Where appropriate, an assessment of the potential for housing yield should be undertaken for these strategically important sites. The development plan shall provide a map and accompanying schedule to identify the Settlement Consolidation Sites. The schedule shall provide the site size (in hectares) and any estimated housing yield for each site.

Settlement Consolidation Sites will be a key focus for the delivery of sustainable compact growth objectives. Planning authorities must ensure that Settlement Consolidation Sites are sufficiently strategic in nature and scale and that they are integrated into a wider regeneration plan or strategy for the relevant area of the settlement.

Given the importance of the Settlement Consolidation Sites to achieving core strategy requirements and compact growth, the planning authority will prioritise actions is support of their development. The tracking of the development of any such sites will be a key monitoring exercise of the implementation of the development plan.

6.4.3 Identification of Regeneration Areas and the Vacant Site Levy

The Urban Regeneration and Housing Act, 2015 confirmed the need to include the regeneration of areas as a key part of the development plan process, including the introduction of mandatory objective 10(2)(h) in the preparation of development plans, requiring plan objectives for areas in need of regeneration.

The 2015 Act also introduced the Vacant Site Levy (VSL) which is a key site activation measure in the development planning process that can encourage vacant or underutilised land in urban areas to be brought into beneficial use. Planning Authorities are required to establish a register of vacant sites in their areas, to which the VSL is applied. The statutory procedures for identifying and designating sites for the VSL are set out in the 2015 Act including the key assessment considerations to be undertaken.

The VSL is a significant enabling mechanism to ensure that that lands and sites in towns and cities are used in a more sustainable way and can contribute achieving more compact settlement patterns. The application of the VSL by a planning authority should therefore be coordinated with the strategic focus on compact growth in the development plan. Analysis of settlements undertaken as part of the plan preparation process should identify potential sites for consideration for the VSL.

6.4.4 Coordinated Project Development and Funding Support

The compact growth objectives of the NPF are supported by significant exchequer funding including both the Urban Regeneration & Development Fund (URDF) and Rural Regeneration & Development Fund (RRDF). The capital infrastructural investment programmes of government departments and state agencies are also coordinated to support the compact growth objective through the spatial alignment of the NPF and the National Development Plan, which sets out the national investment strategy for a period of up to ten years.

The development plan process is an opportunity to identify and articulate a development strategy for regeneration, which may include more specific regeneration projects aimed at enabling compact growth. These may include, for example, specific investment and/or infrastructure to support development, such as site assembly, land acquisition and/or sustainable transport initiatives, aimed at activating area-based regeneration and the strategic and sustainable development of sites identified in the development plan.

Such a 'Plan-led' approach to development is now an important means of focusing public and private investment to support the aims of the plan, and underlines the importance of a clear and well-articulated regeneration strategy.

7 Mandatory Objectives: Communities and People

7. Mandatory Objectives: Communities and People

7.1 Integration of Development and Community

This chapter addresses a range of thematically connected Mandatory Objectives, related to communities and people. The objectives cover a broad range of topics from social and community facilities to Traveller Accommodation and the Gaeltacht. A community and its needs will evolve over time due to a number of influencing factors, primarily its changing demographic but other factors may also strongly affect our communities such as the strength of economy, existing service provision and the quality of the environment.

In approaching the policy requirement for facilities in a development plan review, the planning authority will need to be plan effectively for facilities that will serve the needs of communities over time and adapt to changing needs. Considering the life-cycle needs of a community should form part of the consultation process at the outset with prescribed bodies and other agencies and providers and such an approach will benefit communities beyond the term of the development plan.

The integration of land use planning objectives with social and community considerations is key to promoting the development of balanced and sustainable communities and the development plan must set clear objectives to ensure the alignment of social and community facilities with new development.

The emergence of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECPs) process in recent years has created a new framework for socio-economic planning which runs parallel to the development plan. The LECPs provides the social and economic vision for the County/City whilst the development plan provides for the proper planning and sustainable spatial development of the County. Collectively, both plans deliver a strategic and operational framework for integrated planning.

A broad theme of development plan policy should be to ensure that proper community infrastructure and complementary neighbourhood facilities are provided concurrently with the development of new residential growth areas. As a best practice, the development plan should aim for a roll out of infrastructure that should not only match, but anticipate where possible, development. Improved integration between the provision of housing and essential supporting community and social infrastructure - such as schools, community amenities and childcare facilities should be a prerequisite.

7.2 Mandatory Objective: Amenities (Development)

Section 10(2)(j) of the Act provides that a development plan shall include objectives for: **"the preservation, improvement and extension of amenities and recreational amenities."**

The integration of new development with a wide range of amenities and supporting community and social infrastructure is an essential component in designing for sustainable communities. Meeting halls and community centres, along with schools, health centres, doctor surgeries, libraries, community playgrounds, day care facilities for older and disabled people and churches provide a communal resource through which the residents of a neighbourhood can gain information, education, medical or welfare assistance and social contact.

Rather than include policies that have a vague or aspirational intent, when assessing the local requirements for amenities, planning authorities should provide a clear evidence base for amenities policies. This evidence base could be provided in the form of audits or a 'gap analysis' of existing local amenities and facilities relative to the existing demand and the anticipated demand generated by programmed new development. These strategies can be valuable in informing development plan policy in relation to the requirement for new amenities provision, particularly in new development areas. They can form the basis for zoning and plan objectives related to the provision of such infrastructure and the formulation of phasing policies to ensure that identified and required new infrastructure is delivered in tandem with new residential development in particular.

The potential funding and delivery mechanisms for social and community infrastructure may also inform policies and objectives, for example, where funding options such as S.48/S.49 development contribution schemes or central and local sources of funding are considered.

7.3 Mandatory Objective: Social, Community and Cultural Considerations.

Section 10(2)(d) of the Act requires that a development plan shall include objectives for:
"the integration of the planning and sustainable development of the area with the social, community and cultural requirements of the area and its population."

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provides a stronger and clearer role for local government in economic development and community development through the preparation of 'Local Economic and Community Plans' or LECPs. Guidelines on Local Economic and Community Plans, published in 2015 are available to assist in the preparation of LECPs with a planned update due to be published later in 2021. The purpose of the LECPs is to set out, for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of the relevant local authority area, both by itself directly and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders. The LECPs must be consistent with the relevant statutory city or county development plan and the contents of the LECPs, in particular the evidence gathering background research elements, will in turn inform development plan policy.

The development plan process should, at the initial stages provide, and ultimately be based on an evidence-based approach to the determination of requirements for new social, community and cultural facilities. There must be a particular focus on those that will be required to serve new development in an area, as well as those that will meet the needs of existing communities.

While it is preferable that development plan policies and objectives would be informed by identified social, community and cultural requirements, an objective for the preparation of a 'Community, Social and Cultural Infrastructure Audit' may be appropriate for areas that are likely to experience significant new development, in order to assess gaps and future requirements, especially where unclear or unknown to the extent that may be necessary.

This approach is should be based on planned population thresholds and demographic considerations in order to maximise the social return and community benefit generated. The may be as a result of public investment by state agencies and others, from developer contributions or some combination of public and private investment.

Some Local Authorities – notably Dublin City Council and the Dublin Docklands Development Authority – have successfully conducted these types of audits for various plan areas and the audits have provided a key evidence base for informing plan making.

Case Study - Community Infrastructure Objective – Dublin City Development Plan

OBJECTIVE SN5
To ensure that applications for significant large new developments (over 50 units) are accompanied by a social audit and an implementation and phasing programme in relation to community infrastructure, so that facilities identified as needed are provided in a timely and co-ordinated fashion.
INDICATOR
The number and quality of social and community audits submitted. A post-hoc review of the implementation of facilities as laid out in the audits and required by planning condition.
COMMENTARY ON INDICATOR:
Ongoing monitoring of this objective should lead to a greater consistency and development of a protocol for the preparation of social audits.

7.4 Mandatory objective: Community services

Section 10(2)(l) of the Act requires that a development plan shall include objectives for:

"the provision, or facilitation of the provision, of services for the community including, in particular, schools, crèches and other education and childcare facilities."

The term 'community services' potentially covers a very broad range of infrastructure and service provision to meet the needs of residents in the planning authority's area. The emphasis in the Act is on childcare and educational facilities and includes services such as pre-schools, naíonraí (Irish language playgroups), daycare services, crèches, playgroups, childminding, after-school groups and primary, secondary and special needs schools. It is important that planning authorities consult widely and appropriately in relation to the provision of these services.

In this context, consultation by the planning authority with the Department of Education and Skills and the county or city Childcare Committee will be particularly important.

Other community facilities that would be subject to Section 10 (2)(1) include places of worship, burial grounds, facilities for the elderly and persons with disabilities, facilities for children's play including, playgrounds, skateboard parks and other facilities, libraries, shops and community halls. This list is not exhaustive and planning authorities must respond to the circumstances of their own local communities when formulating development plans. Generally, appropriate policies and objectives for inclusion in plans will relate to allocation and reservation of land, setting appropriate development control standards and indicating provision of specific facilities. The limits of planning authority control over the provision of certain commercial services (banks or shops for instance) and the commercial trend toward online service provision in some instances, should be acknowledged as a potential issue.

With regard to school provision, development plans must facilitate the provision of sufficient land to meet the need for new schools or expansion of existing schools in accordance with the requirements of the community and of the relevant education authorities. The Housing Supply Targets are highly relevant as a database to reference and share with the Department of Education and Skills and they provide a useful baseline to work from. Detailed consultation with the Department of Education at an early stage in the development plan preparation process (as recommended in Chapter 2) will ensure that educational needs can be fully identified, evaluated and responded to. In that regard, the coordination of data between the planning authority and the Department of Education and Skills should take place as early as possible in the review process, particularly as the Core Strategy sets out the projected housing supply target for settlements within the hierarchy and the rural areas.

The guidance provided in the "*Provision of Schools and the Planning System A Code of Practice for Planning Authorities (2008)*, is the core guidance in this regard.

In providing for existing and future school facilities, planning authorities may wish to consider appropriate education or community based zoning objectives to ensure adequate and appropriate lands are provided for school purposes. The long term needs of new residential development neighbourhoods should be planned for, as well as the potential expansion of existing facilities where population changes have occurred.

Planning authorities will generally base their approach in assessing school site requirements on the Department of Education and Skill's site standards as well as taking into account other urban design and sustainable development considerations. Current details of site standards may be amended from time to time by the Department of Education to reflect on-going practice (see Technical Guidance document TGD-025 on the Identification and Suitability Assessment of Sites for Primary Schools 2007).

For policies in relation to childcare facilities, the "*Childcare Facilities - Guidelines for Planning Authorities*" provide the relevant guidance. The objectives section of the development plan should include childcare facilities within appropriate zones as a specific use. The specification and location of facilities will be included as a policy.

Planning authorities should pay particular attention to the cumulative trends of additional residential development in certain growth areas where a large population of pre-school children can be anticipated. The development plan should address the adequacy of local childcare facilities and in appropriate contexts, require the preparation of 'Childcare Capacity Assessments' for major new developments.

7.5 Mandatory objective: Traveller Accommodation

Section 10(2)(i) of the Act requires that a development plan shall include objectives for:

"The provision of accommodation for travellers, and the use of particular areas for that purpose."

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 provides the legislative framework within which the accommodation needs of travellers will be met. The Act requires relevant local authorities to prepare and adopt five-year programmes to meet the existing and projected accommodation needs of travellers in their areas. Accommodation to be provided will range from standard local authority or voluntary housing, group housing, permanent residential caravan parks and sites with limited facilities.

The land-use aspects of adopted programmes should be reflected in the development plan, having regard to the Housing Strategy, which is informed by a robust evidence base in the form of the Housing need Demand Assessment (HNDA). This should take the form of objectives that clearly set out the approach of the development plan in addressing the accommodation needs of the traveller community and an indication of the specific locations of known traveller accommodation projects.

To support the identification of additional locations for such projects, zoning policies should also be drawn up in a flexible manner to reflect the need to secure additional traveller accommodation over the lifetime of the plan.

7.6 Mandatory objective: Gaeltacht Areas

Section 10(2)(m) of the Act requires that a development plan shall include objectives for:

"the protection of the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht including the promotion of Irish as the community language, where there is a Gaeltacht area in the area of the development plan."

