# Table of Contents

## Chapter 1: Policy Context

1. **Introduction** 1  
   1.1 Introduction and Purpose 1  
   1.2 Content of the Report 1  
   1.3 Legislative and Policy Context 3  
   1.4 Preparation of County Development Plan and Associated Town Area Plans 2008 – 2014 3  
   1.5 Strategic Environmental Assessment 4  

## Chapter 2: Settlement Policy and Development Strategy

2. **Context for Settlement and Development Strategy** 5  
   2.1 Vision and Strategic Goals 5  
   2.2 Demographic Profile and Population Growth in County Roscommon 6  
   2.3 Preliminary 2006 Census Information 6  
   2.3.1 Population Projections 7  
   2.3.2 Age Dependency 8  
   2.3.3 Spatial Distribution 8  
   2.4 Roscommon’s Broad Settlement Structure 9  
   2.4.1 Policy Context 9  
   2.4.2 Existing Settlement Structure 10  

---

**Roscommon County Development Plan 2008 - 2014**

---

---
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROSCOMMON COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2008 - 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed Settlement Structure</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 SETTLEMENT STRATEGY</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 3: INFRASTRUCTURE, TRANSPORTATION AND MOVEMENT</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 POLICY CONTEXT</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1 National Policies</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2 Regional Policies</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.3 Local Policies</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.4 Strategic Policy Direction</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 TRANSPORTATION</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 PUBLIC TRANSPORT</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 ROADS AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 GENERAL INFRASTRUCTURE</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 WATER SERVICES</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7.1 Water Supply</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7.2 Water Quality</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8 FLOOD RISK AND PROTECTION</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9 WASTE WATER SERVICES</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE OF CONTENTS

3.10 WASTE MANAGEMENT 41
3.11 ENERGY 41
3.11.1 Renewable Energy 42
3.11.2 Electricity 44
3.11.3 Ireland’s Gas Network 47
3.12 TELECOMMUNICATIONS 49
3.12.1 Broadband 49
3.12.2 Mobile Phone Network Development 51
3.13 MAJOR ACCIDENTS HAZARD 54

CHAPTER 4: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT 57
4.1 INTRODUCTION 57
4.1.1 Economic Development in Ireland 57
4.1.2 Sustainable Economic Development 57
4.2 POLICY CONTEXT 58
4.2.1 National Policy 58
4.2.2 Regional Policies 60
4.2.3 Local Policies 60
4.2.4 Economic Development Approach for Roscommon CDP 2008-2014 62
4.3 PRESENT ECONOMIC PROFILE OF COUNTY ROSCOMMON 62
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>FUTURE EMPLOYMENT, ENTERPRISE AND ECONOMIC STRATEGY</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.1</td>
<td>Change in Enterprise Culture – Roscommon’s transition to a Knowledge Based Economy</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.2</td>
<td>Location Assessment Criteria Model for Mobile Investment and Indigenous Business Start-Ups</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.3</td>
<td>Determinants of Location Assessment for Mobile Investment</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.4</td>
<td>Future Economic Strategy</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>RURAL ENTERPRISE IN TOWNS AND VILLAGES</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.1</td>
<td>Rural Enterprise at National Level</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.2</td>
<td>Rural Enterprise within County Roscommon</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.3</td>
<td>CLÁR Programme and Other Rural Revitalisation Initiatives</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>TOURISM</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>RETAIL STRATEGY</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7.1</td>
<td>Retail Hierarchy</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7.2</td>
<td>Core Shopping Areas</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7.3</td>
<td>Survey Approach Analysis</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7.4</td>
<td>Qualitative Assessment</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7.5</td>
<td>Quantitative Assessment</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7.6</td>
<td>Key Principles for Future Retail Policies and Actions</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER 5: URBAN DEVELOPMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1 National and Regional Context</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.2 Local Context</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 HOUSING STRATEGY</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1 Policy Context</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2 Roscommon Housing Strategy 2001</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3 Mid-Term Review of the Social and Affordable Housing Action Plan 2004-2008</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.4 Housing Strategy, 2008-2014: Context</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.5 Housing Strategy, 2008-2014: Findings</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.6 Assessment of overall Housing Needs</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 LAND USE ZONING OBJECTIVES AND MATRIX</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.1 Town Centres</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.2 Urban Regeneration and Derelict Buildings</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN DESIGN</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5.1 Building Height</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5.2 Architecture and Urban Design/Building Design</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5.3 Urban Design and Residential Density</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.5.4 Design Guidelines for Residential Estates</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT IN URBAN AREAS</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7 SUSTAINABLE ENERGY AND DESIGN</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 6: RURAL DEVELOPMENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 RURAL DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 RURAL ECONOMY</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.1 Agriculture</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.2 Agriculture Diversification and Rural Enterprise</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.3 Rural Tourism – An Integrated Approach</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.4 Forestry and Bio-Fuels</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.5 Wind Farms Development and Landscape Character Assessment</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 RURAL SETTLEMENT STRATEGIES</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.1 Background and Strategic Context</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.2 County Context and Population Analysis</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.3 Rural Housing Strategy and Policies</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.4 Rural Area Types</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.5 Specific Policies</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 RURAL DESIGN GUIDELINES</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5 VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENTS</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.6 BIODIVERSITY</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 7: BUILT HERITAGE AND ARCHAEOLOGY</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2 STRATEGIC CONTEXT</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3 BUILT HERITAGE</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4 RECORD OF PROTECTED STRUCTURES (RPS)</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5 ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION AREAS (ACA)</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5.1 Development Guidelines for Architectural Conservation Areas</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6 HERITAGE GARDENS, PARKS AND DEMESNES</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.7 HERITAGE OBJECTS</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.8 ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.8.1 Record of Monuments and Places</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.8.2 Archaeological Assessment</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.8.3 Underwater Archaeology</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.8.4 Development in Areas of Archaeological Potential-Development Standards</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.8.5 Rathcroghan Archaeological Complex</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.8.6 Development in the Rathcroghan Area-Development Standards</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Title</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 8: NATURAL HERITAGE AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT</strong></td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2 STRATEGIC CONTEXT</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3 DESIGNATED SITES</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4 SITES OF GEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5 NATURE CONSERVATION IN THE WIDER COUNTRYSIDE</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6 INLAND WATERWAYS</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.7 ALIEN INVASIVE SPECIES</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.8 NATURAL HERITAGE AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.9 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 9: SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES</strong></td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2 STATUTORY AND POLICY CONTEXT</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3 SOCIAL INCLUSION AND DISABILITY</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3.1 CLAR and RAPID Programmes</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4 COMMUNITY FACILITIES</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5 CHILDCARE PROVISION</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.6 HEALTH</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.7 EDUCATION</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.8 LIBRARIES</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>MUSEUMS</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.10</td>
<td>ARTS AND THEATRE</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.11</td>
<td>BURIAL GROUNDS</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.12</td>
<td>FIRE SERVICE</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.13</td>
<td>PLACENAMES</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.14</td>
<td>COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FORA</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.14.1</td>
<td>North Roscommon Community Forum</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.14.2</td>
<td>South Roscommon Community Forum</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CHAPTER 10: RECREATION, LEISURE AND TOURISM</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>OPEN SPACE AND SPORTING PROVISION</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>INTEGRATED TOURISM AND RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3.1</td>
<td>Walkways/Cycleways</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3.2</td>
<td>Public Swimming Pools</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3.3</td>
<td>Arts and Theatre</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3.4</td>
<td>Access to recreational lands</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>TOURISM</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4.2</td>
<td>Roscommon Tourism Strategy</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# ROSCOMMON COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2008 - 2014

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.4.3</td>
<td>Economic Development and Employment</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4.4</td>
<td>Tourist Facilities and Infrastructure</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4.5</td>
<td>Integrated Rural Tourism</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4.6</td>
<td>Tourist Accommodation</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4.7</td>
<td>Retail Tourism</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4.8</td>
<td>Marine Tourism</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4.9</td>
<td>Environmental Considerations</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 11: IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>PHASING</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>ADDITIONAL FUNDING</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.4.1</td>
<td>Urban and Village Renewal Grants</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.4.2</td>
<td>NeighbourWood Scheme</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.4.3</td>
<td>EU Structural Funds</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.4.4</td>
<td>The Combat Poverty Agency</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.4.5</td>
<td>The Department Of Arts, Sport and Tourism</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.4.6</td>
<td>Other Sources of Additional Funding</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTION SCHEME</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 12: DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS  279

12.1 INTRODUCTION  279

12.2 GENERAL DEVELOPMENT  279

12.2.1 Building Lines  279

12.2.2 Access for Persons with Disabilities and the Mobility Impaired  279

12.2.3 Light Pollution  280

12.2.4 Noise  280

12.2.5 Drainage  280

12.2.6 Conservation of Water  280

12.2.7 Wastewater Treatment  281

12.2.8 Flood Risk and Protection  281

12.3 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT  281

12.3.1 Residential Development (Qualitative)  281

12.3.2 Residential Development (Quantitative)  283
12.3.3 Residential Density 284
12.3.4 Residential Site Development Standards 285
12.3.5 Apartments 286
12.3.6 House Extensions 287
12.3.7 Backland Development 288
12.3.8 Use of Upper Floors for Residential Purposes 288
12.3.9 Change of use of Existing Houses in Existing Residential Schemes 288
12.3.10 Derelict Sites 288
12.3.11 Residential Care Homes 289
12.3.12 Parking in Front Gardens 289
12.4 RURAL DEVELOPMENT 289
12.4.1 Rural Residential Considerations 289
12.4.2 Siting Guidelines 290
12.4.3 Site Study 290
12.4.4 Septic Tanks / Wastewater Treatment Systems 291
12.4.5 Water Supply 291
12.4.6 Tree and Hedgerow Preservation 291
12.4.7 Access and Other Ancillary Works 292
12.5 RETAIL DEVELOPMENT 292
12.5.1 Shop Fronts 293
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.5.2 Shopping Centres</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.6 Office/Industrial Development</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.6.1 Office Development</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.6.2 Industry, Warehousing and Business Park Developments</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.7 Convenience Food Shopping</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.8 Discount Food Stores</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.9 District Centres</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.10 Retail Warehouse Parks</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.11 Factory Outlet Centres</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.12 Retail Warehouse Clubs</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.13 Local Shops and Petrol Filling Stations</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.14 Pubs/Nightclubs/Amusement Centres</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.15 Fast Food Outlets/Takeaways</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.16 Automatic Telling Machines</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.17 Advertising</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.17.1 Advertising Hoardings</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.17.2 Fingerpost Signage</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.17.3 Rural Advertising</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.18 Tourism</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.18.1 Rural Tourism</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.18.2</td>
<td>Caravan and Camping Parks</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.18.3</td>
<td>Holiday Homes</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.18.4</td>
<td>Tourist Advertisements</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.18.5</td>
<td>Diversification</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.18.6</td>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.18.7</td>
<td>Sustainable Tourism Planning Control Checklist</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.19</td>
<td>COMMUNITY FACILITIES</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.20</td>
<td>SCHOOLS</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.21</td>
<td>NURSING HOMES</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.22</td>
<td>CHILDCARE FACILITIES</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.23</td>
<td>NEIGHBOURHOOD FACILITIES</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.24</td>
<td>AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.24.1</td>
<td>Agricultural Buildings and Structures</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.24.2</td>
<td>Diversification</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.24.3</td>
<td>Agriculture and the Environment</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.25</td>
<td>CAR PARKING</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.25.1</td>
<td>Loading and Unloading</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.25.2</td>
<td>Heavy Vehicles</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.25.3</td>
<td>Cycle Facilities</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.26</td>
<td>TRANSPORT</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.26.1</td>
<td>National Roads and Regional Roads</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.26.2</td>
<td>Sightlines</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.26.3</td>
<td>Public Transport</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.27</td>
<td>RENEWABLE ENERGY/EFFICIENCY</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.27.1</td>
<td>Micro Renewables</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.27.2</td>
<td>Energy Conservation</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.27.3</td>
<td>Planning Exemptions for Renewable Technology</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.28</td>
<td>HERITAGE PROTECTION</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.28.1</td>
<td>Architectural Conservation – Protected Structures</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.28.2</td>
<td>Development in Architectural Conservation Areas</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.28.3</td>
<td>Development in Areas of Archaeological Potential</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.29</td>
<td>TELECOMMUNICATIONS</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.30</td>
<td>EX extractive INDUSTRY</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.31</td>
<td>FORESTRY</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.32</td>
<td>INLAND FISHERIES</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.32.1</td>
<td>River Drainage</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.32.2</td>
<td>Other Works</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.33</td>
<td>BONDING TO SECURE COMPLETION OF DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.34</td>
<td>FUTURE PUBLICATIONS, STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# ROSCOMMON COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2008 - 2014

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF TABLES:</th>
<th>PAGE NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 1: Gender Breakdown in Preliminary 2006 CSO Census</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 2: County Population Change 1981 – 2006</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 3: Population Increases in County Roscommon 2002 – 2006</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 4: Average Estimated Net Migration Rate per 1,000 of Average Population in Roscommon</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 5: Population Growth Scenarios for 2006 – 2016</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 6: Age Dependent Population 2006 (those under 15 or over 65)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 7: Population Change by Electoral District 2002 – 2006</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 8: NSS Settlement Hierarchy</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 9: Current Population Figures and Settlement Hierarchy Categories</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 10: County Roscommon Proposed Settlement Hierarchy</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 11: National Primary Roads Development Strategic Objectives</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 12: National Secondary Roads Development Strategic Objectives</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 13 A: Other Roads Infrastructure Proposals</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 13 B: Proposed Capital Road Projects 2008 – 2013</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 14: Current and Planned Broadband Provision (excl. satellite) in towns and Villages in Roscommon</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 15: Agency Assisted Employment</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 16: Floor Space Capacity by 2014</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 17: Residential Zoned Land (CDP 2002)</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 18: Household Population Forecasts for County Roscommon</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 19: Summary of Anticipated Social and Affordable Housing Need</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 20: Social and Affordable Housing Provision in Roscommon</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 21: Projected Traveller Accommodation Needs October 2004 – November 2008</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 22: Affordable Housing</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 23: Age Dependent Population 2006 (those under 15 or over 65)</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 24: NSS 2002 Rural Area Types</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 25: SRHG 2005 Rural Area Types</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 26: Aspects of Good Planning</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 27: Definition of Local Housing Need</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 28: National Monuments in County Roscommon</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 29: Preservation Orders on Monuments in County Roscommon</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 30: National Monuments in the Rathcroghan Archaeological Complex</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 31: Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in County Roscommon</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 32: Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in County Roscommon</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 33: National Heritage Areas (NHAs) in County Roscommon</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 34: Sites of Geological Importance in County Roscommon</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF MAPS

MAP 1: Republic of Ireland County Location Map
MAP 2: National Spatial Strategy Gateways
MAP 3: National Spatial Strategy West Region
MAP 4: West Region Authority
MAP 5: Percentage Population Change in County Roscommon 2002 to 2006
MAP 6: County Roscommon Settlement Hierarchy
MAP 7: Infrastructural Priorities of the Western Regional Authority
MAP 8: National Roads, Regional Roads, Rail Network
MAP 9: NSS and RPGs: National Road Corridors
MAP 10: Ballaghaderreen Proposed Bypass Preferred Route Corridor
MAP 11: Boyle Town Proposed Bypass Constraints Area
MAP 12: Roscommon Town Proposed Bypass Constraints Area
MAP 13: Groundwater Vulnerability for County Roscommon
MAP 14: Water Features in County Roscommon
MAP 15: Flood Risk in County Roscommon
MAP 16: Windspeed Map
MAP 17: Electricity Transmission and Gas Infrastructure
MAP 18: Eirgrid Electricity Network
MAP 19: Proposed Gas Network
MAP 20: Overlay of Electricity and Gas Networks
MAP 21: Wireless Broadband Network
MAP 22: Rural Area Types
MAP 23: Records Monuments and Places
MAP 24: Designated Areas
MAP 25: Sites of Geological Importance
MAP 26: Inland Waterways in County Roscommon
MAP 27: Landscape Character Areas Map
MAP 28: Landscape Character Types Map
MAP 29: Landscape Values Map
MAP 30: Scenic Route and Views Map
MAP 31: Clár Areas
MAP 32: Upper Shannon Tax Incentive Area
MAP 33: Community Services in County Roscommon
MAP 34: Places of Interest/Visitor Attractions in County Roscommon
LIST OF ASSOCIATED AREA PLANS AND DOCUMENTS:

AREA PLANS:
1. MONKSLAND / BELLANAMULLIA AREA PLAN
2. HODSON BAY / BARRYMORE AREA PLAN
3. ROSCOMMON AREA PLAN
4. CASTLEREA AREA PLAN
5. BOYLE AREA PLAN
6. BALLAGHADERREEN AREA PLAN
7. CORTOBER AREA PLAN
8. CREAGH AREA PLAN
9. LOUGH KEY AREA PLAN

DOCUMENTS:
10. RECORD OF PROTECTED STRUCTURES FOR COUNTY ROSCOMMON
11. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT OF COUNTY ROSCOMMON
12. HOUSING STRATEGY FOR COUNTY ROSCOMMON
13. RETAIL STRATEGY FOR COUNTY ROSCOMMON
14. DEMOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT PROFILE OF COUNTY ROSCOMMON
15. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE ROSCOMMON COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2008 – 2014
# ROSCOMMON COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
## 2008 - 2014

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESDP</td>
<td>European Spatial Development Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEA</td>
<td>Strategic Environmental Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSS</td>
<td>National Spatial Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Central Statistical Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDP</td>
<td>County Development Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ED</td>
<td>Electoral Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPG</td>
<td>Regional Planning Guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DED</td>
<td>District Electoral Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>National Development Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCDB</td>
<td>Roscommon County Development Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCDP</td>
<td>Roscommon County Development Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILUTP</td>
<td>Land Use and Transportation Plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTI</td>
<td>Rural Transport Initiative</td>
</tr>
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<td>NRA</td>
<td>National Roads Authorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCC</td>
<td>Roscommon County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA</td>
<td>Local Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WISP</td>
<td>Water Services National Investment Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RWSS</td>
<td>Regional Water Supply Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSS</td>
<td>Water Supply Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSI</td>
<td>Geological Survey of Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMA</td>
<td>District Metering Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUDS</td>
<td>Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPW</td>
<td>Office of Public Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pNHA</td>
<td>Proposed Natural Heritage Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cSAC</td>
<td>Candidate Special Area of Conservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPA</td>
<td>Special Protection Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>Planning Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLI</td>
<td>Serviced Land Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSM</td>
<td>Global System for Mobile Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIA</td>
<td>Environmental Impact Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPBD</td>
<td>Energy Performance of Buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CER</td>
<td>Commission for Energy Regulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.S.A.</td>
<td>Health and Safety Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESRI</td>
<td>Economic and Social Research Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDI</td>
<td>Foreign Direct Investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRHEC</td>
<td>County Roscommon Higher Education Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEB</td>
<td>County and City Enterprise Boards</td>
</tr>
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<td>CDB</td>
<td>County Development Board</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LCA</td>
<td>Landscape Character Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAP</td>
<td>Local Area Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACA</td>
<td>Architectural Conservation Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIS</td>
<td>Geographic Information Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSL</td>
<td>Digital Subscriber Line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAN</td>
<td>Metropolitan Area Networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FWA</td>
<td>Fixed Wireless Access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA</td>
<td>Environmental Protection Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPPC</td>
<td>Integrated Pollution Prevention Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMW</td>
<td>Border Midland and Western Operational Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF</td>
<td>European Rural Development Fund</td>
</tr>
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<td>WDC</td>
<td>Western Development Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SME</td>
<td>Small and Medium Enterprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPO</td>
<td>Business Processing Outsourcing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHEC</td>
<td>County Roscommon Higher Education Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GVA</td>
<td>Gross Value Added</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDSIP</td>
<td>Local Development Social Inclusion Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPSU</td>
<td>High Potential Start Up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R &amp; D</td>
<td>Research and Development Centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFSC</td>
<td>International Financial Services Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIF</td>
<td>Western Investment Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTD</td>
<td>Medical Technologies and Devices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>Human Environment Interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IoT</td>
<td>Institute of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOHO</td>
<td>Small Office, Home Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C &amp; D</td>
<td>Construction and Demolition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIA</td>
<td>Environmental Impact Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>National Heritage Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICF</td>
<td>Irish Concrete Federation</td>
</tr>
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<td>NESC</td>
<td>National Economic and Social Council</td>
</tr>
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<td>DTO</td>
<td>Dublin Transport Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Housing Finance Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Housing Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAS</td>
<td>Rental Accommodation Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BER</td>
<td>Building Energy Rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEI</td>
<td>Sustainable Energy Ireland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:

CHP  Combined Heat and Power
CAP  Common Agricultural Policy
NFS  Teagasc National Farm Survey
FFI  Family Farm Income
IPPC  Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control Licensing
REPS  Rural Environmental Protection Scheme
IRT  Integrated Rural Tourism
FEPS  Forest Environment Protection Scheme
GPS  Groundwater Protection Scheme
VDS  Village Design Statement
NIAH  National Inventory of Architectural Heritage
RPS  Record of Protected Structures
SFM  Sustainable Forest Management
IFS  Initiative Forest Strategy
NAPS  National Anti-Poverty Strategy
NESC  National Economic and Social Council
NAP  National Action Plan for Social Inclusion
RAPID  Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development
PPP  Public Private Partnership
NGO  Non-government Organisation
TIA  Traffic Impact Assessment
DEHLG  Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government
AEDP  Athlone Environs Development Plan
PDA  Planning and Development Act 2000
SO  Specific Object
NRDO  National Roads Development Office
CHAPTER 1
POLICY CONTEXT
1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 Introduction and purpose

Planning fulfils a vital and central function of any Local Authority primarily in the development of land. The Development Plan in turn acts as the primary guiding tool for the way in which this development is governed in the County Council area over the set period. “The development plan is central to achieving greater balance in regional development and enabling all areas to develop to their maximum potential. The plan creates the vision for the area it covers; specifies the type, amount and quality of development needed to achieve that vision; and seeks to protect and enhance the environment and amenities. It creates the policy framework and necessary degree of certainty within which individual development decisions can be made over the life of the plan.” (DoEHLG, Development Plans: Draft of Guidelines for Planning Authorities: 2)

The purpose of the development plan therefore, is to set out the overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and is comprised of a written statement and attendant maps that give a graphic representation of the objectives contained in the Plan. Under the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, each Planning Authority is obliged to make a Development Plan every six years and in making the Plan the Planning Authority shall have regard to national and regional plans, policies or strategies.

Section 10 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, sets out the content of development plans, which shall consist of a written statement and map(s) and include objectives for:

- The zoning of land
- The provision or facilitation of the provision of infrastructure
- The conservation and protection of the environment
- 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 preservation of the character of the landscape
- The protection of structures, or parts of structures, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest
- The preservation of the character of architectural conservation areas
- The development and renewal of areas in need of regeneration
- The provision of accommodation for travellers, and the use of particular areas for that purpose
- The preservation, improvement and extension of amenities and recreational amenities
- The control of establishments for the purposes of reducing the risk, or limiting the consequences, of a major accident
- The provision, or facilitation of the provision of services for the community
- The protection of the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht, where there is a Gaeltacht area in the area of the development

1.1.2 Content of the report

The Roscommon County Development Plan (RCDP) has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Section 10(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and is presented in many parts. The written framework provides a Vision for the County at the start which feeds into the Strategic Goals/Aims contained in Chapter 2: Settlement Policy and Development Strategy and these then inform the specific policies and objectives in each of the chapters of the written statement.
Chapter 1: Policy Context

- **Roscommon County Development Plan, 2008 - 2014**

**Section 1** of the written statement provides the **Policy Context** with an introduction to the new County Development Plan for Roscommon. An explanation of the legislative and policy context for its preparation is provided which includes sections on the preparation of the Plan and the Strategic Environmental Assessment.

The following **chapters** contain the main policy material under a range of headings together with the planning strategies and principles that underpin them. The main chapters are as follows:

1. Policy Context
2. Settlement Policy and Development Strategy
3. Infrastructure, Transportation and Movement
4. Economic Development and Employment
5. Urban Development
6. Rural Development
7. Built Heritage and Archaeology
8. Natural Heritage and Landscape Character Assessment
9. Social Inclusion and Community Facilities
10. Recreation, Leisure and Tourism
11. Implementation and Monitoring
12. Development Management Guidelines and Standards

- **Area Plans**

The new County Development Plan consists of a single document comprising the County Development Plan as well as Area Plans for all the towns together with zoning maps. These plans provide updated information concerning the towns and a guidance framework for the management of development in an environmentally sustainable manner within the development envelopes of the towns. These will continue to operate as statutory plans for the areas until such time as Local Area Plans, as defined in Part II, Chapter II of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, replace them. It is intended that all such Local Area Plans will be prepared and adopted after the preparation of the County Development Plan and a schedule of these is provided in Chapter 2. In the cases where objectives and policies are not covered directly by the plans in Volume 2 of this document, the objectives and policies of the Roscommon County Development Plan apply.

1. Monksland/ Bellanamullia Area Plan
2. Hodson Bay/Barrymore Area Plan
3. Roscommon Area Plan
4. Castlerea Area Plan
5. Boyle Area Plan
6. Ballaghaderreen Area Plan
7. Cortober Area Plan
8. Creagh Area Plan
9. Lough Key Area Plan

Attached to each of the Area Plans in a zoning map as well as an appendix indicating the following: **Appendix 1:** Architectural Conservation Areas for County Roscommon
• Strategies and supporting documentation

There are various stand alone reports which accompany the Roscommon County Development Plan 2008 – 2014. They are as follows:

• Record of Protected Structures for County Roscommon
• Landscape Character Assessment for County Roscommon
• Housing Strategy for County Roscommon
• Retail Strategy for County Roscommon
• Demographic, Economic and Employment Profile of County Roscommon

The Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Roscommon County Development Plan 2008 – 2014 is provided in CD format.

1.2 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT

A wide variety of international, national, regional and local government policy documents, have been reviewed in preparing this Development Plan.

At the international level, the need to promote “sustainable development” is paramount. This term refers to “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. This principle is an important component of the County Development Plan, and its aims, as are the various European Union publications such as Agenda 2000, Local Agenda 21, the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), and various relevant EU Directives.

Policy developments with a particular relevance to County Roscommon at National, Regional and Local level include:

• at national level: the National Development Plan 2007 - 2013 (NDP); Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland, 1997; the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020 (NSS); and various Planning Guidelines;
• at regional level: the Regional Planning Guidelines for the West 2004-2016 (RPGs) and the Midland Regional Authority: Regional Planning Guidelines, 2004 ; and,
• at local level: the “Roscommon Common Vision”, County Development Board Strategy, 2002 - 2012

At the national level, recent reports such as the National Development Plan 2007 - 2013 have influenced the preparation of this Plan. Specific Planning Guidelines in relation to Retailing, Telecommunications, Renewable Energy, Built Heritage, Childcare, Sustainable Rural Housing, Quarries, etc., have also informed the policies and objectives contained in the Plan.

1.3 PREPARATION OF COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND ASSOCIATED TOWN AREA PLANS 2008 – 2014

The existing Roscommon County Development Plan was adopted on 29 July 2002 and this revised Roscommon County Development Plan 2008 – 2014 supercedes it. Section 11(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 states that; “not later than 4 years after the making of a development plan, a Planning Authority shall give notice of its intention to review its existing development plan and to prepare a new development plan for the area.”

This Roscommon County Development Plan is valid for a six-year period and it reflects consultation with the general public and other interested bodies.
1.4 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the formal systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the County Development Plan before a decision is made to adopt the plan.

The SEA process includes the following steps:

- Preparing an Environmental Report where the likely significant environmental effects are identified and evaluated
- Consulting the public, environmental authorities, and any EU Member State affected, on the environmental report and draft plan
- Taking account of the findings of the report and the outcome of these consultations in deciding whether to adopt or modify the draft plan
- Making known the decision on adoption of the plan and how SEA influenced the outcome.

This County Development Plan has been subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), in accordance with the DoEHLG SEA Guidelines and is included in Volume 3: Appendix 6. The Environmental Report has proofed the strategic policies and objectives against ‘environmental’ objectives, setting out the potential environmental impacts of the policies or objectives of the Plan were they to be implemented.
2.1 CONTEXT FOR SETTLEMENT POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Settlement policy broadly guides where new development will occur in the county and is a fundamental component of spatial planning.

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) sets a national framework for spatial planning into which all other spatial plans must fit. Regional Planning Guidelines were prepared in order to implement the NSS at regional level. The ministerial guidelines on Sustainable Rural Housing are concerned with the issue of rural housing which comes within the ambit of settlement policy. The need to carry out Strategic Environmental Assessment and the implications of the Water Framework Directive, provides for an environmental critique of the process as well as the settlement strategy. All of these form part of the new framework for the County Development Plan. The plan must ‘in so far as is practicable’ be consistent with the following policy documents: the NSS; the Regional Planning Guidelines for the West; and, the statutory guidelines on Sustainable Rural Housing, to name but a few.

2.2 VISION AND STRATEGIC GOALS

The Vision for County Roscommon as defined in the Roscommon County Development Board Strategy: Roscommon Common Vision, is as follows:

“Roscommon will be a vibrant county with an increased population, an enhanced quality of life, employment growth, high quality infrastructure and a strong entrepreneurial spirit. The county will also have a safe, clean environment, a variety of recreational activities and excellent health and educational facilities, providing equal opportunities for all.”

(Roscommon County Development Board, 2002: 1)

The Main Strategic Aims of the County Development Plan are to:

- Plan for and support the sustainable development of Roscommon as an integrated network of vibrant socially and economically successful settlements, supporting and contributing to the economic development of the County, of its neighbouring authorities and of the Region.

- Provide for the future wellbeing of the residents of the County by:
  - promoting the growth of economic activity and increasing employment opportunities
  - protecting and improving the quality of the built and natural environments
  - ensuring the provision of necessary infrastructural and community services.

- Recognise the largely rural character of the County whilst sustaining traditional rural communities and rural activities.

- Ensure that everyone has the opportunity of obtaining affordable housing, can enjoy safe and accessible environments, have access to jobs, education and training, community services and recreational facilities, arts and culture.

- Build on the opportunities which Roscommon provides in terms of trade, business and tourism; promote employment growth and economic activity; widen and diversify the economic base; and encourage growth in less developed areas of the County.

- Promote a balance of development across the county, by developing a hierarchy of high quality, vibrant urban centres and clearly delineated areas of growth.

- Ensure an adequate supply of zoned lands to meet forecast and anticipated economic and social needs.

- Ensure that the vitality and character of established town and village centres are maintained. Ensure also the cohesive and coherent development of existing and proposed settlements.
- Protect, maintain and enhance the quality of the natural environment, protect the unique character of Roscommon’s landscapes and conserve its open spaces and visual amenity.

- Utilise the surrounding natural environment and natural resources, to the benefit of the County, in a managed way that does not compromise these resources.

- Acknowledge that the archaeological, natural and built heritages are important elements in the long-term economic development of the county and that it is important to promote their conservation and enhancement, public access and enjoyment.

- To promote, encourage and facilitate the development of the tourism industry through sustainable means, including the conservation, protection and enhancement of the built and natural heritage, the protection of sensitive landscapes, cultural and community environments in order to maximise upon the economic benefits arising from the industry.

- Contribute to a sustainable environment by encouraging the development of buildings of all types that are environmentally efficient to build and run, and which contribute to the “greening” of the County according to the principles of Local Agenda 21.


- Foster the development of socially, economically balanced sustainable communities, through amongst others, promoting social inclusion and the implementation of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy.

- Continue to influence regional and national Planning and Development policies in the interest of the County. To co-operate with the Regional Authority and other agencies in meeting the needs and development requirements of the Western Region in accordance with the National Spatial Strategy and the Regional Planning Guidelines for the West (RPG’s).

2.3 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE AND POPULATION GROWTH IN COUNTY ROSCOMMON

2.3.1 Preliminary 2006 Census Information

The 2006 Census of Population (Preliminary Report) records a population of 58700 persons in Roscommon. This is a growth of 4926 or 9.2% over the 2002 figure of 53774.

Table 1: Gender Breakdown in Preliminary 2006 CSO census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gender Breakdown in Preliminary 2006 CSO census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>30132 = 51.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>28568 = 48.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: County Population Change 1981 - 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>County Roscommon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>58700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>53774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>51975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>51897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>54592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>54543</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Roscommon had a larger increase (9.2%) than the overall growth for the state (8.1%). Such an occurrence is unknown in the last half century. The population had fallen by 30,000 between 1926 and 1991 including a fall of 2695 between 1986 and 1991.

In the period 2002 – 2006, all counties in Ireland experienced positive natural increase with the highest rates in counties with the youngest profile (Fingal, Dublin South, Kildare, Meath) and lowest in counties with the oldest age profile (Leitrim, Roscommon, Mayo).
By deducting the natural increase in population at county level from the corresponding population change data, it is possible to derive net migration figures i.e. the net movement of all persons into the county from elsewhere and out of the county to elsewhere.

**Table 3: Population Increases in County Roscommon 2002 – 2006**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Roscommon</th>
<th>Connaught</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Numerical Increase</td>
<td>4926</td>
<td>39787</td>
<td>317,722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Increase</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>10764</td>
<td>131,314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Net Migration</td>
<td>4284</td>
<td>28,023</td>
<td>186,408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Annual Births</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Annual Deaths</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Increase Rate</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Net Migration Rate</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The major component of the population increase has therefore been net migration – 19 per thousand of population compared to a state average of 11.4. The rate of natural increase has been low - 2.9 per thousand compared to a state average of 8.1. However, the birth rate has been increasing during 2004 – 2006 (expected to be 5.5 to 6 per 1000 in 2006) and can be expected to rise further after a period of high migration when unaccompanied workers begin to settle and form family units.

To give perspective and to emphasise the scale of the changes in migration, it is worth comparing this figure with previous periods.

**Table 4: Average Estimated Net Migration Rate Per 1,000 of Average Population in Roscommon**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Migration</td>
<td>-2.8</td>
<td>-11.4</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per 1000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As will be seen in the future sections, the natural increase rate has picked up in 2006 and allied to a high net migration rate, the prevailing trends suggest significant population growth.

### 2.3.2 Population projections

Based on CSO population projections and recent local trends, a population of approximately 67,000, a rise of 14%, is expected by the end of the CDP in 2014. The increase is accounted for by high inward migration and relatively low natural increase. Roscommon had a higher death rate and lower birth rate than Connaught or the state as a whole but yet had a greater population increase. The net migration rate of 19 per 1,000 of average population per annum is almost twice the national average. Within Connaught, rates of net migration vary from 25.9 in Leitrim to 6.4 in Sligo.