Gaeltacht areas form a unique part of our Irish cultural and linguistic heritage and development plans have a role to play in their protection, enhancement and development. Plans should include a comprehensive dedicated section for An Ghaeltacht that reflect and complement the Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas (Limistéar Pleanála Teanga (LPTs), the relevant policies included therein and also include further policies that ensure:

(i) The settlements located within Gaeltacht areas are specifically identified and, aligned to the core strategy, their role in sustaining and enhancing the language and its cultural and linguistic integrity is to be protected;

(ii) As a means to contribute to the protection of the Irish language, development plan policy for Gaeltacht areas must provide specific clarity in relation to the requirements for new residential development in Gaeltacht areas. The planning authority shall ensure that policies in Gaeltacht areas prioritise the protection of the language, otherwise policies risk conflicting with existing language protection policy;

(iii) Development proposals in Gaeltacht areas have a positive impact on the linguistic and cultural heritage that can be robustly assessed at planning application stage - some forms or scales of development may not be appropriate;

(iv) The needs of the community in land-use terms for housing, jobs, recreational and community facilities are clearly identified and provided for. Housing strategies should have particular regard to the needs of Gaeltacht residents;

(v) Linguistic and cultural tourism projects and associated commercial schemes are positively promoted and facilitated. Zoning and development control policies and standards should be applied in a flexible manner to ensure that plans do not inhibit suitable schemes; and

(vi) The use of the Irish language is promoted in the design of developments e.g. business advertising, recreational and community facilities are clearly identified and provided and shop-front signage should be in the Irish language.

The Gaeltacht Act 2012 gives statutory effect to the implementation of the "**Strategy for the Irish Language 2010–2030**", where it is stated that **'under the new Act, a language planning process will be instigated whereby a language plan will be prepared at community level for each Gaeltacht district'**, coordinated by Údarás na Gaeltachta. Under the Act, an integrated language plan can include proposals for, among other issues, 'Physical Planning and Development'. The development plan should have regard to the provisions of the Language Plan and examine ways in which the development plan can support the promotion of the Irish language in the Gaeltacht

8 Climate Action (Adaptation and Mitigation) and Environment

8. Mandatory Objectives: Climate (Adaptation and Mitigation) and Environment

8.1 Mandatory Objective: Climate Action (Adaptation and Mitigation)

8.1.1 The Planning Response to the Challenge of Climate Change

Scientific evidence and observations are clear that warming of the climate system is unequivocal and points to the contribution of man-made (anthropogenic) greenhouse gas emissions increasing the concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to a rate unprecedented and not experienced in millennia. Globally, scientific observations show an increase in global mean air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, rising sea level and an increase in the frequency, intensity and duration of extreme weather events. The negative impacts of a changing climate are being experienced in Ireland and are expected to continue and intensify.

Responding to the challenge of climate change requires a dual approach of both mitigation (tackling the cause) and adaptation measures (reduce the impacts and build adaptive capacity and resilience).

- Climate Change Mitigation can be defined as 'a human intervention to reduce the sources or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases'.
- Climate Change Adaptation can be defined as 'the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects. In human systems, adaptation seeks to moderate or avoid harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. In some natural systems, human intervention may facilitate adjustment to expected climate and its effects'.

Both mitigation and adaptation approaches are required in responding to climate change. The 2015 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) established the Paris Agreement to advance actions targeting decarbonisation efforts and adaptation measures to build resilience to the negative impacts of climate change. In Ireland, the enactment of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 (Climate Act) provides the statutory basis for actions consistent with the Paris Agreement Objectives. The National Adaptation Framework and the Climate Action Plan are key instruments of the Climate Act developed to achieve the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient economy:

The **National Adaptation Framework 2018**, is the national strategy for the application of adaptation measures across various sectors and by local authorities to reduce the vulnerability of the State to the negative effects of climate change and to avail of any positive effects that may occur. The emphasis placed on local authorities, regions and key sectors is to assess the key risks and vulnerabilities of climate change, implement climate resilience actions and ensure climate adaptation considerations are mainstreamed into all local, regional and national policy.

The **Climate Action Plan, 2019** sets out an ambitious course for national decarbonisation to deliver a scale up in emission performance across the sectors over the coming decade to meet 2030 targets and to set a trajectory to meet 2050 objectives. The plan recognizes that climate change is a hugely complex issue that requires transformative responses from every sector in society and that all measures, collectively, represent a coherent approach to dealing with the significant challenges ahead.

The leadership role of local authorities is considered fundamental to the overall delivery of national climate objectives. This has been reinforced by the commitment by all local authorities, by way of a **Climate Action Charter**, to a significant scale up in efforts to deliver effective climate action across the extensive range of functions performed at local and regional levels. The role of planning as a regulatory function is highlighted in the Charter to assist in improving the climate outcomes of local authorities through both adaptation and mitigation measures.

Four Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) have been co-ordinating the local authority response to climate change. The CAROs will lead a step up in climate action within local authorities to pursue adaptation and mitigation measures and assist in building capacity within local authorities to engage effectively with climate change.

As climate action is now a key responsibility of local government, all planning authorities should seek to include strong measures, policies and objectives supporting the work of the local authority in playing a key role in the achievement of broader local, regional, national and international decarbonisation objectives and to help build resilience to the negative impacts of climate change at local level.

8.1.2 Role of Spatial Planning in Climate Action

Spatial Planning and particularly land-use planning is a key instrument by which both adaptation and mitigation measures are placed and delivered within the broader perspective of sustainable development. Spatial planning offers a multi-faceted and evidenced-based approach for the integration and coordination of relevant 'climate-proofed' policies and investment decisions for the delivery of key projects and infrastructure at appropriate locations.

The NPF confirms that the planning process provides an established means through which to implement and integrate climate change objectives, including adaptation, at local level and the transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society. The NPF also states that; 'in addition to legally binding targets agreed at EU level, it is a national objective for Ireland to transition to be a competitive low carbon, economy by the year 2050.

There are a range of cross cutting National Policy Objectives included in the NPF, which address a variety of climate action issues including:

- **integrating climate action** into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives;
- **promoting renewable energy** use and generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment;
- ensuring **flood risk management** informs place making by avoiding inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding;
- Integrating **sustainable water management** solutions, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS), permeable surfacing and green roofs, to create safe places;
- integrating planning for **Green Infrastructure** and ecosystem services will be incorporated into the preparation of statutory land use plans; and
- improving **air quality** and helping to prevent people being exposed to unacceptable levels of pollution in our urban and rural areas through integrated land use and spatial planning.

In the context of planning for the mobilisation of mitigation and adaptation efforts at local level it will be important for planning authorities to recognise the multi-faceted impact of the climate challenge and the need to support the ability of all sectors, communities and individuals to scale up response efforts.

- **Mitigation**: In tackling the cause(s) of climate change, planning authorities should provide for the development and implementation of innovative policy approaches that support the radical reduction of emissions and demand for energy at local level to help support the obligations of the State to meet its transition objectives.
- **Adaptation**: To build resilience to the now inevitable effects of climate change (adaptation) spatial planning maintains a role to understand the key risks and vulnerabilities and integrate considerations of those key risks and vulnerabilities into land-use policy to inform effective local level decision making and enable the national adaptation objective of reducing the vulnerability of the State to the negative impacts of climate change.

8.1.3 The Role of the Development Plan in Climate Action

The statutory requirements of the development plan in relation to climate action are set out as a mandatory objective in the Planning Act:

> Section 10(2)(n) of the Act requires that a development plan shall include objectives for:
> **the promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas including the promotion of measures to —**
> ***(i)*** **reduce energy demand in response to the likelihood of increases in energy and other costs due to long-term decline in non-renewable resources,**
> ***(ii)*** **reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and address the necessity of adaptation to climate change, taking account of the local authority climate action plan (within the meaning of section 14B of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015), where such a plan has been made for the area in question; in particular, having regard to location, layout and design of new development;**

The development plan provides an opportunity to focus on particular land-use aspects of climate action (and the local authority's own climate action plan) and how the planning system can be utilised to effect positive change and action. Several components can be identified specifically:

- Compact Growth and Sustainable Mobility
- Importance of Sustainable Transport Measures
- Energy Related Objectives
- The role of Nature-based Solutions
- Flooding and Water Management in Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change

8.1.4 Compact Growth and Sustainable Mobility

The key focus of Objective 10(2)(n) is to promote sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas, in particular in relation to the location, layout and design of development. The Objective also requires that these strategies should include measures to reduce energy demand, to reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and to address the need to adapt to climate change. These strategies and measures, formulated in the development plan, will equate to a significant element of the local authority's overall climate action response, and will, over time, result in meaningful change to the current trajectory of Ireland's contribution to and ability to deal with the effects of climate change.

The NPF sets out the problems associated with the historic pattern of development in Ireland, where the fastest growing areas are at the edges of and outside our cities and towns, primarily on greenfield sites. As a result, it is difficult to provide an effective and efficient public transport network, there are very high levels of car dependence and infrastructure and services are constantly needing to catch-up with development. This greenfield sprawl that extends the physical footprint of our urban areas results in a significantly higher carbon footprint than the EU average, in part due to higher transport and energy demand, mostly based on fossil fuels. The relationship between settlement patterns, namely the location of development, and transport in contributing to the demand for energy and increases in greenhouse gas emissions is clear.

As noted elsewhere in these guidelines, the NPF requires a shift in settlement patterns to provide a more compact form of growth through the preparation of the core and settlement strategy elements of the development plan. This critical element of climate action seeks to change the prevailing pattern of more dispersed development and the resultant inefficient and carbon heavy commuting patterns. The planning authority should have the delivery of compact growth as a central tenet of its policy in tackling climate change. Over time, it is anticipated that modelling and data analysis will facilitate the local authority in monitoring changes in settlement patterns and demonstrate the positive effects of a more compact form of growth in terms of greenhouse gas emissions.

The development plan can also assist in the wider efforts of the local authority to strategically reduce carbon in a holistic manner across all sectors. Local authority-led proposals to establish 'de-carbonization zones' involving a wide range of initiatives with local community and business interest groups that target carbon reduction can be given policy support through related policies and objectives.

8.1.5 Importance of Sustainable Transport Measures

The delivery of public transport and its integration with the location of new development is a key concern of the development plan. However, at the local level, sustainable mobility should also incorporate strategies to promote cycling and walking as key elements of the development plan in reducing overall reliance on motorised transport. By locating people in close proximity to their places of work, services and places where they spend their leisure time, the overall demand for travel will reduce.

Reduced car parking provision can, in appropriate locations, encourage use of other more sustainable modes of mobility. Where car parking is provided, policies to promote measures that facilitate electric vehicles (such as dedicated parking and charging points) can also be encouraged including the formulation of standards and provision of networks for this purpose.

Plans may also wish to encourage proactive measures such as area or community-based travel and mobility plans, which can be linked to forward planning and transportation strategies. Increase in the take up of remote working, co-working (such as through incubation/innovation hubs/spaces) can result in a decrease in long distance commuting trips or reverse commuting patterns and the impact of these factors may also be considered.

Understandably, the issues faced by urban local authorities will differ from those in more rural locations, as will the opportunities and capacity for change. In addition, the planning authority and accordingly the development plan may have limited influence over decisions surrounding the delivery of sustainable transport options. Notwithstanding this however, the development plan can influence the relationship between settlement patterns and accessibility to sustainable mobility opportunities as they arise. Likewise, more compact forms of settlement will, over time, facilitate the critical mass required to justify investment in improved public transport infrastructure.

8.1.6 Energy Related Objectives

Ireland's projected future population growth will unavoidably result in increased demand for energy. The development plan must therefore facilitate energy generation from more sustainable forms of production. In addition, the location, layout and design of development can influence the more efficient use of energy in future development.

In terms of energy production, our transition to a low carbon economy requires a shift from predominantly fossil fuels to predominantly renewable energy sources. Accordingly, pro-active planning for the development and deployment of technologies such as wind, solar, hydro, ocean and bio energy projects to make use of available resources and generate electricity in appropriate locations is required. Planning authorities should consider the potential contribution that their development plan can make towards meeting the targets set out within the Climate Action Plan 2019 and any revision or update to same with regard to renewable energy and related Government policy.

In this regard, the requirements of the Wind Energy Development Guidelines (as amended) are instructive in preparing a Wind Energy Strategy for inclusion in the development plan.

Depending on the nature of planning authority, in addition to the promotion of medium to large-scale electricity generating projects, the consideration of regional and local strategies and decentralised measures relating to energy production and efficiency may also be required. For example, A Strategic Energy Zone may be promoted to support the delivery of renewable energy projects. In addition, the use of centralised renewable energy sources

contributing to a heat distribution system serving all dwelling units in a district, an area, a development or part of a development, e.g. an apartment block, may prove to be more practicable than providing separate renewable energy for each dwelling individually. Such measures could include district heating systems or combined heat and power systems, depending on the scale and nature of the development. Planning authorities may also wish to consider the use of heat mapping to allow for the identification of local waste heat sources which may identify useful connections and co-location between supply and demand for energy, and could link to district heating systems.

These energy-related policies and objectives should be integrated into the mandatory objectives of the development plan for infrastructure under section 10(2) (b) of the Act.

8.1.7 The role of Nature-based Solutions

While acknowledging that energy demands will result from future development, it is important to recognise the potential for the natural environment to act as a balance to climate change, whilst taking into account the need to adapt to the inevitable effects.