The projected population for the CDP was calculated as follows (see **Demographic, Economic and Employment Profile for County Roscommon** for further detail):

Four growth scenarios were utilised:
- 1.2% is equivalent to CSO M2F3 scenario for the state as a whole
- 1.36% is equivalent to CSO M2F3 scenario taking into account Roscommon’s growth relative to the state’s in the period 2002 – 2006
- 1.6% is equivalent to CSO M1F1 scenario for the state as a whole
- 1.82% is equivalent to CSO M1F1 scenario taking into account Roscommon’s growth relative to the state’s in the period 2002 – 2006
Table 5: Population growth scenarios for 2006 – 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1.2%</th>
<th>1.36%</th>
<th>1.6%</th>
<th>1.82%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>58700</td>
<td>58700</td>
<td>58700</td>
<td>58700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>59408</td>
<td>59503</td>
<td>59646</td>
<td>59777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>60125</td>
<td>60318</td>
<td>60607</td>
<td>60874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>60850</td>
<td>61143</td>
<td>61584</td>
<td>61991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>61585</td>
<td>61980</td>
<td>62576</td>
<td>63129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>62328</td>
<td>62828</td>
<td>63586</td>
<td>64287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>63080</td>
<td>63688</td>
<td>64610</td>
<td>65468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>63841</td>
<td>64559</td>
<td>65652</td>
<td>66669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>64611</td>
<td>65443</td>
<td>66709</td>
<td>67892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>65391</td>
<td>66338</td>
<td>67785</td>
<td>69139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>66180</td>
<td>67246</td>
<td>68878</td>
<td>70407</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of population growth, 1.6% increase per annum is viewed as safe to use for the period 2006 – 2014 with the following riders attached:

- future downturns will impact on migration levels where least opportunities exist
- we don’t have labour force breakdowns from 2006 Census yet
- the high level of recent growth rates is unlikely to be sustained

NOTE: The projections were estimated in January 2007 from the figures then available from the CSO. These figures have been utilised for the Housing Strategy and Retail Strategy and have informed all the projections contained within the County Development Plan. The Council will continue to monitor the population trends and once the final population information is available from the CSO for the 2006 census will assess the figures and amend information within the CDP where appropriate.

2.3.3 Age Dependency

The 2002 Census shows that, the age dependent population is significantly higher than the national or West region average and is concentrated in the over 65 rather than the 0 – 14 years category. Age dependency has decreased from 43.3% in 1991 to 35.3% in 2006.

Table 6: Age Dependent Population 2006 (those under 15 or over 65 years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Roscommon</th>
<th>Ireland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>35.25</td>
<td>31.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3.4 Spatial distribution

In terms of spatial profile, the areas of significant growth in the county are Athlone West, Kiltoom and Carnagh (neighbouring EDs in the south east of the county adjacent to Athlone); Ballaghaderreen; Boyle; Roscommon town and surrounding EDs; Castlerea; Termonbarry and Danesfort, the latter two being close to urban centres outside the county boundary. Where falling populations are recorded, the absolute numbers are statistically small but are important in terms of trend and age dependency. This is consistent with more in-depth data from the 2002 Census that identify declining areas in the west and extreme north of the county.

Population density in County Roscommon is 22.9 persons per sq. km compared to a state average of 60.

It is not possible to make further analysis of changes to urban populations as the Preliminary figures for 2006 relate only to Electoral Districts and not urban boundaries. We, therefore, do not know the changes in population figures according to town boundaries to compare with 2002 figures, presented here.

From the Electoral District figures, we can expect the 2006 Town figures to show growth in Roscommon, Athlone Environs, Boyle, Ballaghaderreen, and Tulsk. The urban areas of Elphin,
Castlerea and Strokestown are likely to show marginal growth or stagnancy with probable bigger growth in their outlying areas. In order to give some level of comparability, the ED population figures for 2002 and 2006 are presented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electoral Districts</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athlone West</td>
<td>2262</td>
<td>3114</td>
<td>+37.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballaghaderreen</td>
<td>2319</td>
<td>2741</td>
<td>+18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyle Rural and Urban combined</td>
<td>2613</td>
<td>2966</td>
<td>+13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castlerea</td>
<td>2689</td>
<td>2842</td>
<td>+5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon Rural and Urban combined</td>
<td>5317</td>
<td>5840</td>
<td>+9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total of these EDs</td>
<td>15200</td>
<td>17503</td>
<td>+15.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These show much more positive indications of sustainability of the county towns than the 2002 Census. Whereas the 2002 Census only showed positive demographic outlook for Roscommon and the Monksland area, these are likely to be joined by Ballaghaderreen, Boyle and Castlerea when further Census data on urban boundaries are available.

It is not possible yet to assess any change in the overall levels of urbanisation and rural population. In 2002, the number of persons living in towns with a population over 1500 was 10108 or 18.8%. Therefore, 81% of people lived in aggregate rural areas compared to 40% nationally and 69% in the western region. With current data, we can only compare EDs where towns are located rather than urban boundaries. Such EDs contain a greater number of persons than the urban boundaries but a comparison is useful. As the figure for the EDs increased by 15.2% from 2002 to 2006 i.e. in excess of the total population increase of 9.2%, an increase in urbanisation can be predicted, dependent on outcomes from the urban boundary breakdowns.

Within the county, the majority of Electoral Districts are ranked as either marginally below or marginally above the national average for relative affluence/deprivation. Deviation from this is evidenced in the west and extreme north of the county where many EDs are classified disadvantaged and the south where six affluent EDs are located (2002). Based on more recent CSO County Incomes and Census of Industrial Production data on incomes and salaries, minor improvements to disadvantaged areas and more significant improvements to more affluent EDs can be expected when Census 2006 outputs are fully analysed.

2.4 ROSCOMMON’S BROAD SETTLEMENT STRUCTURE

2.4.1 Policy Context

In its discussion on the West Region, the NSS defines the hierarchy for the Region accordingly:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIER OF DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>SETTLEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gateway</td>
<td>Galway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hubs</td>
<td>Tuam and Ballina/Castlebar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Towns and towns over 5000 population</td>
<td>Roscommon Town in the County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towns 1500 – 5000 population</td>
<td>Ballaghaderreen, Boyle, Castlerea in the County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centres in weak urban structure areas</td>
<td>Strokestown and Elphin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villages and Rural Areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NSS, 2002

The Regional Planning Guidelines for the West, on the other hand identify the towns of Boyle, Castlerea, Strokestown, Ballaghaderreen, Roscommon, and Monksland (Athlone) as key towns for enterprise development in the region. In addition, the development framework for the region divides the County accordingly:
2.4.2 Existing Settlement Structure

The current settlement pattern in County Roscommon can be defined as follows:

**Roscommon Town, Monksland (Athlone Environs), Boyle, Castlerea and Ballaghaderreen** are the principle settlements within the county that serve as the primary residential, employment, service and retail centres. Area Plans are produced for all these areas within this Plan, which provide descriptions and indicate how they should develop until such time are more comprehensive Local Area Plans as compiled.

**Strokestown, Elphin and Roosky** have Local Areas Plans and can be defined as satellite villages which also act as residential, employment, service and retail centres. These have by and large, experienced significant levels of development and should continue to be supported as areas which are “Centres of Weak Urban Structure” as defined in the NSS.

There are a number of key villages in the county which most often have a Church and school within their confines and provide basic services to their communities, such as convenience goods and petrol. There are also a number of smaller settlements, many of which are located around local community facilities and they act as important focal points for the wider rural community. Both of these have tended to be developed in an ad hoc manner however, in order to ensure they develop in a structured and orderly fashion, it is considered necessary that a limit of development be drawn around each settlement area, within which there will be presumption in favour of development. Chapters 5 and 6 of this Plan contain guidance on how these areas are defined and how plans and statements, such as Village Design Statements, can be prepared which will guide their development. It was not possible to pursue the preparation of these during the course of the review of the existing Development Plan due to time and resource constraints. It is worthwhile noting at this stage that Roscommon County Council will aim, as part of this settlement strategy, to develop communities and not just areas and that these areas are supported by the appropriate level of infrastructure, including social infrastructure. These services and facilities may be provided in partnership with the private sector and/or the community.

2.4.3 Proposed Settlement Structure

It is necessary to undertake some analysis to assess the capacity of towns and villages to accommodate future growth. The capacity of the settlements has been examined on the basis of the following:

1. Existing settlement size in terms of population and households
2. Recent trends in population and household growth and projected population growth
3. Presence and capacity of water services i.e. water supply and sewerage
4. Inclusion in programmes such as the Serviced Land Initiative
5. Range of services including health, community, industrial and retail
6. Connections and accessibility from these settlements to towns and counties adjacent
7. Character of the settlements in terms of, for example, natural and built heritage, archaeology and landscape character

The preliminary CSO population figures from the 2006 census have been used, where available, in the compilation of the figures below.
Table 9: Current population figures and Settlement Hierarchy categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIER</th>
<th>SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY</th>
<th>TOWN / VILLAGE / SETTLEMENT</th>
<th>CURRENT POPULATION CSO 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>County Town/Primary growth centre</td>
<td>Roscommon Town</td>
<td>5840 U&amp;R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Key support towns/settlements</td>
<td>Boyle, Castlerea, Ballaghaderreen, Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone Environ)</td>
<td>2500-5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Key satellite villages</td>
<td>Ballinasloe Environ (Creagh), Ballinlough, Ballintober, Ballyleague, Carrick-on-Shannon Environ (Cortober), Cloonfad, Elphin, Frenchpark, Loughglinn, Roosky, Strokestown, Termonbarry, Hodson Bay/Barrymore</td>
<td>500-1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Key villages</td>
<td>Knockcroghery, Athleague, Ballinameen, Bellanagare(DED), Castleplunket (DED), Keadue.</td>
<td>300-500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Smaller Settlements</td>
<td>Arigna, Ballyfarnon, Ballyforan, Bridestown, Castlecoote, Cloontuskert, Cootehall, Croghan, Curraghboy, Dysart, Four Roads, Hillstreet, Kilteevan, Knockvicar, Lecarrow, Moore, Mount Talbot, Rahara, Scarva, Taughmaconnell, Trien, Tulsk, Whitehall</td>
<td>50-300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dispersed rural areas</td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a matter of clarity, the following methodology was used to calculate the population figures for the settlements.

Firstly, in order to define the boundaries of each of the settlements, the existing settlement boundaries for those towns with development plans or local area plans were used e.g. Castlerea. For other towns and villages Townland boundaries were used in an attempt to define settlements as closely as possible. It should be noted that DED areas tend to be significantly larger than defined settlements and until such time as full 2006 CSO information is available, it is not possible to provide more accurate population figures. The CSO figures are generated by DED and we have attempted to compensate for this by employing this 3-step methodology.

Secondly, in order to calculate the number of households, the An Post Geo-directory was used. This is a database which provides the number of residential units with postal addresses in an area and is updated on a 3 monthly basis which ensures that the information provided is current.

Thirdly, in order to establish the total population, the average number of persons per household was multiplied by the number of households in an area. The 2002 census information was used to establish the average number of persons per household, i.e. 2.9 persons.

Thirteen villages have been included in the Serviced Land Initiative which allows for Design Population Equivalents of between 487 and 3182 people. This allows for a significant amount of development in places which can be characterised as quite rural.

It is noted therefore, that all these areas face very different development challenges and the following Settlement Strategy aims in some way to address these. From the analysis above and building on the existing County Development Plan, the NSS and the RPG’s for the West, the following is proposed as the County Roscommon Settlement Structure in this County Development Plan. (See also Map 6)
Tier 1: County Town / Primary Growth Centre (population range 5000 – 10000)

Roscommon Town has a strong historical identity as the County Town and associated market town. It has an extensive range of services including health, community, industry and retail.

As part of the settlement strategy it will be promoted as the primary growth centre for employment generating investment with a strong and attractive residential centre. Its role will be enhanced as the primary retail and service centre as well as a growth centre for industrial development. It will have increased connectivity with other centres in the region through upgraded transportation linkages, both road and rail.

Tier 2: Key support towns/ settlements (population range 2500 – 5000)

These centres have an interacting and supporting role to the County town and also act as service centres for their adjacent rural areas which should be further enhanced. They have an extensive range of services including health, community, financial, and retail. They also have a growing residential and commercial sector. Strong connections also exist from these settlements to towns and counties adjacent to County Roscommon, for example, Boyle to Sligo, Monksland and Athlone environs to Westmeath, Ballaghaderreen to Mayo and Castlerea to Galway and Mayo.

Transportation linkages should be strengthened between these areas, and to the County Town.

Tier 3: Key satellite villages (population range 500 – 1500)

These centres have a more limited range of services than tier 1 and 2 and service provision often includes a range of retail and educational services, but limited financial, health and community services. These areas have been traditionally referred to as towns within County Roscommon however in the national setting would be deemed villages. They should be further developed as residential and employment centres as well as service and local retail centres for their surrounding hinterland. Retail development is likely to be mainly convenience goods, with supermarkets and local shops serving the local town and the hinterland.

Tier 4: Key villages (population range 300 - 500)

Key villages and smaller settlements provide basic services to their community, such as convenience goods and petrol. Education services are provided in some of the settlements, but extend to primary education only. Some of these settlements require major improvements in infrastructure to ensure that they will become attractive settlement centres and assist in the long-term vitality and viability of the County.

The future development strategy of these villages is to concentrate population, services and jobs in strategic village locations which have relatively good access from nearby towns. The clustering of the population in this way will have the effect of strengthening the viability of services such as retail, schooling and public transport as well as the expansion of small rural enterprise.

Tier 5: Smaller settlements (population range 100 – 300)

These villages act as nodes for distinctive quality driven residential development and essential local commercial and community services. It is envisaged that the future growth of these villages should be safeguarded so that they do not act as catalysts to facilitate continuing expansion of larger urban centres. It is important that the existing character of the villages be maintained; that the local community’s needs in relation to future development be taken into consideration; and that new development should harmonise with the ‘old’ existing settlement form.
Tier 6: Dispersed rural areas (population range <100)

This is the smallest type of settlement and the character of these areas mirror the rural countryside but have scattered individual houses with some clustering around one or more focal points. Focal points may include existing development around a cross roads, a shop, church, post office etc. There may be scope for some additional dwellings to consolidate existing focal points and utilise existing services in the area subject to normal planning environmental standards. House numbers should however be restricted to a maximum of eight to ten houses in total, centred on the focal point and should be subject to the satisfactory provision of infrastructure and services. Chapter 6 of this Plan provides further detail concerning the Rural Settlement and Housing Strategy for County Roscommon.

It is important to note that it is not the intention of the Planning Authority to support proposals which amount to a line of ribbon development or that has not developed around a nucleus / crossroad with sufficient lower level social and community services present. The provision for non-integrated residential communities is not sustainable and does not accord with the settlement strategy proposed for the County. Such an approach would establish a poor precedent having regard to the proper planning and sustainable development of rural areas and will lead to inevitable servicing issues. In addition, in designating these areas, it is not envisaged that these areas would become major urban centres. The Planning Authority is committed to ensuring that the variety of these settlements located across the County will offer attractive and affordable housing options as well as employment and community facilities and services to meet the needs of the established rural communities, and those wishing to settle in rural areas e.g. Ballymoe Environs, Lisacul, Curraghroe, Portrunny, Shannonbridge Environs and Creggs Environs to name but a few. In addition, it should be noted that the strengthening of the villages which form part of Tiers 3, 4 and 5 provide an opportunity to divert pressure for the provision of single dwellings in the countryside.

This proposed settlement hierarchy is illustrated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIER</th>
<th>SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY</th>
<th>TOWN / VILLAGE / SETTLEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>County Town/Primary growth centre</td>
<td>Roscommon Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Key support towns/settlements</td>
<td>Boyle, Castlerea, Ballaghaderreen, Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone Environs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Key satellite villages</td>
<td>Ballinasloe Environs (Creagh), Ballinlough, Ballintober, Ballyleague, Carrick-on-Shannon Environs (Cortober), Cloonfad, Elphin, Frenchpark, Loughlinn, Roosky, Strokestown, Termonbarry, Hodson Bay/Barrymore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Key villages</td>
<td>Knockcroghery, Athleague, Ballinameen, Bellanagare (DED), Castleplunket (DED), Keadue, Arigna, Ballyfarnon, Ballyforan, Cootehall Lecarrow, Tulsk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Smaller Settlements</td>
<td>Brideswell, Castleeote, Cloontuskert, Croghan, Curraghboy, Dysart, Four Roads, Hillstreet, Kilteevan, Knockvicar, Moore, Mount Talbot, Rahara, Scrumoge, Taughmaconnell, Trien, Whitehall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dispersed rural areas</td>
<td>All other rural areas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.5 SETTLEMENT STRATEGY

The development and settlement strategy which forms part of this Development Plan has as its primary aim to consolidate the County as an attractive place in which to live, work and recreate, and to facilitate the achievement of a high quality of life for residents and visitors through the sustainable development of further economic and social activities in a quality environment.

The plan seeks to achieve this aim through the development of all parts of the county through:

- economic and social development in the towns and villages, where most new development will be channelled and where it can bring benefits both to the settlements themselves and to their rural hinterlands; and,
- growth and diversification in rural areas, especially where there has been an underlying trend of population decline.

The Roscommon County Development Plan (2002) sought to increase the population of the County to over 60 000 people by 2008 and retain a young adult population which will provide the basis for sustaining communities. The Plan encouraged the strengthening of the urban structure and the consolidation of the towns and villages as centres of economic and population growth. Access to employment and a range of services in towns and villages was thought to be key for the development of the County.

This County Development Plan (2008 – 2014) seeks to promote the development of settlements in accordance with their location in a hierarchy and as outlined in the NSS and RPG’s. As part of this hierarchy, the Plan seeks to promote industrial and commercial development particularly in the larger towns. The strategic aim of these policies is to create a more sustainable balanced development pattern in County Roscommon.

It should be noted also that a Development Plan is primarily concerned with physical planning and land use policies. Unless a specific framework is created, social and economic issues do not receive sufficient attention. The Settlement Strategy and supporting policies provide this framework. It is accepted that unanticipated changes will take place in the distribution of population and that these changes will have an impact on the relative contribution that each centre has to make. It is also accepted that there is a potential need for some provision for those areas that do not qualify as settlement centres but can accommodate some housing.

The following policies relate to development in all settlements including villages within the County:

Policy 1 Improve the quality of life of the residents of the County and make the County an attractive location in which to live in the future.

Policy 2 Promote a balance of development across the county through the designation of a settlement hierarchy, outlining in broad terms the role and function of all settlements, according to hierarchy level, building upon the existing settlement strategy.

Policy 3 Development in all instances should be sustainable and account should be taken of the availability of public transport infrastructure, socio-economic profile, creation of appropriate and sustainable levels of employment and commercial activities which are in proportion to residential development within each area, and protection of the rural hinterland and urban greenbelt.

Policy 4 Ensure there will be sufficient land zoned to accommodate the growing population and endeavour to ensure, in so far as is practicable, that the zoning of land and growth of settlements is accompanied by adequate infrastructural provision, including local social and community infrastructure (such as schools, neighbourhood centres, crèches, community halls, recreation facilities, etc.) at an appropriate rate.
### Policy 5
Development and growth of each of the selected urban centres should be generally restricted to the development envelope, so that they function as the focal points for the development of their rural catchments.

### Policy 6
Discourage development in the immediate vicinity of any defined development envelope, which would compromise the distinction between the open countryside and the built up edge of the settlement.

### Policy 7
Promote compact forms of development with more comprehensive development of the backlands of towns and villages and more efficient use of public infrastructure and services

### Policy 8
Encourage settlements to develop niche activities or roles which will help in their further development

### Policy 9
In all instances RCC should seek the promotion of high-quality urban design that balances the achievement of densities with the provision of high quality services, the management of public safety and the provision of high quality access and networks.

### Policy 10
Prepare a comprehensive suite of Local Area Plans for the larger urban settlements of County Roscommon, where there is potential for large scale development, and where there is a need for plan-led development.

### Policy 11
Establish strong road connections between settlements and promote public transport strategies.

### Policy 12
Encourage the continued sustainable development of rural and urban communities without compromising the physical, environmental, natural, cultural and heritage resources of the County, in so far as is practicable, and ensure the provision of facilities and services for them.

### Policy 13
Protect important landscape features within or on the edge of settlements by restricting development within designated Sensitive Landscapes, unless it can be proven, to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority, that the development would not detrimentally impact on the amenity and character of settlements and the wider setting, or that it is necessary and can only proceed within such a landscape.

### Policy 14
Prepare Village Design Statements to inform planners, designers, decision makers and the public at large of the local community’s needs in relation to future development and to provide recommendations relating to the various ways that new development can harmonise with the ‘old’ existing settlement form.

### Policy 15
Link land use and transport to encourage the provision of viable catchments to sustain public transport and provide an alternative to reliance on the private car.

The following objectives flow from the polices above:

#### Objective 1
Prepare Local Area Plans for the settlements contained in Volume 2 of this Plan in accordance with the priority schedule contained as part of Objective 3. These Local Area Plans will replace the individual Written Statements and Detailed Objectives for Towns and Villages contained within this County Development Plan, 2008 - 2014.

#### Objective 2
Prepare a report with recommendations on the phasing of plans following the 2011 CDP review
Objective 3  Establish the settlement zone boundaries of Villages and commence preparation of the Village Design Statements and Local Area Plans, in accordance with the schedule below. Those Plans to be prepared from 2011 onwards will be decided at the Mid-term review stage of the County Development Plan. It should be noted that the Village Design Statements will address issues of design, managed growth and associated infrastructure.

PRIORITY FOR THE PREPARATION OF LOCAL AREA PLANS (LAPs) AND VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENTS (VDSs) DURING THE LIFETIME OF THE ROSCOMMON COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2008 - 2014

It should be noted that projects are to be undertaken both “in house” and through the help of consultants. SEA scoping for LAPs will be carried out in tandem.

YEAR 1: MARCH 2008 – SEPTEMBER 2009

Rural Design Guidelines
VDSs – Knockcroghery Lecarrow Cootehall Ballyleague Tulsk
LAPs - Monksland/Bellanamullia Elphin Lough Key Stroketown Roosky

YEAR 2: MAY 2009 – SEPTEMBER 2010

Design Guidelines for Housing Estates in County Roscommon
VDSs - Frenchpark VDS
LAPs - Ballaghaderreen Castlerea Boyle Roscommon

YEAR 3: AUGUST 2010 - SEPTEMBER 2011

VDSs- Termonbarry Ballinlough
LAPs - Hodson Bay Creagh Cortober LAP
SO3 – subject to agreement with WCC

Review/Progress of CDP i.e. Managers Report on progress of CDP.

Objective 4  Identify necessary infrastructural services and facilitate their provision through both public and private investment.

Objective 5  Initiate Land Use and Transportation Plans for settlements as required in the County

Objective 6  Facilitate and encourage the provision of serviced sites in existing settlements demonstrating population or economic decline/stagnation as an alternative to one-off rural housing.

Objective 7  Commence the preparation of Design Guidelines for Rural and Urban Areas in accordance with the schedule contained under Objective 3
3.1 INTRODUCTION

Infrastructural development and investment is a vital component in ensuring sustainable development. The country has experienced unprecedented growth and change with the resultant pressure on infrastructure, including energy resources, water and waste-water collection and treatment, solid waste recovery and communications infrastructure.

3.2 POLICY CONTEXT

In relation to the compilation of this chapter of the CDP 2008-2014, the Council shall have regard to the infrastructure and transport objectives of, amongst others:

- The National Development Plan 2007-2013
- Transport 21, 2005
- National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020
- Regional Planning Guidelines for the West 2004-2016

3.2.1 National Policies

The **National Development Plan 2007-2013** provides for an indicative investment of €183.7 billion in the broad areas of infrastructure, enterprise, human capital and social inclusion. High level objectives and investment priorities, especially in relation to economic infrastructure are outlined in Chapter 7 of the NDP. The Plan’s main objective is to deliver a better quality of life for all within a strong and vibrant economy, which maintains Ireland’s international competitiveness and promotes regional development, social justice and environmental sustainability. Roscommon County Council shall strive to implement infrastructural objectives as contained within the NDP.

**Transport 21 (2005)** identified a number of projects for County Roscommon including the improvement of road links from Dublin to the West and Northwest by upgrading National Primary Routes (N4, N5, and N6), the targeted improvement of National Secondary Routes which are particularly important for regional development including the N61 and N60 and the development of a provincial bus service.

The **National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020**, Section 3.7 states that roads, public transport, energy and communications can all have a spatial impact and can influence the location, timing and extent of development. Other economic infrastructure such as water services, and waste and social infrastructure, (i.e. schools, hospitals, bus stations/shops) are also needed to support balanced regional development.

3.2.2 Regional Policies

The **Regional Planning Guidelines for the West 2004-2016**, provides Strategic Goals in Section 3.2 which seek to: secure for the Western Region (including County Roscommon) an integrated transport and access infrastructure; to tackle infrastructure deficits in telecommunications; to improve energy efficiency; and, to put in place a framework that would meet the service infrastructural requirements of the Region for the present and into the future.

3.2.3 Local Policies


The strategic aims of RCDB are to develop an integrated, sustainable, and people centred framework for the development of the County. The work of the Board aims to ensure the delivery of all public services in the county in a cost efficient and equitable manner and its 10 year strategy plan will inform the CDP process in relation to infrastructure provision. The Implementation Plan for this strategy sets
out all key issues, objectives, practical actions, indicators, project completion dates and co-coordinating/partner agencies.

**Roscommon County Development Plan, 2002**

The Roscommon County Development Plan (RCDP) 2002, recognised that the transport system is an important component in meeting social and economic needs of the county by ensuring the mobility of people and goods and in facilitating the development of industrial investment and tourism. The strategic transportation aim of the RCDP (2002) was to develop a safer, more efficient and integrated transport system that will improve the road network and other forms of transport to serve the urban and rural population.1

Roscommon County Council will continue to promote this strategic aim and will also continue to design development policies whose aims/objectives are to integrate transport and land use in order to attain a sustainable development framework for economic, social and cultural development within the County.

The location of County Roscommon nationally and internationally means that a strong transportation network is essential to improve the County’s accessibility and linkages as well as to maximise the flow of economic and social resources to and from its rural areas.

Roscommon County Council will continue to be proactive in constructing new and upgrading existing infrastructure facilities both in urban and rural areas throughout the county. The Council will also work in an integrated and collaborative manner with other service providers be it central government, semi-state bodies or the private sector to effect improvements.

**3.2.4 Strategic Policy Direction**

**The role of Infrastructure provision within County Roscommon**

The timely provision of a full spectrum of infrastructure/services is vital if County Roscommon is to continue to develop as an attractive location for business and residential development. The attractiveness of particular locations depends on the relative accessibility and connectivity which in turn depends on the quality and quantity of one’s transport infrastructure. It is also important that services are provided in a cost-efficient manner:

- A way of achieving this would be to ensure that the Council’s water and wastewater investment programmes primarily target settlements and areas where growth is planned.
- Roscommon County Council will work towards ensuring that infrastructure provision will take place in advance of or in tandem with new development.
- The Council will continue to be proactive in constructing new and upgrading existing infrastructure facilities both in urban and rural areas throughout the county.
- The Council will also continue to work in an integrated and collaborative manner with other service providers be it central government, semi-state bodies or the private sector to effect improvement

**Strategic Aim for Infrastructure**

To provide the necessary infrastructure in order to deliver a better quality of life for all within a strong and vibrant economy and that maintains Roscommon’s competitiveness, promotes balanced development, social justice and environmental sustainability.

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1 Roscommon County Development Plan 2001, p. 22
Strategic Policies for Infrastructure

Policy 16 Identify and prioritise key infrastructural objectives required to promote the sustainable development of the County

Policy 17 Implement the recommendations of the NSS for effective regional development by facilitating the delivery of reliable and effective energy systems, such as gas and electricity to power stations and service agencies


Policy 19 Ensure as far as practicable that future development is planned for in an integrated and collaborative manner with other service providers such as central government, semi-state bodies and the private sector

Policy 20 Facilitate the development of communications ICT infrastructure and broadband technology

Policy 21 Facilitate energy infrastructure so as to provide for the future physical and economic development of County Roscommon, outside the county and the Region

Policy 22 Encourage more sustainable development through energy end use efficiency, increasing the use of renewable energy and improved energy performance of new developments throughout the county

Policy 23 Align transport and infrastructural policies and programmes with the Settlement Strategy and Land Use proposals for the County, as informed by the NDP, Transport 21, NSS and RPG’s

Policy 24 Provide for and facilitate gas exploration and gas extraction processing and distribution in the County and to and from neighbouring counties

Policy 25 Promote and provide for the use of alternative energy sources

Policy 26 Support the infrastructural renewal and development of electricity networks in the region, including the overhead lines and the provision of power stations

Policy 27 Support the upgrade of existing 110kV lines to 400kV from Lanesboro/Ballyleague Power Station (400kv) to serve Roscommon Town, Flagford power station (currently 220kV) and Boyle Town; as well as to the Athlone 110 kV Station serving Monksland and Athlone Gateway

Policy 28 Reserve land along strategic route corridors to facilitate future infrastructure or improvement works

Policy 29 Acknowledge the importance of wind energy and support the development of such infrastructure in a plan led approach. In accordance with government guidelines, include objectives to secure the maximum potential from the wind energy resources of the county, having regard to landscape sensitivity and other planning considerations, and identifying appropriate locations for development and criteria on which proposals will be addressed

Policy 30 Support the universal delivery of broadband as a key utility for effective development of County Roscommon as recommended in the NSS
Chapter 3: Infrastructure, Transportation and Movement

Strategic Objectives for Infrastructure

**Objective 8** Support the implementation of the infrastructural objectives contained in the RCDB document ‘Roscommon Vision: A Ten Year Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development

**Objective 9** Be proactive in constructing new and upgrading existing infrastructure facilities both in urban and in rural areas throughout the county

**Objective 10** Work in an integrated and collaborative manner with other service providers be it central government, semi-state bodies or the private sector

**Objective 11** Deliver a modern and integrated infrastructure system within Roscommon in order to help Roscommon partake in the knowledge economy

**Objective 12** Provide for a comprehensive gas distribution grid to all towns and throughout the County. In addition, facilitate and promote the connections of Roscommon Town, Strokestown, and Boyle to the Gas Network as proposed under the New Towns Connection Proposal Phase 2 (‘Roscommon Cluster) and as a next step Carrick-on-Shannon/Cortober.

3.3 TRANSPORTATION

Policy Context

Transportation policies and objectives within the RCDP 2008-2014 will be informed by national and regional strategies and guidelines as well as by policies and decisions of the elected members of the County Council. Along with land-use, transportation is the most important element in planning and forms a key component in the achievement of sustainable development.

The Council recognises that accessibility, mobility and speedy access to domestic and foreign markets is vital for future economic and social development of the county and therefore the development of an integrated transport policy is critical for future sustainable development of Roscommon.

Sustainable Transport and Land Use integration

The concept of an integrated transport policy encompasses not only integration within and between different modes of transport, but also integration with environmental, social, recreational, economic, educational, health policies and objectives.

An integrated approach to land use and transportation will play a key factor in the delivery of sustainable development. The need to travel is a function of distances separating different activities to which segregated land use zoning has contributed. Development which is spread out at low density also generates need to travel. In planning for new development areas, providing for mixed uses or for separate uses in a more closely spaced / finer grained layout, allows for more sustainable forms of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport.

Transportation considerations will therefore inform all aspects of plan making. Zoning will support the achievement of sustainable travel patterns, reducing reliance on private car usage and promote public transport as well as cycling and walking.

In terms of the National Road Network, the traffic carrying capacity of the national roads, the level of service they deliver and the period over which they continue to perform efficiently will be determined by a range of factors in addition to traffic growth, in particular:
Chapter 3: Infrastructure, Transportation and Movement

- The frequency of access points to the network
- The extent of development adjoining national roads, including interchanges, and in the
  environs of such roads, as well as,
- The traffic volumes generated by development.

It is an objective of this Plan to facilitate the upgrading of the County’s roads and preserve adjacent land from development so as not to undermine the implementation of future infrastructure upgrades.

The County Council may in so far as funds permit consider the preparation of Integrated Land Use and Transportation Plans (ILUTP’s) for the large towns within the County. Such plans should include the provision of adequate and sustainable public transport services and public transport related facilities such as the provision of parking and parking management frameworks that are appropriately scaled to the land use planning context: e.g. park and ride facilities; feeder bus services; traffic management and bus priority facilities; pedestrian and cycling facilities. Such plans should also have regard to the existing and future local transport requirements within and between the towns including links to the Midland Gateway of Athlone/ Tullamore and Mullingar, to the Sligo Gateway, to the linked Hubs of Ballina/ Castlebar and to locations outside the immediate local authority area and the West Region.

Regional Planning Guidelines for the West (2004-2016): Transportation:

The preferred Strategic Development Option in relation to Transportation for the West Region focuses on, amongst others;

- To ensure that all routes identified for construction and upgrading in the Regional Planning Guidelines be progressed as soon as possible to facilitate the implementation of the NSS and promote balanced regional development
- To encourage the promotion of the region as a location for major industrial development by ensuring a co-ordinated approach to implementing policies and infrastructural priorities set out for the region."
- The upgrading of the N5, as included in the Overall Regional Infrastructural Priorities, which is necessary in order to achieve the planning and development objectives of the region

The RPG’S recommended that the identified National Transport Routes i.e. N61 Athlone - Roscommon and the N60 Roscommon – Castlebar; should be reclassified to National Primary Status and upgraded accordingly.

All national secondary routes in the region require upgrading over the lifetime of the NSS. For County Roscommon the most important priority routes to be upgraded include:

- N61 (Athlone - Boyle) – which links Roscommon to the surrounding Gateways (Midland Gateway of Athlone/Mullingar/Tullamore), Sligo Gateway, and indirectly to the linked Hubs of Castlebar/Ballina, and from there to the national ports and airports via its connection with the N4, N5 and N6 National Network.

The RPG’s also emphasise that it is of critical importance that the gateway and hubs are connected by good access corridors. To enable adequate access between towns and villages and to the gateway and hubs, it is crucial that a continued high level of investment be focused on the regional and local roads throughout the region.

For County Roscommon, the N5 Strategic Corridor will provide a strategic linkage between Dublin and Westport. In addition, the upgrade of the N6 to dual carriageway/motorway will provide speedy access between Athlone linked Gateway and Galway Gateway.

Map 7 is taken from the RPGs for the West, and the road corridors are indicated on it.

Roscommon County Development Plan 2008 – 2014
Policy Direction

The policy aims and objectives of the CDP should take an integrated approach to land use and transportation in the timely development of the County’s transportation infrastructure and movement. The Council will continue to facilitate the provision and potentially influence greater change by the relevant authority where the community has identified a need. It should be noted however that in addressing the rural transport services, the issues of cost, frequency and quality are essential variables in determining an appropriate provision.

Strategic Aims for Transportation & Movement

- Develop a safer, more efficient and integrated transport system that will improve the road network and other forms of transport to serve the urban and rural population of Roscommon
- Ensure that the transport system is sustainably developed and upgraded to a level that can support increased economic, social and cultural development of the county
- Develop the county’s transportation infrastructure to make Roscommon an attractive place to live, work and visit.
- Enhance the links between Roscommon and the NSS Hub and Gateway towns

3.4 PUBLIC TRANSPORT

This section outlines the strategic policy of Roscommon County Council with respect to the promotion of rail, bus, air, walking and cycling. Public transport improvements, fall under the control of other agencies such as the transport providers. However, as Roads Authority and as a key player in the development arena with a remit for the promotion of sustainable development, Roscommon County Council has the potential to influence the decisions of other relevant public transport infrastructure.

The Council acknowledges the importance of the provision of a high quality public transport service provision. This section should be read in conjunction with recommendations contained within the following chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 in relation to the following aspects of public transport, parking and cycling and walking.

Rail

Roscommon is served by 3 rail lines the pass through the county namely;
- Dublin Heuston to Westport Line
- Dublin Heuston to Galway Line
- Dublin Connolly to Sligo Line

Future plans from Iarnrod Eireann are to increase the frequency of service on main lines to a minimum of 2 hourly.

The main weakness in the present rail network is that the main line from Roscommon/Athlone/Heuston comprises of a single track while other Strategic Rail Corridors throughout the country are all dual track. This provision helps deliver more speedy access and mobility to its passengers. There are capacity problems associated with single track rail lines serving County Roscommon.

Rail Corridors

The Western Rail Corridor is an important infrastructure in developing a successful Western Economic Corridor (Galway-Limerick-Cork) as set out in the RPG’s. Rail corridors in general have the potential of increasing population along such corridors as well as encouraging industrial development in proximity to it. Towns and villages in County Roscommon could benefit from such growth.
Bus Services

Bus services play a vital social role in rural communities, linking rural areas with settlements and essential services such as schools, employment and community facilities. There are 4 categories of bus transportation currently within County Roscommon:

1. Bus Eireann expressway long distance services
2. Bus Eireann School Bus services operated on behalf of the Department of Education and Science
3. Private mini-bus services
4. Community Bus Routes operated under Rural Transport Initiative(s) (RTI)

The Rural Transport Initiative (RTI)

The RTI was launched in 2001 by the Department of Transport and is administered by Pobal. There are 34 projects in total across the country. In 2003, the use of the free travel pass was extended to these schemes whereby entitled holders to free travel.

The Rural Transport Initiative (RTI), established under the NDP 2000-2006 has now been made permanent and mainstreamed from the beginning of 2007 and in line with the commitments in ‘Towards 2016’ and in parallel with the implementation of Transport 21.

Under the auspices of the RTI there are 3 service operators providing rural transport across County Roscommon. The providers are:

1. Aughrim –Kilmore Rural Transport
2. Ardcarme Rural Transport
3. South Westmeath Rural Transport

There are also other initiatives in the county operating rural transport services outside the support of the RTI Programme e.g. Kilbride/Four Mile House service.

Roscommon has a Rural Transport Forum including representatives from Arigna LEADER, Mid South LEADER, Roscommon Partnership and other relevant agencies which operate and exist to support the development of services in the county. In addition, they provide a platform for the transport operators to discuss issues of concern, share best practice information and to inform one another of their annual work programmes and initiatives, so as to avoid duplication.

Airports

International air access supports and facilitates growth in foreign direct investment, supports indigenous enterprise and tourism. As Ireland evolves into a more knowledge and service based economy, the efficient movement of people is increasingly critical as there is often individual customisation of products/services which necessitates direct customer interaction.

Direct air access to national and regional airports is therefore an increasingly important factor in the economic development of regions. The distances to the main regional and national airports are also a key factor for industrial location and for speedy access to domestic and international markets.

The RPG’s identified the potential for air facilities in South Roscommon.
Policies for Public Transport

Policy 31 Encourage the accessibility of the public transport system to people with disabilities and enhance the accessibility of bus and railway stations in line with the Department of Transport Sectoral Plan under the Disability Act 2005

Policy 32 Facilitate the expansion of the public transport network to enable ease of commuting, business and quality of life

Policy 33 Promote the provision of public transport interchange facilities at appropriate points on the public transport network in co-operation with semi-state and private bodies.

Policy 34 Support initiatives which would provide greater accessibility by bus between rural towns/villages with their more remote hinterlands to facilitate improved access to economic, educational and social activity within County Roscommon

Policy 35 Promote growth and development of settlements on existing transport routes

Policy 36 Support the provision of public transport services by zoning land in suitable locations for public transport infrastructure and ancillary facilities

Policy 37 Promote land use patterns which reduce the need to travel by private car and support public transport, including higher densities at public transport corridors and nodes

Policy 38 Continue to support and encourage the RTI to expand their services

Objectives for Public Transport

Objective 13 Work with Iarnród Eireann to improve existing facilities at e.g. Roscommon Railway Station and to seek the provision of the re-opening of rail stations in South Roscommon at Knockcroghery, Taughmaconnell and Bogginfin

Objective 14 Facilitate and encourage the upgrading of railway stations and their ancillary services at Roscommon, Boyle and Castlerea

Objective 15 Investigate the provision of Park and Ride facilities at appropriate locations on the public transport system

Objective 16 Ensure that new development in all towns so as to facilitate the provision of local bus services and sheltered bus stops, where appropriate

Objective 17 Support the provision of an airport in South Roscommon over the lifetime of the Plan that could build on the synergies of existing industries within the environs of Athlone Linked Gateway.

Objective 18 Encourage the increased use of rail transport including the re-opening of Knockcroghery and Taughmaconnell passenger services and facilitate the development of new facilities to serve the SOI lands at Bogginfin in the Athlone/Monksland environs

Objective 19 Support the improvement of the capacity (e.g. dual track standard) of all rail networks serving the County in order to provide speedy access for passengers and freight transport as appropriate for a Strategic Rail Corridor

Objective 20 The Council will encourage and facilitate LEADER & CLÁR to expand the Rural Transport Initiative
3.5 ROADS & TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

The Council will continue to work with the National Roads Authority (NRA), to deliver objectives for National Routes; and, with the DoEHLG for the maintenance of regional and local roads.

Roads profile for the County

County Roscommon has approximately 3,972km of roads that consist of approximately 3,381km of local roads, 103km of National Primary Roads, 145km of National Secondary Roads, and 343km of Regional Roads.

National/Regional Policies & Guidelines

The NDP, NSS and RPG’s have stated objectives to upgrade the N4, N5 and N6 National Primary Routes and the National Secondary N61. Routes N60 and N61 are also mentioned in the RPG’s for upgrade to National Primary status.

Roads Policies

Policy 39 Provide a safe and modern road network throughout the county, having regard to National and Regional policies and guidelines and liaising with national agencies.
Policy 40 Restrict new access points onto or adjacent to National Roads
Policy 41 Co-operate with the NRA to identify the need for Service Areas along the N4, N5 & N6 and to assist in the implementation of suitable proposals for their provision
Policy 42 Reserve national road corridors free from development as appropriate where they appear in the Plan
Policy 43 Facilitate the improvement of interchanges at appropriate locations to benefit the economic growth of settlements along national routes.
Policy 44 Liaise with service providers when planning road infrastructure in order to co-ordinate development works and services for an area
Policy 45 Regulate, control and improve road signage throughout County Roscommon
Policy 46 Maintain and improve the bridge stock of the County
Policy 47 Continue to invest in non national roads in County Roscommon in order to improve access to peripheral areas and to provide balanced regional development and promote social inclusion

Roads Objectives

Objective 21 Facilitate the programmed improvement to the National Road Network as per Tables 11 and Table 12
Objective 22 Carry out improvement works on non – national roads as per Table 13A and Table 13B
Objective 23 Identify and Develop locations for Road Interchanges and junction improvements in conjunction with the NRA
Objective 24  Assess all development proposals that access onto National routes in accordance with the policies set down in this Plan

Objective 25  Encourage the development of service and link roads within towns and village areas to open up lands within settlements and reduce the necessity for ribbon development.

Objective 26  Identify areas for car parks for the control of on-street and off-street car parking, adequate to meet the short term shopping and business requirements, as well as, for the needs of the local community

Objective 27  Continue to pursue the upgrade of the N60 and N61 to National Primary Status

Objective 28  Facilitate the provision of a substantial upgrade of the N61 access to the N6

Objective 29  Develop a traffic database for all links national, regional and strategic local roads for the county

Objective 30  Implement Parking Bye–Laws for Roscommon Town, Boyle, Castlerea, and Ballaghaderreen and other towns as appropriate

Objective 31  Identify local priorities for road improvements in conjunction with the preparation of Local Area Plans (LAP’s) and other land use plans

Objective 32  Continue to improve road access to Knock Airport

Objective 33  Perform a survey of bridges to establish repairs required which will inform a bridge management programme

Objective 34  Continue to upgrade road signage and road markings on a phased basis

Objective 35  Carry out road realignment and/or road overlay at selected locations on regional and local roads 2008-2014

Objective 36  Prepare a strategy to regulate development adjacent to and along the entire N6 National Route once it is downgraded following the opening of the new N6 dual carriageway from Dublin to Galway

Objective 37  Initiate Integrated Land Use and Transport Plans (ILUTP’s) in the county and prepare a programme during the course of this Plan

Objective 38  Liaise with Westmeath County Council with regard to the preparation of a co-ordinated land use and transportation plan for Athlone and Monksland/Bellanamullia

Objective 39  Work with Westmeath County Council is the provision of further cross river linkages.

Objective 40  Continue to ensure that all landowners and occupiers of land take reasonable care to ensure that road side structures, trees, hedges and other vegetation growing on their land are not, or could not become, a danger to people using or working on a public road. Roscommon County Council will serve a written notice on owners or occupiers or carrying out works which it considers necessary. The cost of these works will be recovered from the owner or occupier of the land in question.

The following tables set out RCC’s Strategic Objectives for National and Regional Roads.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route</th>
<th>Proposal</th>
<th>Approximate Location</th>
<th>Timeframe 2008-2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N4</td>
<td>N4 Carrick-on-Shannon Bypass</td>
<td>Cloongownagh/ Tumna in Roscommon, crossing the River Shannon to the existing N4 east or Carrick</td>
<td>Co-operate with Leitrim Co Co to ensure publication of CPO 2007/8 and seek NRA approval to proceed to construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Castlebaldwin to Cortober 2+1 Feasibility Study</td>
<td>Castlebaldwin to Cortober</td>
<td>Prepare Feasibility Report 2007. Seek NRA Approval to carry out recommendations as necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N5</td>
<td>N5 Charlestown Bypass</td>
<td>N5 west of Charlestown to Currinagh in Roscommon</td>
<td>Co-operate with Mayo Co Co to ensure completion of the scheme in 2007.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N5 Ballaghaderreen Bypass</td>
<td>Currinagh to Rathkeery</td>
<td>Publish CPO 2007. Seek NRA approval to proceed with construction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N5 Strategic Corridor (Ballaghaderreen to Scramoge)</td>
<td>Rathkeery to Scramoge</td>
<td>Complete Route Selection Phase 2007. Seek NRA approval to proceed with the remaining design and construction steps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N5 Longford to Scramoge</td>
<td>Cloonmore (Roscommon) to Termonbarry</td>
<td>Route Assessment 2007. Seek NRA approval to carry out recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N6</td>
<td>N6 Athlone to Ballinasloe Dual Carriageway</td>
<td>Athlone to Ballinasloe</td>
<td>Completion in 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N4, N5, N6</td>
<td>Continue programme of pavement strengthening Improve signage and markings</td>
<td>As per annual programme of works</td>
<td>Ongoing on an annual basis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* The timeframe for all projects is subject to NRA approval.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route</th>
<th>Proposal/ Scheme</th>
<th>Approximate Location</th>
<th>Timeframe 2008-2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N60</td>
<td>Castlerea Bypass</td>
<td>N60 Bypass of Castlerea</td>
<td>Seek NRA funding to progress the development of this scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N60</td>
<td>Upgrade the entire route within the County</td>
<td>Roscommon town to Ballinlough (County Boundary)</td>
<td>Develop strategy for the upgrade of this route and seek NRA funding for its implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N60</td>
<td>Coolteige Phase 1</td>
<td>Cloonybeirne to Mullymucks</td>
<td>Seek NRA approval to publish CPO and proceed to construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N60</td>
<td>Boyle Town Bypass</td>
<td>Knockroe/ Ardkeenagh to Keeloges/Kilbryan</td>
<td>Complete Route Selection Phase 2007. Seek NRA approval to proceed with the remaining design and construction steps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N60</td>
<td>Roscommon Town Bypass</td>
<td>Coolteige to Killeenrevagh</td>
<td>Complete Route Selection Phase 2007/8. Seek NRA approval to proceed with the remaining design and construction steps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N61</td>
<td>N61-N6 Junction</td>
<td>New N61-N6 Junction to tie-in with existing N61 south of Roscommon</td>
<td>Carry out feasibility study on new N61-N6 Junction including upgrade of the N61 south of Roscommon in 2007/8. Seek NRA funding to develop the recommendations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N61</td>
<td>Upgrade all of N61 between Athlone and Boyle to National Primary Standard</td>
<td>Athlone to Boyle</td>
<td>Carry out feasibility study in 2007/8. Seek NRA funding to develop the recommendations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N63</td>
<td>N63 Clooneen to Athleague</td>
<td>Clooneen to Athleague</td>
<td>Complete in 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N63</td>
<td>Upgrade all of N63 in County Roscommon</td>
<td>Mount Talbot to Ballyleague</td>
<td>Develop strategy for the upgrade of this route and seek NRA funding for its implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N83</td>
<td>Upgrade all of N83 in County Roscommon</td>
<td>Gorteenacamaddil to Cloonfad East</td>
<td>Develop strategy for the upgrade of this route and seek NRA funding for its implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N60, N61, N63, N83</td>
<td>Continue programme of pavement strengthening Improve signage and markings Provide traffic calming on N61 at the County Hospital in Roscommon Town</td>
<td>As per annual programme of works</td>
<td>Ongoing on an annual basis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 13 A: Other Roads Infrastructure Proposals

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Construct link Road from Old Tuam Road/New Tuam Road (R362/L2047) junction to N61 at Bogganfin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Upgrade the following Roads in Monksland:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Monksland Road upgrade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• New Tuam Road R362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Old Tuam Road L2047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Drum Road L2027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The Mihanboy Road L7581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Millbrook Bridge Road L7560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The Curramore Road L2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Provide Traffic Calming on the N6 at Summerhill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide for a new junction at N6 Summerhill junction with the Drum Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Provide Traffic Management on the N61 at Bogganfin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Upgrade roads adjoining the N6 at Creagh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Extend the 5th arm of the N63/N61 Lanesborough Road Roundabout to the N61 at Ardsallagh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Provide a link road from the N63 at Ballinagard to the County Home Road (L1812).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Upgrade the following roads in Roscommon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The County Home Road (L1814) from its junction with the Ballinagard Road (L1812) to its junction with the Golf Links Road (L7055) – extend this over longer length</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ballinagard Road L1814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Golf Links Road L7055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gallowstown Road L1808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Antogher Road L7052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Provide Traffic Management and upgrade the Circular Road in Roscommon Town over entire length</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Provide a Link Road from the N60 to the N61 North of Roscommon Town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Upgrade the R371 at Ballyleague.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Develop an inner relief road and river crossing to serve backlands in Castlerea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Construct R293 Eastern Ring Road in Ballaghaderreen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Provide an inner relief road to serve industrial lands &amp; N4/N61 approach to Boyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Upgrade Croghan Road in Cortober.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Upgrade L1415 from Roosky to Termonbarry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Upgrade L1243 in Ballinlough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Upgrade Abbey Road (L5058) and Drum Road (L1020) in Boyle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Upgrade roads, footpaths, surface water sewers and public lighting in other towns and villages as resources permit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Upgrade Boyle/Gurteen Road to Sligo.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 13 B: Proposed Capital Road Projects 2008-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Project</th>
<th>Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traffic Management</td>
<td>Roscommon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic Management</td>
<td>Boyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic Management</td>
<td>Castlerea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic Management</td>
<td>Ballaghaderreen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic Management N6</td>
<td>Athlone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summerhill Athlone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic Management N61</td>
<td>Athlone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bogganfin Athlone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian Crossings in Towns</td>
<td>County Wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carparking</td>
<td>Roscommon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carparking</td>
<td>Boyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carparking</td>
<td>Castlerea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realignment and Junction Scheme</td>
<td>County Wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drum Road Improvement</td>
<td>Athlone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Tuam Road Improvement</td>
<td>Athlone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link Road: N61 to R362</td>
<td>Athlone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monksland Athlone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mihanboy Road L7581</td>
<td>Athlone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milbrook Bridge Road L7560</td>
<td>Athlone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curramore Road L2022</td>
<td>Athlone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link Road: Old-New Tuam</td>
<td>Athlone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creagh: Upgrade Roads Infrastructure</td>
<td>Athlone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade R363 from Cam</td>
<td>Athlone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to Ballynullavill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballaghaderreen: Upgrade Roads Infrastructure</td>
<td>Ballaghaderreen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct R293 Eastern Ring Road in Ballaghaderreen</td>
<td>Ballaghaderreen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cortober: Croghan Road Improvement</td>
<td>Boyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade Abbey Road (L5058) and Drum Road (L1020) in Boyle</td>
<td>Boyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cootehall: Upgrade Roads Infrastructure</td>
<td>Boyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croghan: Upgrade Roads Infrastructure</td>
<td>Boyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castlerea Inner Relief Road</td>
<td>Castlerea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballinlough: Upgrade L1243</td>
<td>Castlerea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon: Extend 5th. Arm N61/N63 Roundabout to Ardsallagh</td>
<td>Roscommon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon: Link road from N63 to County Home Road L1812</td>
<td>Roscommon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon: Upgrade County Home Road (Urban Area)</td>
<td>Roscommon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon: Upgrade Boyle Road N61 (Urban Area)</td>
<td>Roscommon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon: Upgrade Castlerea Road N63 (Urban Area)</td>
<td>Roscommon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon: Upgrade Ballinagard Road L1814</td>
<td>Roscommon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon: Upgrade Golf Links Road L7055</td>
<td>Roscommon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon: Upgrade Gallowstown Road L1808</td>
<td>Roscommon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon: Upgrade Antogher Road L7052</td>
<td>Roscommon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade N61 at Castlemine</td>
<td>Roscommon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballyleague: Upgrade R371 within village</td>
<td>Strokestown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloontuskert: Upgrade Roads Infrastructure</td>
<td>Strokestown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elphin: Upgrade Roads Infrastructure</td>
<td>Strokestown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roosky: Upgrade Roads Infrastructure</td>
<td>Strokestown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strokestown: Upgrade Roads Infrastructure</td>
<td>Strokestown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarmonbarry: Upgrade Roads Infrastructure</td>
<td>Strokestown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.6 GENERAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Economic Infrastructure encompasses road, public transport, water services, wastewater, solid waste management, telecommunications and energy networks. The NDP 2007-2014 also makes provision for an investment in Social and Knowledge infrastructure.

Under the NDP a sum of €33.6 billion will be invested in housing, health infrastructure, justice, sports, culture, heritage and community infrastructure over the lifetime of the NDP. Social infrastructure has a key role in promoting social inclusion and improving quality of life especially for those who are disadvantaged economically and socially².

There has been increasing emphasis on the need to put in place a range of appropriate infrastructure in the areas of sports, culture, heritage, waterways and community infrastructure. Such facilities can provide attractive recreational outlets and can also provide benefits for society at large.

Roscommon County Council will have regard to Government policy in the area of swimming pool provision and will continue to make the case for funding of new swimming pools at Ballaghaderreen and Boyle. It is recognised that if Roscommon County Council is to successfully promote the county as a quality tourist destination, more provision of public pools including spa and leisure facilities is required.

The inland navigation system can open up access to rural Roscommon, for boaters and walkers providing leisure opportunities for the domestic and foreign tourist as well as providing opportunities for entrepreneurs and individuals in the regeneration of towns and villages around the navigation routes. The Waterways Sub programme of the NDP 2007-2013 has identified the following areas for grant support:

- The putting in place both on-shore and water-based facilities to serve local communities and the visitors to the waterways and to attract additional people to the existing network
- Investigating the feasibility of providing additional destinations and extending the navigation to provide social and recreational opportunities. Opportunities can be provided for local regeneration and rural tourism by attracting visitors to areas of relative disadvantage³

Roscommon County Council shall, where possible and appropriate, facilitate this sub-development programme.

Marinas

The RPG’s indicate that there is a need for the provision of increased mooring facilities at 4 to 5 chosen locations along the Shannon, as well as, select types of significant commercial development along the riverside, to provide for an economic gain from the Shannon⁴.

The Council recognises this need and shall identify these locations during the lifetime of the CDP. In addition, RCC shall seek to upgrade existing marinas including the provision/upgrading of pumping out facilities and other ancillary services necessary in the delivery of sustainable waterway tourism. All of the proposed settlements shall have upgrades of their public sewerage treatment systems.

Roscommon County Council will co-operate with Waterways Ireland, private cruiser operators, and other stakeholders, in establishing all ancillary facilities at chosen locations along the Shannon. The

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² National Development Plan 2007-2013, p. 209
³ National Development Plan 2007-2013, p. 227
⁴ Regional Planning Guidelines 2004-2012, p. 92
Council in collaboration with Waterways Ireland will upgrade existing pumping out facilities. It is also hoped to liaise with other LA’s, Waterways Ireland and private operators in an effort to introduce an electronic card for pump-out services for all cruisers using the Shannon System.

The Shannon’s potential has yet to be fully realised, and it is hoped that the provision of key infrastructure including marina development at appropriate locations along the River Shannon will help extend/enhance river tourism not only for villages but to the wider hinterland of Roscommon. It is the aspiration of this Plan that marina development and boating may act as a catalyst for diversifying the rural economy. Chapter 10, Section 10.4.3 of this Plan provides more detailed information on marine tourism.

Urban and Village Renewal under Community Infrastructure Sub-Programme

The Community Infrastructure Sub-Programme of the NDP will invest some €895 million over the period of the plan. It’s primary objective is to improve the fabric of the built environment in support of social and economic development, enhance the attractiveness of urban areas as places to live and work, promote environmentally sustainable development and support tourism development.

The public realm i.e. the streetscape, public buildings, squares, parks and green spaces, riverfronts, street furniture, cycling and pedestrian facilities are key elements of the overall urban fabric and an important contributor to visual amenity, safety and toward establishing a ‘sense of place’.

Investment focus will primarily be in Gateways and Hubs as identified in the NSS but support will also be available for county and other towns. Funding will also be available to support renewal and remediation works in small towns and villages with an element of competitive assessment. A programme of works including a development description and costings is submitted to the Department at the start of each programme period.5

As part of the CDP process the Council will investigate Urban & Village Renewal under the NDP Community Infrastructure Sub-Programme under the National Development Plan 2007-2013.

Village Enhancement

The CLÁR Village Enhancement Scheme, introduced in 2002, provides funding for the enhancement of villages and settlements in CLÁR areas through small-scale infrastructure provision. Types of Projects assisted under the Roscommon Village Enhancement Scheme from 2002-2006 included Community Development and Enterprise projects, tidy towns, playgrounds, and playschools. Projects will complement rather than overlap with projects funded under the EU Co-financed Urban and Village Renewal Measure. It is hoped that eligible projects will be further aided over the duration of the CDP 2008-2014.

Knowledge Infrastructure – Higher Education Infrastructure Sub-Programme

It is estimated that 62% of net new jobs which employers are expected to create in 2010 are likely to require third level education, compared with less than 30% of new jobs in 2001. 6

Findings from an analysis undertaken by the RCDB on physical and social infrastructure within Roscommon, found that the lack of a skilled workforce was a major problem for the County. There are currently only three certified third level courses relevant to the workplace available in the county. For future development of businesses, more courses will need to be made available. Although educational attainment is high in Roscommon there is a significant ‘brain drain’- only 15% of graduates from Roscommon got their first post-graduation job in their home county in 20027. The leakage of skills

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5 The National Development Plan 2007-2013, p. 228
6 The National Development Plan 2007-2013, p. 201
and qualifications contributes to a cycle of deskilling of the labour force and rendering the county less attractive for the location of jobs with knowledge content.

The RPG’s recommended that there is an urgent need for outreach facilities offering a range of courses in the key towns within ‘Zone F’ (Roscommon Town and Monksland are the key towns in relation to Roscommon).\(^8\)

Roscommon County Council recognises the ‘gap’ in Third Level delivery within the county and will collaborate with all Higher Educational Institutions in investigating the feasibility of establishing a Third Level Educational Facility and a Third Level Research and Innovation Institution within the County.

**General Infrastructure Policies**

**Policy 48** The Council will support the provision of economic, social and knowledge infrastructure for the entire County.

**Policy 49** Realise the potential of the River Shannon in collaboration with Waterways Ireland and adjoining Local Authorities

**Policy 50** Establish a new programme for the provision of LA swimming pools under the new NDP sub-programme for Community Facilities

**Policy 51** RCC supports the precautionary principle whereby action is taken now to avoid possible environmental degradation in the future e.g. protecting floodplains from development and planning for flood attenuation.

**Policy 52** Collaborate with Waterways Ireland as well as other relevant agencies and interested parties, to provide the necessary services and facilities, which will include upgrading those which already exist, along the River Shannon

**General Infrastructure Objectives**

**Objective 41** Formulate Lake Management Plans over the lifetime of the CDP in collaboration with relevant authorities and agencies.

**Objective 42** Ensure that development locating in areas that function as local floodplains is curtailed or that appropriate provision for flood attenuation is made. Floodplains and bogland should be protected to ensure that the flood regime of these areas is maintained.

**Objective 43** Promote the upgrading of marinas at strategic locations along the Shannon and work in collaboration with Waterways Ireland and other LA’s, agencies and interested parties, in the provision of all ancillary services/facilities.

**Objective 44** Implement Groundwater and water catchment protection policies to inform planning and sustainable development in areas at most risk.

**Objective 45** Implement the Urban & Village Renewal as proposed under the NDP Community Infrastructure Sub-Programme of the new NDP 2007-2013.

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\(^8\) Regional Planning Guidelines for the West Region 2004-2012, p. 95
Objective 46  Facilitate the development of private marinas to accommodate one or two privately owned craft on lands owned by the boat owner. This includes the boat owner’s private dwelling or on lands under the control of Waterways Ireland. Private jetties shall be subject to appropriate design and environmental considerations as outlined in the Development Management Guidelines of this Plan. Floating type jetties will be preferred to fixed structures founded on the lake/river bed.

Objective 47  Facilitate the development of a limited number of commercial marinas along the Shannon Waterway

3.7  WATER SERVICES

Water supply and wastewater treatment and disposal are critical infrastructure requirements for development. The provision and safeguarding of infrastructural investment is a critical component of the sustainable development strategy of the County. Without an environmentally sound means of supplying water and disposing of wastewater, these principles cannot be met. The provision or the facilitation of infrastructure is a mandatory objective required for inclusion into the County Development Plan by the Planning and Development Act, 2000-2006.

As such, this County Development Plan includes objectives for the provision of adequate services and aims to continue the development and improvement of water supply and drainage systems to meet the anticipated requirements of the County.

3.7.1  Water Supply

In terms of water supply, it is important to ensure an adequate, continual potable and clean supply of water to all people, in accordance with applicable quality standards. Policy relating to water services must have regard to the requirements of the Water Framework Directive and Groundwater Directive and to the Urban Wastewater Directive. The Ground Water Protection study and mapping produced by the Geological Survey of Ireland (2003) displaying the ground water characteristics of the County will be consulted in the development management process.

Public Water Schemes

Ground water is the main source of drinking water in the County. Twelve out of the 18 public water schemes (over 80% of water abstracted) and 47 out of the 56 group schemes are supplied by groundwater. Areas not served by public or group schemes rely on individual wells as their source of water.

Roscommon County Council conducted an assessment of needs in respect to the Water Services National Investment Programme (WSIP) in October 2006. The current programme runs until 2011 and includes the following schemes -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capital Schemes - Water Projects</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North East RWSS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ballyleague WSS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roscommon Central RWSS</td>
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<td>Arigna RWSS</td>
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<td>Keadue WSS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Castlerea Town WSS</td>
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<td>Castlerea RWSS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ballinlough/Cloonfad RWSS</td>
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<td>South Roscommon RWSS</td>
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<td>Boyle/Ardcarne RWSS</td>
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<td>Cortorber WSS</td>
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<td>Ballyfarman WSS</td>
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<td>Rover WSS</td>
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<td>North Roscommon RWSS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bellanagare WSS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knockcroghery/Lecarrow RWSS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mount Talbot RWSS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sixteen of the 18 existing public schemes have been approved for upgrading works to improve water quality and augment existing supply. This includes a process of amalgamation of small public schemes to form larger regional schemes.

In the assessment of need, Roscommon County Council have proposed the following to be included in the investment programme for the period 2010-2014:

1. Mount Talbot Regional Water Supply
2. Boyle Ardcane
3. South Roscommon
4. Roscommon Central
5. NE Regional Supply
6. West Roscommon

The capital projects are funded primarily by the DoEHLG through the National Development Plan. Since the introduction of the Water Pricing Policy, the marginal cost of facilitating the non-domestic sector is not funded centrally and must be provided for by the Local Authority via this sector. This can range from 20% to 40% on some schemes and will have future financial implications for the County Council through raising of loans and other fiscal strategies.

Groundwater Vulnerability and Protection

Groundwater and water catchment areas have an inherent ecological and economic value and are a major resource that needs to be protected. Groundwater contributes to rivers, lakes and therefore influences its amenity and recreational value. The Council is responsible for the protection of all waters including rivers, lakes, and groundwater. The responsibilities include; implementation of pollution control measures, licensing of effluent discharges, implementing and monitoring compliance with environmental regulations, the drawing up of pollution contingency measures.

The Geological Survey of Ireland/Roscommon County Council publication ‘County Roscommon Groundwater Protection Scheme’ (June 2003) states that a large portion of the county is classed as having either ‘extreme or high vulnerability areas and risk of contamination’. Areas in the north of the county, particularly where rock is generally at or close to the surface are extremely vulnerable.

The Planning Authority will consider the groundwater vulnerability as per the Geological Survey findings when assessing development proposals.

Rural Water Programme - The rural water programme is administered by Roscommon County Council and consists of the following elements:

- **Design Build Operate Scheme** - This includes for the provision of full water treatment on twenty six private and two public water schemes.
- **Takeover of group Water Schemes** - Scheme provides solely for existing water quality deficient group schemes serving more than 50 persons and where the identified solution is to have the scheme taken in charge by the council
- **New and Upgrading group Schemes** - Provides for new and general upgrading works on group schemes, in particular quality deficient group water schemes serving more than 50 persons.
- **Small Public Water and Sewerage Schemes** - Provides for extensions or upgrading of networks and water and sewerage schemes up to a maximum limit as set out by the DoEHLG

**Water Conservation Projects** - Roscommon has in place a Rural Water Strategic Plan whose aims are to:

- Identify the needs of water consumers
- Assess existing water supply networks, both public and private in terms of quality of supply, physical conditions and service delivery
• Prioritise investment under the different financial measures
• Set down a strategy for developing the most effective and efficient water supply possible

The objectives of the Water Conservation project include the following:
• To put in place a conservation/leak detection programme for the county
• The acquisition of modern leak detection equipment and the provision of District Metering Areas (DMA’s)
• Perform an accurate assessment of water demand and measurement of usage on each scheme
• Implementation of a management system in relation to maintenance of water supply
• Prepare a rehabilitation programme and implement within the lifetime of this Plan
• Educate consumers

3.7.2 Water Quality

Groundwater and major surface water sources are important to the development of the county. The protection of these resources is of major concern to the Council. The proposed CDP 2008-2014 will take cognisance of the Groundwater Protection Plans and groundwater vulnerability in the county and shall adopt a Water Quality Management Plan for the County.

It shall be a policy of the Council to identify the catchment areas of those surface water bodies used or capable of being used as major resources of potable water or for other beneficial purposes, and to restrict development within those catchment areas where it is deemed that such development would endanger the quality of water in the water body.

Drinking Water Quality

The Water Monitoring Programme was a precursor to the current Drinking Water Regulations and the monitoring currently being carried out by RCC is in accordance with the Drinking Water Regulations. The Water Services Section of RCC works in cooperation with the Environmental Laboratory of the Environment Section regarding the mandatory drinking water regulations for all private group, semi-private and public water schemes for the county. Mandatory testing is performed on a regular basis depending on the size of the schemes.

Surface Water Quality

It is an aim to have water quality within all the County’s schemes defined as ‘good status’ by 2015. An integrated approach to management and monitoring of lake and river catchments areas is underway with the support of the DoEHLG. The GSI is also working with the Council in the preparation of Groundwater Protection schemes. The measures recommended in these plans will aid the protection of sources for both public and private water scheme supplies. The CDP will also provide guidance concerning the control of development and associated septic tanks, identification of areas suitable for the spreading of slurry; and the framing and adoption of bye-laws by the LA with regard to water quality.

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)

The Council will have regard to the guidance of the Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) designed to manage storm water run-off in urban areas. The aims are to control discharge as soon as possible after precipitation (source control); slow down the speed of discharge off-site (control of quantity); use passive techniques to filter and settle suspended matter (control of quality).

SUDS are the approach favoured by Roscommon County Council as the best way to manage storm water runoff and avoid causing flooding. These techniques reduce the risk of flash floods arising from runoff from impermeable surfaces and should be incorporated in the County Development Plan.
Chapter 3: Infrastructure, Transportation and Movement

Policies in relation to Water Services

Policy 53  Continue the development and upgrading of the water supply so as to ensure that an adequate, sustainable supply of piped water of suitable quality is available for domestic, commercial, industrial and other uses, such as fire safety, for the sustainable development of the County and in accordance with the Settlement Strategy as proposed within this Plan.

Policy 54  Utilize the existing water supply in an effective, efficient, fair and equitable manner, in the best interests of proper planning and sustainable development.

Policy 55  Implement measures under the Rural Water Programme so as to improve the quality and reliability of water supply for rural dwellers.

Policy 56  Promote better design, planning and management of water supply schemes.

Policy 57  Ensure that the provision of water supply is undertaken in accordance with EU policies and Directives.

Policy 58  Eliminate existing deficiencies in water supply.

Objectives in relation to Water Services

Objective 48  Identify, prioritise and progress the implementation of the water services investment programme.

Objective 49  Ensure that all drinking water within the County complies with the highest EU standard applicable.