Green infrastructure includes urban and rural components, ranging from the designed to the more natural. Types of green infrastructure include: agricultural land, allotments, community gardens and urban farms, cemeteries, churchyards and burial grounds, coastal habitats, derelict land, general amenity spaces, grasslands, heathlands, peatlands and scrublands, green roofs, institutional grounds, orchards, outdoor sports facilities, parks and public gardens, private domestic gardens, street trees, water bodies and courses, wetlands, and woodlands. Green infrastructure can act as a carbon pool or sink which absorbs emissions and thereby helps to avoid an increase in emissions overall. It creates a more diverse habitat, which has a positive impact on biodiversity and related ecosystem services such as pollination and natural pest control. Green infrastructure can also assist in managing high temperatures, particularly in urban areas, by providing evaporative cooling and shading.

Strategically reducing the extent of development on greenfield land will also contribute towards a more compact pattern of development, as discussed above. This can include reducing the need to travel by car through the provision of local recreation areas and green travel routes to encourage walking and cycling. It is however critical to ensure that, when striving to achieve a more compact settlement pattern, an appropriate balance is struck between the extent of development and the ability of the natural environment to accommodate this growth. For example, increased compact growth formats of development should be supported with sustainable green infrastructure and with consideration of water demand and management.

Adaptation benefits of green infrastructure include flood prevention and storage capacity; reducing and slowing down peak flows, thereby helping to alleviate flooding. Just as natural floodplains, which allow rivers to over-bank and flood their land temporarily, naturally occurring green infrastructure (Dune systems, wetlands and salt marshes) along the coast provides a service that helps to manage coastal flooding.

Green infrastructure, as part of a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS), has a substantial role to play in reducing flood risk. It reduces the rate and volume of water entering the drains by intercepting it, providing temporary and permanent storage areas, and allowing water to infiltrate into the ground rather than being directed to drains.

Planning authorities should consider the appropriate inclusion of policies and objectives on these green infrastructure elements in their development plan.

8.1.8 Flooding and Water Management in Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change

Planning for adaptation to climate change requires the development of long-term, wide-ranging strategies, setting out high-level visions of how we might effect a transition towards a climate resilient future. Importantly, the development plan should acknowledge the importance of flood risk management in responding and adapting to climate change with its increased flood risk for communities and infrastructure along rivers, estuaries and the coast with accelerating rates of coastal erosion; threatening coastal habitats and environment. In particular, the NMPF is an important policy context for such issues in planning authorities with stretches of national coastline.

The 'Flood Risk Management, Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2009)[24] provide assistance to planning authorities in preparing their development plans including the undertaking of flood risk assessments. In terms of flood prevention, a risk-based approach is recommended whereby flood-sensitive development should avoid flood-prone areas, based on classifications of land-use vulnerability and flood zones. On an exceptional basis, town centre development in flood prone areas may be appropriate (subject to a justification test), providing the risk is managed.

The on-going CFRAM Programme of the OPW is an important resource for planning authorities in relation to flood risk. CFRAM has identified and mapped the existing and potential future flood hazard and flood risk in the areas at potentially significant risk from flooding (Areas for Further Assessment (AFAs). It also has also identified feasible structural and non-structural measures to effectively manage the assessed risk in each of the AFAs and prepared a set of Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs) and associated Strategic Environmental and Habitats Directive (Appropriate) Assessments that set out the proposed feasible measures and actions to manage the flood risk in these areas and their river catchments.

Climate Change will have significant impacts on flooding, flood risk and flood risk management. The work of the OPW and their resources, maps and assessments provide valuable information for a planning authority in examining flood risk and devising related and strengthened objectives and policies in their development plan for adaptation against increasing flood risks due to climate change.

8.1.9 Tailoring Climate Change Policy and Objectives Locally

The range and urgency of climate change actions required will vary from planning authority to planning authority and the opportunity to adopt locally relevant policies is an important aspect of plan preparation. Appropriate priorities and feasible measures will need to be carefully identified and considered given the differing geographical, settlement, environmental and other characteristics of different parts of the county. Nevertheless, national transition targets and objectives provided for within national climate legislation and policy remain common across geographical, topographical and administrative boundaries.

Close co-operation within the local authority and co-ordination with authority wide analysis and initiatives related to climate change is required, as well as collaboration with the relevant Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO), energy agencies and other relevant stakeholders as appropriate, which can provide exchange of blended experience and best practice across administrative boundaries and climate action areas. In this manner the development plan can support wider climate action measures through its statutory framework.

It will be important to include measurable indicators integrated into the climate action related objectives of the development plan in order for progress to be effectively monitored. These indicators will be a combination of common climate action indicators on a national basis and local developed indicators formulated by the planning authority itself to reflect the particular emphasis or set of actions included in their plan.

[24] prepared in conjunction with the OPW and published under Section 28 of the Act.

There is a range of supporting guidance provided by various bodies and agencies in relation to issues related to climate change. For instance, the EPA's '**Integrating Climatic Factors into Strategic Environmental Assessment in Ireland - A Guidance Note'** is a good practice note on how to practically incorporate climate change into plans and programmes, which come under the remit of the SEA Directive.

8.1.10 Climate Action as an Opportunity

Climate change is a significant challenge however, the approaches required to tackle its cause and adapt to its effects, offer longer-term opportunities for both environmental success and improved economic performance. The potential of clean energy systems, technological innovation, advances in smart technologies and digital platforms, sustainable land management and the move towards a circular economy offer unique opportunities with the potential for sustainable employment, remote working opportunities and community development, also combatting commuting trends. Spatial planning plays a pivotal role in delivering new technologies, new approaches and redefining economic goals. In this regard climate action opportunities should be also be a consideration for local economic development in the development plan.

8.2 Mandatory Objective: Environment

Section 10(2)(cb) of the Act provides that a development plan shall include objectives for:

(cb) the promotion of compliance with environmental standards and objectives established —

(i) **for bodies of surface water, by the European Communities (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009;**

(ii) **for groundwater, by the European Communities (Groundwater) Regulations 2010; which standards and objectives are included in river basin management plans (within the meaning of Regulation 13 of the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003);**

The development plan should include objectives that refer to the Water Framework Directive and achieving good ecological status for all waters in line with the River Basin Management Plans and meeting the targets of the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive. These objectives should be linked to indicators such as the status of water bodies (groundwater, rivers, lakes, estuarine, coastal, bathing, drinking waters) as reported by the EPA and the number of settlements in compliance with Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (UWWTD).

The Department is currently preparing specific planning guidelines to assist planning authorities in meeting their obligations under the Water Framework Directive.

8.3 Mandatory Objective: Major Accidents Directive

Section 10(2)(k) of the Act requires that a development plan shall include objectives for:
"the control, having regard to the provisions of the Major Accidents Directive and any regulations, under any enactment, giving effect to that Directive, of

***(i)* siting of new establishments**
***(ii)* modification of existing establishments, and**
***(iii)* development in the vicinity of such establishments,**

for the purposes of reducing the risk, or limiting the consequences, of a major accident."

This objective relates to the EU Seveso Directive, which lays down rules for the prevention of major accidents which involve dangerous substances, and the limitation of their consequences for human health and the environment, with a view to ensuring a high level of protection throughout the Union in a consistent and effective manner. It applies to establishments where dangerous substances are produced, used, handled or stored.

The original Seveso-Directive (Directive 82/501/EEC) was later amended in view of the lessons learned from later accidents resulting into Seveso-II (Directive 96/82/EC). In 2012 the Seveso-III (Directive 2012/18/EU) was adopted taking into account, amongst other factors, the changes in EU legislation on the classification of chemicals and increased rights for citizens to access information and justice.

Article 13(1) of the Directive obliges Member States to ensure that the objectives of preventing major accidents and limiting the consequences of such accidents are taken into account in their land-use and/or other relevant policies. In so doing, the Member State shall pursue those objectives through controls on: the siting of new establishments; modifications to establishments; and new developments including transport routes, locations of public use and residential areas in the vicinity of establishments, where the siting or developments may be the source of or increase the risk or consequences of a major accident. Annex 1 of the Directive identifies the substances concerned and quantities involved.

The Chemicals Act (Control of Major Accident Hazards involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations 2015 (S.I. 209 of 2015, known as the 'COMAH' Regulations) implement the Seveso III Directive and replace the previous regulations which had implemented the Seveso and Seveso II Directives. The COMAH Regulations set out tiered controls for the operators of the establishments, meaning that the larger the quantities of dangerous substances present, the more onerous the responsibilities of the operator. This reflects the requirements of the Directive which refers to 'upper tier' and 'lower tier' establishments.

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) has been designated as the Central Competent Authority, responsible for the enforcement of the legislation, and has published a document setting out their approach to advice to Planning Authorities - *"Policy & Approach of the Health & Safety Authority to COMAH Risk-based Land-use Planning" (2010)*. Local authorities are, amongst other authorities, designated as Local Competent Authorities. The National Steering Group of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government published *'A Framework For Major Emergency Management: Guidance Document 10'* in October 2015 in order to outline the obligations and responsibilities of the relevant Principal Response Agencies (which includes local authorities) with regard to external emergency planning for 'upper tier' establishments.

In the context of the requirement to include objectives for the purpose of preventing and limiting the consequences of a major accident, development plans should indicate the location and nature of establishments within the area covered by the plan. Zoning objectives relating to land in the vicinity of such establishments should take account of the need, in the long term, to maintain appropriate distances between establishments and residential areas, areas of public use and areas of particular natural sensitivity or interest. The HSA is a prescribed authority for the purposes of Sections 11, 12 and 13 of the Act. Planning authorities should pay particular attention to any technical advice supplied by the HSA, either on foot of consultation or otherwise under Article 24 of S.I. No. 209 of 2015.

9 Heritage and Landscape

9 Mandatory Objectives: Heritage and Landscape

9.1 Related Mandatory Objectives

This chapter addresses a number of interrelated mandatory objectives that are grouped under the themes of 'heritage and landscape'. Heritage can be defined as "*denoting or relating to things of special architectural, historical, or natural value*" and the mandatory objectives in this chapter cover the full range of heritage themes. Heritage is a valued amenity for communities, it is an important resource for economic activity, including tourism and it is crucial that development plan policy responds in a sensitive and proactive way to protecting and managing heritage.

In practical terms, there are significant additional guidance documents available in this area, in relation to for example, architectural heritage, archaeological heritage and protected sites. The development plan should seek to set local objectives and to reference guidance documents and national policy, without the necessity to re-state material that is available elsewhere. In relation to designated sites, given that such sites are protected under separate legislation, development plans are best to outline overarching policy objectives. The policy objectives should also, where necessary, provide detail on protection measures and the implications for development management standards.

The technical expertise of a conservation officer, archaeologist and/or a heritage officer where available is valuable resource in the preparation of a development plan, particularly in relation to landscape and built heritage. Integrating local knowledge with best practice in these areas is a useful way to demonstrate the value of protecting and managing our built and natural heritage.

As a cross cutting subject area for every development plan, landscape is a primary consideration in achieving proper planning and sustainable development in the plan-making process. Ensuring that our landscape can accommodate the needs of people, nature and of the environment in a sustainable way is not straightforward and the development plan can play a significant role in harmonising these competing demands.

Landscape in the development plan should be addressed in a way that reflects its importance, particularly the value it holds in our culture and history, our settlements and our environment. While the development plan policies and objectives are in force for a finite period, our landscapes form part of a wider legacy and the mandatory objectives set out in this chapter reflect a wider view to that effect.

As set out in Chapter 2, in preparing for a development plan review, planning authorities should consult with adjoining planning authorities in relation to a number of matters including landscape. Where natural features are shared and administrative boundaries are immaterial, policies should reflect a common approach to avoid unnecessary conflicting policies being adopted.

9.2 Mandatory Objective: Heritage

Section 10(2)(c) of the Act provides that a development plan shall include objectives for:

(c) the conservation and protection of the environment including, in particular, the archaeological and natural heritage and the conservation and protection of European sites and any other sites which may be prescribed for the purposes of this paragraph;

(ca) the encouragement, pursuant to Article 10 of the Habitats Directive, of the management of features of the landscape, such as traditional field boundaries, important for the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species;

9.2.1 Archaeological Heritage

Development Plan policy on archaeological heritage should be framed around the **"Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage"** (1999) which sets out national policy and broad principles for the protection of the archaeological heritage. It states that the planning process:

"is an essential mechanism for ensuring the protection of the archaeological heritage and is indeed, often the primary means of doing so."

The Framework provides guidance to planning authorities on the relevant sources of archaeological data, the overall approach to be applied to archaeological heritage in the context of development and the protection of archaeological monuments and areas as well as public access to those monuments that are in national ownership, where appropriate. The principles set out in the document provide a framework for the formulation of appropriate policies for inclusion in development plans.