Objective 50  Meter all non domestic premises and charge for water usage on a quantitative basis.

Objective 51  Facilitate the implementation of water conservation projects, which reduce leakage in existing water distribution systems.

Objective 52  Improve the quality and reliability of rural water supply schemes and extend the water supply schemes as prioritized by the Water Services Assessment of Needs.

Objective 53  Enter into PPP’s for the provision of necessary infrastructure as appropriate.

3.8 FLOOD RISK AND PROTECTION

Flood risk is a more important issue than when the current Development Plan was being prepared. The Planning and Development Act 2000 lists among suitable reasons for refusing a planning application ‘the proposed development is in an area which is at risk of flooding’.

Flooding is a natural phenomenon of the hydrological cycle. While there are different types and causes of flooding, the most common in County Roscommon are the flooding of rivers especially the Shannon River Catchment. The Office of Public Works completed a flood study for the county and findings indicated that flooding mainly occurs along the eastern bounds with the River Shannon.

The CDP will take cognisance of the OPW’s Flooding Report and any future reports in relation to flood risk for the County. It is the intention for the duration of this Plan that flood studies will be conducted for all towns within the county as necessary. Developments granted permission in areas close to flood plains will contain measures to ensure that the risks of flooding are minimised or eliminated. The monitoring strategy and appropriate indicators provided for in the Environmental...
Report for the SEA process will be utilised by Roscommon County Council to provide early flooding warning information for these areas.

**OPW Guidelines on Flood Risk, 2005**

The Office of Public Works has issued guidance for Planning Authority on flood risk and development which state, in terms of location, that development that is sensitive to the effects of flooding would generally not be permitted in flood-prone or marginal areas. The guidance also states that appropriately designed development, which is not sensitive to the effects of flooding, must not reduce the flood plain or otherwise restrict flow across floodplains. Development consisting of construction of embankments, wide bridge piers, or similar structures would not normally be permitted in or across flood plains or river channels.

The guidance states that development must incorporate the maximum provision to reduce the rate and quantity of runoff. Developments must be set back from the edge of the watercourse to allow access for channel clearing / maintenance. In addition, developments must be constructed to meet specific minimum flood design standards and flood impact assessment must accompany certain applications. Roscommon County Council will have regard to these and any future Guidelines.

**Policies in relation to Flood Risk & Protection**

**Policy 59** Have regard to the OPW’s Guidelines on Flood Risk, 2005 and any future reports in relation to flood risk for the County.

**Policy 60** Control development and ensure appropriate mitigating measures are in place for natural flood plain of rivers and develop guidelines in co-operation with the adjoining LA’s for permitted development in different flood risk category areas.

**Objectives in relation to Flood Risk & Protection**

**Objective 54** Review work undertaken by the OPW and integrate information into the Roscommon County Council GIS

**Objective 55** Liaise with the OPW on all issues involving river drainage and flood relief, especially when dealing with any applications in the vicinity of important drainage channels

**Objective 56** Improve and extend the surface water disposal infrastructure to serve all zoned areas, in order to facilitate development

**Objective 57** Require all significant development impacting on flood risk areas to provide a Flood Impact Assessment, to identify potential loss of flood plain storage and how it would be offset in order to minimise impact on the river flood regime

**Objective 58** It is the policy of Roscommon County Council to require all new large scale developments in all designated settlements to provide ‘Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) as part of their development proposals

3.9 **WASTE WATER SERVICES**

In addition to drinking water treatment and distribution, LA’s are also responsible for waste water collection/ disposal and storm-water management, including collection and disposal. The drainage system collects foul sewerage, industrial effluent and rainwater, all of which must be discharged or treated while minimising flood risk or environmental impacts.
Water Framework and Urban Wastewater Directives

The development and expansion of the County’s wastewater and surface water drainage system is essential to the future sustainable development of the County and to the improvement of water quality within and adjoining Roscommon.

The following is a List (in alphabetical order) of Sewerage Schemes within County Roscommon: – Athleague, Ballyfarnon, Ballintubber, Ballyleague, Ballinlough, Ballyforan, Ballaghadereen, Ballinagar, Boyle, Ballinameen, Castlerea, Cloonfad, Cootehall, Elphin, Frenchpark, Hodson Bay, Knockcroghery, Keadue, Lisacul, Lecarrow, Loughglynn, Monksland, Roscommon, Roosky, Strokestown, Tarmonbarry and Tulsk.

CAPITAL PROJECTS - SEWERAGE SCHEMES

1. **Town and Villages Sewerage Scheme** - The provision of new and upgrading of existing sewerage facilities in the villages of Arigna, Ballinlough, Cootehall, Creagh, Elphin, Frenchpark, Hodson Bay, Knockcroghery, Lisacul, Loughglynn, Brideswell, Strokestown and Tulsk, Ballyleague environs.

2. **Sludge Management** - The Plan provides for a Sludge Hub Centre at Roscommon Sewerage Treatment Works and also for sludge reception centres as required throughout the county.

3. **Roscommon Town Main Drainage** - Although the Roscommon Sewerage scheme was upgraded in 2000, the wastewater treatment plant and various sewer sections are now at capacity. This is primarily due to the rapid development of the town over the last number of years and the significant storm water flows entering the collection system.

   The objective of Roscommon County Council is to deliver an upgraded sewerage scheme and a surface water drainage system, which will cater for the town over the next twenty years and beyond. It should also represent best value for money while complying with the relevant design standards and statutory requirements.

   In addition, detailed catchment based policy to protect and maintain the existing drainage system will be prepared.

4. **Monksland Sewerage** - Increase the existing treatment capacity to provide for the rapid expansion in the Monksland/Bellanamullia area and consider extending the catchment area.

   In the assessment of needs Roscommon County Council have proposed a second ‘Town and Villages sewerage project’ to be included in the investment programme for the period 2010 – 2014. A number of existing schemes in villages such as Ballyfarnon, Ballyforan, Athleague, Cloonfad, and Keadue, if not already upgraded, will be considered for inclusion into the project but will be dependent on value for money issues taking into account existing and potential economic growth within these towns and villages. Similarly other un-serviced villages will also be considered for inclusion. Villages such as Portrun, Croghan, Granlahan, Castlecoote, Fuerty, Taughmaconnell, Dysart, Kilmore, Hillstreet, Four Roads, Kiltoom, Knockvicar, Moore and Mount Talbot will be considered.

**Serviced Land Initiatives**

The Serviced Land Initiative (SLI) was introduced under the Water Services Investment Programme to provide water services specifically for new residential development in order to increase housing supply and to reduce pressures on house prices. The schemes receive 40% funding from the Department with the remaining 60% funded by the local authority on foot of development contributions from the developer. New scheme proposals must demonstrate the following: a focused response to housing supply requirements in cities, towns and villages and their transport catchments; include only such works as are necessary to improve water services where the lack of available
serviced land is the main constraint to housing development; be capable of being completed quickly; and, have an estimated cost not exceeding €5m, including all contract and non-contract costs.

In considering applications for funding, the Department will have regard, in particular, to the policy for housing development outlined in Section 5.3 of the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020. In addition in order to ensure that the infrastructural development keeps pace with and facilitates growth, Roscommon County Council envisages an upsurge in SLI’s across the county and had included as a water services need over the 2007-2009 period. These SLI’s will primarily be schemes which will fast track parts of water or wastewater infrastructure in order to cater for imminent development.

SLI funding will be applied to put additional infrastructure (surface water or water-main) into villages in conjunction with the provision of foul sewers. Schemes for inclusion into this project can be added on a continuous basis throughout this period.\(^9\)

**Policies in relation to Wastewater Collection & Treatment**

**Policy 61** Facilitate the provision of an adequate wastewater collection and treatment systems to all towns and villages in the County to serve existing and future populations in accordance with the proposed Settlement Strategy identified in this Plan, the Water Framework Directive 2000, EU Urban Wastewater Directive

**Policy 62** Ensure that all new developments have and are provided with satisfactory drainage systems in the interest of public health and to avoid the pollution of the ground and surface waters

**Policy 63** Co-operate with adjoining LA’s to increase capacity to service settlements, to jointly investigate proposals for future upgrades of treatment plants; and participate in the provision of a long term solution for wastewater treatment in the West Region

**Policy 64** Implement the recommendations of the adopted Sludge Management Plan (as reviewed in September 2006) for the County, including any amendments

**Objectives in relation to Wastewater Collection & Treatment**

**Objective 59** Ensure all existing wastewater schemes meet the Urban Waste Water Regulations and public health legislation

**Objective 60** Strictly control the siting of septic tanks and proprietary treatment systems and promote public awareness on the issue of correct installation, monitoring and maintenance in the interest of the protection of the environment and public health.

**Objective 61** Facilitate the delivery of the Towns and Village Sewerage Scheme’ as proposed

**Objective 62** Identify, prioritise and progress the implementation of the sewerage investment programme

**Objective 63** Prepare a programme for the provision of services in un-serviced towns and villages, particularly those targeted for growth in the proposed Roscommon Settlement Strategy”

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\(^9\) RCC Assessment of Needs, October 2006, p. 6
3.10 WASTE MANAGEMENT

The Replacement Waste Management Plan for the Connacht Region 2006 - 2011

This Connacht Waste Management Plan has been developed by the Local Authorities of Galway County and City, and the Counties Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo, and covers the period from 2006-2011. The Plan is based on the waste hierarchy established in the EU Framework Directive on Waste.

The Plan has been adopted through an alternative legislative process and shall be the guiding document for the implementation of an integrated waste management approach within the Region as a whole.

The CDP 2008-2014 shall have regard to all legislative, national and regional documents and objectives in the implementation of waste management.

3.11 ENERGY

The Planning & Development Act 2000 indicates that a Development Plan shall include objectives for the provision and facilitation of energy infrastructure.

The National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020 indicates that the key points to consider between local planning and electricity network planning are:

- The need to address electricity infrastructure in CDP’s and LAP’s to facilitate national, regional and local economic progress
- The need to liaise with the operators of the transmission and distribution grids, particularly in the environs of towns, to ensure the continued availability of corridors for overhead cables and continuity of supply for existing and new users of electricity.

The Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006

This Act makes provision for key infrastructure development applications to be directed to the new division of An Bord Pleanála for consideration. All planning applications for high powered transmission lines are now expected to go directly to the Bord. This change in the legislation will ensure a more speedy approach to such applications, and, decisions will be delivered within an 8 week timeframe by the Bord directly, rather than by a LA.


The document sets out a number of strategic policy aims and goals:

- To Ensure Security of Energy Supply:

There is a need to have reliable access to oil and gas supplies and the infrastructure to import, distribute and store these supplies. There is also a need for robust networks and the electricity generating capacity to ensure consistent supply.
• To Promote the Sustainability of Energy Supply and Use:

A sustainable energy future for Ireland is being met through a range of strategies, targets and actions to deliver environmentally sustainable energy supply and use.

• To Enhance the Competitiveness of Energy Supply:

A key Government policy objective is to ensure a reliable and competitively priced energy supply and competition in energy markets in support of economic growth and national competitiveness. Structural change in the energy market enables competition and also delivers consumer choice. The Government intends to create a new impetus for choice and innovation in a lighter regulated environment and delivering a responsive and stable energy market.

• To create an Integrated Approach to Delivery:

The Government will ensure a fully integrated and cohesive approach to energy policy priorities, supported by comprehensive and regular stakeholder engagement and backed up by full accountability for performance and delivery.

The National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012 builds on the Government’s commitment to sustainable development as outlined in “Towards 2016” and NDP 2007-2013 and is one of a number of inter-related Government initiatives that will address energy and climate change issues.

In relation to energy, the Strategy supports the aim that 15% of electricity shall be generated from renewable sources by 2010 and 33% by 2020, Biomass shall contribute up to 30% of energy input at peat stations by 2015. The Strategy also provides support for Combined Heat and Power projects and towards a National Ocean Energy Strategy.

3.11.1 Renewable Energy

The development of renewable energy offers sustainable alternatives to our dependency on fossil fuels, a means of reducing harmful greenhouse emissions and opportunities to reduce our reliance on imported fuels. Renewable energy comes from natural resources that are continuously replenished by nature. The main sources of renewable energy are the wind, the sun (solar), water (hydropower, wave and tidal energy) heat below the surface of the earth (geothermal energy) and biomass (wood, biodegradable waste and energy crops or bio-fuels such as rapeseed and lupines). Discussed hereunder are a few of these. (see also information contained within Chapter 6 of this Plan)

Wind Energy & Windfarms

The Green Paper on sustainable energy advocates a doubling of the national renewal energy output by 2010. The principle renewal resource accessible to technology at the present time is wind energy.

The topography of, for example, north Roscommon is an ideal location for the development of wind energy as well as certain suitable exposed areas. It is an objective of this Plan to achieve a reasonable balance between responding to government policy on renewable energy and in enabling the wind energy resources of the county to be harnessed in an environmentally sustainable manner.

The Development Plan will provide a strong policy base to encourage the development of renewable energy, with guidance on how proposed developments will be assessed.

The Development Plan strongly supports the development of wind energy at appropriate locations in the County and highlights the following guidance:

• Target the proportion of energy to be generated from renewables in County Roscommon
• Provide clear criteria against which proposals for renewable energy projects will be assessed
• Encourage new developments to assess the potential for renewable energy integration as well as energy efficiency
• Provide guidance in balancing the benefits of developing more sustainable forms of energy generation against any local environmental impacts; and,
• Promote awareness of energy use through policies guiding the design, layout and construction techniques of new development proposals.

Locations of Windfarms

The siting of wind turbines requires careful consideration. While turbines located on elevated sites, tend to have a higher output, they also have a significant visual impact. Visual obtrusiveness depends on location, layout, size, number of turbines, design and colour of the turbines as well as the subjective perceptions of the viewer. Noises generated from rotating blades as well as rotation flicker are also considerations in the siting of wind turbines.

In assessing proposals for wind turbine development, Roscommon County Council will require detailed information to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) standard. Proposals will generally be discouraged in or close to pNHA’s, cSAC’s, SPA’S designations, scenic routes and protected views and highly sensitive rural landscapes.

Current windfarm locations within County Roscommon are at Kilronan, Laragan Hill and Altagowlan. Energy produced by the windfarms are fed into the national electricity grid and augment the existing network. (see also Map 16)

The Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), included as part of Volume 3 of this CDP, provides recommendations which should be taken into consideration in the assessment of applications for wind farm development as well as planning and siting for such development throughout the County.

In addition, as mentioned in Chapter 10 of the CDP, RCC supports accreditation or eco-labelling schemes which promote energy efficient design and operation of, for example, tourism related businesses.

Solar Energy

In recent years the use of solar energy in Ireland in addition to ground-source heating systems has provided sustainable sources of energy for buildings and has reduced the demand for electricity supply from the national grid. Planning permission is no longer required for the erection of solar panels to the front elevations of domestic houses with the exception of protected structures and those buildings located within Architectural Conservations Areas (ACA’s).


In addition to promoting renewable energy development there is also the issue of energy efficiency to be considered. The EU Directive on the Energy Performance of Buildings (EPBD) as transposed into Irish Law in 2006, contains a range of provisions aimed at improving energy performance in residential and non residential buildings, both new build and existing.

Roscommon County Council is committed to developing sustainable building requirements with regard to a shift to energy efficient, low environmental impact buildings. The incorporation of good design into developments will be welcomed. Good design is the key to achieving the optimum energy performance of buildings at no extra cost. Roscommon County Council will also promote the use of ‘passive house’/timber framed house design and construction within Roscommon.

Chapter 5.6 Energy Efficiency - provides more detailed information regarding this issue
Chapter 3: Infrastructure, Transportation and Movement

Policies in relation to Energy and Renewable Energy

Policy 65  Support the National Climate Change Strategy 2000 by facilitating measures to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases over the committed period 2007-2012


Policy 68  The PA will have regard for DoEHLG Guidelines for PA’s on Wind Energy Development, 2006

Policy 69  Encourage the increase of development of renewable energy sources

Policy 70  Facilitate energy infrastructure provision, including the development of renewable energy sources at suitable locations, so as to provide for the further physical and economic development of County Roscommon

Policy 71  Roscommon County Council will encourage more sustainable development through energy end use efficiency, increasing the use of renewable energy and improved energy performance of all new building developments throughout the county

Objectives in relation to Renewable Energy

Objective 64  Develop and implement a Renewable Energy Plan for County Roscommon over the lifetime of the Plan


Objective 66  Designate areas of the county, as recommended in the LCA, which may be suitable for wind energy development in line with the national guidelines on wind energy, and take a proactive role in encouraging applications in these areas

Objective 67  Assess applications for wind farms with regard to guidance contained within the Landscape Character Assessment. Subject to normal planning considerations wind farms will only be permitted in locations that do not negatively impact upon the scenic value of rural areas.”

3.11.2  Electricity

General Needs

Throughout Ireland domestic, commercial and industrial demand for electricity is steadily increasing. Ireland has successfully attracted micro-electronics and light industry during the past decade; however the quality of electricity supply to these industries is becoming increasingly important, as their processes are heavily dependent on microprocessor control.

The quality of power supply is a key strategic factor taken into consideration by global companies locating in Ireland. These companies compare infrastructure standards not only between different parts of Ireland but also internationally. It is critical that adequate capacity, in terms of both energy and energy infrastructure, is available within the County to support its development. The growth of the national economy has placed extra strain on the national electricity generating capacity.
This plan will aspire to create sustainable communities which in turn require investment in electricity infrastructure including networks and generating stations.

The Transport of Electrical Energy

Bulk electricity, generated in the various generating stations in Ireland is transported around the country using a system of 110KV, 220kV and 400kV overhead lines to the major load centres (i.e. cities, towns and industry which has a direct transmission supply). The 400kV lines are used to carry power to the Dublin area from a large coal burning power station at Moneypoint on the West coast. For every doubling of the transmission voltage, the amount of power wasted is reduced by 75%. A voltage of 756kV is very common in other countries and in fact there are lines operating at over 1,000kV. Underground cables are used in heavily populated areas where there is no room to install overhead lines but it is preferable for electricity to be transported by overhead lines. The Transmission network in Ireland is known as the National Grid.

Transmission Network within County Roscommon

Eirgrid promotes the provision of new High Voltage electrical Infrastructure, including high voltage transformer stations and new overhead transmission power lines. Such infrastructure will be required for reinforcement of the transmission network related to growing electricity demand from existing customers.

It may become necessary over the lifetime of this Plan to increase existing power lines within the county to at least 220kV, and to 400kV in the longer term.

RCC recognises that the development of secure and reliable electricity transmission infrastructure is a key factor for supporting economic development and attracting investment to the area.

Existing and Proposed Projects with County Roscommon

The electricity demand of County Roscommon is distributed from the 110kV Station Bulk Supply Points at Carrick-on-Shannon, Lanesborough and Athlone, through the 38kV, Medium Voltage (MV), and Low Voltage (LV) network to customers. Map 17 indicates the Electricity supply network.

Since the adoption of the CDP 2002, the following reinforcements of the electricity transmission network have taken place within the County:

- Flagford – Srannagh 220kV Project (likely commissioning in the 3rd quarter of 2007 and due for completion by the end of 2008)
- Flagford-Tonroe 110kV Line (Complete)
- Capacitor Banks in Athlone 110kV Station (Complete)
- The new Castlebar – Tonroe 110kV line will be constructed at 220kV and operated at 110kV. This forms part of a long term development to introduce 220kV to support future load growth

In addition, the following list outlines significant projects which were completed in the 38kV and MV Network:

- The 110kV/38kV station at Lanesboro, which supplies Roscommon 38/MV station, is being refurbished in conjunction with the building of the Lough Ree Power Peat Generation station.
- A new 110kV/MV station is being built at Corderry, near Arigna, to facilitate the transmission of Wind generation. This station is connected into the Arigna - Carrick-on-Shannon circuit and will provide additional generation support to the Roscommon area via Carrick-on-Shannon 110kV station.
- Athlone 110/kV38kV station is currently in the process of being “uprated” to 2x63MVA, thereby doubling it’s capacity.
• The 38/MV station at Athlone 110KV station has been “uprated” from 2x5MVA to 2x10MVA.

• A new 110kV/38kV station at Tonroe near Ballaghaderreen was recently completed. This is providing increased security and improved quality of supply to customers in northwest Roscommon, north Mayo and south Sligo.

• The Lanesboro – Roscommon 38kV line has been totally re-built. In addition to increasing the reliability of the line, the capacity of the line has been increased by 50% in order to cater for future growth in the Roscommon area.

• The entire Medium Voltage (MV – 10kV and 20kV) overhead network has been refurbished and many of the lines have been “uprated” to increase their capacity.

Eirgrid has published its Forecast Statement 2006-2012 and includes the following projects in County Roscommon;

• A new 110kV Line between Athlone 110kV Station and Shannonbridge 220kV station which will provide the necessary reinforcement of electricity supplies to Athlone.

• A new 110kV Line between Tonroe 110kV station (near Ballaghaderreen) and Castlebar 110kV station, in order to improve the security of electricity supply at both Castlebar and Ballaghaderreen.

These projects are at an early stage of development and as yet, route corridors have not been identified. Eirgrid are presently liaising with the Council as the project progresses.

In addition, the following are the most significant elements of work which have a high probability of being needed during the course of your planning period 2008-14: All these projects will be evaluated in detail by ESB Networks prior to commencement and if they are to proceed they will go through the standard planning permission process:

1. The existing Roscommon 38kV/MV station will be “uprated” from 2x5MVA to 2x10MVA in 2007/8. Thereby doubling the capacity in Roscommon town.

2. Due to the high growth rates in Roscommon town, it is expected that further network capacity will be required during the timeframe of this plan – approximately 2012. It is expected that this will be in the form of a new 110kV/38kV/MV Station or a 110kV/MV station. The location of this station is likely to be on the Western side of Roscommon town and looped into the Lanesboro-Cloon 110kV line which is to the North of Roscommon.

3. The Monksland Customer station will be relocated to facilitate NRA’s work on the N6 road.

4. A new 38/MV or 110/MV station will be required in West Athlone.

5. The existing Castlerea 38kV/MV station is planned to be upgraded from 2x2MV to 2x5MVA in approx 2008.

6. The existing Ballaghderreen station will be “uprated” from 2x5MVA to 2x10MVA before 2010.

7. The existing Ballygar station – which feeds part of Roscommon will be uprated from 1x5+1x2MVA to 2x5MVA.

8. A new 38kV line is to be built from Cloon 110kV station (near Galway) to Glenamaddy 38kV/MV station. While this network is distant from Roscommon, the transfer of Glenamaddy 38/MV station to Cloon leaves extra capacity on the existing network to serve as standby to Roscommon.

9. Under the 20kV conversion programme a significant amount of the 10kV – medium voltage lines in Roscommon will be switched to 20kV operation. These lines are already built to 20kV standard and by converting to 20kV, losses will be reduced by 75% and the capacity of the lines will be doubled.
### Policies in relation to Electricity

**Policy 72**
Promote the delivery of the NSS in so far as it aims to deliver reliable and effective energy systems such as electricity and gas in order to power industry and services.

**Policy 73**

**Policy 74**
Co-operate and liaise with statutory and non-statutory providers in relation to electric power generation in order to ensure adequate power capacity for the future needs of the County

**Policy 75**
Support the statutory providers of the National Grid infrastructure by safeguarding such strategic corridors from encroachment by other developments that might compromise the provision of electricity networks where strategic route corridors have been identified

**Policy 76**
Promote and facilitate the doubling of the transmission voltage where required, in order to reduce power wastage by 75%.

### Objectives in relation to Electricity

**Objective 68**
Facilitate the provision of new high-voltage electricity infrastructure within County Roscommon in collaboration with the various agencies

**Objective 69**
Work in collaboration with ESB, ESBI, Eirgrid and other service providers and statutory bodies in order to create a modern electricity networks and power stations within the county

**Objective 70**
Promote the maintenance and upgrade of electricity infrastructure throughout the county

**Objective 71**
Actively promote the implementation of the Government’s White Paper Document “Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland, Energy Policy Framework 2007-2020, its strategic aims and goals including the delivery of electricity over an efficient, reliable, and secure networks and the diversification of fuels for power generation

**Objective 72**
Secure a reliable electricity transmission infrastructure in order to support economic development and attract investment into Roscommon

### 3.11.3 Ireland’s Gas Network

Natural gas is the cleanest of all fossil fuels and its chemical composition makes it an environmentally friendly fuel. There has been a large increase in the consumption of gas for electricity generation and also for residential and industrial heating and other uses. The use of Gas in Ireland as an energy source is a relatively recent phenomenon due to lack of large gas fields being discovered within close proximity of this country. However, this has changed with the discovery of the gas field at Kinsale in 1971, more recently the Corrib Gas Field off the west coast; and, the potentially viable Lough Allen Gas Field. Also within this period, sub sea Interconnector pipelines were constructed between Ireland and Scotland and these now satisfy most of the country’s gas requirements.

The Bord Gáis Network consists of 2,002km of high-pressure steel Transmission pipes and over 9,316km of Distribution pipelines. Gas is received from the Transmission network and delivered through the Distribution network to over 540,000 residential, business and industrial gas users across the country.
The NSS 2002-2020 is the key government policy on Regional Development. As is highlighted throughout the NSS, the development of regional infrastructure is essential to achieve balanced regional development. The NSS emphasizes that:

- Reliable and effective energy systems, such as gas and electricity to power stations and services, are key prerequisites for effective Regional Development\(^\text{10}\)

Main considerations in terms of spatial policies relating to energy include:

- Developing energy infrastructure on an all-island basis to the practical and mutual benefit of both the Republic and NI
- Strengthen energy networks in the West, North West, Border and North Eastern Areas in particular
- Enhancing both robustness and choice of energy supplies across the regions, through improvements to the national grids for electricity and gas

The demand for gas in the west is very high and their need for electricity and gas in particular for both domestic and commercial/industrial use is continually growing also for the large number of medium and small sized towns in the area.

Currently the closest connection point for Roscommon would be near Athlone on the Dublin- Galway transmission line. Recently parts of Monksland have been connected to this transmission line. Under Phase 2 of the New Towns Connection Report it is planned to include the towns of Boyle, Strokestown and Roscommon (Roscommon Cluster) within this second phase.

The ‘Roscommon Cluster’ has the potential, with a gas burning power station in north Roscommon; to connect to the national gas grid and in so doing aid balanced regional development of the mid-west and act as a tool for the successful economic development of Roscommon, the Midlands and Sligo.

**Policies in relation to Gas Supply**

**Policy 77** Work in collaboration with An Bord Gáis, the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) and other statutory bodies in the provision of a comprehensive gas distribution grid throughout County Roscommon

**Policy 78** Support the extension of the gas network to all major towns within County Roscommon

**Objectives in relation to Gas Supply**

**Objective 73** Investigate the feasibility of the location of a gas burning power station in north Roscommon

**Objective 74** Liaise and collaborate with An Bord Gáis, CER and other statutory bodies in the provision of an extended gas network within County Roscommon as a whole and in the provision of a gas powered generating station in north Roscommon

**Objective 75** Reserve infrastructure corridors for transmission pipelines in collaboration with An Bord Gáis/CER and provide consistency of projects with the requirements identified from An Bord Gáis Distribution Network Capacity Report(s) or strategic network analysis over the lifetime of this Plan

\(^{10}\) National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020, p.64
3.12 TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Telecommunications investment is essential to furthering the social and economic development of County Roscommon. A high quality and competitive telecommunications service is considered essential in order to promote industrial and commercial development and to improve personal and security and to enhance social inclusion and mobility, amongst others.

Forfás has highlighted the importance of broadband in relation to job creation and estimates that inadequate Broadband infrastructure could result in a shortfall of 25,000 potential jobs in key sectors in Ireland by 2010. Ireland’s level of broadband penetration ranks amongst the lowest in the EU and provincial areas including the West and Midlands are even further behind. The inability to access broadband seriously affects the competitiveness of firms in regional locations.

To enable the further development of the economic potential of County Roscommon, and to provide its residents with technological access to information, the development of additional communications ICT infrastructure is necessary and must be done in the most environmentally sustainable manner. The future telecommunications access needs of business parks, new housing estates or communities, should be addressed as part of the planning process and it should be a requirement to install fibre optic capacity in all new roads infrastructure on an open access basis.

Roscommon County Council recognises that the Broadband is an essential infrastructure utility required for the development of towns and villages and in terms of capitalizing on investment opportunities within the County.

3.12.1 Broadband

Broadband with its resultant speed, provides a considerable advantage to home-users, businesses and industry and it is also an important asset in attracting new industry/business and FDI into an area. The implementation of broadband is under the auspices of the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources. There are 3 programmes in place to ensure the delivery of broadband within the country; –

- Metropolitan Area Networks (MAN) which is a network serving businesses and residences in urban areas
- Group Broadband Scheme
- Broadband for schools

Broadband Delivery within County Roscommon

Roscommon County Development Board (RCDB) has identified the provision of broadband as vital for the development in County Roscommon and has developed a Broadband Strategy ‘The Rollout of Broadband in County Roscommon’.

Roscommon’s current access to Broadband is as follows:

The main modes of delivery of Broadband throughout the country are DSL via phone lines, Wireless Broadband and Satellite Communication.

Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) (digital subscriber line) is a low cost broadband technology that is usually available in urban areas up to 4km from a DSL –enabled exchange. In order to get broadband through your phone-line, your local telephone exchange must have been upgraded or ‘enabled’ to support this. In most cases, if one lives in or very close to a town one is likely to be connected to an enabled telephone exchange. In rural Ireland, very few exchanges are enabled.

DSL service providers include Eircom, Digiweb, Imagine, Cinergi, BT and Perlico. DSL provision is available in Athlone/Monksland, Ballaghaderreen, Ballinasloe/Creagh, Boyle, Carrick-on-
Chapter 3: Infrastructure, Transportation and Movement

Shannon/Cortober, Castlerea and Roscommon Town, Ballyfarman, Knockcroghery & Roosky. This effectively means that a broadband supply with residential and business service offerings is available up to four kilometres of these exchanges, subject to line test. Eircom exchanges have low capacity, are slow and are not suitable for business use.

Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) Broadband

Wireless broadband does not require a phone line. This service is transmitted wirelessly from local transmission stations around the county. Currently there are two operators in Roscommon that offer wireless broadband. Last mile broadband operate 12 transmission stations. Azotel-Brisknet is a newcomer to the market and is currently rolling out services in Roscommon town. One disadvantage of wireless broadband is that to receive service one must have a line of sight to the transmission station – i.e. there must be no obstacles between user and transmission station e.g. a hill / large clump of trees etc.

Wireless service providers include Last Mile Broadband, Azotel-Brisknet, FWA is available in a number of areas with transmitters centred in Athlone, Ballinlough, Ballyleague, Boyle, Knockcroghery and Strokestown.

Metropolitan Area Networks (MANs)

The Council has been centrally involved in the design and construction of the Metropolitan Area Networks (MAN) in Roscommon Town. The Roscommon Town network is in place but without service provision as yet. Funding has been secured for Monksland, Boyle and Castlerea (planned).

Satellite Broadband

Direct Satellite broadband is available in most parts of Roscommon and is provided by 12 satellite broadband service providers as listed in the Department of Communications website operating in County Roscommon. This service however is not as efficient a service as wireless or by phone line connection. Satellite broadband services are usually used where deployment of other types of services are not viable.
Satellite service providers include Digiweb Satellite, Orbitlink, Pure Telecom Satellite, Avonline, Eircom Satellite, Media Satellite and Broadband. Satellite is currently available throughout the county, however in general it is more expensive than other access technologies.

Broadband for schools initiative

This programme is a partnership between the Government and the telecommunications network. This joint approach was announced in 2004 under the Broadband for Schools Initiative whereby industry committed €15million and the Government a further €3million over a 3 year period to fund the rollout of broadband to primary and secondary schools by the start of 2005 academic year. Roscommon is continuing its delivery of broadband under the Broadband for schools initiative.

Table 14 and Map 21 indicates the Cerena Consulting Ltd. assessment of the adequacy of Broadband infrastructure in certain areas of Roscommon. This assessment is based on criteria/targets as contained in the RCDB Broadband Strategy:

- Each of the priority areas should as a minimum, be served by 2 alternative types of access technology (excluding satellite), and provided by at least 2 competing providers, with all potential customers having access to at least one service. This recommendation will allow consumer choice, provide competitive incentive to lower prices, provide a better quality of service, and, will reduce the likelihood of customers being unable to get access to broadband due to technical limitations
- All areas in the county should have at least on service provider, accessible to all potential customers in the area
Table 14 provides a list of Current and Planned Broadband Provision (excl. satellite) in Towns & Villages in Roscommon including their Assessment Category

Table 14: Current and Planned Broadband Provision (excl. satellite) in Towns & Villages in Roscommon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town Priority Areas</th>
<th>Population CSO 2002</th>
<th>Current Broadband Service</th>
<th>Planned Services</th>
<th>Assessment Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon Town</td>
<td>4,489</td>
<td>DSL (Multiple providers), FWA, OF MAN</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyle &amp; Environs</td>
<td>2205</td>
<td>DSL (Eircom), FWA (Digiweb)</td>
<td>FWA (Last Mile subject to licence)</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ballaghaderreen</td>
<td>1416</td>
<td>DSL (Eircom), FWA (Last Mile)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castlerea</td>
<td>1788</td>
<td>DSL (Multiple providers)</td>
<td>OF MAN FWA (Last Mile)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strokingtown</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>FWA (Last Mile/SCBI) No other plans</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elphin</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>FWA (Last Mile/SCBI) No other plans</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monksland/Athlone</td>
<td>1626</td>
<td>DSL (Eircom), FWA (Last Mile)</td>
<td>FWA Irish Broadband</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cortober/Carrick-on-Shannon</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>DSL (Eircom), FWA (Last Mile subject to licence)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creagh/Ballinasloe</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>DSL (Eircom), DSL (Eircom)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Towns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballinlough</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>FWA (Digiwest)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballyfarnon</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>No current plans</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballyleague</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>FWA (Lakeside)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloontuskert</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>FWA (Lakeside)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frenchpark</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>FWA (Last Mile)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keadeau</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>No current plans</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loughglynn</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>FWA (Last Mile)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roosky</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>No current plans</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Villages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athleague</td>
<td></td>
<td>FWA (Last Mile)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arigna</td>
<td></td>
<td>No current plans</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballyforan</td>
<td></td>
<td>No current plans</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballintober</td>
<td></td>
<td>FWA (Last Mile)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castleplunkett</td>
<td></td>
<td>FWA (Last Mile)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croghan</td>
<td></td>
<td>FWA (Digiweb) FWA (Last Mile)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiltoom</td>
<td></td>
<td>FWA (Last Mile)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knockcroghery</td>
<td></td>
<td>FWA (Last Mile)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecarrow</td>
<td></td>
<td>FWA (Last Mile)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mont Talbot</td>
<td></td>
<td>FWA (Last Mile)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarmonbarry</td>
<td></td>
<td>No current plans</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulsk</td>
<td></td>
<td>FWA (Last Mile/SCBI) FWA (Last Mile/SCBI)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: RCDB Broadband Strategy, prepared by Cerena Consulting Ltd, p.14
* Roscommon portion of populations for towns adjoining other counties, not available in CSO

3.12.2 Mobile Phone Network Development

With regard to mobile phone network development, the physical infrastructure and structures needed to provide this service must be developed in a strategic way that minimizes the impact where possible on the environment. It shall be the policy of the Council to achieve a balance between facilitating the provision of telecommunications services in the interests of social and economic progress and sustaining residential amenities including public health as well as maintaining a quality environment.
The Telecommunications policy for the County shall be based on the recommended Guidelines for Planning Authorities with regard to Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures (1996). This policy encourages co-sharing and clustering of masts.