As many sites and objects await discovery, development plans should, insofar as is possible, include an objective that aims to protect archaeological sites that are not yet identified and protected under the National Monuments Acts.

Specific objectives for existing World Heritage Sites and those included on Ireland's tentative list should be included in the development plan, referencing the relevant Management Plan and incorporating any relevant objectives where appropriate.

In terms of illustrating the archaeological heritage, Recorded Monuments should, as far as practicable, be included on the appropriate maps in the development plan.

The development plan should outline the measures the planning authority proposes to take in cases where a proposed development includes a Recorded Monument or Place within the land-holding, including requirements to commission an archaeological assessment and the basis on which a buffer area, where appropriate, to preserve the setting of the site is to be defined.

9.2.2 Natural Heritage

Policies and objectives in the development plan should have regard to a number of important national policy initiatives.

A broader national policy on heritage – '**Heritage Ireland 2030'** is under preparation and will bring together a tapestry of other relevant heritage initiatives, provide an overarching space for engagement and action over the next decade. It will integrate essential national heritage policy principles into the future strategy of the whole of Government and should be referenced in the development of heritage policy at the local level.

The 'National Biodiversity Action Plan' 2017-2021 sets out the extent to which local authorities will play a key role in biodiversity conservation through the planning system, the wide range of environmental services they provide, the network of biodiversity and heritage officers and the Local Authority Water and Communities Office and their implementation of plans and programmes. County-level Biodiversity and Heritage Action Plans are the appropriate policy framework for addressing these issues and the development plan objectives should be developed to support these Action Plans.

9.2.3 Protected Areas

The EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC)17 and the Birds Directive (Directive 79/409/EC)18 form the cornerstone of Europe's nature conservation policy. They are built around two pillars: (i) the Natura 2000 network of protected sites (called Special Areas of Conservation in the Habitats Directive, and Special Protection Areas in the Birds Directive); and (ii) systems for the protection of species outside those protected areas.

A comprehensive network of protected areas has been established in Ireland in recent years. This network is made up of sites of European importance (Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas) known collectively as European Sites and sites of national importance (including proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs), Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs)).

The development plan should be prepared in accordance with the **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Planning Guidelines** and **Appropriate Assessment** 'Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities' (2010), with updated guidance to be published by the Department by year end 2021.

The EU Directive on Habitats (92/43/EEC) aims to create a network of protected wildlife sites in Europe through the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) - collectively known as European sites. It is a requirement of the Directive and implementing legislation to carry out an **Appropriate Assessment** on any plan or project that is likely to have a significant effect on a European site.

9.2.4 Nature Conservation

While protected areas cover a significant part of the country, the majority of the country lies outside of this network. There are many other sites which are of local importance for flora and fauna. Local authorities have an important role to play in preventing the loss of such sites and the species which rely upon them for their survival. Development plans should identify such sites of local ecological importance and endeavour to secure their protection. Any development on or near such sites should avoid any significant adverse impact on the features for which the site is considered to be of local importance.

Features in the countryside such as hedgerows, river corridors, ponds and small stands of trees etc. provide important habitats for a variety of species. Development plans should seek to address the loss of such features in line with the National Biodiversity Plan's commitment to no net loss of biodiversity.

Case Study - Community Infrastructure Objective – Dublin City Development Plan

OBJECTIVE WS SOBJ 9

To promote compliance with environmental standards and objectives established—

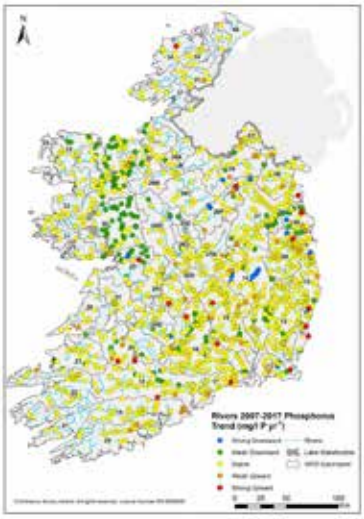
(i) for bodies of surface water, by the European Communities (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009;

(ii) for groundwater, by the European Communities (Groundwater) Regulations 2010 which standards and objectives are included in river basin management plans.

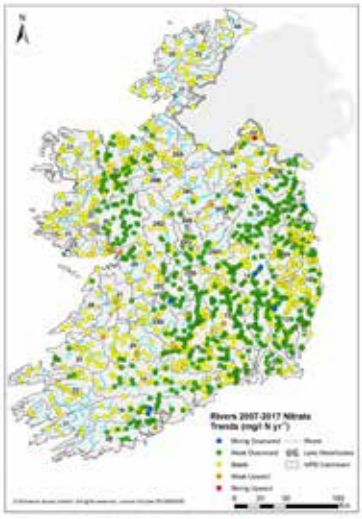
INDICATORS

EPA County data on the WFD groundwater quality monitoring programme. This data is available for eight locations in County Meath. Also, the EPA 'Water Quality Indicators' dataset reports annually on surface water quality and can be used as an important benchmark for water quality trends.

Map 5: Trends in phosphate concentrations at river sites for the period 2007–2017.



Map 3: Trends in average nitrate concentration at river sites between 2007 and 2017 inclusive.



COMMENTARY ON INDICATOR

Meath has maintained a generally 'stable' performance in relation to phosphate concentrations at river sites over the twelve-month period from 2015 to 2017 but experienced a 'weak downward' trend in nitrate concentration.

9.3 Mandatory Objective: Protection of Structures and Preservation of the Character of Architectural Conservation Areas

9.3.1 Architectural Heritage Policy

Section10 (2)(f) of the Act provides that a development plan shall include objectives for:

"the protection of structures, or parts of structures, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest".

Section 10(2)(g) of the Act provides that a development plan shall include objectives for:

"the preservation of the character of architectural conservation areas."

The *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines* (originally published in 2004) provide guidance to planning authorities on the application of Part IV of the Act and deal with protected structures and Architectural Conservation Areas in considerable detail and this should be the starting point for development plan policy on architectural heritage protection.

A number of key national policy documents pertaining to archaeology and built heritage are recently published or under preparation/review including:

- Heritage Ireland 2030;
- the Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan for the Built and Archaeological Heritage.
- The Built Vernacular Strategy;

The Development Plan should support the holistic integration of heritage – led strategies to deliver key infrastructural projects such as the upgrade of public spaces, the adaptation of vacant buildings for new uses such as digital hubs or cultural venues, the heritage-led regeneration of urban sites and the adaptation of vacant or redundant town buildings to provide housing.

Heritage policy has a key role in town and village revitalisation. Specific policies should focus on the identification of archaeological and built heritage and its role in urban regeneration. Key objectives for the protection of built heritage character, include high quality repair and intervention, the reuse of urban buildings and understanding of their historical context with appropriate infill to their character and scale should form part of wider regeneration policies for urban centres.

9.3.2 Record of Protected Structures

Section 51 of the Act specifies that, for the purpose of protecting structures or parts of structures which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest, every development plan shall include a Record of Protected Structures.

This should be developed with reference, where possible, to the *National Inventory of Architectural Heritage* (NIAH), being published by the Department on a phased basis and available at www.buildingsofireland.ie and the Minister's recommendations derived from the NIAH under section 53 of the 2000 Act on inclusions in the planning authority's record of protected structures. The Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines identify further potential sources of information. The Plan should include objectives to support the protection of structures in the Record of Protected Structures, through, inter alia, providing advice to owners of protected structures, promoting high conservation standards, issuing declarations on types of works that would or would not materially affect the character of the architectural heritage and raising awareness generally of the value of protected structures.

The 'Record of Protected Structures', which will have gone through several iterations of county development plan review processes over the last twenty years, will not be a complete record and new elements of architectural heritage will be brought to light during the plan-making process. The development plan review will likely provide the opportunity to consider additions or deletions to/from the RPS.

9.3.3 Architectural Conservation Areas

The designation of Architectural Conservation Areas is also provided for under the Act. Section 81 of the Act sets out that a development plan shall include an objective to preserve the character of a place, area, group of structures or townscape, taking account of building lines and heights, that

a) is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or value, or

b) contributes to the appreciation of protected structures

In applying the provisions of Section 81 of the 2000 Act, the main elements to be considered for incorporation in the development plan are:

- An overview statement indicating that it is the policy of the planning authority to protect the built heritage within an area or in the settings of protected structures, through the designation of appropriate Architectural Conservation Areas;
- A commitment to taking such steps as are necessary to ensure the preservation of the special character of such areas;
- An indication that consideration will be given to drafting and adopting Areas of Special Planning Control for specific parts of Architectural Conservation Areas;
- Promotion of local initiatives to underpin the preservation of the special character of such areas;

An Architectural Conservation Area may consist of groupings of buildings and streetscapes and associated open spaces. The protected status afforded by inclusion in an ACA only applies to the exteriors of structures and features of the streetscape. It does not prevent internal changes or rearrangements provided that they do not impact on the external appearance of the structure. There may be scope, in certain circumstances, for considering the designation of an ACA, as an alternative conservation approach to the listing of groups of protected structures.

It is recommended that the Record of Protected Structures and list of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) should be specifically titled as such and included in an Appendix to the plan as well as being included on the accompanying development plan maps. The background material relating to ACA designation, setting out the character appraisal and policy framework for the area, should be available to view for the public, although it shouldn't necessarily form part of the development plan suite of documents.

9.4 Mandatory Objective: Amenities (Natural Features)

Section 10(2)(j) of the Act provides that a development plan shall include objectives for:
"the preservation, improvement and extension of amenities and recreational amenities."

The definition of 'amenities' is potentially quite broad, ranging from natural amenity assets such as parks, open spaces, green infrastructure, greenways etc and also social and community facilities. This section addresses the 'natural features' definition of amenities. Part XIII of the Act deals with amenities and focuses on the natural aspect of the definition, making provision, inter alia, for:

i) Areas of Special Amenity;

ii) Landscape Conservation Areas;

iii) Tree Preservation Orders; and

iv) Public Rights of Way.

Part IV of the First Schedule to the Act also refers to amenities and includes provision for landscape protection; preservation of public rights of way; provision of public open space; provision of recreation space, including space/places for children to play; and, control of roadside advertisement structures.

The requirements of the planning authority for public open space and recreation space provision in connection with development proposals, particularly residential development, should be set out in the development plan. The planning authority's own specific objectives in this regard should also be indicated.

Rather than include policies that have a vague or aspirational intent, planning authorities should provide a clear evidence base for open space and recreation space policies. This evidence base could be provided in the form of an 'Open Space Strategy' or a more broad-based, 'Green Infrastructure Strategy' which should include a detailed audit of existing open space provision across the County. The important role that such networks can play in addressing climate change is set out in Chapter 7 above.

A number of local authorities in recent years have produced good examples of 'Open Space Strategies' and 'Green Infrastructure Strategies' which, following detailed audits and gap analysis, have led to 'Open Space Accessibility Standards' - effectively targets for optimum accessibility from homes for each type of public open space in a county. These strategies can be valuable in informing development plan policy in relation to the requirement for new open space provision, particularly in new development areas.

Protected landscapes play an important role in providing active outdoor amenities and also acting as carbon sinks. Furthermore, there is also a role for these landscape designations to provide 'strategic green corridors' which provide for development buffers and pathways for biodiversity.

9.5 Mandatory Objective: Landscape Character, Views and Prospects

Section 10(2)(e) of the Act requires that a development plan shall include objectives for:

"the preservation of the character of the landscape where, and to the extent that, in the opinion of the planning authority, the proper planning and sustainable development of the area requires it, including the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest."

The preservation of the character of the landscape can be secured in various ways, including:

(i) Zoning designations as set out in the development plan;

(ii) Amenity designations as set out in Part XIII of the Act; and

(iii) Other statutory and non-statutory designations including EU and international designations.

Zoning Designations

Planning authorities can use zoning designations in the development plan as a means of protecting scenic landscapes, amenities and areas of ecological value. Areas so designated are commonly known as 'Areas of High Amenity' or 'Areas of High Scenic Quality'. Within such areas, landscape character is preserved, generally through the application of development management policies, supported in some cases by positive measures to upgrade particular locations or features. Prior to the inclusion of those zones in a development plan, planning authorities should carry out an assessment of the landscape character of the area (related to 10 (2)(p)).

Part XIII makes provision for local authorities to designate:

- Areas of Special Amenity (Section 202)
  Areas of Special Amenity relate to areas of outstanding natural beauty or special recreational value and are thus not confined solely to preservation of landscape character. Landscape Conservation Areas may be designated for the purposes of preservation of the landscape, whether natural or designed. Both of the above designations are subject to a requirement for

public consultation. Areas of Special Amenity must be confirmed by An Bord Pleanála. Separate procedures to the development plan adoption process are involved in the designation of these areas. However, designations that are either proposed or confirmed should be included in development plans. Their protection will be achieved by managing the development process, and on occasion by controls over development proposals that would have significant adverse impacts.

- **Landscape Conservation Areas (Section 204)**

  For the purposes of the preservation of the landscape, a planning authority may designate any area or place within the functional area of the authority as a landscape conservation area. The procedures for providing for this designation are set out under Section 204.

Other Designations

There are a large number of other designations, both statutory and non-statutory, which protect the character of the landscape. While a number of these have as their primary focus the protection of flora, fauna or habitat, they also act to protect the landscape. They originate with agencies other than the local authority and some have EU or other international agency foundations. An example in this regard would be a World Heritage Site recognised by UNESCO. The planning system, through the application of appropriate policies, has a key role to play in their implementation. They should therefore be included in development plans and appropriate policies formulated for their protection.

In addition to the above, the objective also refers to the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest. The role of the development plan in this regard is to identify these and include appropriate policies for their protection. The inclusion of views and prospects will be supported with visual evidence and must relate to views and prospects of strategic importance to the administrative area of the Local Authority. In this regard, consultation with adjoining local authorities is required to establish where views and prospects are shared and to develop a common policy approach.

9.6 Mandatory Objective: Rights of Way

Section 10(2)(o) of the Act requires that a development plan shall include objectives for:

"the preservation of public rights of way which give access to seashore, mountain, lakeshore, riverbank or other place of natural beauty or recreational utility, which public rights of way shall be identified both by marking them on at least one of the maps forming part of the development plan and by indicating their location on a list appended to the development plan".

The legislation requires each Development Plan to include an objective for the preservation of public rights of way that give access to places of natural beauty or utility and for such rights of way to be listed in an appendix and identified on development plan maps. The identification of a public right of way requires verification and the burden of proof rests with the local authority. Whilst there are varying examples from local authorities of the level of detail provided as part of fulfilling this objective, local authorities should endeavour to identity and list public rights of way as they come to the attention of the planning authority.

In addition to the requirement set out in Section 10(2)(o) of the Act, there are a number of mechanisms that the Local Authority can use to secure the development of improved access to the countryside and amenities besides this statutory process. The 'permissive access mechanism' described in Circular Letter PL 5/2015 can complement the statutory development plan objective and can deliver an integrated approach to combining agreed ways and trails with public rights of way statutorily defined in the development plan. This approach has the potential to extend the amenity and recreational offer, and as such providing better access and improved connectivity throughout a local area or the wider county area. The overall combined approach, providing an inventory of permissive access routes in addition to rights of way, represents a best practice approach.

The Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) has recently published a research paper entitled **'Public Rights of Way and the Local Development Plan: A Survey Report on the Operation of Section 10(2)(o) of the Planning Act'.** This is a useful reference that details investigative research and analysis of current practices regarding PROWs, publishes findings of a survey of local authority development plans and outlines good practice in the area.

9.7 Mandatory Objective: Landscape Protection and Management

Section 10(2)(p) of the Act requires that a development plan shall include objectives for:

'landscape, in accordance with relevant policies or objectives for the time being of the Government or any Minister of the Government relating to providing a framework for identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes and developed having regard to the European Landscape Convention done at Florence on 20 October 2000'.

The traditional view of landscape related to places, generally rural, of scenic beauty. The European Landscape Convention definition introduced the concept of landscape as a dynamic system, the result of the action and interaction between natural and human factors.

Planning authorities will need to consider the variety of landscapes when drafting this objective including the countryside, urban, peri-urban and rural areas, encompassing land, inland waters, coastal and marine areas. The development plan offers the opportunity to distinguish between every day and degraded landscapes, as well as those that are considered to be exceptional. In drafting this objective, planning authorities should ensure that policies relating to landscape use are complementary and mutually reinforcing and that conflicting policy objectives are to be avoided. Planning Authorities will also need to consider the National Landscape Strategy (2015-2025) in drafting this objective and any future emerging National Landscape Character Assessment. Most local authorities undertake landscape character assessment to assist in the determination of policies for the development plan.

10 Plan Implementation Monitoring and Reporting

10. Plan Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting

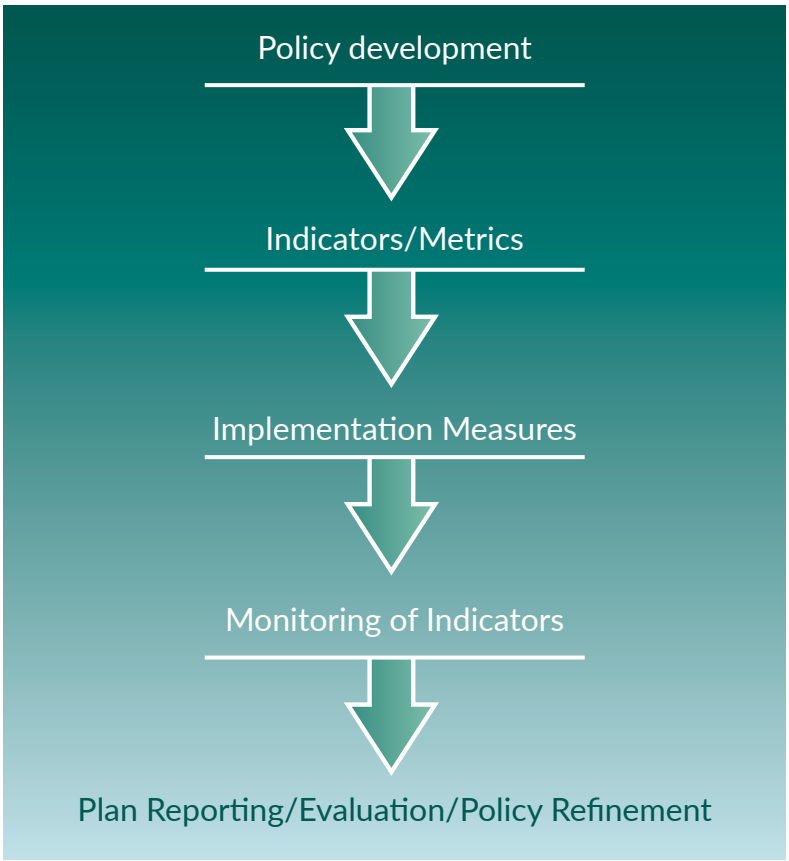
10.1 Delivering the Development Plan

It is critical to the success of the development plan function that it is a continuous and on-going undertaking from preparation and adoption of the plan to implementation and delivery on the plan objectives. The actions subsequent to the adoption of the development – implementation and the related monitoring and reporting tasks, are aspects of the plan-making process that are required to be structured and durable to ensure that the desired objectives of the plan are achieved.

A scenario where the development plan process effectively ends with the making of the development plan and with the development plan team effectively 'disbanded' and reallocated to other planning roles, is to be avoided. The planning authority must instead ensure that there is a significant corporate focus on the implementation of the development plan on an ongoing basis, as the key strategic plan for the development of the area.

As outlined in chapter 2 above, there must be a permanent Development Plan Team within the planning authority that is responsible for the monitoring of the adopted development plan, in a timely and structured fashion, with the overall aim to analyse and consider if the plan is progressing satisfactorily towards the implementation of its objectives.

The establishing of resources and systems to effectively perform this monitoring and analysis function is therefore a key responsibility of the planning authority. In this regard, a new approach to plan implementation and monitoring is a key requirement of these guidelines. In order to achieve this outcome, it is essential that the policies and objectives of the development plan, particularly where they deal with core land-use planning and development issues, should be framed in a manner where they can be implemented, monitored and evaluated.



An effective development plan process will involve a positive cycle of policy development with measurable indicators formulated, implementation activities led by the local authority, monitoring, reporting and policy analysis.

10.2 Plan Implementation

As emphasised in these guidelines, the development plan is the key strategy to structure the development in a local authority area over the six-year statutory time period of the plan. It seeks to address the physical, economic, social and environmental needs of the community, in terms of supporting structured new development, enhancing valued assets and amenities and protecting the environment.

The implementation of the development plan is a key strategic focus for the local authority and requires a concerted range of actions by the entire organisation in order to be successfully implemented. The local authority will need to utilise its wide range of statutory powers and responsibilities to achieve the objectives of the development plan. While ensuring that decisions on proposals for new development are consistent with the development plan through the development management system is critical, local authorities have also a wide range of functions in housing, transport, development of amenities, economic development, infrastructural delivery and community involvement that can enable it to implement the development plan in practice.

In relation to housing, and the housing strategy in particular, simply zoning lands for residential development will not activate delivery of housing in the right place. The implementation phase, therefore, necessitates proactive measures to be taken to enable the housing outlined in the core strategy to be realised and for it to align with policies like the regeneration of towns and compact growth. Ensuring that infrastructural programmes are developed and progressed in tandem with state agencies and other infrastructure providers is also essential. The local authority must ensure that its organisational capacity and resources are arranged to support the implementation tasks of the development plan including active land management as noted in Chapter 6.

The local authority must endeavour to attract state and other investment programmes to support the implementation of the objectives of its plan. For example, development plans that focus on objectives to address the regeneration of town and areas of towns that are in decline can seek to access national funding programmes for urban and rural regeneration.

10.3 Plan Monitoring

In order to assess the success with which the development plan is being implemented, planning authorities will need to establish a strong, frequent and ongoing monitoring system for their development plan as a permanent function.

The monitoring task of the planning authority for its development plan comprises of two strategic monitoring elements:

A) Core Strategy Monitoring

B) Plan Objectives Monitoring

10.3.1 Core Strategy Monitoring (annual)

The development plan has a primary role in land use and spatial development policy and in particular regarding the provision of new housing development. The monitoring role must provide a focus on development patterns occurring under the settlement strategy of the development plan and the tracking of the nature of new development that is occurring.

It is therefore critical that these planning and development trends are reported on and analysed spatially, with accompanying mapping, to illustrate the development trends being experienced at settlement level and to assess the consistency of such trends with the agreed housing and population targets as set out in the core strategy of the development plan. The data required for successful monitoring will be a mixture of information readily available in the local authority (eg. from the development management function) and from externally/independently provided sources (eg.CSO). This 'Core Strategy Monitoring' is to occur annually and include the following indicators:

INDICATOR	
Residential	
1.	New home completions (including through refurbishment/conversions)
2.	New home completions per NPO 3 (see below)
3.	Planning permissions granted for residential development with: (i) A breakdown of 1, 2 ,3 and 4+ units permitted and (ii) A breakdown per Tier 1 and Tier 2 lands
4	Breakdown by relevant rural area type of rural housing: (i) Planning Applications lodged (ii) Breakdown in decisions (iii) New home completions
Commercial	
5	Developed and occupied commercial floorspace
6	Planning permissions for business/employment uses (m^2 of development) for: (i) Office (ii) Industrial (iii) Retail (iv) Warehousing/Logistics
Settlement Consolidation Sites	
7	Specific reporting on the progression of the Settlement Consolidation Sites identified in the development plan. This shall include information on enabling infrastructural services delivery, planning permissions granted, housing constructed, funding applications made, project timelines, Vacant Site Levy commentary, etc.

This information is be provided both on a settlement basis and overall planning authority area basis with accompanying digital maps that satisfactorily illustrate the spatial trends in development. An '**Annual Development Plan Monitoring Report**' containing this key information shall be assembled by the planning authority and presented to the elected members. It shall be published thereafter including on the website of the planning authority.

10.3.2 Plan Objectives Monitoring (two-yearly in line with 10.4 below)

As outlined in Chapter 5, the development plan process should formulate plan objectives that are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Realistic and Time-related) and thereby facilitate their monitoring over the lifetime of the plan.

Each development plan will therefore have a set of objectives that are particular to it and are required to be monitored and reported on.

However, these must include:

- Indicators that are that aligned with reporting for other related national policies (e.g. climate change, water quality, etc) or for the purposes of monitoring the SEA. The monitoring of the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan is a statutory requirement of the SEA Directive and the planning authority shall refer to the EPA's guidance document entitled "Guidance on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Statements and Monitoring"[25] and any future review.
- Additional/supplementary indicators can be identified and utilised by the individual planning authority for specific objectives

[25] https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/assessment/EPA_Guidance_web.pdf

10.4 Reporting on the Development Plan

Additional to the on-going monitoring of development trends and spatial patterns by the planning authority annually, there are two instances where there is a requirement for a more formal development plan report to be produced which details progress on the specific objectives set out in the development plan:

(i) The **Two Year Progress Report** by the Chief Executive on the development plan in accordance with Section 15(2) of the Act

(ii) The **Baseline Report** as outlined in chapter 2 above, published as the evidence base for commencing the review procedure for the development plan not later than four years after its adoption

These reporting requirements for planning authorities are to be comprised of an analysis of the annual plan monitoring data and also of the progress to achieving identified development plan objectives. These two formal reporting exercises will allow the planning authority to establish the status of the effectiveness of the development plan in meeting its stated objectives. The Chief Executive's report must specifically include information in relation to progress on, and the results of, monitoring the significant environmental effects of implementation of the Development Plan. This report must include the results of SEA monitoring for the Development Plan, as well as variations to the Plan and the effects of implementing Local Area Plans[26].