Location of Masts

As a means of achieving reduced exposure, base stations and mobile phone telecommunications masts should comply with the following standards:

- In the general not be constructed in proximity to Protected Structures, archeological sites and monuments should be avoided or in the vicinity of larger towns, developers may endeavor to locate in industrial estates
- In areas outside towns/villages freestanding masts should be placed in areas free of obstruction, and where they do not have a negative effect on the environment and have good access roads.
- It shall be the preferred approach that all new support structures meet fully with the co-location or clustering policy of government guidelines and that shared use of existing structures will be insisted where the number of masts located in any single area is considered by the PA to have excessive concentration.
- Where the antennae and their support structures are no longer being used by the original operator and no new user has been identified they should be then demolished, removed and the site reinstated at the operators expense. In future all such permissions granted will contain a bonding arrangement to this effect. It shall also be an obligation of the original operator to inform the PA if he intends to dispose of the site to another suitably operator.

Mobile Phone Providers operating in County Roscommon

**Meteor:**
Presently there are 13 live GSM installations located throughout County Roscommon which provides coverage to the main towns and a certain level of coverage to the major routes. Of the 13 sites, 6 are Meteor independent structures for which planning permission was granted the remaining 7 are sites which have been provided by private landowners, other operators or semi-state bodies such as the ESB. Meteor has future proposals with regard to increasing its coverage in the County which includes 13 additional areas. It is acknowledged that existing infrastructure may be available at these locations which could be utilized.

**O2:**
Caldragh in County Roscommon had upgrading of coverage along the N61 between Boyle and Elphin and along the R361 between Boyle and Frenchpark.

**Vodafone:**
Vodafone Ireland has recently improved coverage in many areas throughout the country including parts of Connaught. Roscommon has however not featured in recent improvement works.

**Perlico:**
Perlico is Ireland’s largest alternative supplier of Telephone and Broadband services. There is no available information on recent improvement works in County Roscommon

**Eircom:**
There is no available information on recent improvement works in County Roscommon.
Chapter 3: Infrastructure, Transportation and Movement

Policies in relation Telecommunications Infrastructure

Policy 79  Promote an integrated approach with service providers and with appropriate bodies in the creation of a modern telecommunications infrastructure within County Roscommon

Policy 80  Work towards achieving the strategic aims as put forward within Roscommon’s Broadband Strategy ‘The Rollout of Broadband within County Roscommon’

Policy 81  Have regard to Government guidelines on telecommunications infrastructure, including Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures–Guidelines for Planning Authorities 1996 (DoEHLG) and any subsequent revisions.

Policy 82  Have regard to recommendations made by the Landscape Character Assessment

Policy 83  Support the RCDB, in stimulating demand, as part of a Broadband delivery strategy, via maps and local demonstrations/training, in the application of ICT technology for SME’s and local business including the benefits of e-business and e-commerce

Policy 84  Encourage and promote e-inclusion in County Roscommon through the planning process and by supporting strategies to encourage and enable lower income households to avail of modem and broadband infrastructure

Policy 85  Increasingly work towards on-line service delivery in the public sector

Policy 86  Encourage the location of telecommunications based services at appropriate locations within the county subject to technical requirements and to environmental considerations

Policy 87  Support enhanced coverage and further co-ordinated and focused development and extension of telecommunications infrastructure including broadband connectivity within Roscommon as a means of improving economic competitiveness and enabling more flexible work practices e.g. tele-working, video-conferencing, e-business and e-commerce

Objectives in relation to Telecommunications

Objective 76  Support the RCDB in providing Provide digital outreach initiatives to deprived areas in partnership with the private sector

Objective 77  Promote the delivery of universal broadband availability throughout the County by 2007.

Objective 78  Support the provision of a minimum of one terrestrial (non-satellite) service provider for all locations

Objective 79  Support the RCDB in facilitating the take-up of Group Broadband Scheme and the School Broadband Access Programme

Objective 80  Support by planning condition where appropriate the development of underground telecommunications broadband infrastructure for road, commercial and residential schemes, as set out in the government’s recommendations

Objective 81  Ensure, by way of planning conditions, that telecommunications infrastructure is adequately screened, integrated and/or landscaped, so as to minimize adverse visual impacts on the environment where practicable
Objective 82  Encourage the provision of broadband, including the provision of electronic courtyards, within developments

Objective 83  Facilitate and encourage shared access for service providers for erecting antennae for line of sight broadband access

3.13  MAJOR ACCIDENTS HAZARD

The EU Directive on the Control of Major Accidents Hazard is addressed in the Development Plan making by the mandatory objectives in relation to Establishments. The “Seveso 11” Directive 82/96/EC is concerned with the prevention of major accidents and limiting their consequences. Article 12 of this directive relates to land-use planning and under this section members are now obliged to ensure that the objectives of preventing major accidents and limiting the consequences of such accidents are covered by the land-use policies.

To achieve these objectives Article 12 states that controls shall be put on:

- The siting of new establishments
- Modifications to an existing establishment to which Article 10 of the Directive applies or
- Proposed development in the vicinity of an existing establishment for the purposes of reducing the risk, or limiting the consequences, of a major accident.

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) is the Authority prescribed under Article 13 of the Planning & Development Regulations (SI 600 of 2001). The requirements are to provide the general approach of the Authority to Land-Use planning advice and also to provide detailed type of advice in relation to a particular notified site and its zone classification under Appendix 2 of the Seveso 11 Directive.

In establishing whether Regulations apply to a particular establishment, the primary criteria to be assessed is whether dangerous substances are present in quantities equal to or in excess of those listed in the First Schedule of the Regulations. There are 2 tiers of industries; lower and upper tiers, depending on the quantity of substances used, handled or stored on site. Regulations require different duties of operators for lower and upper tier establishments

**Lower Tier** establishments are required to:

- Notify the HSA and the local PA of their existence and provide information in relation to-
  - Inventories of dangerous substances
  - Type of activity in operation
  - The surrounding environment of the establishment
  - To take all necessary measures to prevent the occurrence of a major accident and to limit the consequences of any accident for people and environment
  - To prepare and implement a major accident prevention policy
  - To take action in the event of a major accident
  - To maintain a register of notifiable incidents

**Upper Tier** Establishments are obliged to include those set out above for the Lower Tier and in addition;

- To produce a Safety Report
- To prepare an internal emergency plan
- To provide information to those responsible for off-site emergency plans
- To provide information for the safety of the public

The Health and Safety Authority noted in their submission of the 22/08/06 to the CDP 2008-2014 that Elan Pharma International Limited manufacturing facility in Monksland, Athlone is one of the
Establishments as referred to in the European Communities (Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances). The Regulations covering their operation (Lower Tier), is the European Communities (Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations, S.I. 74 of 2006.

The H.S.A. have requested in relation to land use planning that a Consultation Distance of 1 km from Elan be set and should be drawn around the Elan site on a local map and that any planning application for within this circle should then be forwarded to the H.S.A for consultation.

The following is the type of information that should be forwarded with the application to the Authority [Planning and Development Regulations, 2001: Part III, Section 13 (s)] :

- A copy of the relevant planning application
- Include an up-to-date map of sufficient scale to show the proximity of the proposed Development to the Seveso establishment (location to be indicated on the map), such map to include all existing and approved residential developments and outlining the site location of the proposed development in red
- Where the planning application relates to a development covered by sub-article 1(b) or 1(c) of Article 137 of the Planning & Development Regulations of 2001, identify the relevant establishment or establishments.
- Where an EIS has been submitted with the planning application, include a copy of the statement
- Where the planning application relates to development which comprises or is for the purposes of an activity requiring an integrated pollution control license or a waste license, include that fact
- Request technical advice on the effects of the proposed development on the risk or consequences of a Major Accident

Policies in relation Major Accidents Hazard

Policy 88 Comply with the “Seveso 11” Directive 82/96/EC with regard to the prevention of major accidents and limiting their consequences

Policy 89 Ensure that land use policies must take account of the need to maintain appropriate distances between future major accident hazard establishments and residential areas, areas of substantial public use and areas of particular natural sensitivity/interest

Policy 90 Liaise with the Health and Safety Authority and with notified site operators and other statutory bodies with regard safety regulations and safety zones and to implement the provision of Land-Use planning advice and/or detailed advice as outlined by the H.S.A

Policy 91 The Council will have regard its Major Emergency Plan as well as the provisions of the Fire Services Act, 1981, in assessing developments.

Objectives in relation to Major Accidents Hazard

Objective 84 Facilitate the implementation of the “Seveso 11” major accidents directive and in doing so the Council will have regard to major infrastructure projects including transport links, gas pipeline, rail links, major roads and locations frequented by the public and residential/community areas in the vicinity of existing establishments, where the siting of establishments are such as to increase the risk of consequences of a major accident

Objective 85 Collaborate with the H.S.A in relation to the annual review of notified sites and implement any specified revisions as proposed by the H.S.A Authority.
Objective 86  An indicative Consultation Distance of 1 km from the Elan site has been set (see Map 35) which will be confirmed with the H.S.A and the relevant local authorities within 6 months of the adoption of the Plan. Any planning application for within this circle should then be forwarded to the H.S.A for consultation.
4.1 INTRODUCTION

Planning and development issues today have become more complex and frequently overlap with other policy areas such as economic development, transport, education and health provision. The DoEHLG recommends that Development Plans need to address this wider policy context and set out a strategic spatial framework for the area the Plan covers. This spatial framework, while acknowledging wider social, economic and environmental trends, also requires one to focus on the “big picture” planning issues, possibilities and considerations that will underpin how the development process in an area is to be structured in order to achieve the Plan’s objectives for the wider community.1

4.1.1 Economic Development in Ireland

The ESRI, in their Medium-Term Review 2005-2012, recognise that the Irish Economy has experienced unprecedented growth, resulting in low unemployment and impressive GDP gains over the past 10 years or so. Features of our economy include: record investment in housing, (acting as a catalyst to growth within the overall economy); close to full employment (the lowest rate experienced in the EU); and sustained growth in the labour force driven by substantial immigration (with Ireland recognized as one of the preferred labour market destinations in the EU). As a result, consumer and business confidence within the economy is strong, public spending was up 9% in 2005, GDP growth was in the region of 4-5%, while the Exchequer deficit for 2005 was lower than expected.

It is predicted that future economic growth will move towards the services sector. Manufacturing will continue to move to high-end technology operation as well as overall R&D and science. Technology and innovation will become more integral and more important. Connected with the trends identified above, is the recognition that there is a need to meet the demand for appropriate amounts of serviced land.

The ESRI concluded that there is a need for a high quality environment with the requisite services in order to attract enterprise. This goes hand in hand with a skilled labour force and infrastructure in order to secure the required investment of enterprise to improve competitiveness and expand the R&D capacity of a region.

Vision of Indigenous Firms

The Enterprise Strategy Group2 noted in its report ‘Ahead of the Curve’ that; “a weak infrastructure in the regions presents a barrier to their economic development. The key mechanism for enabling regional development is to enhance their infrastructure. Regions will attract enterprise only if they have the infrastructure and facilities that allow them to compete with Dublin and international regions for trade and investment” (Ahead of the Curve- Ireland’s place in the Global Economy, 2004, p. 98)

4.1.2 Sustainable Economic Development

To be sustainable, ‘development must strike a balance between the economic, social and environmental objectives of society in order to maximize wellbeing in the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs’.3

The basis for EU policies basis is on the social and economic aspects of sustainability in addition to the re-distribution of wealth to improve the quality of life for all. Sustainable economic development of a region is critical in the attainment of social and environmental sustainability.

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1 DoEHLG, Development Plans, Draft Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2006, p. 1
2 The Enterprise Strategy Group was appointed by Minister Harney, T.D. Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment to develop a 10 year strategy for maintaining growth in enterprise in Ireland.
A significant challenge exists however within all EU countries, including Ireland, to ensure better conservation of the environment while maintaining a competitive industrial base and energy supply for the provision of employment and income.

The Irish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) highlights the need for increased eco-efficiency to balance economic development whilst ensuring the protection of the environment and sustainable development. The cost effectiveness of environmental regulations also needs to be managed and in Ireland, one of the principal policy responses to regulating industrial pollution is via Integrated Pollution Prevention Control (IPPC) licensing.

The EPA also state that increasing efficiency in the use of energy and material, using cleaner technologies to minimize emissions to air and water, preventing or reducing waste, and increasing re-use or recycling activities will help maintain Ireland as an attractive location in both economic and environmental terms for the continued development of indigenous and multinational industry. In addition, long distance commuting from residential developments located at greater and greater distance from where people work is not sustainable in the longer term.4

4.2 POLICY CONTEXT

4.2.1 National Policy

The NDP 2007 – 2013 states that, balanced regional development means supporting the economic and social development of all regions in their efforts to achieve their full potential. The NDP aims to promote the development of all regions in Ireland within a co-ordinated, coherent, and mutually beneficial framework. The Plan will be implemented by;

- A programme of investment in infrastructure with a particular focus on addressing deficits in the various NSS Gateway areas
- Implementation of integrated spatial planning frameworks at Gateway/Regional Authority level which will address appropriate land use at these levels and, facilitate and complement the planned investment in infrastructure
- Investment in Enterprise and Human Capital Development of the Regions, including Rural Areas
- The establishment of a Gateway Innovation Fund on a competitive basis to bring about better co-ordination in Gateway development supporting distinctive and innovative projects in Gateway areas which are contributing to the development of the Gateways and their wider regions5
- The Development of the Rural Economy via the rollout of broadband, expenditure on non-national rural roads, improving the Rural Transport Initiative (RTI), investing in rural water/sewerage services
- The delivery of LEADER/Rural Economy Sub-Programme in promoting the diversification of the rural economy (i.e. start up of new rural micro-enterprises, supporting the development of business, promoting agri-tourism, assisting the diversification by farm families into non-farming activities, enhancing villages and small towns and the conservation of areas of high natural and cultural value)
- The delivery of the Agriculture and Food Programme by promoting the continuing modernization and competitiveness of the farming sector and food processing sector as well as enhancing the quality of the rural environment. Support will be provided for investment in food and forestry sectors, on farm investment, food marketing, start up assistance for young farmers and early retirement for older farmers, & agri-training
- The delivery of the CLÁR programme for the regeneration of rural areas suffering from population decline

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4 Environment in Focus 2006, Environmental Indicators for Ireland, 2006, p. 46 & 64
5 National Development Plan, 2007-2013, p. 57
• The delivery of the RAPID programme which will tackle social exclusion in twenty provincial towns
• The delivery of the Rural Social Scheme and income support for low-income farmers as well as the enhancement of rural amenities and services
• The delivery of the Western Investment Fund through the WDC in western counties
• The delivery of the Gaeltacht and Island Communities Programme in the provision of infrastructure and enterprise development in the Gaeltacht and island communities

The NSS 2002-2020

The NSS has established an integrated spatial policy framework embracing both urban and rural areas in “developing the full potential of each area to contribute to the optimal performance of the state as a whole – economically, socially and environmentally”.

The NSS places County Roscommon in the West Region, which has as its goal to promote economic activity and build balanced regional development through building on the dynamic role of Galway as a gateway and expanding its influence. The NSS recommends the following:

• Development and expansion of towns such as Ballaghaderreen, Boyle and Castlerea through effective promotion and marketing in association with larger towns, hubs and gateways
• Smaller towns and villages can play a key role in service delivery, and employment support particularly for those areas which are physically remote and peripheral
• Gateways and hubs can support development in smaller villages, where pressure for development exists, through servicing and development initiatives
• Identifying key assets and presenting or assembling a quality tourism package relying on the natural and cultural heritage of areas, such as those located along the Shannon River

The NSS highlights the importance of the availability of social infrastructure in improving the quality of life of the existing population and in attracting internationally mobile labour with in-demand skills. The NSS notes that it is important to build on the central locations of the key towns at the intersection of national road and rail routes, the attractiveness of the village structure and the natural resources of the rural areas. High quality education, skills and research, together with physical infrastructure and services for the population is critical to underpin future economic growth.

In terms of rural areas; efficient agricultural, marine and natural resource sectors together with significant and developing sectors such as tourism, enterprise, local services and other sources of off-farm employment, will be the mainstays of a strong rural economy.

In terms of marketing our tourism potential, the NSS states “Ireland must continue to trade on its ‘green’ image, a mark of quality, which is attractive for tourism and all investment. Protecting this environmental quality will be crucial”. Specific spatial responses are required to maximise the potential contribution of the tourism sector, while protecting the assets that make these areas attractive for visitors.

European Union: Rural Development Policy, 2007-2013

The future Rural Development Policy 2007-2013 focuses on three areas in line with measures put in place in the new rural development regulations, which aim to improve competitiveness for farming and forestry, improving quality of life and diversification of the rural economy.

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6 National Development Plan, 2007-2013, p. 81-82
7 National Spatial Strategy in the National Development Plan, 2007-2013, p.58

Fáilte Ireland in its Development Strategy, has identified the need to adopt a policy in relation to the carrying capacity of the most popular destinations and spreading tourism to other parts of the country. The Strategy has objectives to facilitate the development of a number of new tourism growth-poles around the country and to develop, in a sensitive way, the untapped potential of some of our least developed tourism areas. The strategy identifies opportunities for the development for the middle Shannon centering on Athlone as the hub of a comprehensive tourism development of the Shannon Corridor; development of a strongly branded “Lakeland” fishing product; and using the assets of heritage, golf, equestrian, walking and cycling routes, ecology and waterways to develop strong centres for special interest activities and rural tourism.

4.2.2 Regional Policies

The Border Midland and Western (BMW) Operational Programme 2007-2013

The objective of the BMW Strategy is to; “facilitate innovation, ensure sustainable development, improve accessibility and develop the urban fabric within the region in order to enhance overall productivity and competitiveness”. Their three key priorities and key interventions accord with the three core aspects of the strategy i.e.:

Priority 1: Innovation, ICT and the Knowledge Economy consisting of 33% of allocation share which will be targeted at applied Research enhancement, incubation and collaboration, research capacity, micro enterprise & entrepreneurship, broadband provision and experimental actions.

Priority 2: Environmental and Risk Prevention consists of 17.7% of allocation share and will be targeted at rural water source protection, pilot village sewerage schemes and renewable energy.

Priority 3: Urban Development and Secondary Transport Networks consists of 49.3% of allocation funding and will be targeted at urban development, key link routes and public transport infrastructure.

The European Rural Development Fund (ERDF) will co-finance 40% (€229m) of the total funding towards the BMW Operational Programme. In conjunction each of the priority areas will be attracting much larger levels of resources from national sources.

The Regional Planning Guidelines for the West Region 2004-2014 places North Roscommon within Zone ‘C’ with key towns such as Boyle, Castlerea, Strokestown and Ballaghaderreen as the key drivers of economic and social development. South Roscommon is placed within Zone ‘F’ of the RPG’s with Tuam as its ‘hub’ town, other key towns identified are Roscommon Town and Monksland (Athlone).

The Western Development Commission (WDC) has published, in 2003, Jobs for Towns, in which it recommends a substantial contribution to the development of a strategy for investment and employment in Western Towns. The Development Plan shall take account of the recommendations contained within this report.

4.2.3 Local Policies

The County Development Board Strategy 2002 – 2012, “Roscommon Common Vision”: A ten year strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development sets an overall framework within which public bodies in the county will deliver their range of services over the next decade. One of the three Strategic Goals is; “To develop and enhance the economic well-being in County Roscommon so as to facilitate existing and future economic growth, in line with balanced regional development.”

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Policy Orientation

The policy orientation of this strategy, identified a number of key priorities in relation to entrepreneurship, manufacturing and advanced sectors of the economy and includes the following:

- Develop County Roscommon as a location for indigenous industry and for decentralized government departments
- Facilitate the provision of high quality serviced sites/land ready for industrial/commercial development and workspace
- Develop geographical spread of affordable workspace in a range of sizes
- Develop the widespread dispersal of SME’s of an appropriate scale and activity
- Promote co-operation and co-ordination among educational providers, public bodies and agencies supporting enterprise in the county
- Support the development of extra jobs in established enterprises and increase employment in the county
- Promote the county as the location for county graduates to involve themselves in the business sector by developing a relationship between education facilities and economic development
- Promote the involvement of women in entrepreneurial activity
- Address the barriers that are experienced in getting a product/service to market
- Promote public –private partnerships in the provision of industrial sites and business parks
- Seek to maximize employment creation within the West Region.

The CDP 2008-2014 where relevant and further through the LAP process, shall endorse these objectives and facilitate their implementation.


This strategy forms part of the County Development Board’s (RCDB) 10 year strategy for economic, social and cultural development. The purpose of RCDB’s Job Creation Strategy is to facilitate the articulation of a vision for the development of the County and to provide the focus for co-operation and co-ordination which in turn will enhance the capacity for maximizing the effectiveness of spending programmes. Within the Strategy is an Implementation Plan, whereby each of the strategic goals has specific actions, indicators, target timeframes and co-coordinating/partner agencies. This Implementation Plan plays a key role in the delivery of objectives, analysis of policies and target outcomes.

The CDP 2008-2014 will have regard to the RCDB Job Creation Strategy and its Implementation Plan in the creation of policies and objectives in relation to economic development and employment for the County.

The RCDP’s 2002 priority in relation to Employment and Industry was to attract a wide range of employment opportunities, particularly those that support its overall strategy of attracting and retaining a young adult population.

The new CDP 2008-2014 will continue to promote this strategic aim and will also continue to design development policies whose aims/objectives are to integrate transport and land use in order to attain a sustainable development framework for economic, social and cultural development within the County. Key to promoting employment growth and a strong entrepreneurial spirit will be the provision of high quality infrastructure including broadband and the creation of more third level education provision including R&D facilities and support for small and medium size enterprises (SME’s) and high potential start-up companies (HPSU’s).
4.2.4 Economic Development Approach for Roscommon CDP 2008-2014

In order to deliver a spatially differentiated economic development and employment strategy for the Roscommon CDP 2008-2014 it is necessary to examine the external and internal environments that affect the County. This process will inform the CDP process and aid in the formulation of economic policies/objectives which will address the specific circumstances in which Roscommon finds itself at this time.

It should also be noted that the promotion of economic development in general, and industry and enterprise is particular, depends heavily on the policies, objectives and guidelines not only set out under EU/National/Regional documents and directives but also in other Sections of this Development Plan.

4.3 PRESENT ECONOMIC PROFILE OF COUNTY ROSCOMMON

The Job Creation Strategy: An Enterprise & Employment Profile & Action Plan 2005-2007 prepared by the RCDB and provides an internal examination of data on the economic trends within the County. This document was based on data from the 2002 Census and other sources. It provides detail on a number of issues and this information has now been updated for the purposes of the CDP 2008-2014 and has been used in devising the present profile of the County in relation to economic development. It should be noted that the main data of Census 2006 is unavailable until the latter half of 2007 and some of the data from Census 2002 has been used. The current spatial framework as outlined within the Job Creation Strategy Document as updated is consistent with that put forward in the existing CDP 2002 and the proposed Settlement Strategy as outlined in the CDP 2008-2014 (Refer to S. 2.6).

The actions recommended in the Job Creation Strategy include:

1. To foster entrepreneurship
2. To attract Graduates to return
3. To stimulate existing sectors to move up the value chain
4. To explore alternative business location model 1: to develop opportunities in Business Processing Outsourcing (BPO)
5. To explore alternative business location model 2: to attract satellite activity from large employers outside the county
6. To increase FDI
7. To increase Market size of Retail and Tourism sectors
8. To expand Third Level Training provision and workplace learning, particularly at County Roscommon Higher Education Centre (RHEC) in order to drive business growth and innovation.

The PA endorses these objectives and will also pro-actively engage and collaborate with other state, semi-state, private, voluntary bodies and organizations in order to develop an integrated approach to sustainable economic development of both the urban and rural areas of the County. It is an aspiration of the Plan that there will be synergy and complementarity in the policies and objectives between each agency and those of the PA which shall help create a positive and certain environment for the promotion of economic growth.

The following SWOT Analysis performed in 2007 is offered from information available since the publication of the Job Creation Strategy in 2005\(^9\). Its emphasis is on trends since the last available set of data.

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\(^9\) e.g. 2006 Preliminary Census, Census of Industrial Production 2004, CSO Vital Statistics, CSO Population Projections, Higher Education Authority and Department of Education figures, Live Register, Department of Environment housing statistics, Fáilte Ireland, information from IDA, Enterprise Ireland, Roscommon County Enterprise Board, Roscommon VEC, Roscommon County Council etc
### Strengths
- Population increase and reversal of trend
- Net migration up significantly and natural increase becoming more favourable
- Diversification of manufacturing away from reliance on Food & Drink sector
- Greater opportunities for graduates locally
- Increased rate of third level participation
- Greater take-up of ICT and business subjects by local students at third level
- Improvement of commercial property availability
- Broadband coverage in most areas
- Performance of micro-enterprise sector
- Access to River Shannon and positive environmental profile
- Most urban centres showing signs of improved sustainability since Census 2002

### Weaknesses
- Tourism share low
- Lack of strong niche products in tourism and associated marketing activity
- Low GVA (Gross Value Added) per worker will erode competitiveness
- Reliance on primary and construction sectors
- Vulnerability of some manufacturing sectors
- No significant advance in flagship industries in more progressive sectors including FDI
- Low level of R & D and HPSU activity
- Some rural parts not sharing in recent progress

### Opportunities
- Significant growth of labour force
- Growth and consolidation of Higher Education Centre
- Lough Key and Hodson Bay developments and further potential for environment-based tourism activities
- Continued development of Enterprise Centres
- Significantly increased allocations for Social Inclusion and Rural Development measures in new NDP present opportunity for real action of spatial development and agricultural diversification
- Availability of Gateway standard infrastructure and marketing opportunities at Monksland
- Broadband offers opportunities for business development in more remote areas based on work/life balance
- Mid Shannon Tax Incentive Scheme
- Upgrading of N61 and Dublin-Galway route
- Construction-related opportunities from Transport 21
- Demand for new types of rural tourism and outdoors activities

### Threats
- Recent increase in Live Register may indicate an unwelcome trend
- Cost base increases for business
- Lack of private investment in tourism infrastructure
- Need to manage spatial relations between areas close to growth of enterprise and development of infrastructure and those areas remote from current opportunities
- Continued growth in Galway and Dublin means continued poles of attraction outside the county. Access needs continual improvement
- Vacancy levels in new residential properties (esp. Tax incentive ones) may lead to unsustainable and unstable communities
- Competition from other locations with attractive skills base, business infrastructure and access routes
SWOT Analysis Findings 2007

1. In the period since 2002, Roscommon has seen significant growth in its population and labour force. This has been due to high net migration and a lower but growing rate of natural increase. The county has reversed its previously poor demographic trend that had made Roscommon Town the only centre of sustained growth in the period between 1981 and 2002. Almost uniquely in modern times, the county has grown at a rate greater than the national average in the period 2002 – 2006.

   **Net Migration** levels show that the county is attractive to newcomers as a place to live and work. This will have a positive impact in lessening the county age dependency ratio. The growth in the labour force allied to high participation levels at third level will ensure a good supply of labour at different skill levels over the life of the Plan.

2. In terms of **Spatial Profile**, the areas of significant growth in the county are Athlone West, Kiltoom and Carnagh (neighbouring EDs in the south east of the county adjacent to Athlone); Ballaghaderreen; Boyle; Roscommon town and surrounding EDs; Castlerea; Termonbarry and Danesfort, the latter two being close to urban centres outside the county boundary.

   The 2006 Census Preliminary Report shows much more positive indications of sustainability in all of the County’s towns not just Roscommon and the Monksland area as indicated in the 2002 Census. However, since the 2005 CLÁR Boundary review, 104 of the County’s 112 EDs are designated as part of the CLÁR programme which accounts for approximately 41,679 persons (2002 Census figure).

   Significant increases in the next LEADER and Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP) as well as increased allocations for CLÁR, Rural Social Scheme, Western Investment Fund and Rural Transport Initiative offer opportunities for real action on spatial equity and meeting some of the challenges for the rural areas listed above. The challenge will be in ensuring effective co-ordination and an emphasis on community infrastructure and employment/enterprise supports.

3. **The County’s Education Profile** is improving. A high rate of third level participation and improved take–up of science, IT and business subjects in recent years will give the county the skills relevant to enterprises involved in a knowledge economy which compete in the global market place. The development of community education and third level courses at the Higher Education Centre is seen as a necessary opportunity to develop greater linkages between education and the workplace, allowing the enterprise sector to benefit from up-skilling of the workplace in a flexible manner.

   Due to the low level of local opportunities in the 1990s, the rate of return for Roscommon graduates has been low. In 2000, only 7% of local graduates returned to the county and this has increased somewhat to 19% for 2004. Whilst still low, the improvement reflects a belief amongst more young people that greater opportunity exists in terms of career and work/life balance.

4. **The County’s Employment Base** faces a considerable challenge to develop and attract industries in modern sectors of the economy i.e. those with a significant knowledge content that add value through intellectual input such as research, innovation or design.

   There is a large reliance on construction, primary processing and public sector employment. The small number of firms employing over 50 persons (25) demonstrates the difficulties in getting business to grow; it is feared that the obstacles to growth are the same obstacles that will prevent the innovation and diversification needed to simply survive as competitive pressures increase.
5. **Economic Growth Sectors** locally include the pharmaceutical industry and extractive industries, both of which have significantly increased their share of salaries provided in the county. In recent years, investment in indigenous HPSUs (High Potential Start-ups), R & D (Research and Development) and Enterprise Centres in the county has increased. However, the overall level of such activity is low. As Ireland’s policy at national level is to support mechanisms for transition to a Knowledge Economy, it is essential that Roscommon nurture innovation in knowledge intensive businesses. The provision of infrastructure for HPSUs including flexible accommodation and broadband access are supported by this Plan and is seen as a key driver of the future economic wellbeing of the county. It is recognised that in the Knowledge Economy, many smaller enterprises can be located away from large urban centres if these supports are available.

The **availability of commercial property** has significantly improved in recent years and it is an aim of this Plan to facilitate the development of modern, flexible commercial space to meet the needs of local entrepreneurs and service providers as well as to attract mobile investment. Currently, suitable premises, depending on sector, are available at Roscommon, Boyle, Roosky, Monksland, Ballinlough and in various Enterprise Centres, situated throughout the County.

To win further jobs and business activity from the mobile and FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) sectors, the county will need to focus on those activities suited to its skills base and accommodation base. In terms of the trends into non-city locations in Ireland, the potential exists to win mobile investment in shared services; financial services and European headquarter locations – typically businesses of 20 to 50 persons in office environments. Further relevant sectors are pharmaceutical businesses, currently clustering in Monksland; and logistics given the county’s location and improving access. Access, environment and tourism provide opportunities and challenges for the county. Tourism revenues and numbers are very low, less than 4% of that of the Ireland West region. In previous years, private and public investment in flagship enterprise and marketing activity has been low. There has been improvement in this area in recent years with the development of facilities at Hodson Bay and Lough Key.

The **Micro-Enterprise** sector continues to be a major strength with almost 1500 firms employing between 1 and 9 people. About 10% of these receive agency assistance. The existence of such firms testifies to local entrepreneurial spirit but there is both a challenge and an opportunity to assist some of these to expand through innovation and diversification.

6. The following potential exists in terms of tourism: **marina-type development and improved access to the River Shannon**; development and marketing of outdoor sports through trails and other facilities; and the upgrading of the N61 from Athlone; and, the primary route from Dublin to Galway are key pieces of infrastructure that will facilitate improved tourism activity.

The proposed **Mid Shannon Tax Incentive Scheme**, and its limits on the ratio of accommodation floor space, will be a significant catalyst for investment in the area within 12 kilometres of the Shannon.

The provision of further **Flagship Enterprises**; the facilitation of ecologically-sensitive access to the county’s lakes and rivers; as well as improved access into the county; the development of cycle and walking routes; along with other outdoor activity-based tourism; and, the encouragement of public and private investment in such facilities are aims supported in the Development Plan.
7. Overall, a number of key conclusions of the 2005 Job Creation Strategy still hold:

- Sustainability of remote communities in some parts of the county need to be supported
- Need to move away from reliance on more vulnerable employment sectors
- Need to support innovation and growth in indigenous enterprise
- Lack of flagship enterprises in modern sectors
- Need for greater investment and marketing in tourism sector

8. From the available evidence, however, there has been considerable progress in significant areas:

- Increased rate of graduate return indicates increased opportunity levels for higher skills
- Increased rate of third level participation and take-up of ICT and business subjects
- Consolidation and growth of Higher Education Centres
- Development of a small number of high profile tourism product(s)
- Diversification away from Food & Drink manufacturing
- Growth of commercial property availability
- Increased focus on entrepreneurship even if large-scale results have not been displayed yet
- Positive demographic trends including the area around Boyle and around the poles of Athlone West and Roscommon Town, as well as in most urban centres
- Widespread broadband availability
- Growing income levels

4.4 FUTURE EMPLOYMENT, ENTERPRISE AND ECONOMIC STRATEGY

4.4.1 Change in Enterprise Culture-Roscommon’s transition to a Knowledge Based Economy

Strategic Goal for Future Employment:

To develop and enhance the economic well-being in County Roscommon so as to facilitate existing and future economic growth, in line with balanced regional development

The National Enterprise Framework is moving increasingly from a culture of job–taking to job-making and as industries move up the value chain, high volume job projects become rarer. The indigenous sector has long been characterised by a predominance of SME’s. In recent years projects have been moving away from manufacturing and even call centres toward higher value activity. More people will be required to innovate and set up in business themselves.