10.5 Spatial Development Patterns

The location of existing and new development is a central focus of the development plan and the wider planning function of a planning authority. An understanding of where and to what extent development is occurring is a key requirement to be undertaken by the planning authority.

In particular, the observed trends in residential development need to be presented spatially in order to facilitate an assessment of the national spatial policy objectives of the NPF. Specifically, in order to pursue the compact growth objective and ensure the required re-orientation of a sufficient proportion of the new housing development into our settlements, the NPF has set specific National Policy Objectives with requirements for the % of new homes to be delivered within our settlements:

National Policy Objective 3a	Deliver at least 40% of all new homes nationally, within the built-up footprint of existing settlements
National Policy Objective 3b	Deliver at least half (50%) of all new homes that are targeted in the five Cities and suburbs of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford, within their existing built-up footprints
National Policy Objective 3c	Deliver at least 30% of all new homes that are targeted in settlements other than the five Cities and their suburbs, within their existing built-up footprints

Importantly, the appropriate settlement boundary for measuring the extent of such housing growth is specifically identified in the NPF as the 'Urban Settlement' boundary as defined by the CSO. This boundary will be the policy tool utilized to monitor the delivery of new housing against the requirements of NPO 3a-c. Therefore new homes provided inside this defined boundary will count towards delivering the minimum thresholds identified in the NPOs. New dwellings created through the refurbishment/conversion of existing buildings are also reckonable towards this minimum threshold figure.

[26] Article 13J of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (S.I. No. 600 of 2001), as amended

The measurement of compact housing growth under NOP 3a-c will be a key performance indicator of a development plan to assess the satisfactory implementation of the NPF at a city or county scale (as noted in section 10.3.1 above).

There are significant digital spatial data systems and capabilities now available to assist the planning authority in recording, collating, analysing and representing spatial information. The provision and development of these capabilities is a key resource issue for the planning authority. At a national level the Department will continue and improve its assistance to the local authorities in providing structured support in the capture, storage and analysis of spatial data related to planning. Further system, process and technological improvements are programmed to deliver standardised planning data on a planning authority, regional and national level to provide a comprehensive NPF spatial policy monitoring regime.

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Appendix A - Core Strategy Worked Example

1 Standardised Approach

This appendix sets out the standardised approach to be taken by planning authorities in preparing the core strategy of their development plan. This standardised or uniform methodology will draw together the different elements and inputs and aid the formulation of a transparent and coherent core strategy. The appendix expands upon the requirements set out in Chapter 4 of the Guidelines, 'Core Strategy' and provides some sample core strategy tables and commentary.

1.2 Core Strategy Parameters

1.2.1 Population and Housing Targets

In the preparation of the core strategy, a planning authority must address (as per Section 4.3.1. of these Guidelines) both population and housing supply targets for the period of their development plan.

The planning authority will be required to clearly document their approach to both these requirements in their core strategy. This must be done in a transparent and easily understandable fashion whereby it is unambiguous to the reader of the plan. The required approach to be followed (steps A-E) are detailed in Section 4.3.1 of these Guidelines and it must be reflected in the core strategy of the plan such that the OPR can easily identify the relevant elements for its plan assessment function overall.

1.2.2 Settlement Capacity Audits

A primary input is the 'Settlement Capacity Audit' as identified in Section 4.5.2 of these Guidelines. In the past, all local authorities compiled an annual survey of available zoned residential land, for submission to the Department (up to 2014 when it was last requested). This was more formally assembled into the '*Residential Land Availability Study*' (2015) which provided a national survey of residential land integrated with digital mapping of the lands or sites concerned.

A Settlement Capacity Audit is now a key research task of the development plan preparation process to be undertaken by a planning authority. The work should seek to identify and map zoned residential (and mixed-use zoned) lands with residential development potential. This will include (i) lands within the existing built up area (ii) serviced greenfield 'Tier 1' tranches of land and (iii) serviceable greenfield 'Tier 2' lands. The audit should establish a threshold for the size of site to be included, which may be smaller for city/large urban centres and should include data about each site, including:

INFORMATION		FORMAT
1.	Area of the site	m^2
2.	Site in Built-Up Area	Yes/No
3.	Services status	Tier 1(serviced)/Tier 2(not serviced)
4.	Assumed residential density	Net homes per hectare
5.	Estimated residential unit yield from site	Number of homes
6.	Planning History	Planning Register reference number

The output of the audit should be a digital GIS layer with the relevant above attribute information attached, allowing for spatial analysis and overlaying of other layers. This GIS dataset should be published as part of the background material for the development plan. [1]

The previous work undertaken for the 2015 '**Residential Land Availability Study'** by all local authorities provides an established and available digital data resource which can be utilised as basis for updating the audit for use in the development plan.

Site Residential Density/Housing Yield

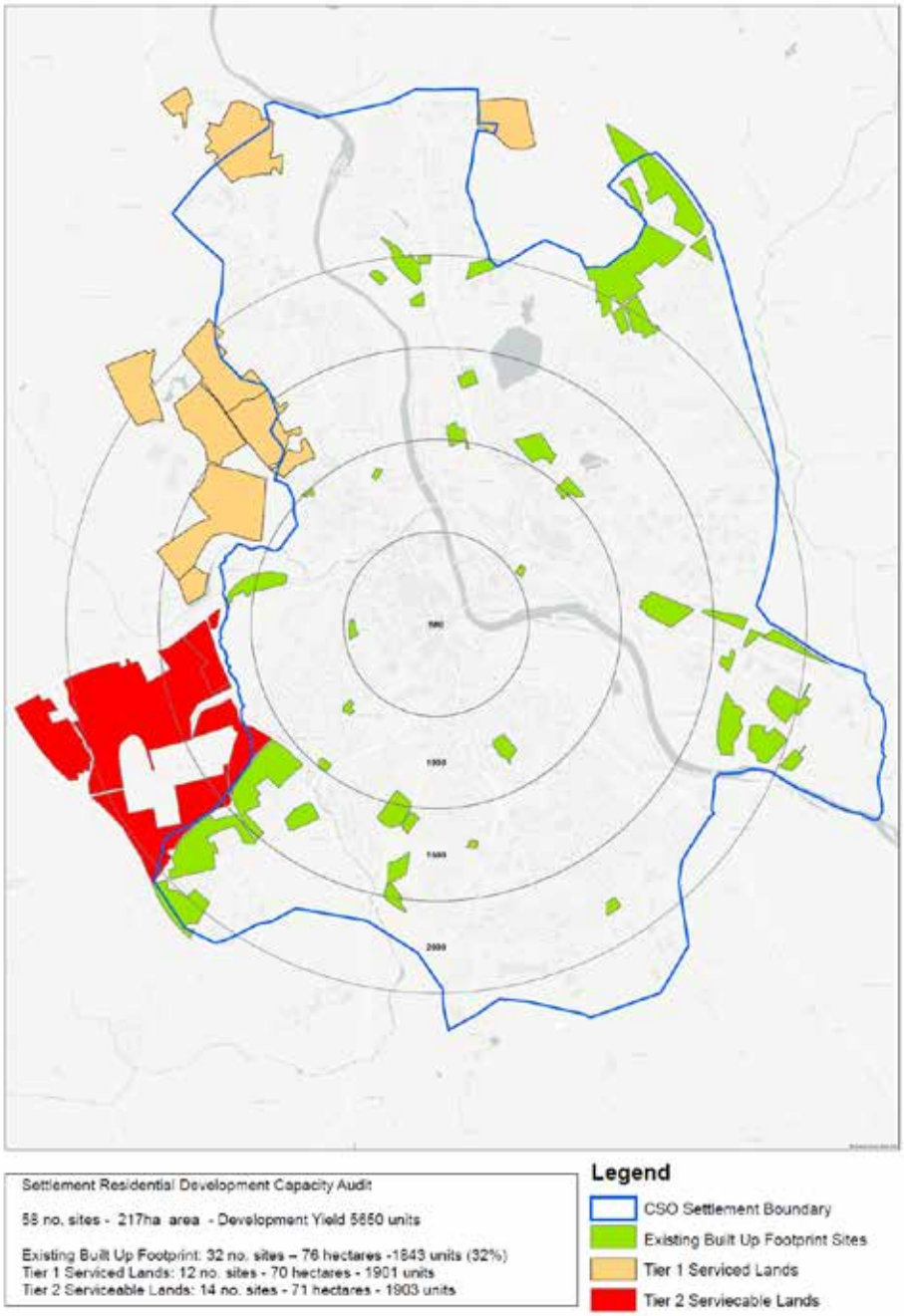
The assumptions regarding the residential density that will be delivered on the sites will have a significant influence on the estimate of development potential and should be given careful consideration. Sites with an existing planning permission will have a residential density that can be used as an assessment of the general development potential of the site, with the understanding that there is no guarantee that that particular planning permission will be implemented.

For lands that have no planning permission, there may be residential densities that have already been set down in a local area plan and could be used to estimate development potential. For other sites, the residential densities recommended in the **Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, Guidelines for Planning Authorities**, 2009 (or in any updated version of these guidelines) should be used. A distinction should be drawn between sites that are more suited to higher residential density – by virtue of their location close to an urban centre or proximate to public transport – and other sites, less well located.

The application of a single standard density across a whole county or settlement level would not reflect the nuance of differentiated density policy and should not be used.

A site area/size threshold of 0.5ha has been used in land availability surveys in the past, but particularly in Metropolitan areas, planning authorities should include smaller sites, which, cumulatively and at higher densities may have the potential to deliver a significant amount of housing.

An example of a Settlement Capacity Audit map for a settlement is provided below and outlines the detail that should be examined for each settlement, including the number, the area and the estimated residential yield of residential sites in the various categories (existing built up area/Tier 1 serviced and Tier 2 serviceable).


Settlement Residential Development Capacity Audit
58 no. sites - 217ha area - Development Yield 5650 units
Existing Built Up Footprint: 32 no. sites – 76 hectares -1843 units (32%)
Tier 1 Serviced Lands: 12 no. sites - 70 hectares - 1901 units
Tier 2 Serviceable Lands: 14 no. sites - 71 hectares - 1903 units
Legend
CSO Settlement Boundary
Existing Built Up Footprint Sites
Tier 1 Serviced Lands
Tier 2 Serviecable Lands

1.2.3 Extant Planning Permissions

Information on extant planning permissions for residential development zoned lands should be gathered as part of the housing land availability study. It is difficult to make assumptions regarding the deliverability of individual planning permissions and many permissions will, for a number of reasons, not commence development in a timely manner. The application of the Vacant Site Levy should be considered in all cases (if applicable) where permission for significant residential development has been granted but not commenced, particularly in circumstances where a single permission may represent a large proportion of the housing development potential in a settlement, in the interests of activating development.

In preparing the core strategy and in making the subsequent decisions in relation to residential zonings, the planning authority will need to carefully consider the implications of extant planning permissions on future delivery of housing as per Section 4.4.1 of these Guidelines.

In the approach set out in Chapter 4 and this appendix, the planning authority will devise a settlement strategy that identifies a housing allocation for each settlement (above a certain threshold size) within the county. It will then approach the zoning of lands for housing in accordance with the methodology set out in Chapter 6, giving appropriate focus to core and centrally located housing sites consistent with the sequential test and required consolidation of the built footprint of the settlement.

Section 4.4.1 of the Guidelines addresses how lands with extant planning permissions should be considered as part of the core strategy land availability calculation and draws the distinction between permissions that have commenced construction and permissions that are yet to commence. These permissions represent potential housing delivery over the plan period but cannot be considered in isolation to the wider issues involved in the preparation of the core strategy.

1.3 Settlement Strategy and Core Strategy Table

1.3.1 Allocation of Population/Housing Targets to Settlements

The allocation of housing targets to the various settlements identified in the Core Strategy Table (including both the higher-order settlements outlined in the RSES and the smaller settlements identified at development plan stage) is a critical element of the Core Strategy and is discussed in Chapter 4.

The Core Strategy Table should be accompanied by a statement which sets out the rationale behind the allocation of housing for each settlement (or 'Core Strategy Statement'). The existing proportion of population in each settlement should be clearly set out, with the proportion of new population and housing allocated to each settlement also clearly set out. The statement should explain any circumstances where an allocation of new population/housing is made for a settlement which would be out of proportion to its overall existing position in the settlement hierarchy.