Ireland is the world’s largest exporter of software, even if much of this is PC-packaged. The country has a strong portfolio of manufacturing, administration, R & D and customer services in the ICT area. Our key export driver is ICT manufacturing and software (Intel, Dell and Microsoft account for almost 20% of Irish exports). Seven of the world’s largest ICT companies are located here and the sector employs 50,000 people

In the ICT area, the most likely type of operations to locate in the regions are shared service centres, serving Europe and Middle Eastern countries. These have very similar needs as those in the financial services sector. The International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) industry has grown at a very rapid pace and Ireland has reached parity with Luxembourg as Europe’s most attractive location for Funds. Indeed, Ireland is now the home to 30% plus funds under administration worldwide with strong growth sustained in recent years. This sector faces many challenges viz. its ability to absorb growth, cost base competition, space, competition for labour which could provide opportunities for regional centres. As Funds become more price conscious, there is a perceived need to reduce costs whenever and wherever possible. This has led to the locating of over 2,500 jobs in the sector in regional locations since 2001.
Of late, there has also been a focus on European shared services and headquarters operations in both ICTs and financial services. Typically, these employ 20 to 50 people in a variety of capacities e.g. customer support/technical support, administration, financial functions and legal services. Such operations are primarily sought by and suitable for regional locations in that they will not dominate a location (all eggs in one basket syndrome), they can add significantly to local spending power and up-skilling and their space, personnel and environmental needs are capable of being accommodated.

However, addressing the shortcomings in Telecommunications and access infrastructure (particularly air access) will be critically important in attracting ICT business to the Western Region. The attractiveness of a place to employees will have a key impact on location decisions by firms in these sectors. The supply of social infrastructure including health facilities, schools, arts and recreation facilities play a significant role in attracting such enterprises. The provision of social infrastructure must be a priority in any strategy to attract ICT and Financial Services to the Region. ANSAmed’s location in Boyle, counteracted Boyle’s perceived remoteness by emphasizing that the town was only 31 minutes from Sligo Regional Airport. Non-availability of broadband in the past, poor roads, electricity supply and water supplies were problems in locating in Boyle).

4.4.2 Location Assessment Criteria Model for Mobile Investment and Indigenous Business Start-Ups

On the basis of current trends in mobile investment and indigenous business start-ups, the following model of Location Assessment Criteria describes the major determinants of business location choice. The mobile investment for which Irish regions are most successfully competing is now principally office-based with few heavy goods. The main inputs are intellectual skills and the outputs can often be delivered as small goods or online.

There are also some opportunities for pharmaceutical projects, logistics and, to a much lesser extent, ICT manufacturing. These also require larger premises, a campus environment for buildings with different uses, logistics supports, high power and waste capacity and better surface links in addition to the requirements listed in the Diagram below.

4.4.3 Determinants of Location Assessment for Mobile Investment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Large Office and FDI</th>
<th>Smaller Office Knowledge Sector HPSUs</th>
<th>Logistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevant skilled labour and favourable demographic projections</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population mass of 250,000 within one hour</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of Suitable (Office) Premises</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Office Accommodation</td>
<td>4*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractiveness of Site Environment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to third level college</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadband availability</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of Broadband service providers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access/time to Dublin (Airport)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Transport Links</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare availability</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing availability and prices</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of overall quality of life (e.g. availability/quality of schools, sports and leisure facilities, crime rate, environment)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 = Essential  
3 = Certain to be a decisive factor between competing Irish locations  
2 = Likely to be a decisive factor between competing Irish locations  

1 = Desirable  
0 = Not a significant determinant

10 Western Development Commission ‘Enterprise and Employment in the West Region, Issues and Challenges and Recommendations 2004, p. 29
The competition to fill commercial space is increasing. Many developers are prepared (for a “suitable” client) to offer very competitive packages to prospective tenants. Offers of up to three or four years rent-free in locations less than one hour from the M50 are not uncommon, especially to blue chip tenants whose reputation would attract other clients. Leases with ten-year breaks and premises outfitted to the client’s requirements at the landlord’s expense are becoming a feature. The relative emphasis decreases for smaller, highly profitable, operations, as rents become a lower proportion of overall costs. Nevertheless, it is a significant distinguishing factor between locations and buildings.

**Findings indicate that:**

- Availability of Suitable (office) premises and Broadband availability ranked the highest (scored 12) across all three type of industry (FDI, HPSU’s & Logistics)
- Cost of Office Accommodation ranked second highest (scored 11)
- Transport links, Relevant Skilled Labour and favourable Demographic Projections third highest (scored10)
- Access/Time to Dublin (Airport) ranked fourth (scored 9)
- Proximity to Third Level College ranked fifth highest (scored 8)
- Attractiveness of Site Environment and Housing Availability & Prices ranked sixth (scored 7)

See **Demographic, Economic and Employment Profile of County Roscommon** for a full list of the corporate requirements in location profiling.

County Roscommon would be placed favourably within the above determinants. Areas that could be improved would be access time to an airport and proximity to Third Level Colleges. The CDP 2008-2014 supports measures that would allow Roscommon to become self sufficient in both of these determinants in the future.

### 4.4.4 Future Economic Strategy

In devising a future economic strategy under the CDP process the PA has had due regard to the national, regional and sectoral contexts which pertains to County Roscommon’s economic development potential. The socio-economic profile has been examined in depth within the county and contrasted with national figures and future sectoral trends have been examined.

The Planning Authority (PA) in conjunction with the Roscommon County Development Board (RCDB) are committed to maximising employment generation and entrepreneurship within Roscommon through enterprise creation and support, attracting foreign investment, harnessing the potential of the social economy and reflecting the need for balanced development, to address any strategic gaps within physical or social infrastructure in a fair manner.

The PA have considered the need to ensure that appropriate job creation will be provided at local level in a sustainable manner and recommendations shall be guided by the principles of proper planning in the creation of quality environments within the proposed Settlement Strategy.

Attracting higher graduate returns to Roscommon will depend on the building of the existing knowledge base, attracting knowledge intensive industries, fostering higher skill capacity in traditional industries and supporting entrepreneurship and enterprise development are all key salient factors.

**Such a Strategy should incorporate a specific set of supports designed to:**

- Enhance the skills base of SME’S within the traditional sectors which are facing particular challenges in adapting to changing conditions
- Adopt a proactive and creative approach to continually up-skilling the Labour Force in the region which should not be confined to re-skilling redundant workers but should be based on a strategy for lifelong learning and skills development. It should be led by the enterprise agencies and delivered in partnership with the private sector. For example, the role played in
the meat processing industry will require specific policies aimed at the provision of alternative employment opportunities in those areas particularly affected (Glanbia and Green Isle). Roscommon County Enterprise Board and LEADER Companies have a particular role to play in this regard in order to assist innovation and knowledge intensity through backing the acquisition of capital equipment, software and other technological applications by Traditional Manufacturing enterprises

- The rollout of high quality broadband telecommunications infrastructure and services including areas of lower population density is vital and RCC will continue to prioritise its delivery to all parts of the County over the lifetime to this Plan
- Address the transport deficits in air, road and rail. Air access is particularly vital to the high-tech and ITS sectors. Knock and Sligo airports are well located to serve the needs of the northern part of Roscommon.
- Continue to target Medical Technologies and devices (MTD’s) companies particularly in their efforts to become more knowledge intensive. State agencies should be proactive in facilitating the creation of networks between firms in the sector and in strengthening the links between them and Third Level Institutions.
- Develop support structures for spin-offs of hi-tech and IT businesses to help promoters to develop their business ideas, carry out viability studies and generate business plans
- Provision of social infrastructure should be a priority within any strategy in order to attract hi-techs, IT and Financial Services businesses in Roscommon
- Seek the financial support for enterprises through the Western Investment Fund (WIF) 11
- Promote a Regional Knowledge Initiative to include the strengthening of research capacity within the regions HEI’s, IoT’s and through business processes and non–technological innovation 12

The new Economic Strategy for Roscommon should be based on;

- The integration of economic development with land use planning in a systematic approach.
- The PA shall ensure that any future guidelines underlying economic and job creation policies must be clear so that there is no conflict in supporting one business over another.
- That policies and objectives for job creation within this Chapter do not conflict with other policies and objectives contained within the Plan

In general there are three different strategies to promote economic activity within towns/villages:

1. attracting new companies
2. retaining/growing existing companies
3. starting new companies

Attracting new companies usually takes the form of attracting Foreign Direct Investment by means of offering tax incentives or making development sites available. The policy of attracting this type of investment to peripheral or declining regions in terms of long term economic growth may be questionable. The availability of land with appropriate infrastructure, availability of skilled labor, amenities and quality of life are critical location factors. More often than not these criteria are difficult to fulfill all at once. It has also become much more difficult to attract such investment due to increased international competition and the enlargement of the EU which has opened up cheaper labour markets. Furthermore other towns in Ireland are also competing aggressively for FDI with the majority of projects been located in urban areas. In response, economic development efforts have had to re-focus on new strategies aimed at increasing the size of home-grown businesses. Entrepreneurial development therefore forms a key part of this new perspective. Given the nature of the rural economy and the lack of a national approach to rural enterprise, devolved funding and other supports available

11  Western Development Commission, Enterprise and Employment in the Western Region, Issues, Challenges and Recommendations, 2004, p. 21-24
12  Western Development Commission, Western Development for Ireland’s Future submission to NDP 2007-2013, p. 18
through LEADER, the County Enterprise Board and the Western Development Commission are especially relevant to rural enterprises. It is essential that their combined supports under the new NDP are coordinated effectively and are targeted at rural entrepreneurs and as well as in providing rural business infrastructure.

The development of infrastructure in smaller or more remote areas is a key factor in attracting people and especially small enterprise projects. These include:

- Broadband telecommunications
- Office accommodation and home office facilities for tele-working, professional services personnel, cultural industries, administration of tourism products
- Work/life balance opportunities
- Good road links and access to rail and air transport
- Marketing of these opportunities.

The Plan shall seek to encourage each of these within all key towns in Roscommon. Practical measures could include:

1. Exemption from commercial rates for those operating SOHO (small office home office) businesses involving family members and say up to 2/3 employees
2. Planning guidelines/exemption to facilitate computer-based home business where no goods are produced and car parking is confined to, say 2/3 cars of clients and employees/associates
3. Development of ‘electronic courtyards’ – see below
4. Encouragement of lifelong learning and skills development through CRHEC and linkage to other education providers including capacity building and business animation supports through LEADER to identify and nurture latent entrepreneurial and innovative talents.
5. Support for the provision of courses/modules on Rural Entrepreneurship through CRHEC and CEB
6. Oversee the coordination of local funding for rural development under NDP 2007-2013. Most funding devolved to local bodies will be subject to endorsement through CDB structures. It is vital that an emphasis on enterprise supports, upskilling and community infrastructure is upheld in programme planning and delivery.
7. Inventory of all enterprise space to be held by RCDB

It is the a policy of the Planning Authority that commercial developments proposed within towns and villages within Tier 3 to 6 of the Settlement Hierarchy shall be exempt from development contribution scheme for developments up to 1,000m2.

The creation of opportunities that can take advantage of this infrastructure and marketing in remoter areas is then dependent on market take-up by businesses and individuals. Except for the provision of marketing supports and infrastructure development, incentives are problematic, as they would need to satisfy aid/competition regulations. In addition, there is a strong argument to be made to accept the inevitably of commuting in satellite and hinterland areas. The challenge is to provide for its orderly development based on functional definitions of different spaces.

**Electronic Courtyards in Village Locations**

An approach currently in development which looks at technology based enterprises within the Shannon Region is called ‘E-Towns’. The objective is to generate incremental business activity by offering the modern entrepreneur a turn-key residential and business solution with all the convenience of advanced facilities in a quality-lifestyle location. The vision of the project is to “apply 21st century telecommunications technology and best practice in Town Renewal, to help create an alternative enterprise culture within small regional communities that will meet their specific needs in terms of an attractive living environment, as well as sustainable economic activity, including the creation of new jobs.”
Four E-Towns are being developed to provide accommodation for ten residential/business units with a capacity to accommodate 50 persons in ten knowledge-based enterprises such as graphic design, telemedicine, software etc. These are to be based in a “courtyard”, combining detached homes, townhouses, and apartments as well as up to 10,000 square foot of wired office accommodation. The towns chosen are Miltown Malbay (Clare), Newport (Tipperary), Tarbert (Kerry) and Cappamore (Limerick). The size of each is comparable to a number of population settlements in Roscommon.

Roscommon County Council, in considering technology based enterprises including Electronic Courtyard development. The following requirements shall be considered:

1. Ensure that there is sufficient lands zoned in appropriate locations for the promotion of ICT, Financial Functions and Legal Services
2. Ensure that sufficient land is zoned in appropriate locations for pharmaceutical projects, logistics and ICT Manufacturing. These industries will require larger premises, a campus environment for buildings with different uses, logistics supports, power/waste capacity and better surface links
3. Facilitate the provision of ‘Courtyard’ developments in small towns/villages that provide workspace and broadband connectivity through tailored solutions negotiated with telecommunications. The primary aim is to disperse economic activity and job creation to smaller population centres. A byproduct is the bringing of broadband services including training and expertise to the surrounding town, village and rural areas.
4. Encourage and facilitate the provision of a diverse range of Third Level and R&D opportunities within all the key towns including the promotion of linkages to industry
5. Support the RCDB in adopting a proactive approach to re-skilling redundant workers based on a lifelong learning and skills development strategy. Promote this strategy through the enterprise agencies including Teagasc and delivered in partnership with the private sector

The PA shall favour targeted economic investment and the provision of strategic infrastructure in all of the key towns within the County. These towns will act not only as economic and social nodes for their wider hinterland they will also provide linkages via transport corridors within Roscommon and the Western Region.

**The Implementation of such a Strategy shall also have regard to the following:**

1. Local Area Plans
2. The Zoning Matrix of this Plan shall also guide the LAP process
3. Land Use Zoning Maps in each Local Area Plans shall inform the location of industrial/commercial developments

**Policies in relation to Future Employment, Enterprise and Economic Strategy**

**Policy 92**  
Ensure that adequate and suitably located lands are zoned for employment uses in a range of sizes and locations in order to facilitate the growth of industrial, commercial and enterprise creation within the County.

**Policy 93**  
Promote and facilitate the implementation of targeted economic development in zoned and serviced areas (within speed limit areas) as part of the Future Economic Development Strategy for the County.

**Policy 94**  
Development Proposals will be expected to be compatible with the land use zoning matrices in the relevant LAP or in the absence of such, shall be in compliance with this CDP

**Policy 95**  
Ensure that the provision of key infrastructure is in place prior to planned growth
Policy 96 Facilitate home based economic activities that do not impact negatively on residential amenity and the living enjoyment of residents.

Policy 97 Promote ‘Electronic Courtyard’ type developments within small towns and villages in order to disperse economic activity to smaller population centres.

Policy 98 Encourage mixed usezonings within LAPs’ in which homes and employment are relatively close.

Policy 99 Facilitate the provision of high quality serviced sites/land ready for industrial/commercial development including workspace units with broadband connectivity within all key towns and strategic locations.

Policy 100 Promote the county as a business location for county graduates by developing a Relationship/network between education facilities including Third Level Institutes and economic development.

Policy 101 Promote PPP in the provision of industrial sites and business parks.

Policy 102 Support the RCDB in investigating innovative approaches towards the development and densification of quality employment enterprise clusters of various sizes including Smaller Office and Knowledge Sector HPSUs.

Policy 103 Promote the clustering of Major Accidents Directive land uses to minimise the possible negative impact thereof on the environment of Roscommon.

Policy 104 Support the RCDB in encouraging indigenous innovation and enterprise by making suitable start up locations available to entrepreneurs.

Policy 105 Facilitate and encourage the establishment of small scale light industries which are considered compatible with surrounding uses on suitable sites.

Policy 106 Facilitate and support the development of a technologically-based knowledge network in the County that establishes strong links with surrounding industries, Third Level Institutions, State and Local Agencies, including FÁS and Teagasc.

Policy 107 Encourage the RCDB in its support of SME’s, and the enhancement of their skills base especially those within the traditional sectors which are facing particular challenges in adapting to changing conditions.

Policy 108 Promote new industrial development in towns and villages utilising existing infrastructural facilities, services, telecommunications of, where these can be provided, through PPP’s.

Policy 109 Support the BMW Operational Programme 2007-2013 and help implement Priority 2: Innovation, ICT and the Knowledge Economy within County Roscommon which will be targeted at applied Research enhancement, incubation and collaboration, Research capacity, micro enterprise & entrepreneurship, broadband provision and experimental actions. Help implement Priority 3: Urban Development and Secondary Transport Networks which will be targeted at urban development, key link routes and public transport infrastructure.

Policy 110 Support the RCDB in its liaison with the IDA to promote foreign direct investment and the establishment of new industries in the County.
Policy 111  Support and liaise with LEADER programmes and co-operate with Local Area Partnerships in rural development projects.

Policy 112  A Road Safety Audit is required for all development that incorporates a proposal for a new access to a national road and where the development may give rise to a significant increase in traffic on an existing access to a national road. A Traffic Impact Assessment is required where a development gives rise to a significant increase in traffic. These need to be assessed in association with their cumulative impact together with neighbouring development.

Objectives in relation to Future Employment, Enterprise and Economic Strategy

Objective 87  Investigate the provision of Third Level and R&D facilities within Roscommon

Objective 88  Co-operate with neighbouring counties and regional authorities in seeking the development of corridors such as the Atlantic Corridor.

Objective 89  In consolidating the urban form, support the location of quality employment and residential developments in proximity to each other in order to reduce the need to travel and the dependence on private transport.

Objective 90  Facilitate and encourage the establishment of all types of industry which are considered compatible with surrounding uses on suitable sites.

Objective 91  Assist the RCDB in attracting major new industry/service providers to nurture and grow existing industry

Objective 92  Ensure that sufficient land is zoned in appropriate locations for pharmaceutical projects, logistics and ICT Manufacturing. These industries will require larger premises, a campus environment for buildings with different uses, logistics supports, power/waste capacity and better surface links

Objective 93  Ensure a high standard of design, layout and amenity is provided and maintained at locations selected for enterprise development

Objective 94  Work with and support Enterprise Ireland in the creation of clusters both at local and regional level.

Objective 95  Facilitate the provision of childcare facilities in appropriate locations thereby promoting labour market participation, access to training, education and employment among parents of young children

Objective 96  Encourage indigenous innovation and enterprise by identifying land where suitable start up can locate for entrepreneurs.

Objective 97  Facilitate home based economic activities that do not impact negatively on residential amenity and the living enjoyment of residents.

Objective 98  Facilitate the provision of ‘Courtyard’ developments in small towns/villages so as to accommodate economic activity and job creation to smaller population centres

Objective 99  Facilitate the development of High Potential Start-Ups (HPSU’s) and SOHO (small office home office) at appropriate locations
Objective 100  Support the RCDB in adopting a proactive approach to re-skilling redundant workers based on a lifelong learning and skills development strategy. Promote this strategy through the enterprise agencies including Teagasc and delivered in partnership with the private sector.

4.5 RURAL ENTERPRISE IN TOWNS & VILLAGES

4.5.1 Rural Enterprise at National Level

Enterprise in rural areas tends to be characterised by small firms operating in the more traditional sectors, some 65% of enterprises meet the definition of micro-enterprise (i.e. less than 10 employees). Not only do rural enterprises have to compete with the attractions of urban locations they have to also deal with issues such as transport costs, market access peripherality, poor communications and physical infrastructure.

The NDP 2007-2013 states that rural areas have significantly higher dependence on the more vulnerable manufacturing, natural resources and construction sectors. The Plan also states that the long-term sustainability of growth in employment in rural areas requires to be underpinned by job creation initiatives in a wider range of sectors. The objectives of the NDP are to sustain current growth within indigenous enterprise sectors in rural areas and to build on this growth by supporting, on a commercial basis, enterprise in rural areas and rural based entrepreneurs. The NDP also states that development of enterprise and employment opportunities will be vital to sustaining the rural economy and will require focused policy interventions at both national and local levels across a range of sectors.

Given the nature of the rural economy and the lack of a national approach to rural enterprise, devolved funding and other supports available through LEADER, the County Enterprise Board and the Western Development Commission are especially relevant to rural enterprises within County Roscommon. It is essential that their combined supports under the new NDP are coordinated effectively and are targeted at rural entrepreneurs and in providing rural business infrastructure.

Programmes and lead agencies that will be of benefit to the development of rural enterprise within County Roscommon include –

- Enterprise Ireland and the IDA Ireland through the Indigenous Enterprise & FDI Sub-Programmes will include interventions to promote enterprise in rural areas by facilitating entrepreneurial development and the development of the enterprise environment in local and rural communities. In this way there will be a continuing focus on enterprise in rural areas in addition to the benefits that will accrue to these areas from enterprise development in adjacent urban areas.
- The County and City Enterprise Boards (CEB’s) will play a central role in helping to generate a strong culture of entrepreneurship and in the promotion of micro-enterprise at the local level via the provision of information, financial supports and programmes designed to enhance management capability of owner/managers.
- LEADER through the National Rural Development Programme 2007-2013, will help support the creation of new rural micro-enterprises i.e. indigenous rural resources in artisan food, forestry, marine, rural/agri-tourism, recreational tourism and community promoted enterprises.
- EU Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 will seek to improve the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry sectors, improve and protect the environment and enhance the quality of life in rural areas including the diversification of the rural economy.
- Tourism Development Programme of the NDP will provide a fund for tourism infrastructure covering access, signposting, water-based facilities and marinas, walking and cycling leisure route development, festivals and cultural events as well as adventure activities such as water activities.

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13 National Development Plan 2007-2013, p. 86
sports and outdoor activity centres. The programme also covers initiatives in communications and enterprise capability areas.

- Rural Social and Economic Development Programme and the Local and Community Development Programme will be relevant to reducing social exclusion in a rural context.
- CLAR Sub-programme will fund or co-fund projects with other departments and state agencies and LA’s in supporting physical, economic and social infrastructure.
- A policy oriented research programme on rural development delivered by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs will help departments understand how sectoral policies and programmes impact on rural areas, in order to enable them to adjust their policies/programmes in a timelier manner.
- The Rural Social Scheme which will provide income support for low income farmers and certain services of benefit to rural communities.\(^\text{14}\)

The NDP admits that the challenges facing rural areas are substantial, ranging from infrastructure and employment to distinctive needs of local enterprises.

The CDP 2008-2014 shall have regard to these and other documents in the development of Rural Enterprise within the County.

### 4.5.2 Rural Enterprise within County Roscommon

County Roscommon is largely a rural county with an estimated 81% of people live in aggregate rural areas compared to 40% nationally and 69% in the western region. Although a predicted increase in urbanisation is expected in the 2006 Census results, this increase will not have significant effects on the spatial distribution of the population. The following support initiatives and agencies are in place to support enterprise within the County

### 4.5.3 CLAR Programme and other Rural Revitalization Initiatives

Since the 2005 CLÁR Boundary review, 104 EDs (there are 112 in County Roscommon in total) are now designated as part of the CLÁR region, characterised by population decline. These areas comprise 41,679 persons (77.5% of county population) based on the 2002 Census. CLAR is a programme managed by Department of Community and Gaeltacht Affairs, aimed at revitalising rural areas and is designed to tackle the problems of deprivation decline and lack of services in rural areas. It also provides rural communities with funding for infrastructure and social and community services.

#### Mid Shannon Tax incentive Scheme

Section 26 of the Finance Bill 2007 introduces a new pilot tax based scheme for tourism facilities in the mid-Shannon area. The Scheme is aimed at encouraging the development of new tourism infrastructure or the refurbishment of existing tourism infrastructure, in that area. The list of qualifying areas which are to be designated on a district electoral division basis is included in a new Schedule 8B to the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997. The nature of the tourism infrastructure buildings and structures which may qualify under the scheme will be set out in guidelines to be issued by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism in consultation with the Minister for Finance. Projects wishing to avail of relief must get approval in advance and also must get formal certification after completion.

The scheme has the potential to attract strong rural employment opportunities. As the scheme limits the provision of accommodation to 50% of total floor area, investors will be encouraged to derive returns on investment from more productive activities and alternative inputs such as labour and intellectual capital. The potential, therefore, exists for hospitality and tourism activity, sports, design and other small businesses.

\(^{14}\) National Development Plan 2007-2013, p. 91
Qualifying areas within Roscommon for this Scheme include Athleague East and West, Athlone West Rural, Ballydangan, Ballynamona, Castlesampson, Caltragh, Cams, Carnagh, Carrowreagh, Cloonburren, Cloonown, Cranagh, Creagh, Culliagh, Drumliso, Dysart, Fuerty, Kilcar, Kiltoom, Lackan, Lecarrow, Lismaha, Moore, Mote, Rockhill, Roscommon Rural, Roscommon Urban, Scregg, Taughmaconnell, Thomastown and Turrock.

It is a policy of the CDP to support and promote the scheme, when its details are known. Strong marketing will be essential which attempts to create compatible clusters of high-value activity, which will build regional; identity, and promotes the area as the leading inland waterway destination in the country.

**Roscommon County Enterprise Board and Roscommon LEADER** has provided funding and technical assistance in the promotion of local employment and enterprise initiatives. The focus has been on enterprise and rural tourism projects around the County for both individual and community groups. Enterprise Projects assisted by Arigna LEADER have included; business diversification through the purchase of new equipment and technology; the development of tourist attractions including accommodation facilities and marketing initiatives including web design.

**Roscommon Partnership Company** for Enterprise and Business Supports also provides aid to the unemployed and underemployed to enable them to develop their business ideas and assist them in creating businesses (e.g. information and advice, pre-business start up training, Back to Work allowance, business subsidies, bookkeeping and women in Business Network). The business supports and services are provided through close collaboration with Roscommon County Enterprise Board; the Department of Social and Family Affairs, and also with other local development agencies and statutory bodies.

**FÁS Ireland** seeks to maximize the development of enterprises tailored to meet the regeneration needs of local economies within disadvantaged communities.

**Roscommon Chamber of Commerce** also seeks to promote economic development including tourism within the county.

### Table 15: Agency Assisted Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>Number of Units (firms) 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise Ireland</td>
<td>1873</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>1806*</td>
<td>74 approx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDA</td>
<td>887</td>
<td>902</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Enterprise Board</td>
<td>803 Full-time</td>
<td>863 Full-time</td>
<td>924 Full-time</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>232 Part-time</td>
<td>229 Part-time</td>
<td>258 Part-time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3563 Full-time</td>
<td>3741 Full-time</td>
<td>3631 Full-time</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>232 Part-time</td>
<td>229 Part-time</td>
<td>258 Part-time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sources: Forfás Annual Employment Survey, 2004, 2005, 2006; County Enterprise Board)

*Reduction from 2005 figures almost entirely due to losses in Food & Drink sector.

There are also over 200 full time and 200 part-time jobs in companies assisted by two LEADER groups and the Roscommon Partnership.

The Council shall work with these bodies and other State Agencies/Departments in order to promote rural development and enterprise creation throughout all areas of the County over the lifetime of this Plan and in collaboration with the above mentioned NDP programmes 2007-2013.

In particular the delivery of the LEADER/Rural Economy Sub-Programme shall be a key instrument in the diversification of the rural economy within County Roscommon i.e. is in the fields of start up of new rural micro-enterprises; supporting the development of business; promoting agri-tourism; assisting the diversification by farm families into non-farming activities; enhancing villages and small towns; and, the conservation of areas of high natural and cultural value. Roscommon County Council shall also work in close collaboration with the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in seeking the delivery of the EU Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 within County.
Roscommon and also in providing primary data in support of the proposed new research programme on rural development.

**Policies in relation to Rural Enterprise and Job creation in Rural Areas**

**Policy 113** Support the RCDB in encouraging and facilitating small indigenous industries, in recognition of their increasing importance in providing local employment and helping to stimulate economic activity among local communities.

**Policy 114** Facilitate proposals such as Smaller Office and Knowledge Sector HPSUs and micro enterprises at appropriate locations in the countryside and consider the feasibility of providing exemption from commercial rates for those operating SOHO (small office home office) businesses involving family members and up to 2/3 employees. Such developments will be considered by the PA on a case by case basis and shall be subject to proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

**Policy 115** Consider the introduction of Rural Enterprise Zones under the LAP process.

**Policy 116** Support the RCDB in the promotion of the LEADER/Rural Economy Sub-Programme in the diversification of the rural economy within County Roscommon.

**Policy 117** Facilitate the implementation of Mid Shannon Tax incentive Scheme within the proposed qualifying areas.

**Policy 118** Support the BMW Operational Programme 2007-2013 and help implement Priority 2: Environmental and Risk Prevention within County Roscommon which will be targeted at rural water source protection, pilot village sewerage schemes and renewable energy.

**Policy 119** Support the RCDB in its roll out of Broadband to rural areas and consider it as a key infrastructure utility in the provision of employment and rural development.

**Objectives in relation to Rural Enterprise and Job Creation in Rural Areas**

**Objective 101** Roscommon County Council shall work with local and State Agencies/Departments in order to promote rural development and enterprise creation throughout all areas of the County over the lifetime of this Plan and in collaboration with the above mentioned NDP programmes 2007-2013.

**Objective 102** Collaboration with the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs both in seeking the delivery of the EU Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 within County Roscommon and also in providing primary data in support of the proposed new research programme on rural development.

**Objectives 103** Provide a flexible approach to start-up businesses and small scale industrial/enterprise activities. Where a proposed development needs to locate near an existing natural resource, it will be necessary to demonstrate that it can be accommodated without damage to the natural environment and shall not have any adverse effect on the character of the area.

**Objectives 104** Work in close collaboration with RCDB and their partnership agencies in the delivery of an integrated rural enterprise strategy for the County.

**Objectives 105** Implement CLAR programme within the qualifying areas.
Objectives 106 Liaise with the Western Development Commission and their research team in the delivery of an integrated vision for rural development for the County and West Region

4.6 TOURISM

Roscommon County Council agrees that Tourism shall become a major importance within the County especially in light of changing trends within agriculture and traditional industrial sectors and acknowledges that it will play a lead role in the diversification of the rural economy.

Chapter 10 of this Plan sets out detailed policies and objectives in relation to Recreation, Leisure and Tourism within the County. Chapter 6 deals with Rural Development including the diversification of the rural economy in relation to Tourism.

4.7 RETAIL STRATEGY

All Planning Authorities are required to prepare a Retail Strategy and policies for inclusion in the Development Plan for their area as set out in the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities. Further to changes in the sector and to address over restrictive guidance, the Amended Retail Planning Guidelines (January 2005) removed the floor-space cap on retail warehouses within the functional areas of the 4 Dublin LA’s and in the other National Spatial Strategy Gateways. The relaxation will only apply in areas subject to Integrated Area Plans under the Urban Renewal Act, 1998.

It is noted that part of the environs of Athlone is located in Roscommon, however this area was not subject to an Integrated Area Plan under the provision of the Urban Renewal Act 1998. In this context, the cap of 6,000 square meters will continue to apply to retail warehousing units in Roscommon County. In accordance with these guidelines, RCC commissioned consultants to undertake a Retail Study of County Roscommon. The Retail Planning Guidelines state that the matters that are required to be included in all future Development Plans are:

- Confirmation of the retail hierarchy, the role of the centres and the size of the main town centres
- Definition in the Development Plan of the boundaries of the core shopping areas of town centres
- A broad assessment of the requirements of additional retail floor space
- Strategic guidance on the location and scale of retail development
- Preparation of policies and action initiatives to encourage the improvement of town centres
- Identification of criteria for the assessment of retail developments

4.7.1 Retail Hierarchy

The purpose of the Retail Hierarchy is to indicate the role and importance of the various development centres of the county in order to enable the Council to protect each centre’s overall vitality and viability allowing each centre to perform its overall function within the county’s Settlement Hierarchy. Identifying the key centres which can accommodate major retail floor space assists the market in bringing certainty and thus improving the county’s competitiveness. The hierarchy provides the means to strengthen each centre’s role and function, and ensures a good geographical distribution of key centres in the county.

The Retail Planning Guidelines identify four tiers of shopping provision within the national hierarchy. Dublin is identified as the only first tier retail centre. Roscommon, as a County Town, would be considered a third tier centre. The fourth tier of the hierarchy comprises a large number of towns in the 1,500 to 5,000 population category – Boyle, Castlerea and Ballaghaderreen, would be examples of such centres.

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15 Under the 2001 Retail Planning Guidelines a maximum area cap of 6,000 square meters gross retail floor space for large scale single retail warehouse development applied
The Draft Roscommon County Retail Strategy identified four tiers on the Retail Hierarchy within the County.

| First Tier | Roscommon Town Centre  
| Monksland (in the context of Athlone – a gateway town and first tier centre in the Westmeath Retail Strategy)  
| Cortober (in the context of Carrick-on-Shannon, a first tier centre in the Leitrim County Retail Strategy) |
| Second Tier | Boyle  
| Castlerea  
| Ballaghaderreen  
| Stroketown  
| Creagh |
| Third Tier | Small Towns/Neighbourhood Centres. Elphin has been identified as the only third tier centre. |
| Fourth Tier | Villages and local shops¹⁶ |

4.7.2 Core Shopping Areas

In accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines, Core Retail Areas have been identified for the main centres as this is where large new retail development will be located. Car access and the provision of car parking often present difficulties and for this reason central sites are not always the first favoured by developers. To address this, the Retail Planning Guidelines established the Sequential Approach to determine of retail applications. This recognises the importance of sustaining town centres and their retail importance, vitality and viability.

The County’s Core Retail Area

Core Shopping areas of the principal urban centres including Roscommon Town, Boyle, Castlerea, Ballaghaderreen and Strokestown were identified. Core shopping areas are normally characterised by a mix of factors including prime retail units, low vacancies, predominance of multiples and well-established family-run stores, few non-retail uses and high pedestrianised foot flow.¹⁷ It is recognised that, as with Roscommon Town in the previous Retail Strategy for the County, such core areas may expand to the immediately adjacent areas over the lifetime of the Strategy.

4.7.3 Survey Approach and Analysis

In order to establish the necessary data for the retail study, it was necessary to undertake a number of qualitative and quantitative surveys. These included:

- Review and update of Floor Space Survey
- Household Survey
- Business Survey

¹⁶ Draft Roscommon County Retail Strategy, Executive Summary 2007, p. vii
¹⁷ Draft Roscommon County Retail Strategy, Executive Summary 2007, p. vii
Floor Space Survey

A detailed floor space survey for County Roscommon was undertaken in 2002 by Brady Shipman and Martin when the County Retail Strategy was being undertaken. This survey included detailed floor-space information. This existing data was augmented with register information from Roscommon County Council in order to determine the approximate retail floor area in relation to convenience, comparison and bulky household floor space in each of the main towns in the County.

The results indicated that Roscommon is the principal retail centre in the County comprising 31% of the convenience retail floor space, 50% of the comparison floor space, and 24% of the bulky household floor space in the County. Due to an increase in convenience and bulky household floor space in recent years, Ballaghaderreen has now superseded Boyle as the third largest town in terms of overall retail floor space provision. Generally there are quite high vacancy rates throughout the county, particularly in Roscommon and Ballaghaderreen.