Allocation of significant Growth Targets to non-designated Settlements

National Planning Framework policy on settlement growth includes specific provisions which facilitates more expansive population growth in settlements *only* in particular circumstances. This policy is in response to circumstances in the past where smaller settlements have grown rapidly, on foot of extensive rezoning, in a manner that cannot readily be supported by requisite infrastructure. Going forward, proposals for extensive new growth targeted at smaller settlements in Development plans should only be made subject to the provisions of National Policy Objective 9 of the NPF. The Core Strategy Statement should include commentary/justification on any settlements that are to be targeted for growth of this scale.

1.3.2 A Differentiated Approach to Core Strategy Tables

The approach to the Core Strategy table described below should be followed by planning authorities to outline the allocation of housing and population across settlements in their counties. However, it is clearly the case that the characteristics of development plans differ quite significantly for the major cities, the larger urban counties and the smaller, predominantly rural counties, therefore a 'one size fits all' approach to the level of detail included in the strategy would not be appropriate.

Core Strategy for the Cities

In the Cities there will be a well understood structure of 'major town centres', 'district centres' and 'urban villages' and while the distinction between the 'core' and the 'periphery' will be important considerations in targeting growth, there may not be the same discrete hierarchy of settlements as can be found in other counties. The settlement strategy may be focused around particular public transport corridors, transport nodes or major SDZ sites where targets for residential development may be set and the general opportunities for encouraging brownfield and infill densification may be much greater and more pervasive than would be the case for county plans. City–based planning authorities should seek to identify, and provide robust estimates, for areas identified for growth within the city and to also make estimates for residual, infill development potential.

Core Strategy for the Larger urban Counties

The larger urban counties (those with multiple urban settlements over 5000 population) will be using the core strategy to set out spatial growth targets across potentially a large number of settlements and therefore the level of detail that should be presented in the core strategy table will be more extensive than the smaller counties. In order to formulate a manageable core strategy, planning authorities should decide on a threshold for including settlements which will generally be based on population scale or planned levels of development, but at a minimum, all settlements with a population greater than 1500 population should be included.

Core Strategy for the smaller, predominantly rural counties

The smaller, more rural local authorities, with relatively few major settlements should tailor the core strategy table accordingly, and will provide a more limited amount of detail, reflective of the smaller number of often small-scale settlements.

1.3.3 Core Strategy Table

The Core Strategy Table should present the settlement hierarchy and set out the broad allocation of housing across these settlements and rural areas, if relevant. The table should set out the housing allocations across each settlement and also present the appropriate population figure. Detail should be included on the existing population of each settlement, the proportion of population of the county that the settlement represents, that target housing figure and the proportion of the total allocation proposed for each settlement. The Core Strategy Table must be accompanied by a statement, which sets out the rationale behind the allocation of housing across the various settlements.

Core Strategy Statement

The statement accompanying the core strategy should address the background to the spatial decision making of the strategy. As an example, based on the sample Core Strategy Table above, a statement would be expected to set out background detail on how and why the allocations of population/housing were made. The Core Strategy statement should also set out clearly, in tabular form if necessary, the difference between the quantum of zoned land in various settlements in the existing development plan, relative to proposals for zoning in the Draft Plan. The statement should make clear if, for example, significant additional rezoning is being proposed in the plan or if a significant overzoning of land is to be addressed. Some of the areas to address would include:

The allocation of 30% of forecasted population growth to the County Town was made on the basis of the following considerations:

- Its existing scale of population and social/community infrastructure, including schools/ third level
- The large scale of existing (and planned) employment provision. Over 30% of all jobs in the County are located in the County Town, with substantial zoning provision for future employment growth.
- Its high level of public transport accessibility both from other settlements in the County and also its accessibility to other, higher order employment centres
- A detailed analysis of the carrying capacity of zoned lands, including wastewater and water supply infrastructure, public transport accessibility and environmental/flooding sensitivity
- The allocation of 15% of forecasted population growth to 'Larger Town I' was made on the basis of the following considerations:
- Its existing scale of population and employment provision existing (and planned). Over 10% of all jobs in the County are located in this Town, with additional zoning provision for future employment growth.
- A detailed analysis of the carrying capacity of zoned lands, including wastewater and water supply infrastructure, public transport accessibility
- Some constraints to development are present, specifically some quite extensive areas at risk of flooding, also a number of designated European sites.

The allocation of population/housing has generally followed the scale of proportionality of existing settlement scale, with the exception of 'District Town III', which has grown substantially in previous intercensal periods and has some outstanding requirements in relation to social and community infrastructure which must be met before significant additional housing development could be considered. The smaller District Towns (iii to iv) have only relatively limited capacity in relation to wastewater and water supply infrastructure and have been allocated a housing target that reflects this capacity.

There are no proposals to increase the population of any settlement beyond 30% over 2016 census levels. The following table shows the shortfall/excess of zoning in each settlement. In the case of the County Town and Larger Town I, a proportion of the excess zoned land was designated as strategic reserve and the remainder rezoned to open space/agricultural use. Additional rezoning of land was required in several of the District Towns.

From Housing Allocation to Land Use Zoning

As referenced in Chapter 4, '**Ensuring Sufficient Provision of Housing Land/Sites'**, it may be necessary to provide some additional serviced, zoned lands in settlements, over and above the minimum required in order to allow a degree of choice and to reflect the fact that not all zoned lands will be released for development during the lifetime of the plan. The allocation of 'Additional Provision' lands to settlements, not exceeding 25% of the defined minimum required lands can be considered, subject to the criteria set out in Section 4.4.3. The Core Strategy statement should include detail on all settlements that have been subject to an allocation of 'residual provision' of lands and the reasons for making that proposed allocation.

It is important to note that the target of ensuring that a minimum of 30% of residential development to take the form of 'infill' or brownfield development within the existing built up area, will apply to the totality of all lands in a settlement, including any 'surplus' lands identified.

SETTLEMENT		POPULATION AND HOUSING				LAND ZONING REQUIRED					
Settlement Type	**Settlement Name**	**Census 2016 Population**	**Census 2016 (%)**	**Housing Target (units)**	**Housing Target %**	**Existing Zoning (ha)**	**Zoned land Required (with additional surplus) (ha)**	**Target Residential Density (UPH)**	**Minimum 30% Infill Lands (ha)**	**Remaining 70% lands (non-infill) (ha)**	**Shortfall/ Excess of Zoned Land**
County		149,722		**5910**		**405**	**177**		**65**	**112**	**228**
Key Town	County Town	20,188	13	1773	30	98	55	40	20	35	**43**
Self-Sustaining Growth Towns	Larger Town I	11,381	8	887	15	79	30	35	10	20	**49**
	Larger Town II	8,040	5	709	12	44	23	35	10	13	**21**
	Larger Town III	9,822	7	709	12	40	22	35	7	15	**18**
Self-Sustaining Towns	District Town I	1,984	1	177	3	38	9	30	3	6	**29**
	District Town II	1,840	1	177	3	0	8	30	4	4	**-8**
	District Town III	3,591	2	207	4	12	10	30	3	7	**2**
	District Town IV	1,620	1	177	3	0	8	30	3	5	**-8**
	District Town V	280	0	30	1	0	2	30	1	1	**-2**
Strong Villages Smaller Villages		15,698	10	220	4	94	10	25	4	6	**84**
Rural Areas		75278	50	844	14						

1.3.4 Rural Population/Housing Targets

For development plans with rural areas, the Core Strategy must also contain the classification of differing rural area types required under the Guidelines on Sustainable Rural Housing, 2005 including the depiction of these areas on the Core Strategy Map. The Department is currently preparing an update to the 2005 Guidelines which will provide further guidance to planning authorities including on the process for classifying rural typologies.

The Core Strategy should provide some background information on planning permission activity and housing completion trends across the different rural area types over the previous development plan period. At a minimum, a separate table should be presented which sets out the planning and development trends (number of permitted dwellings and completions) for each of the rural area types over the previous plan period and this data should be used to inform an evidence-based assessment of likely future rural housing demand in these areas, in conjunction with the wider Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA) process.

The NPF sets as a requirement that Planning Authorities project the need for single housing in the countryside through the local authority's overall Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA) tool and county development plan[2].

It is intended that the Core Strategy process will bring to light the balance that is to be struck between strengthening settlements with a level of targeted housing growth while reflecting a realistic estimate of rural housing growth over the lifetime of the plan.

Rural Area Type	Population (Census 2016)	No. of Units Permitted – Previous Development Plan	Dwelling Completions 2011-2019	% of Actual Housing completions Per Rural Area
Rural areas with high urban influence		**624**	**640**	
Rural areas with moderate urban influence.		**324**	**314**	
Highly rural/ remote areas		**340**	**340**	
Total		**1,847**	**1,853**	

[2] National Policy Objective 20

1.3.5 Excess Zoned Residential Land

The Core Strategy must demonstrate how the level of any excess of land or housing will be addressed, taking account for example of zoning objectives of previous development plans. Any excess will not normally include lands identified for strategic long-term (i.e. 10 to 15+ year) development as part of Strategic Development Zones or major regeneration sites within the key Metropolitan areas. Later phases of development in these strategic and sustainable development areas can be considered to form part of a strategic land bank within the development plan area that may take a number of development plan cycles to be realised per section 4.4.4 of these Guidelines.

For other circumstances, all of the three mechanisms below should be considered to the full in addressing any excess:

(1) Prioritising / phasing of development: by indicating on relevant tables and maps, where any 'Additional Provision' lands will be regarded as a Long-Term Strategic And Sustainable Development Sites and that proposals for the development of such lands or housing will not be considered for development purposes during the plan period;

It is important to note that all zoning decisions must be founded upon the merit of the lands in question within the contemporary strategic and statutory policy context and should not be disproportionately influenced by legacy zoning matters. Planning authorities are not obliged to carry forward legacy zonings simply on the basis that lands were zoned in a previous plan(s).

(2) Alternative Objectives: by indicating lands that will be considered for alternative appropriate uses within the plan period such as employment, amenity, community or other uses;

(3) Discontinuing the Objective: by deletion of the zoning objective and related lands from the written statement and maps of the development plan.

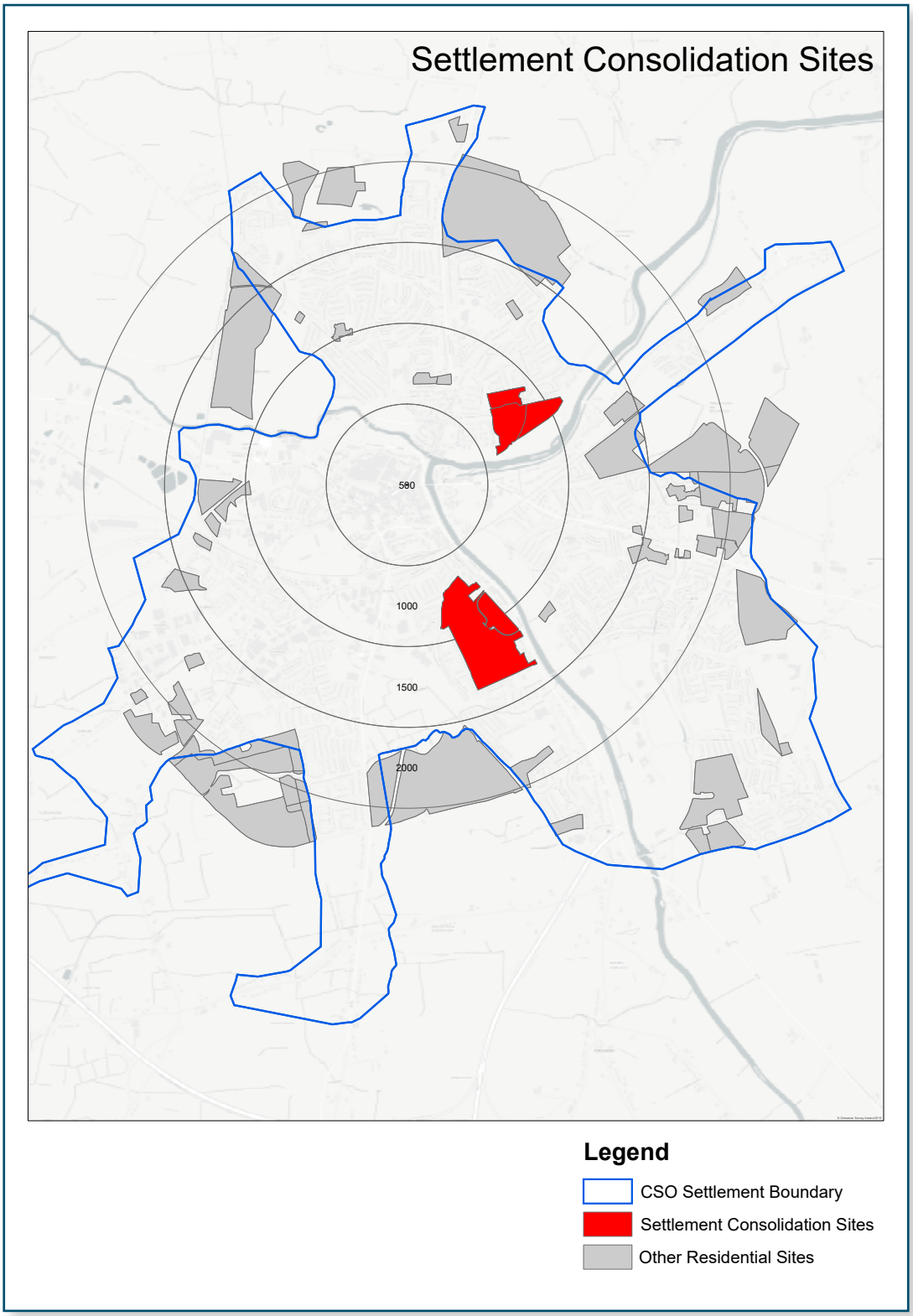
1.3.6. Settlement Consolidation Site Maps

A new provision of the Development plan Guidelines is the requirement to designate '**Settlement Consolidation Sites'** within each settlement with a population greater than 1500 persons. The designation of these Settlement Consolidation Sites will give effect to the requirement set out in the NPF regarding compact growth targets.