The results indicate that:
- Boyle is declining compared to the continued intensification of Cortober which is located in close proximity to this urban centre.
- Roscommon is performing well; however, there are clear opportunities for the town to further enhance its retail profile and function.

The Household Survey

The household survey is essential in order to establish the existing shopping pattern in County Roscommon for different retailing types including clothing, footwear, food and household goods. It was carried out by telephone on a sample of all households in the County in January 2007. In total 400 people were interviewed. The household survey primarily contained questions relating to where the respondents carry out their main food shopping, top-up shopping, bulky household shopping, clothing and footwear shopping. The survey also included other useful information such as the mode of transport for shopping trips and the frequency of shopping trips.

With regards to main food shopping, 27% of the respondents stated that they did their main food shopping in Roscommon Town. A further 21% stated that they did their food shopping in Athlone. Five percent of those surveyed carried out their main food shop in Carrick-on-Shannon.

Shopping patterns for top-up shopping tend not to be as concentrated in and around certain towns as is the case for main food shopping. 69% of respondents said that they did their top up shopping in a local store such as a symbol store (e.g. Centre, Mace), a corner shop or a shop associated with a petrol station. In terms of shopping for clothes and footwear, it was found that more people travelled to Athlone to carry out their main clothing and footwear shopping than to any other centres. 29% of those surveyed travelled there for that purpose. Roscommon Town was also a popular destination for clothing and footwear shopping with 19% of those interviewed travelling there for these types of purchases. A further 11% of respondents visit Sligo for their main comparison shopping needs. 59% of those surveyed carried out their main clothing and footwear shopping outside of the County.

With regard to bulky goods, 23% of all persons said that they travel to Athlone, 20% travel to Roscommon Town, 12% travel to Boyle, 11% travel to Castlerea, and 7% travel to Ballaghaderreen.

Business Survey

A survey of retail outlets in the County was also undertaken. Respondents were asked questions such as where their customers came from, what their business outlook for the next five years was and what improvements they thought could be made to the retail environment in Roscommon. In terms of where customers came from, the survey revealed that the majority of customers visiting the various retail outlets came from within a 10 mile radius. A small percentage of retailers attracted customers from outside of the County (15%). In terms of opportunities for their businesses in the next five years, the
survey revealed that 45% of respondents felt that the population increase being experienced in the County would enhance the number of customers in the catchment area and thus their customer base.

The survey also asked respondents if they felt there were any improvements that could be made to the retail environment. 44% stated that environmental improvements such as street paving, improved public amenities such as seating, litter bins etc would be desirable. A further 36% felt that better town centre management should be promoted. It is apparent that some retailers feel under threat from larger retail centres in the vicinity. There is clearly a concern about the future viability of many smaller retailers in the smaller towns in the County.

Consultation

In addition to carrying out the household survey and business survey, an integral part of the study was to undergo consultation with key stakeholders, interest groups, retailers and individuals.

4.7.4 Qualitative Assessment

A health check assessment of the principal towns in County Roscommon is an integral part of the Retail Strategy. A health check assessment essentially analyses the strengths and weaknesses of town centres and is based on a qualitative analysis of factors such as the range and quality of activities in a centre, its mix of uses, its accessibility to people living and working in the area and its general amenity, appearance and safety.

The Retail Planning Guidelines provide a comprehensive checklist of information to be included in a health check assessment. It is stated in the guidelines that a healthy town centre, which is vital and viable, balances a number of qualities including:

- **Attractions** – these underpin a town and comprise the range and diversity of shopping and other activities which draw in customers and visitors.
- **Accessibility** – successful centres need both to be accessible to the surrounding catchment area via a good road network and public transport facilities, and to encompass good local linkages between car parks, public transport stops and the various attractions within the centre.
- **Amenity** – A healthy town centre should be a pleasant place to be in. It should be attractive in terms of environmental quality; urban design, and safety and it should have a distinct identity and image.
- **Action** – to function effectively as a viable commercial centre, things need to happen. Development and improvement projects should be implemented efficiently; there should be regular and effective cleaning and maintenance and there should be co-ordinated town centre management initiatives to promote the continued improvement of the centre.

Health check assessments of the principal towns of Roscommon, Castlerea, Boyle, Ballaghaderreen and Strokestown were carried out. In addition, there was an assessment to the Environs of Athlone (Monksland), the Environs of Carrick-on-Shannon (Cortober) and the Environs of Ballinasloe (Creagh). A brief survey of the principal smaller towns and villages in the County was also undertaken. Villages reviewed include Tulsk, Castleplunkett, Ballintubber, Athleague, Elphin, Bellanagare, Frenchpark and Roosky.

Roscommon

Under the Roscommon County Development Plan 2002, Roscommon Town is identified as the most important retail and commercial centre within the county and has a well developed and established central shopping area along Main Street.

The core retailing areas within the town has traditionally been located along Main Street and Castle Street and have principally been characterised by a range of small-scale independent retailers coupled with two or three principal convenience outlets such as Supervalu and Mace on Main Street. However,
significant town centre development has recently occurred to the east of Main Street including the construction of the new Tesco supermarket.

The health check assessment indicates that Roscommon, as the County Town, is trading well. There is only a small percentage of dereliction along secondary retail locations. The town has a good range of retail and service facilities that have been complemented by the addition of national multiples such as Tesco, Dunnes Stores and Lidl, in the last number of years, demonstrating investment confidence in the town centre.

The quality of the public realm and physical environment of the traditional town centre would benefit from a continuation of improvement works and further investment. Significant upgrading of shop fronts and building facades is required along the town’s main streets as is the provision of street furnishings. Investment should be encouraged in the reuse of upper floors and the removal of overhead wiring to underground.

While limited floor plate sizes along Main Street have restricted national traders entering the traditional retail core of the town, there are a number of sites in the town centre area which have the capacity to provide appropriate opportunities for delivering modern retailing formats. Sites such as the Roscommon Mart site and other sites along the Circular Road should be encouraged for town centre development.

**Castlerea**

Castlerea acts as an important retail centre for a large surrounding hinterland, including the neighbouring towns of Ballaghaderreen, Ballyhaunis, and Strokestown.

Retail facilities in Castlerea are concentrated along Main Street and partly on Patrick Street and mainly comprise of independent retailers. Supervalu provides the largest convenience outlet (1,000 sq.m) in the traditional town centre area. This store has dual access from both Main Street and a car park of 80 spaces to the rear.

The town suffers from considerable traffic congestion during peak times and weekends. As stated within the Town Development Plan, the bypass of the town would help to alleviate congestion within the town centre. It has been highlighted that Main Street has a number of poorly maintained shop fronts with a number of vacant retail units. The town would benefit greatly from greater investment in the public realm including the upgrading of shop fronts and pavements and the provision of more litter bins and street furniture as well as the removal of overhead wiring from the main streets.

It is evident from the health check analysis that the retail area of Main Street extends over a considerable area. This is not favourable towards encouraging concentrated pedestrian footfall within the town centre. The town requires a more defined retail core with new car parking facilities to help service the retailing area. A number of key sites have been identified within the town centre which, if redeveloped for town centre/retail uses, would contribute significantly to the consolidation of the retail core and the enhancement of the shopping environment. These are the Castlerea Mart site, the River Island site and an industrial site off Main Street.

**Boyle**

Boyle is an important retail and commercial centre serving the northern parts of County Roscommon. Boyle is well served in terms of convenience retail provision. The town contains a large Mace Supermarket as well as a purpose built SuperValu Shopping Centre that has been developed in the town centre. Boyle also accommodates a number of other smaller convenience retailers including a Londis supermarket.

Comparison provision in the centre is relatively poor and is predominantly characterised by independent retailers such as Boles of Boyle, which was opened in 1886. There is a lack of national or
international comparison multiples represented in the town and the comparison outlets are generally limited.

The environmental quality of Boyle is generally good and it has an attractive townscape, however the health check assessment conducted outlines that Boyle is a town in decline. The town has had little investment in recent years with many retail premises gradually being replaced by service and office functions. The retail role and function of the town is being eroded. The tight urban grain and small retail units in Boyle town centre provide limited opportunities for large retail traders to enter the traditional retail core of the town. However, sites have been identified on Patrick Street and at the old mill that have the capacity to provide appropriate areas for delivering modern retailing formats.

**Ballaghaderreen**

Ballaghaderreen’s close proximity to Roscommon Town, Castlerea, Boyle and Carrick-on-Shannon, together with its limited population means its importance as a retail centre is restricted; however, the town does serve as a local retail and service centre for the north-west of County Roscommon.

In Ballaghaderreen retail facilities are concentrated along Main Street and Market Square and largely comprise of small local retailers. There is significant leakage to other urban centres such as Roscommon and Athlone in particular for comparison shopping.

The environmental quality of some of the more peripheral streets such as Pound Street and Barrack Street is poor with a high level of dereliction, high vacancy levels, poor shop front maintenance and a dominance of overhead wiring.

The future retail role of Ballaghaderreen in the short to medium term is as a service centre for the local population and surrounding hinterland. There are a few under-utilised and largely vacant sites within the town centre which could be redeveloped for larger retail purposes. These include a large area of land located on Marian Road between Barrack Street and Station Road and the old Railway Station and Community Centre site on Station Road.

**Strokestown**

Strokestown is an estate town, and one of the few planned towns within the county. The town is classified by the Heritage Council as a “Heritage Town” and is home to the internationally renowned Strokestown House and gardens. Retail activity within the town is primarily centred on Elphin Street with the two main stores of Centra and Spar being the main convenience stores in the town. Other retail floor space comprises of a takeaway, butchers, estate agents and pubs.

The retail profile of Stokestown Town Centre would not be considered as vibrant as Roscommon, Castlerea, Ballaghaderreen or Cortober in terms of the range and quality of products it has to offer. The town offers a limited range of services and retailing facilities. The proximity of Carrick-on-Shannon, Roscommon and Athlone has impacted on the growth of its retail function.

The town centre contains considerable dereliction with vacant buildings a common feature along the main streets. Retail provision largely comprises of two convenience stores which cater for the majority of the town’s requirements. The town currently does not have the population or catchment area to service any large scale retail development within the town centre.

Due to the considerable dereliction and high vacancy levels, there has been a considerable negative impact on the streetscape. Environmental enhancements such as a new public amenity space along Bawn Street and Church Street should be encouraged as well as appropriate hard landscaping, tree planting, street furniture and lighting, street signage, public art and more defined on-street car parking spaces. This will help in creating a better environment for Strokestown and stimulate the development of tourism-related retailing in the town.
Athlone Environs

The Western Environs of Athlone consist of lands located in the Bogganfin/Monksland Townland at the junction between the N6 National Primary Route and the N61 National Secondary Route in south-eastern County Roscommon. These lands are within the administrative jurisdiction of Roscommon County Council but abut the boundary of Athlone Town Council and Westmeath County Council to the south-east. There is a large number of houses currently under construction or proposed in the area, which is likely to substantially increase the population of the area and contribute further to the growth of the area.

The existing convenience stores within the catchment consist of four small local stores located at Kiltoom, Hodson Bay and Bellanamullia. The area comprises of a significant number of retail warehousing including the Monksland Retail and Business Park and the West Point Business Park in which there are a number of vacant units. It is recommended that the level of future retail warehousing developments permitted in the Athlone Western Environs area should be curtailed until these units have been occupied.

A specific area referred to as Zone H (General Development) in the Athlone Environs Development Plan 2002 was identified as the most appropriate location for the first new neighbourhood centre in Monksland. These lands at the western junction of the Old Tuam Road and the New Tuam Road and the Proposed New Monksland Link Road are centrally located within the Monksland/Bellanamullia residential area. A neighbourhood centre development has been permitted on lands as part of a new mixed use development and is currently under appeal.

Carrick-on-Shannon / Cortober

The Cortober area, which comprises the townlands of Cortober, Mullaghmore and Tullyleague, is located to the south-west of Carrick-on-Shannon.

Substantial housing development in Cortober has been concentrated in ribbon development along the R368 and R370 Regional Roads and resulted in a significant growth in the area’s population and physical size. The largest retail/commercial development in recent years has been the Carrick-on-Shannon Retail Park between the N4 and the River Shannon. It includes a number of retail and commercial multiples including Supervalu (1,000 sq. m), Cineplex, Supermacs, Elvery’s sports store and a number of other retail/commercial units. However, there are also a number of large vacant units in this scheme.

The area is continually undergoing development with a 6,515 sq. m retail warehousing development, known as the N4 Retail Park, near completion on the N4 Boyle Road, while construction is soon to begin on a new three storey building opposite the Lidl supermarket comprising 5,877 sq. m of retail development divided into 16 individual units ranging from 38 sq. m to 1,350 sq. m. It is understood that Toy’s ’r Us will occupy the largest retail unit in the scheme. The proposed development also provides for a leisure/bowling alley, restaurant and office space.

Given the concurrent growth of residential and commercial/retail developments in Cortober over the last number of years a more attractive and safer pedestrian environment should be encouraged including the provision of pedestrian crossings, high quality pavements and cycle paths, street lighting, and street furniture in the area. The potential for a new local bus route from Cortober to Carrick-on-Shannon should be encouraged to increase connectivity within the larger urban area and reduce dependency on the private car.

Village Study

An assessment was carried out on the retail provision in villages across the County, which vary significantly in terms of their size and retail facilities offered. Local retailers in villages play a vital role in maintaining the rural economy of many areas in the County. The location of small retailers in the heart of a village creates a focal point and a sense of community.
From this assessment, it is clear that the areas in most need of redevelopment and investment are Elphin and Tulsk. It is clear that Elphin urgently requires investment with a lack of street activity brought on by an excessive number of vacant units. Elphin has the potential to develop its role in supporting the network of smaller villages across the County. Tulsk has significant capacity to improve its retail core with a focus on tourism given its strategic location and the existing Cruachan Aí Visitor Centre.

**Assessment of Competing Centres**

This section of the report provides an assessment of competing centres to Roscommon. While the traditional competing centres such as Athlone, Longford and Carrick-on-Shannon are examined as part of this review, it was felt that it was also pertinent to focus on the impact of major retail developments in the Greater Dublin Area, Galway and Sligo.

The household survey revealed that there are high levels of expenditure leakage to the competing centres. In terms of comparison retail, Sligo and Athlone are the greatest attractors. It is envisaged that the retail role and function of these centres will continue to grow considering their gateway status and regional importance.

**Longford**

Longford would be considered a third tier town in the context of the Retail Planning Guidelines. Longford has direct connections to Roscommon Town via the N63. It is located approximately 30 kilometres from Roscommon Town. It is also within 22 kilometres of Strokestown. It is therefore within easy commuting distance of these two urban centres.

It is evident from this assessment that Longford has an active and vibrant town centre area. Rates of vacancy are very low and there is a good range of retail facilities. Generally however, there is a lack of multiple representations within the town and the extent of convenience floor space is currently somewhat limited considering the population of Longford and its catchment area. The town can become very congested, and there is a lack of adequate car parking facilities. These factors may dissuade customers from Roscommon from travelling to the town.

However, there are a number of large retail schemes in the pipeline for Longford, including two major mixed use retail schemes and a large new convenience development, and it is envisaged that once these are constructed, the retail offer of the town will be significantly enhanced. The development of significant convenience multiples such as Dunnes Stores will be a major retail draw to consumers in Roscommon and has the potential to increase the degree of leakage of expenditure from Roscommon to Longford.

**Carrick-on-Shannon**

Carrick-on-Shannon is the county town of Leitrim. In the context of the Retail Planning Guidelines, it would be considered a third tier centre.

Carrick-on-Shannon is an attractive healthy town centre and is a relatively good retail destination. In recent years the town has experienced significant growth in its retail sector with a number of major retail proposals including Tesco, the Town Centre scheme, as well as a number of retail warehouse schemes at Cortober and adjacent to the Tesco development.

It is envisaged that Carrick-on-Shannon will continue to capitalise on its growth and success and with current retail schemes in the pipeline such as the Town Centre development as well as the extensive retail warehousing developments are completed, the town will have a significant retail role and function. The new Tesco store is already a significant retail destination and attracts customers from a wide catchment area due to its ease of accessibility, ample car parking and wide convenience and comparison offer.
Carrick-on-Shannon will thus continue to attract customers from other retail centres in Roscommon, particularly Boyle.

**Athlone**

Athlone is a significant retail destination for people from Roscommon and is considered to be an important competing centre in retail terms.

Overall, Athlone has a good retail environment with a number of well known multiples and national chains. For many years the town was imbalanced in terms of the concentration of retailing activities, the primary focus of retailing being concentrated around Golden Island as opposed to the traditional retail centre of the town. The relative weakness of the traditional town centre was evidenced by high rates of vacancy and poor visual appearance of many of the properties. It is envisaged however, that this imbalance will be significantly addressed with the new town centre scheme due to open this year. This, coupled with the significantly enhanced urban realm around the new civic centre and Prince of Wales Hotel, will act as a significant attraction for consumers and will revitalise the town centre area.

Athlone’s retail environment has significantly improved over the past number of years. There has been significant investment and commercial interest in the town. Although there are some areas that would still benefit from further rejuvenation, the town has a significant retail offer. It is likely in this context that Athlone will continue to attract customers from a wide catchment area particularly for comparison shopping.

**Sligo**

Sligo serves as a nationally strategic and regionally important commercial centre for the North West Region. Sligo is an attractive destination for shoppers from Roscommon for comparison shopping purposes. It is envisioned that much of the trade draw is generated by the Quayside Shopping Centre which accommodates a number of major anchors such as Monsoon and Next which are not available in Roscommon. It is likely that the appeal of the town will further be enhanced as future proposals such as the Wine Street development come on stream.

**Greater Dublin Area**

Although Dublin is located 146 kilometres from Roscommon, improvements to the N6 and N4 have made it much more accessible to the residents of Roscommon County. The Greater Dublin Area comprises of several major retail areas including Dublin City Centre, Blanchardstown, Dundrum Town Centre, Liffey Valley, Swords and Tallaght.

It is envisaged that shoppers from Roscommon will continue to visit Dublin City Centre and specific retail destinations such as Liffey Valley and Dundrum occasionally for comparison shopping and specialist retail facilities not readily available in Roscommon.

**Galway**

Galway City is the principle retail destination in County Galway and attracts customers from a wide catchment area. Galway is located 82 kilometres from Roscommon and is readily accessible from the western and southern parts of the county.

Galway City has an attractive and dynamic city centre. Although there have not been many recent Retail additions to the City, it still offers a broad range of international, national and local retailers and has a broad range of higher order retail services and facilities not available in County Roscommon. As a higher order centre, within the region it is likely that it will always attract some level of expenditure diversion from the County.
4.7.5 Quantitative Assessment

The approach taken in the capacity assessment included the following steps:

1. Estimate of population at base year and design year.
2. Estimate of expenditure per capita on convenience, comparison and bulky household goods at base year and design year.
3. Estimate of total available expenditure on base year and design year for residents of County Roscommon with adjustments to allow for inflows and outflows based on the household and shoppers surveys.
4. Estimate of the likely increase in expenditure available for provision of additional floor space, making allowances for existing planning permissions, increased efficiency of existing retail floor space and changes in the proportion of expenditure on other forms of retailing such as internet or mail order.
5. Estimate of the likely average turnover for new floor space in convenience, comparison and bulky household goods.
6. Estimate of the capacity for additional retail floor space in the county.

The population projections were based on a growth rate of 1.6% per annum in order to be consistent with the Roscommon County Development Plan. The table below sets out the floorspace capacity in the County up to 2014.

Table 16: Floor space Capacity by 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Floor Space</th>
<th>Low 2014</th>
<th>High 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sq. m</td>
<td>Sq. m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>2,649</td>
<td>4,577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>15,245</td>
<td>21,732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulky Goods</td>
<td>- 20,496</td>
<td>- 17,813</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The floorspace capacity figures above should not be considered as upper limits, merely as indicative of the scale of new floorspace required to meet the needs of existing and future population and expenditure in the county. Additional new floorspace may be proposed and this could replace some existing outdated or poorly located retail floorspace. These figures should be seen as minimum rather than maximums. The key consideration is the location of new floorspace. The quantum only becomes a critical consideration where new convenience and comparison floorspace is proposed outside of the defined retail core of any town or village and the issue of likely impact on the town centre as a whole arises.

Nor should the deficit capacity in terms of retail warehouse floorspace be seen as a constraint to the delivery of further schemes of this nature in the County. As noted elsewhere in this study, this form of retailing is increasingly being developed due to increasing diversification of retailers in terms of their product offer and increasing expenditure on home improvements and DIY. It is detailed in the Retail Planning Guidelines that “generally speaking the evidence is that planned retail parks do not have any material impact on town centres provided the range of goods is limited to truly bulky household goods or goods generally sold in bulk”. It is envisaged that the market will largely dictate the need and demand for further schemes of this nature in the County. It is not the purpose of the planning system to constrain development. The key point will not to inhibit competition or the development of such parks, but to ensure that the range of goods sold from such units is tightly controlled so that there is no adverse impact on the vitality and viability of town centres within the County.
4.7.6 Key Principles for Future Retail Policies and Actions

1. The location and scale of new retail development must have regard to the planning context for the County and in particular the Retail Planning Guidelines, the County Development Plan and Local Area Plans as appropriate.

2. A key principle in the provision of future retail floor space is the need to reinforce the existing retail hierarchy of the County, and in particular existing town and village centres. It is particularly important that the principle urban centre of Roscommon continues to develop its retail function to meet the shopping needs of residents of the county and to ensure a healthy and competitive retail environment.

3. It is equally important that the secondary retail centres of Ballaghaderreen, Castlerea, Boyle, Strokestown, Cortober and the Western Environs of Athlone retain and reinforce their retailing role and that the existing provision of retail development in these centres and indeed the other smaller towns and villages in the County is maintained and enhanced in the interests of sustainability and to ensure that all residents of the County have easy access to basic convenience goods.

4. In terms of future zoning, the principal location for future population growth and employment development is Roscommon Town. In addition the towns of Athlone and Carrick-on-Shannon will continue to develop. This will have implications for future development in Cortober and the Western Environs of Athlone. It is likely that the majority of future retail development will be concentrated in these locations. Consideration to the potential impact of large scale retail development in these areas and its impact on the traditional town centres of Carrick-on-Shannon and Athlone should be taken cognisance of.

5. It is assumed that new retail floorspace provision will reflect existing and projected population distribution in the county and the identified retail hierarchy. Additional convenience and comparison retail floor space should be provided where possible within the existing town centres of Roscommon, Ballaghaderreen, Boyle, Castlerea and Strokestown and in the centres of other towns and villages in the County. A number of potential opportunity sites suitable for town centre development have been identified for the principal urban centres as indicated in Chapter 7. of the Retail Strategy 2007.

6. Limited convenience floor-space may be appropriate in neighbourhood centres in Roscommon Town and the Western Environs of Athlone to serve existing and planned areas of residential expansion. Additional bulky household goods floor-space should be met either in town centres or in purpose built retail warehouse parks situated on the edge of town centres where possible. Conditions should be imposed in such developments clearly restricting the sale of goods to bulky household items.

7. The Retail Planning Guidelines (January 2005) in S30 require that a joint retail strategy for the Athlone Area be carried out by Westmeath and Roscommon County Councils. This has to yet been carried out due to the different timeframes Councils have for their respective development plan reviews. The council resolves that at the next review of either county’s retail strategy a joint retail strategy will be carried out for the Athlone Area.

In the interim period it is recommended that the following joint policies and actions will be followed by both authorities in considering applications for large retail developments in the Athlone Area.

- Each council will consider the sequential test to be of paramount importance with regard to the appropriateness of any application for a large convenience foodstore (supermarkets).
- Applicants for large retail outlets will be required to prepare a retail impact assessment which will have regard to the policies in both the Roscommon and Westmeath Retail Strategy.
- Both councils are conscious of and support the concept of having a commercially vibrant town centre in the core of Athlone commensurate with its status as a Gateway. It is considered that such support will progress and expand commercial activity in both the core area and its hinterland in a coherent and healthy manner.
• Both councils will require applicants for large retail developments to carry out traffic impact assessments which will have regard to the road networks within both functional areas.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FOR TOWN CENTRE AND VILLAGE IMPROVEMENTS

The following are specific action policies to encourage the improvement of town centres in Roscommon Town, Castlerea, Boyle, Ballaghaderreen & Strokestown.

1. ROSCOMMON TOWN

Improvement Objectives for Roscommon Town Centre:

Objective 107 Create a comprehensive and detailed environmental improvement scheme for Main Street, Castle Street, Goff Street and Church Street in particular, eventually extending to the entire town centre area. This should include significant new pedestrianised areas, high quality paving and street furniture, tree planting, flower baskets, sculpture, water features, lighting and facilities for the those with disabilities

Objective 108 Once urban design guidelines have been prepared which address amongst others shop frontages and upper floors of buildings, publicise these and be available to provide advice to property owners and retailers on urban design.

Objective 109 Establish a town management initiative in association with the Chamber of Commerce

Objective 110 Implement a programme for the refurbishment/upgrading of a number of laneways and associated archways within the town’s retail core including works to provide greater pedestrian permeability, particularly between Main Street and the extended town centre to the east.

Objective 111 Establish a programme to enhance pedestrian facilities and connections in order to encourage greater pedestrian movement within the town’s retail core.

Objective 112 Promote town centre development relating to particular sites such as the Roscommon Mart site and other sites adjacent to the new Centre Point Retail Park on the Circular Road

2. CASTLerea

Improvement Objectives for Castlerea Town Centre

Objective 113 Create a comprehensive and detailed environmental improvement scheme in the town centre. This should include the following:
• Upgrading of pavements, particularly on the fringes of the town centre;
• Laying of natural stone pavements in the heart of the town centre;
• Widening of pavements at regular intervals to break up the lines of parked cars;
• Removal of remaining overhead wires to underground.

Objective 114 Facilitate the consolidation of the retail core with new car parking facilities to help service the retailing area

Objective 115 Encourage commercial development within the town centre and require the preparation of detailed feasibility studies for any identified opportunity sites
Objective 116  Implement a programme for the widening of public footpaths, particularly along Main Street, to improve the pedestrian environment

Objective 117  Explore the potential to designate an element of short-term on-street parking areas along Main Street

3. BOYLE

Improvement Policies for Boyle Town Centre

Policy 120  Encourage tourism development through the upgrading and enhancement of the public realm.

Improvement Objectives for Boyle Town Centre

Objective 118  Establish a town management initiative in association with Boyle Town Council and the Chamber of Commerce

Objective 119  Sites identified with development potential should be advanced by the preparation of a detailed feasibility studies in association with relevant development and retailer interests.

Objective 120  Explore the potential for creating a high quality pedestrian link along the riverside between Bridge Street and the Mace supermarket

Objective 121  Encourage the establishment of cafés and restaurants along the southern river bank in order to provide passive supervision along this walkway. The streetscape, paving etc. in this area needs to be enhanced through appropriate environmental improvement works

Objective 122  Facilitate the provision, within appropriate zones, of business parks and business premises

4. BALLAGHADERREEN

Improvement Policies for Ballaghaderreen Town Centre

Policy 121  Promote the consolidation of the existing retail core of the town through the reuse of vacant and derelict structures.

Improvement Objectives for Ballaghaderreen Town Centre

Objective 123  Create a comprehensive and detailed environmental improvement scheme for Market Square, Main Street, Pound Street and Barrack Street, eventually extending to the entire town centre area. This should include new pedestrianised areas, high quality paving and street furniture, tree planting, flower baskets, sculpture, water features, lighting including the under grounding of overhead wires and the provision of facilities for the disabled and visually impaired. The scheme should extend to include all signposting and traffic light hardware.

Objective 124  Efforts to enhance the town’s retail role and function where appropriate should be made through the development of opportunity sites close to the town centre for larger retail development. The framework plan for the lands previously defined as SO1 should be promoted and finalized as part of the LAP process.
Objective 125 Implement a programme of public footpath widening, particularly along Main Street and Market Square, to improve the pedestrian environment.

Objective 126 Explore the potential to designate an element of short-term on-street parking areas along Main Street.

Objective 127 Promote the development of Market Square as a more pedestrian friendly environment with the provision of street furniture, sculptures and street lighting.

5. STROKESTOWN

Improvement Policies for Strokestown Town Centre

Policy 122 Promote the consolidation of the existing retail core of the town through the reuse of vacant and derelict structures.

Improvement Objectives for Strokestown Town Centre

Objective 128 Once urban design guidelines have been prepared which address amongst others shop frontages and upper floors of buildings, publicise these and be available to provide advice to property owners and retailers on urban design.

Objectives 129 Implement an environmental enhancement programme for new public amenity spaces along Bawn Street and Church Street as well as appropriate hard landscaping, tree planting, street furniture and lighting, street signage, public art and more defined on-street car parking spaces. This will help in creating a better environment for Strokestown and stimulate the development of tourism-related retailing in the town.

Objective 130 Enhance the town’s retail role and function where appropriate through the development of appropriate brownfield sites on Elphin Street, Bridge Street and Church Street.

6. ATHLONE ENVIRONS - MONKSLAND/BELLANAMULLIA

Improvement Objectives for Athlone Environs

Objective 131 Create a more attractive and safer pedestrian environment including the provision of pedestrian crossings, high quality pavements and cycle paths, street lighting and street furniture in the area including the provision of a new pedestrian/cycle route from the existing Cushlea residential area and the new residential areas in the west of Monksland to the commercial, retail and community facilities on the New Tuam Road in Monksland. This pedestrian/cycle route should continue along the new link road and extending through the SO1 lands to the existing Ganly’s Roundabout on the N61, connecting ultimately to the existing footpath network into Athlone Town.

Objective 132 Investigate the feasibility of developing a local bus service with the provision of new bus stops/shelters at appropriate locations linking Monksland with Athlone. The possibility of developing a terminus in this area should also be explored.

Objective 133 Encourage the provision of new access and road improvements such as the upgrading of the Old Tuam Road/New Tuam Road West Junction and the provision of the new Monksland link road in order to increase accessibility to the Western Environs area from the adjoining national road infrastructure.
7. CARRICK-ON-SHANNON ENVIRONS – CORTOBER

**Improvement Policies for Cortober**

**Policy 123** Provide a more attractive and safer pedestrian environment and generate greater connectivity between residential and commercial/retail developments in the area. Encourage the provision of more investment for appropriately located pedestrian crossings and traffic lighting, high quality pavements and cycle paths, street lighting, and street furniture in the area.

**Improvement Objectives for Cortober**

**Objective 134** Explore the potential for a new local bus route from Cortober to Carrick-on-Shannon in order to increase connectivity within the larger urban area and reduce dependency on the private car.

**Objective 135** Facilitate the provision, within appropriate zones, of business parks and business premises.

8. BALLINASLOE ENVIRONS – CREAGH

**Improvement Policies for Creagh**

**Policy 124** Ensure that all future development in the Creagh area is accompanied by high quality footpaths, street lighting, cycleways, street furniture, open space and other amenities to ensure that a safe and attractive pedestrian environment is created.

**Policies in relation to Retail Development**

**Policy 125** Implement the principles established in the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2005), as the primary basis for the control of future retail development. This will be augmented by the Retail Strategy as adopted

**Policy 126** Implement the general principles for assessing new developments as indicated in the Regional Planning Guidelines for the West Region 2004-2012

**Policy 127** Use town centres to promote social inclusion by creating good public realm, having a mix of services where they are most accessible and where a public transport service will be most widely available.

**Policy 128** Protect and reinforce the established central retailing and service areas of town centres and have regard to the retail activity generated in the centres of Athlone, Ballinasloe and Carrick-on-Shannon

**Policy 129** Help to make towns and other settlements attractive to inward investment.

**Policy 130** Ensure that lands adjacent to and extending from the town centre are protected from development that would compromise longer term town centre expansion proposals being realised.

**Policy 131** Encourage the provision of local convenience shops in residential areas where there is a clear deficiency of retail provision, subject to the protection of residential amenity.

**Policy 132** Secure the regeneration of areas in need of renewal using all instruments available.
Policy 133 Reinforce the importance of retailing in the County’s Tourism Economy

Policy 134 Promote initiatives or programmes to enhance the character and urban design quality of all the main towns to ensure that they remain attractive for investment in commerce and in retailing

**Objectives in relation to Retail Development**

- **Objective 136** Carry out monitoring and proactive town centre management to ensure town centre vitality and viability.
- **Objective 137** Improve pedestrian priority within town centres.
- **Objective 138** Encourage and facilitate the reuse and regeneration of derelict land and buildings for retail uses with due regard to the Sequential Approach.
- **Objective 139** Acknowledge the fact that many retail cores have an interspersed residential element. Give favourable consideration to proposed changes of use to retail, where a dwelling has adjacent non-residential uses on both sides.
- **Objective 140** Implement the General Measures to Promote Town Centre and Village Improvements as indicated in Chapter 10 of the Retail Strategy 2008-2014.
- **Objective 141** Implement the Specific measures for the Town Centre and Village Improvements as indicated in Chapter 10 of the Retail Strategy 2008-2014.
- **Objective 142** Encourage the retention of traditional shop fronts and pub fronts of character and design.
- **Objective 143** Ensure that all new retail and commercial development proposals respect the scale and character of the existing streetscape within which they are proposed.
- **Objective 144** Continue to promote/develop the living over the shop initiative.
- **Objective 145** Facilitate the preparation of feasibility studies for development of town centre management initiatives for the principle towns in the County in association with the Chamber of Commerce.
- **Objective 146** Encourage and facilitate innovation and diversification in the County’s retail profile.

### 4.8 EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY

Quarry developments by their nature are resource based and result in the removal of soil and rock. At present in Ireland, most primary aggregates are sourced from land-based quarries. The use of secondary/recycled aggregates is at a relatively low level but it is envisaged that this will increase in the future with the introduction of the Landfill Levy; establishment of the National Construction and Demolition Waste Council; the recent development of a number of construction and demolition (C&D) waste recycling facilities; and the greater acceptance of the use of secondary/recycled aggregates. A number of these recycling facilities have been located within existing quarry developments. There are approximately 500 operating quarry developments in Ireland.\(^{18}\) By their nature, aggregates can only be worked where they occur. The cost of haulage affects the economic competitiveness in this sector and accordingly the extractive industries seek to locate in proximity to developing settlements and major existing and proposed roads, thus minimising haulage costs as travel to end users is reduced. Extractive industries can also give rise to detrimental environmental and

\(^{18}\) Geological Survey of Ireland GSI 2001
residential amenity effects including traffic congestion, dust, noise/vibration, water pollution, visual intrusion, and the effects on local road networks may also be significant.