The Settlement Hierarchy maps will indicate the available zoned residential and mixed use land with residential development potential in each settlement and will specifically designate and identify the centrally located, infill, 'Settlement Consolidation Sites'.

Planning authorities are required to designate Settlement Consolidation Sites spatially sequential outwards from the settlement core. Settlement Consolidation Sites will not be located at the periphery of the settlement. In settlements with a population range of between 5000 and 20,000, the Settlement Consolidation Sites will be generally within 1km from the centre of the settlement, as the crow flies. In settlements with a population greater than 20,000, the Settlement Consolidation Sites will be generally within 1.5km from the centre of the settlement. This distance-from-the-centre definition has some flexibility as it must take account for local geographical nuances or settlement context, for example topography, local features such as water courses/bodies or indeed an important heritage feature or archaeological zone.

An example of a Settlement Consolidation Site map is set out below.



1.4 Enterprise & Employment Zoning

Local authorities may formulate a methodology that suits their own enterprise/employment profile and local characteristics, but the approach should provide a logic to the quantum of lands proposed for zoning and should generally follow the approach outlined below:

- **Population targets**
  The Core Strategy will include population targets for the Plan area, which will be disaggregated to settlement level. These will form the basis of the analysis.

- **Jobs ratio**
  Ratio of jobs to resident workforce[33]. This figure will provide an indication of the scale of commuting flows in and out of the County and at settlement level. The Economic Strategy may have some objectives or target to improve the jobs ratio of the County or certain settlements. It is important that these objectives provide a realistic scenario of the future. The NPF sets as an objective that **"future jobs growth would be geographically more distributed, but to a limited number of larger and regionally distributed centres, to include the North and West and Midlands"**. Some Development plans have, in the past, provided growth targets for employment in excess of 100% for relatively small settlements over time, if they are to meet notional jobs ratio targets. Trends in relation to the location of employment, which have tended toward a concentration in larger urban centres, are highly unlikely to undergo a radical shift of this scale toward smaller settlements and land use zoning proposals in Development plans should not reflect wholly unrealistic employment targets.

- **Labour force participation rate**
  Labour force participation rate at County level is made available by the CSO. The Labour Force participation rate differs from County to County based on demographic profile.

- **Future potential workforce**
  A broad-based estimate of future potential workforce in the County/City, derived from the data points above, should be indicated in the Development plan. This should be done in order to provide a basis for employment/enterprise land use zoning.

- **Employment Zoning Requirements**
  An estimate of the potential land requirement for employment purposes can be made based on assumptions around the number of jobs per square metre of employment floorspace or jobs per hectare.

The development plan will have an economic strategy chapter. There will be a close interaction between the development plan and the Local Economic and Community Plan. The LECPs should provide some very useful baseline information about the nature of the local economy, in terms of local specialisations and many local authorities have provided very detailed socio-economic baseline studies as part of the process.

The LECPs must be consistent with the provisions of the Development plan. Many of the economic development objectives that are developed in the LECPs will have an overlap and a spatial dimension that will require reflecting through the Development plan process.

Sequential Test and Accessibility

Accessibility is a central consideration in selecting employment zonings and the transport provision of potential locations for development needs to be strategically considered:

- Low intensity employment uses such as distribution, warehouse, storage and logistics facilities will require good access to the major road network;

- High intensity employment uses such as offices will require the highest level of accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling. The sequential approach to land use zoning will also apply, with lands contiguous to existing development within a settlement being prioritised for high-intensity employment zoning ahead of lands located further on the periphery of the settlement.

[3] A ratio of 1.0 means that there is one job for every resident worker in a settlement and indicates a balance, although not a match, as some resident workers will be employed elsewhere and vice-versa. Ratios of more than 1.0 indicate a net in-flow of workers and of less than 1.0, a net out-flow. The extent to which the ratio is greater or less than 1.0, is also generally indicative of the extent to which a town has a wider area service and employment role, rather than as a commuter settlement

Worked Example
(from Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Development plan 2016)

Population Target
Population Target 2014- 2022 = **71,000** persons, based on 31,000 households X average household size of 3.3 persons per household

Working Population
The labour force participation rate is based on a calculation of those aged over 15 years of age in the workforce. The proportion of population aged over 15yrs in the County is 82%, leaving a total of **58,220.**

Labour Force Participation rate
The Labour Force Participation for DLR is 64%, which leaves a potential workforce of **37,260**

Jobs Ratio
The present jobs ratio in DLR is 0.8. This is a reasonable target and assumption for future working populations, given the likely prominence of the Dublin City area and high quality transport links to the City area. Applying this ratio leaves a figure of potentially **29,800** additional jobs located within DLR.

Distribution of Jobs Across Land Use Zones
In DLR, only 40% of jobs are located within specific enterprise and employment land zones. A further 30% of jobs are located within mixed use town, district and neighbourhood centre zones. The remaining c.30% of jobs are located within the other land use zones, including residential (schools etc) and rural zones. It is reasonable to expect this ratio to continue, with densification and infill employment developments in town and district centres accommodating a certain level of job growth and the incremental increase in employment in the non-employment zones. Therefore, it is reasonable to anticipate approximately **12,000** jobs located in employment zoned lands.

Zoned Land Requirements
The majority of employment on enterprise-zoned lands in DLR comprises office-based employment, with a smaller number of manufacturing/industrial sites. If it is assumed that approximately 80% of jobs will be office based and the floor area requirements are generally 20sq.m of floorspace per employee, this translates to a requirement for up to **200,000sq.m** of office floorspace. An estimate for manufacturing of c.50sq.m per employee would result in a requirement for **c.100,000sq.m** of industrial floorspace.

The capacity of existing employment zoned lands to accommodate this potential scale of growth should be assessed, making assumptions regarding plot ratio/building height.

Appendix B - Recommended Standardised Zoning Objectives

In providing zoning objectives in their development plan, it is recommended that planning authorities adopt the standardised zoning objectives in the below table. This will assist in providing a consistent approach to zoning nationally and aid the understanding of zoning objectives by the public and the development sector alike.

It may not be necessary to provide each of the zonings within a particular development plan depending on the strategic policies of the development plan and the context of the relevant planning authority.

USE	CODE	ZONING	OBJECTIVE	DESCRIPTION
Residential	RS	Residential	Provide for residential development and protect and improve residential amenity	For existing predominately residential areas allowing for the protection of existing residential amenity balanced with new infill development
	R1	New Residential	Provide for new residential development in tandem with the provision of the necessary social and physical infrastructure	For new residential areas/town extensions to ensure the provision of high quality new residential environments. Provide an appropriate mix of house sizes, types and tenures in order to meet household needs and to promote balanced communities
Urban/Town	TC	Town Core	Provide for the development and enhancement of town core uses including retail, residential, commercial, civic and other uses	Consolidate the existing fabric of the core/central areas of settlements by densification of appropriate commercial and residential developments ensuring a mix of commercial, recreational, civic, cultural, leisure, residential uses and urban streets, while delivering a quality urban environment. The zoning emphasises compact growth objectives and priority for public transport, pedestrians and cyclists while minimising the impact of private car based traffic
	DC	District Centre	Provide for the development and enhancement of district centres in urban areas including for retail, residential, commercial, civic and other uses	Provide for the development of district level centres in cities and larger urban areas as part of an integrated strategy for mixed-use compact growth where key locations are identified for new development consolidation and densification
	RE	Regeneration	Provide for enterprise and/ or residential led regeneration	Identification of specific areas of the built fabric for significant redevelopment and regeneration activity
	RW	Retail Warehousing	Provide for retail warehousing development	Facilitate the sale of bulky goods/ goods in bulk within high quality settings and highly accessible locations subject to the requirements of the relevant retail strategy and retail planning guidelines

USE	CODE	ZONING	OBJECTIVE	DESCRIPTION
Community Services and Infrastructure	CI	Community Infrastructure	Provide for and protect civic, religious, community, health care and social infrastructure	Facilitating the sustainable development of necessary community, health, religious, social and civic infrastructure for communities ranging from those of regional importance such as health facilities, to those of local and neighbourhood importance such as places of worship, community centres and childcare facilities
	LC	Local Centre	Protect, provide for and/or improve local centre facil-ities	Provide a mix of local community and commercial facilities for the existing and developing communities to ensure a range of community, recreational and retail facilities, including medical facilities and childcare facilities, at an appropriate local scale
	ED	Education	Provide for educational facilities	Providing for the wide range of educational facilities and related development
	OS	Open Space and Recreation	Preserve and provide for open space and recreational amenities	Provide recreational and amenity resources for the community including parks, sporting and leisure facilities, amenity areas and natural areas
	TU	Transport and Utilities infrastructure	Provide for transport and utilities infrastructure	For development associated with the provision of public transport services (including ports) and public utilities such as electricity network infrastructure, telecommunications, water, wastewater, etc.
Rural	RU	Rural	Protect and improve rural amenity and provide for the development of agriculture	Provide for zoned areas that prioritise the protection of rural amenity and avoid harmful impacts of urban sprawl. Provide for and protect agriculture activities and rural -related business activities which have a demonstrated need for a rural location. Provide integration spatially with development policy on rural housing
	HA	High Amenity	Protect and enhance high amenity areas	Protect highly sensitive and scenic locations from inappropriate development that would adversely affect the environmental quality of the locations
	RV	Rural Village	Protect and pro-mote the character of the Rural Village and promote a vibrant community appropriate to available physical and community infrastructure	Protect and promote established villages within the rural area where housing needs can be addressed relative to their catchment and local services and smaller scale rural enterprises are to be provided. Population/growth will be managed through the core strategy to ensure sustainable population levels without providing for growth beyond local need and unsustainable commuting patterns

USE	CODE	ZONING	OBJECTIVE	DESCRIPTION
Employment	BP	Business Park	Provide opportunities for general enterprise and business development	Facilitate opportunities for compatible industry and general employment uses, in a quality physical environment. General Employment areas should be highly accessible, well designed, permeable and legible with a modest density of employees. Policy safeguards are to be provided to prevent inappropriate intensive office uses at locations poorly served by public transport and the proliferation of retail or commercial uses requiring public access that are best located in mixed-use town core areas
	SI	Special Industry	Provide for specialised industrial development	Provide locations specifically for specialised industry associated with environmental emissions, including noise and odour (eg. waste processing, aggregate processing, etc) and with intensive or hazardous processing (eg. Seveso premises) which may give rise to land use conflict if located within other zonings. Such uses, activities and processes would be likely to produce adverse impacts, for example by way of noise, dust or odour
	WD	Warehousing & Distribution	Provide for distribution, warehouse, storage and logistics facilities based on appropriate access to a major road network	Facilitate logistics and warehouse type activity including storage, distribution and associated re-packaging of goods and products which have specific transportation requirements as they can generate considerable traffic volumes and hence benefit from being located within a purpose built, well designated environment which is well connected to the strategic road network and allows for the efficient movement of goods. Characterised by a low density of employees with appropriate policy safeguards to prevent unsustainable intensive employment uses at these locations
	CD	High Technology/ Manufacturing Campus Development	Provide for office, research and development and high technology/ high technology manufacturing type employment in a high quality built and landscaped environment	Facilitate opportunities for high technology and advanced manufacturing, major office and research and development based employment within high quality, highly accessible, campus style settings. The zoning is for high value added businesses and corporate facilities that have with extensive/specific land requirements
	COE	Commercial Office Employment	Provide for office-based development with a high density of employment	Provide for office-based development where a high density of employees are to be accommodated based on the sustainability of high quality public transport accessibility

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