At present there is no national planning policy or strategy for construction aggregates or dimension stone. Local Authorities consider the land use and planning issues associated with quarries and the extractive industry in their CDP’s. The general objective in planning provision of these materials is to ensure that the supply is managed in a sustainable way so the best balance is obtained between environmental, economic and social considerations.\(^{19}\) It is also recognised that the rural based nature of the quarrying/extractive industries offers opportunities for part-time farming to continue with quarrying providing valuable off-farm income.

LA’s are responsible for the planning and environmental regulation of quarry developments (non scheduled minerals) and ancillary facilities. The current planning and environmental regulatory framework requires these developments to comply with the Planning and Development Act 2000 (Section 261) and related regulations. LA’s and An Bord Pleanala attach conditions relating to environmental management of these developments to planning permissions granted.

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) may be required for the proposed development, depending on its nature and extent. Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (Part 1, Class 19 & Part 2, Class 2) sets out the relevant thresholds for the requirement of an EIS. The PA also has discretionary powers to request an EIS for development proposals below this statutory threshold.

“The 2007 – 2013 National Development Plan will continue to invest in construction and infrastructure and the demand for aggregates will continue. Given the significance of construction and the scale of ongoing infrastructure development in Ireland the mapping and identification of areas with aggregate potential is of critical importance to the economy – both in terms of cost effective aggregates and avoiding sterilisation of resources”, Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, Noel Dempsey TD.\(^{20}\)

County Roscommon has extensive deposits of stone and mineral material, which is a fundamental resource for the building industry. There are multiple workings of stone quarries and gravel pits throughout the county with continual pressure for the development of new sources. These stone quarries and gravel pits are a non renewable resource and are a part of the geological heritage of the county. They may also represent a valuable habitat for rare species of plant and animal, such as species-rich dry calcareous grassland of a type listed, with priority status, in Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. This is found at the Castlesampson Esker which is one of the best preserved eskers in the country, yet still one of the most significant locations for gravel extraction in the county (see Chapter 8, Section 8.4, Sites of Geological Importance). Roscommon County Council recognises that there is a need to balance the requirements of aggregate extraction with the requirements of conservation of important geological and landscape features.

Roscommon County Council will seek to identify the location of major aggregate deposits and will safeguard valuable un-worked deposits for future extraction. Roscommon County Council recognises the need to protect drinking water supplies by protecting ground and surface water and will have regard to the Co. Roscommon Groundwater Protection Scheme as prepared by the Geological Survey of Ireland and Catchment Management Plans prepared under the EU Water Framework Directive.

It should be noted that Roscommon County Council recognises that the economic value of the aggregate resources and enterprises in the County. Employees in the Mining and Quarrying Sector rose from 113 to 201, and employee earnings rose from €2.6m to €7.2m. (CSO, 2006)

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\(^{19}\) EPA Environmental Management in the Extractive Industry (Non Scheduled Minerals) Environmental Management Guidelines, 2006, p.2

\(^{20}\) Planning and Environmental Newsletter of Irish Concrete Federation, 2007, p. 3
In areas where quarries will be permissible, Roscomon County Council will have regard to the protection of residential and natural amenities, the prevention of pollution and the safeguarding of aquifers and groundwater. The development of new quarries will be strictly controlled in areas of high landscape value, on European sites, Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs), Nature Reserves or other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna, or in areas of significant archaeological potential.

The Irish Concrete Federation (ICF) in their submission to the Draft CDP process wish to see that the PA make adequate provision within the CDP policies to ensure the ongoing availability of an adequate supply of aggregates for the construction industry. This should provide a balance between social, economic and environmental cost, whilst ensuring that extraction and development are consistent with the principles of sustainable development. The ICF also indicated that the planning system needs to recognise the land use requirements for the industry, to determine future resource extraction areas and to protect these areas within the context of the CDP. Aggregates with special qualities should be considered at county level and/or regional level. The ICF also recommended that the PA engage the GSI to carry out an aggregate analysis and map all possible aggregate reserves for future needs. The ICF also suggested that a national EPA Licensing System be introduced whereby a licence would be granted subject to planning compliance.

The Irish Concrete Federation has drawn up an Environmental Code for the aggregate and concrete product industries, to promote member awareness of, and commitment to, good environmental practice.

Section 261 of the Planning & Development Act 2000, set out the criteria for quarry registration eligibility for the country. Approximately 28 quarries were initially registered under this section in County Roscomon.

The OSI have produced a geological/bedrock of County Roscomon which identifies locations for different types of bedrock within the County. An aggregate potential map will be prepared by GSI for County Roscomon within the lifetime of the Plan.

The PA will have regard to the Quarries and Ancillary Activities Guidelines for PA’s (2004), the Environmental Management in the Extractive Industry (Non Scheduled Minerals) (2006) and the Planning and Development Act, 2000 in considering proposals for the quarrying industry

**Policies in relation to the Extractive Industry**

Policy 135  The Council shall seek to protect areas of geomorphologic interest, groundwater and important aquifers, important archaeological features and Natural Heritage Areas from inappropriate development.

Policy 136  Encourage the expansion of the extractive industry and ensure that it does not adversely affect the environment or adjoining existing land uses

Policy 137  The PA shall have regard to evolving best environmental management practice as set out in Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Guidelines ‘Environmental Management in the Extractive Industry: Non Scheduled Minerals’

Policy 138  Ensure adequate supplies of aggregate resources to meet future growth needs of the Country and to facilitate the exploitation of such resources where there is a proven need and market opportunity for such minerals or aggregates.

**Objectives in relation to the Extractive Industry**

Objective 147  The PA shall have regard to the Landscape Character Assessment Report 2007 and its recommendations including the provision of special recognition to the esker area in LCAs 34, 35 and 8 in South Roscomon and LCA’s 24 and 25 in north Roscomon
Objective 148  Co-operate with the GSI in the identification of the locations of all major mineral deposits in the county and safeguard these resources for future extraction. The Planning Authority will have regard to compatibility of uses in assessment of any applications for development in areas surrounding existing quarries.

Objective 149  Protect from inappropriate development important aquifers and ground water resources, having regard to Ground Water Protection Schemes as identified by the Geological Survey of Ireland and Catchment Management Plans, as prepared under the EU Water Framework Directive.

Objective 150  Ensure that the extractives industry minimises adverse impacts on the road network in the area and that the appropriate cost of road improvements which are necessary to facilitate extractive industries are borne by the industry itself.

Objective 151  Co-operate with the Geological Survey of Ireland and work towards carrying out Aggregate Potential Mapping for the county to identify important locations of aggregate potential in the county and to safeguard valuable un-worked deposits for future extraction.

Objective 152  Safeguard valuable un-worked deposits from new and permanent development that would prevent or hinder their future extraction.

Objective 153  Give preference to the sustainable continuation or extension of existing authorised quarries.

Objective 154  Ensure that the extraction of minerals or aggregates does not adversely impact on residential or environmental amenity of the landscape including the safeguarding of aquifers and groundwater.
CHAPTER 5
URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Roscommon County Council
Comhairle Chontae Ros Comáin
5.1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Town and villages in the County act as vital economic and cultural hubs. The continuing challenge is to sustain and enhance the viability and diversity of these settlements through appropriate development and growth.

5.1.1 National and Regional Context

National Spatial Strategy, 2002

The NSS places County Roscommon in the West Region, which has as its goal to promote economic activity and build balanced regional development by building on the dynamic role of Galway as a gateway and expanding its influence. Aims within the Strategy include the achievement of more cohesive and integrated local urban communities. The NSS broadly sets out the range of services and facilities that contribute to the attractiveness of the various settlements within the country. It is acknowledged that there is a strong relationship between settlement size and the levels of service that can be supported.

Similarly to other areas, the NSS notes that it is important to build on the central locations of the key towns at the intersection of national road and rail routes, the attractiveness of the village structure and the natural resources of the rural areas.

Regional Planning Guidelines for the West, 2004 - 2016

In terms of development within urban areas the RPG’s highlight the following;

In North Roscommon,
Key towns: Boyle, Castlerea, Strokestown, Ballaghaderreen.

Potential/ Strengths:
- There is potential to Support Major Retail developments as well as Industrial and Outreach facilities in all key towns

Needs (or Requirements for Change/Development):
- Increased retail and service provision in key towns.
- Appropriate and sustainable new developments should be encouraged
- Generally the area needs continued regeneration.

In South Roscommon:
Key towns: Roscommon, Ballinasloe, Mountbellew, Ballyhaunis, Monksland (Athlone)

Potential:
- Decentralisation will greatly benefit a number of towns in this zone, this gives them potential to achieve a higher level of critical mass for many developments.

Needs (or Requirements for Change/Development):
- The orderly growth of all settlements in this zone should be facilitated
- Greater levels of industrial and services employment need to be generated in the key towns
- Increased provision must be made for commercial activity and the provision of increased numbers of services in the smaller settlements in this zone.

Retail Planning Guidelines for Local Authorities, 2005

The Retail Planning Guidelines (RPGs) seek to provide the policy framework to enable future retail development demand to be provided in a way that is “efficient, equitable, and sustainable”. The guidelines emphasise the need to protect and enhance the vitality and viability of town and district
centres. The RPG recognises that the detail and complexity required to address retail planning issues varies depending on the extent of urbanisation, population density, and number of centres. The guidelines acknowledge that the town centre is the focus of a range of commercial and community activities, resulting in a mix of, often interdependent, land uses which contribute to a sense of place and identity. Town Centres encompass a combination of natural features, historic buildings, cultural, civic and government buildings, as well as public spaces. This physical form and mix of functions, which will have evolved over a considerable period of time, makes a town centre different from a shopping centre and provides much of its character, which can be further enhanced by introducing appropriate new uses into historic buildings. It also has a high level of accessibility to employment, services, and facilities for all the community.


Arising from the Kyoto Protocol, the EU has set the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions as an important objective. The most significant greenhouse gas is CO₂, primarily from energy use, and over 40% of such emissions derive from energy use in buildings, including 27% from housing. (The energy used in buildings could be reduced by having more energy efficient design and construction.) The EU adopted the Energy Performance in Buildings Directive in 2002 and it has since been transposed into Irish legislation. Legislation requires:

- the energy rating of newly constructed buildings, existing buildings (when existing buildings are let or sold) and of public service buildings;
- improvement of the energy efficiency of certain classes of boilers and heating installations; and
- inspection of air-conditioning systems.

Energy rating requires that in the design of a building a performance target must be set out and when the building is completed it must perform as well as or better than the target.


The Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands published “Action on Architecture, 2002 – 2005”. The aim of the policy was to place architecture higher on the political and cultural agenda, focusing on three central themes:

- Promoting awareness and understanding of architecture;
- Leading by example; and,
- Strengthening the architectural input in the planning process.

Residential Density Guidelines, 1999

The Residential Density Guidelines promote increased residential density where appropriate, especially where close to existing or future public transport routes. The Guidelines also emphasise high quality design and layout, good quality living environment including the availability of adequate shopping, social, childcare, transport and leisure infrastructure.

The provision for higher densities should be considered in proximity to public transport nodes and subject to high quality design and open space. Higher density to be accompanied by better design and the protection of amenity standards: outdoor space, freedom from overlooking and overshadowing.

Increasing density is about better quality of life: living in communities where community interaction is possible, open spaces are safe and overlooked, and the movement of traffic is secondary to the safety of vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, especially children, and cyclists. Dwellings per hectare is the most appropriate measure for estimating the gross or net yield of existing or future housing, but should be used in conjunction with other planning standards and with plot ratio standards in particular when controlling development form.
Appropriate Locations for Increased Densities
Town and city centres are appropriate locations for increased densities and these increased populations will assist in urban regeneration, make more intensive use of existing infrastructure, support local services and employment, encourage affordable housing provision and sustain alternative modes of travel, such as walking, cycling and public transport.

Inner Suburban/Infill
Infill or subdivision may be possible close to existing or proposed public transport corridors. A balance must be struck between protection of amenities and privacy of adjoining dwellings, the character of the area and the need for infill. Infill sites, particularly those of 0.5 hectares and upwards (1.2 acres) 'should be capable of proposing their own density and character'.

Many inner suburbs contain large houses on relatively extensive sites whose conversion to multiple dwellings is achievable without a dramatic alteration in the public character of the area. In newer areas proximate to improved public transport, policies which would permit more intense residential usage should be considered.

Outer Suburban/Greenfield
The guidelines recommend the following which is not as easily applied in County Roscommon. More recent development has taken place at net densities of 15-20 per ha (6-8 per acre). The greatest efficiency in land usage on such lands will be achieved by providing net residential densities in the general range of 35-50 dwellings per ha (14-20 per acre) however, this is not usual in County Roscommon. Development at densities less than 20 dwellings per ha (8 per acre) should generally be discouraged in the interests of land efficiency, particularly on sites in excess of 0.5 ha, however, many settlements in Roscommon display low residential densities. In excess of 50 per ha should be permitted in proximity to public transport corridors

Institutional Lands
Often characterised by large buildings set in substantial open lands, which in some cases, may offer a necessary recreational or amenity open space opportunity required by the wider community. In the event that planning authorities permit the development of such lands for residential purposes, the retention of some of the open character of the lands should be considered in the context of the quality and provision of existing or proposed open space in the area generally. The objective of retaining the open character should be achieved by concentrating densities in selected parts.

Town/Village
Increased densities would be appropriate where located in existing or planned public transport corridors and particularly where spare capacity exists in existing facilities e.g. schools. In a village setting, densities which reinforce street patterns would be acceptable. On serviced land, in villages, proposals for developments with densities of less than 20 per ha (8 per acre) will be considered in limited circumstances in order to act as an alternative to the provision of one-off rural housing. A lower density is often the case for developments in County Roscommon.

Local or Action Area Plans setting out targets for density yields, recreational uses and urban form, should be considered in advance of development. Pre-planning discussions would be helpful in achieving quality environments. The objective should be the achievement of an effective use of land appropriate to its context while avoiding problems such as overdevelopment. Local or Action Area Plans should be designed to provide individual neighbourhood units, within which environmental cells will form identifiable phases of development. There should be limited access from distributor or main roads. Other design issues include using topography, having identity and hierarchy, public area design/surveillance and legible grading from public areas to private.

Building height
Density can be increased significantly with a modest increase in height. Low rise to be the norm except in locations identified in the Development Plan such as close to an expanse of water or public parkland or in town/city centres where they can make a positive contribution to the skyline. High buildings should address design; overshadowing; overlooking; scale of existing streetscape; structures or spaces of historic or other importance; views; open space; micro-climate.
Overlooking/Overshadowing:
This is an important aspect of residential environment and should entail freedom from undue observation; 22m opposing first floor windows of living rooms and balconies; and 35m upper floor living room and balconies beside existing houses.

In terms of overshadowing, shadow projection diagrams should be submitted and the standard to be applied per 'Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice' (BRE 1991) or BS 8206.

Car parking and Roads
Traditional standards have left many rigid and regimented housing layouts where the car is dominant and long straight roads encourage speeds in excess of maximum limits. Very few Plans include objectives relating to the use of shared surfaces, traffic calming or grouped car parking. In considering higher residential densities and the accompanying objective of creating a more urban form in new developments, roads and car parking standards must be considered in more detail. The aim should be to encourage initiative and innovation, while ensuring that the maximum safety standards are maintained. Authorities should base their assessment of other types of layout on guidance contained in publications such as 'Places, Street and Movement' (DETR, 1998) and Layout of Housing Roads Design Guide (DOE, Northern Ireland 1998) as updated to Layout of Housing Roads Design Guide (DOE, Northern Ireland 2000).

'Recommendations for Site Development Works for Housing Areas' was originally drafted by An Foras Forbartha in 1984 and was updated in 1998. This Publication is concerned with construction standards and with some traditional type housing layout.

Off Street Car Parking Standards
1-2 per dwelling is standard. Parking standards exert a significant influence on the form of residential development, its environmental quality and the intensity with which sites can be developed. Different arrangements affect the area required and perception. Visibility and convenience and the visual impact of grouped parking are factors. Standards should consider public transport availability. Consider also relaxing standards in town centre and close to public transport. Underground parking can free up greater areas of the site for landscaping.

Internal standards
Recommended minimum standard for apartments are those set out in 'Guidelines on Residential Developments in Urban Renewal Designated Tax Incentive Areas' (DoE, 1995) as well as ‘Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (DoEHLG, 2007). Planning Authorities should encourage the provision of dwellings that can be extended, e.g. attic conversion.

Ecology and Biodiversity
Layouts and planting should encourage bio-diversity. Guidelines on safeguarding bio-diversity are being drafted in association with the Heritage Council. These are discussed further in the section below.


In relation to residential density, this document notes the importance of the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) and the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) report, Housing in Ireland: Performance and Policy. The NSS, which is a twenty-year planning framework, estimated that the population of the State was likely to reach between 4.4 and 5.0 million by 2020; more recent projections by the Central Statistics Office, based on the 2002 Census, indicate that the higher figure is now more likely. In addition to demographic increases, the NSS also stated that average household size in Ireland (2.97 in 2000) was expected to converge rapidly towards the current EU average of 2.63 by 2011, with a significant increase in the number of single person households. On the basis of the higher population projection in 2020, the NSS estimated that the number of households in Ireland
would almost double between 1996 and 2020; some 500,000 additional dwellings would be needed to meet likely demand up to 2010.

The NSS emphasised the role of gateways and hubs in achieving more balanced regional development. These cities and towns will play an important role in accommodating the scale of new housing development which will be needed to meet demand. Sustainable provision of housing in urban areas involves: concentration of development in locations where it is possible to integrate employment, community services, retailing and public transport; mixed-use and well designed higher density development, as recommended in the 1999 density guideline; and the efficient use of land by consolidating existing settlements and use of brownfield sites.

On the upward pressure on prices, the consultation document quotes the 2004 NESC report on housing; that land is a scarce factor and low-density suburban development is not economically, socially or environmentally sustainable. It can seem that one of the only ways to achieve an affordable price is to go far from cities and towns and to simply construct suburban estates of the traditional kind, even if the result is low-density unsustainable development. But if we analyse the system as a whole, the relationship between sustainability and cost is more likely to be the opposite: unsustainable development drives up cost both to individual households – through higher land and house prices, greater transport costs, longer commuting times, and in the long run higher taxes – and to society, through infrastructural costs, increased service costs and environmental damage.

Traffic Management Guidelines, 2003

This joint publication, the Department of Transport and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the DTO and the NDP notes:

Higher densities cannot be achieved using conventional road layouts. Streets as living space; streets in urban areas serve many different needs: access to property; areas to socialise; leisure and play for children; shopping; through -traffic and servicing.

It is only in the last few decades that the car has come to dominate every street. Streets are (or ought to be) living spaces, an integral part of the community and the focus of many activities that link together people’s lives. The way in which streets are managed and used promotes or discourages a sense of community and makes them an attractive or unattractive place to live.

Layout and design in residential areas: design consideration for motor vehicles has come to dominate the shape and layout of developments. This has often been to the detriment of other road users and there are many examples where the road design and speed of traffic has discouraged pedestrian and cycle movement because of concerns over safety. It has also led to the creation of areas that are too similar and lack their own sense of local identity.

Developments should encourage walking, cycling and easy access to good existing or improved public transport links. Minor access roads - these generally serve small groups of houses, up to 50 dwellings. The document paves the way for the more innovative layouts sought, by describing roads which should be designed for speeds of 30km/h – below the legal limit.

Road Traffic Act, 2004

This act states that;

9.—(1) A county council or a city council may make bye-laws (“special speed limit bye-laws”) specifying in respect of any specified public road or specified part of a public road or specified carriageway or lane of a public road within its administrative area the speed limit (“special speed limit”) which shall be the speed limit on that road or those roads for mechanically propelled vehicles. (2) The special speed limits that may be specified in bye-laws under this section are— (a) 30 kilometres per hour, which shall only be applied in respect of a road or roads (other than a motorway) in accordance with guidelines issued by the Minister under this section.
Guidelines for the Application of Special Speed Limits under S 9 (9) of the Road Traffic Act 2004 – issued DoEHLG, April 2005:

In applying special speed limits, these guidelines state that:

1. The 30km/h speed limit would normally be applied to a zone or area but may sometimes be applied in respect of a single road;
2. The permanent 30km/h speed limit must not be applied to a national road;
3. The area should not include any road that has a distributor function – i.e. all of the roads in the area should have a traffic function that is limited to the area itself.

5.1.2 Local Context


The County Development Board Strategy sets an overall framework within which public bodies in the county will deliver their range of services over the next decade. One of the three Strategic Goals is;

- To develop and enhance the economic well-being in County Roscommon so as to facilitate existing and future economic growth, in line with balanced regional development.

The Strategy highlights a number of key issues, together with objectives and strategic actions to address them with co-ordinating agencies listed, in relation to;

1. Planning

Objective: To ensure progressive and transparent planning systems in the county. To ensure future development plans, housing strategies and other Local Authority strategies take account of the environment and sustainable impacts of development.

Strategic Actions include: Prepare local area plans to encourage the development and revitalization of towns, villages and small settlements; seek to ensure disabled access to all buildings, where practicable; develop County Council planning guidelines in consultation with the CDB with regard to rural development; preserve the character and identity of towns and villages in housing and other developments while allowing for appropriate levels of growth; and, identify suitable locations for industrial development and business parks / enterprise space for FDI and indigenous industry

2. Accommodation

Objective: To ensure the provision of quality accommodation for every person in the county suitable to his or her needs, in a pleasant environment and at a price or rent they can afford

Strategic Actions include: Ensure the development of appropriate housing in the county with diverse housing type and design, to meet the needs of the different family types and individuals; develop and implement a Local Authority estate management plan.

5.2 HOUSING STRATEGY

5.2.1 Policy Context

The Housing objectives of successive Irish Governments has been; “to enable every family to have available an affordable dwelling of good quality suited to its needs in a good environment as far as possible at the tenure of its choice.”

Good quality housing is fundamental to the social and economic development of the country and to the economic wellbeing of its people. According to the NDP 2007-2013 housing is central to social development, competitiveness and to economic growth. The Social Partnership Agreement, Towards

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1 DoEHLG: Social Housing- The Way Ahead 1995

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2016, and the Housing Policy Framework: Building Sustainable Communities, jointly set out the broad approach being taken to housing policy under the NDP 2007-2013. Toward 2016 estimates that the accommodation needs of some 140,000 new households will be assisted through the various social and affordable housing measures over the period of the Plan.

Under the NDP 2007-2013 the Housing Programme will be delivered under 2 Sub-Programmes:

1. **Social Housing Provision and Renewal** (€17 billion) is targeted at the provision of an expanded range of tailored social housing supports and an accelerate programme of renewal and improvement of the existing stock. Some 200,000 households are currently receiving housing support provided by LA’s, Voluntary and Co-operative housing associations or in the private rented accommodation. The Government is committed to delivering high quality development in mixed community settings that do not contribute to or reinforce social segregation. Targeted programmes are also in place to address the accommodation needs of the homeless, Travellers and special housing needs of people with disabilities and the elderly.

2. **Affordable Housing and Targeted Private Housing Supports** (€4 billion). It is estimated that 40,000 households will benefit from affordable housing over the plan period. Exchequer funding will be focused on the provision of subsidies to make homes affordable, while other expenditure relates to funding of mortgages by means of loans raised through the Housing Finance Agency (HFA). LA’s in many incidences will act as enablers of affordable housing provision and will be in a position to offer homes on their own lands. In addition to this a number of PPP type projects including Rental Accommodation Scheme will be progressed over the period of the plan under the Sustaining Progress Affordable Housing Initiative.

At the centre of the Government’s Housing Policy is to deliver housing at affordable prices to meet housing demand. Population growth will underpin current and future housing demand in all regions of the country including County Roscommon.

### 5.2.2 Roscommon Housing Strategy, 2001

RCC recognises the major role housing plays in shaping the social, economic and physical character of the County. It also recognises the housing needs of all sectors of the population of the county. County Roscommon is by nature a predominately rural area, where a significant amount of residential development is in rural locations. The current Housing Strategy (HS) 2001 was prepared as required under Section 94(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 and was adopted under the CDP 2002. The 2001 Housing Strategy outlines current and future housing within the Council’s functional area, in particular a requirement for social and affordable housing.

- The Council seeks to reserve 20% of all land zoned for residential use, or a mixture of residential land or other uses, for the provision of social and affordable housing in Roscommon. Based on household projections over the lifetime of the Strategy, 152 social and affordable housing units will be provided through the application of Part V.
- The land banks within each Electoral Area were estimated at 50h.a. in total, and it was envisaged that this would be capable of providing some of the social housing needs in local and rural locations where Part V of the Planning and Development Act cannot be applied. It was estimated that at a density of 20 housing units per ha would provide for 1,000 housing units.\(^3\) The Council aimed to focus future land purchases in smaller pockets in both the main towns and rural villages and settlements in order to counter balance the level of social/affordable housing being provided in the main settlements under Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 - 2006
- Indicative spatial distribution of 2,148 new households shall be 1,074 households in main towns and secondary settlements and 1,074 households in rural areas and smaller villages. This provided for 308 households to be formed in Roscommon Town,125 in Castlerea, 105 in  

\(^3\) Roscommon Housing Strategy 2001, p. 23
Ballaghaderreen, 152 in Boyle, 110 in Athlone Environ, 50 in Cotorbo and 30 in Creagh, with a further 194 households to be formed in secondary settlements (total of 1074). There were no rural settlements within either the Roscommon or Athlone Electoral area as identified in the CSO Census.

- The HS estimated that the current stock of 715 rented houses within the County would be increased through the provision of a further 540 houses by the end of 2006. In addition to its construction works scheme the Council was committed to using the remedial works scheme to improve the quality of its existing housing stock.
- The Housing Strategy envisioned an enhanced role for the voluntary and co-operative sector and it was estimated that output from this sector will increase by 96 housing units by the end of 2006

5.2.3  A Mid-Term Review of the Social and Affordable Housing Action Plan, 2004-2008

A Mid-Term Review of The Social & Affordable Housing Action Plan 2004-2008 was undertaken by the Council in June 2006.

The main findings and recommendations indicated:

- The core aim of the Action Plan was to provide 600 residential units over the lifetime of the Action Plan with an average rate of 120 per annum. The Council front loaded the programme by constructing large developments on existing land banks at Castlerea (48 units), Ballaghaderreen (32 units) and Monksland (30 units) as well as a number of smaller schemes.
- Overall Performance on the core aim of providing 600 houses was ahead of target but the challenge will be to maintain this progress. There was some slippage on Voluntary Housing, Traveller Accommodation and on Remedial Works Schemes
- Demand for Social Housing is dispersed throughout the County and it is policy to meet the needs of the applicants as close as possible to their preferred location. This gives rise to a significant challenge for the Housing Authority i.e. the need to develop a large number of small developments in villages when the largest component of demand is generated by Monksland, Roscommon Town, Boyle and Castlerea. The Council is presently following this policy.
- Needs, Targets and Performance – current need has risen to approximately 850 households, due to the presence of a transient Centre for Non-Nationals in Athlone Town. It is hoped that accommodation will be provided through the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) and through Part V of the Planning and Development Act which will begin to deliver both land and units for both social and affordable use over the coming year.
- Proposed changes to the programme included the revision downwards on the projections for the implementation of RAS, Shared Ownership and Regeneration/Remedial Works
- Specific Areas:
  - Part V Progress: The Council seeks land or units on the subject site with the offer of a financial contribution considered as a last resort. Land has been acquired in Monksland, Ballinlough and Elphin. Units have been delivered in Ballaghaderreen, Castlerea and Roscommon Town
  - RAS Delivery Options: Because in the delay in starting this scheme the estimated number of transfers for 2006 was 40 (17 from Voluntary Sector and 23 from the Private Sector)
  - Overall Targets: The 2005 Assessment of need showed 485 households but to date the Council has 688 approved applicants on the Housing List with a further 210 applications under consideration, making a total of 898 (assuming that a substantial number of these were for rent allowances purposes there was at least 645 households on the list which correlated with the number on the 2004 list when the original plan was prepared)
- The Council's land bank has decreased from 94 acres to approximately 60 acres due to construction activity. Part V deals would contribute to an additional 15 acres of serviced land in zoned areas. It shall continue to be a policy to acquire suitable land when it becomes available to meet future requirements. In areas of highest demand for housing, such as Athlone, Roscommon Town and Boyle, land prices are very high.
• **Voluntary Housing** – Small locally focused groups work best in County Roscommon in terms of the delivery of housing and many schemes in Strokestown, Ballaghaderreen, Tulsk and Ballinaclare have been successfully concluded. Roscara, who are the Housing wing of the Brothers of Charity, provide independent living for people with intellectual disabilities. The Four Mile House Housing Association Ltd is also active. There are also proposals in Croghan and Taughmaconnell.

• **Traveller Accommodation** - the planned figures for Traveller accommodation conform to the figures in the Action Plan 2004-2008. In 2006, revised plans were submitted to the Department for accommodation at Torpan Beg and Ballyforan.

### 5.2.4 Roscommon Housing Strategy, 2008-2014: Context

The Planning and Development Act, 2000 specifies that a Housing Strategy will:

1. Estimate the existing and likely future need for housing in the area, and ensure that sufficient zoned and serviced land is made available to meet such needs
2. Provide that as a general policy, a specific percentage (not exceeding 20%) of the land zoned in the Development Plan for residential use, and or for a mixture of residential and other use, shall be reserved for those in need of social and affordable housing in the area.
3. Ensure that a mixture of house types and sizes are provided to meet the needs of different categories of households, including the special requirements of elderly persons and persons with disabilities
4. Counteract undue segregation between persons of different social background

The proposed Housing Strategy that shall be delivered by the Council over the period of this Plan comprises of three elements;

- To ensure that sufficient zoned and serviced land is available in designated towns and villages within the County to accommodate the estimated housing requirements over the Plan period
- To provide directly for social and affordable housing solutions through its own house building programme, assistance to other agencies and individuals, acquisition of dwellings and other special programmes
- To provide for social and affordable housing through Part V of the Planning and Development Acts, 2000-2006

Housing demand and supply, including the supply of serviced zoned land and the overall requirement for social and affordable housing are considered; strategies to ensure an adequate supply of land for housing and necessary construction of social and affordable housing, are set out; and policies which the Council will apply as well as other relevant housing aims. (see Roscommon Housing Strategy for full text)

### 5.2.5 Roscommon Housing Strategy, 2008-2014: Findings

The Roscommon Housing Strategy, 2008-2014, which has been prepared in tandem with the CDP 2008-2014 shall provide for the existing and future housing needs of the County, taking account of national policies and guidelines on residential development, including the need for social and affordable housing as well as Traveller and Special Needs Accommodation.

The Strategy examined housing demand and supply including the supply of serviced zoned land and the overall requirement for social and affordable housing; strategies to ensure an adequate supply of land for housing; necessary construction of social and affordable housing, policies which the Council shall apply in pursuit of this strategy, and other relevant housing aims. The HS 2008-2014 has adopted a residential density for development of 19-29 dwellings per ha (8-12 dwellings per acre) throughout the study and applied, where appropriate, to estimate a capacity for development across the County. It will be the ultimate responsibility of the LAP’s to establish an appropriate density and targets within their development boundary.
The main findings and recommendations of the Roscommon Housing Strategy, 2008-2014, include the following:

- The Housing Strategy indicates a likely requirement of 2,455 additional households in the period from 2008-2014.
- Average 26%-27% of households to experience affordability difficulties as defined in the Planning and Development Act, 2000
- A total of 775 households (Refer to Table 5.12 of the Housing Strategy 2007) in the lifetime of the Strategy will experience affordability issues
- Seek to reserve 20% of land zoned Residential for social and affordable housing
- Spatially the largest share of future housing will be provided in the 3 main urban areas namely Roscommon Town, Boyle and Athlone Environs. All of these have the greatest availability of residential land and offer the most sustainable option for accommodating additional residential units. There is though also a need for rural housing provision, given the broad significance and social contribution of such accommodation in rural County Roscommon
- The percentage distribution subject to flexibility in order to meet change will be;
  - Roscommon Town and Athlone Environs 65%
  - Boyle, Castlerea and Ballaghaderreen 30%
  - Other Settlements 5%
- The indicative spatial distribution of the 2,455 new household formations between 2008-2014 will be subject to flexibility to address changes in current, emerging and future local circumstances and will include the following -
  1. Roscommon town: 350 of new households;
  2. Athlone Environs: 425 new households;
  3. Boyle: 350 new households;
  4. Castlerea: 110 new households;
  5. Ballaghaderreen – 85 new households;
  6. Cortober – 40 new households;
  7. Creagh – 35 new households;
  8. Strokestown – 65 new households;
  9. Elphin – 100 new households;
  10. Roosky – 35 new households; and
  11. Elsewhere in the county – 860 of all new households
- Whilst these should be interpreted and adopted in broad terms as relative final distributions, there will over the period of the strategy be a need for ongoing monitoring and a degree of flexibility in the spatial strategy to allow for any changing circumstances. Given the relatively high proportion of the County’s population who reside in rural areas, the strategy allows for sufficient new housing provision (at least 35%) in these rural areas.
- The provision of housing above anticipated rate of household formation will provide an additional and notional ‘surplus’ in housing stock. This could help to reduce and/or alleviate the numbers of registered on the housing ‘waiting list’
- In detailing the scope of the proposed composition, mixture and social integration of future housing development schemes, the Council will consult in full with all of the relevant stakeholders and housing providers( in reaching agreement)
- In seeking to achieve all of the above, the principles and objectives of sustainable development, and the best utilisation of available land resources will be adopted.

5.2.6 Assessment of overall Housing Needs

Zoned Land

The series of local area and town development plans provides a range of sites and land that are allocated or zoned for residential and/or mixed development. The most up-to-date information made available demonstrated that across the County there is still very much a large area of zoned land that remains available and ready for future residential development.
In spatial terms, the greatest areas of undeveloped land are in Roscommon Town, Boyle and within the Athlone Environs. In the latter there is 341.9 hectares of undeveloped residential land. The total undeveloped land across the County represents some 1,315 hectares, of which 70% is situated in the areas of Roscommon, Boyle and the Athlone Environs.

On the basis of a potential development density of 19-29 dwellings per hectare (i.e. 8-12 dwellings per acre), the land currently zoned and undeveloped for residential use in Roscommon County could notionally accommodate between 24,983 and 38,132 dwellings if fully developed. This does not, though, take account of the relative availability of the aforementioned land zoned for residential development, in respect of its programmed release during the strategy period from 2008 to 2014 – i.e. phased release or serviced lands.

The strategy indicates a likely requirement for up to 2,455 additional households in the period of the Housing Strategy from 2008 - 2014. Based on the assumption that land zoned for residential development, equivalent to 2,500 new residential dwellings will be required to accommodate future housing requirements, then this will represent a need for up to 132 (at least 86) hectares of zoned residential land in the plan.

The existing (CDP, 2002) undeveloped land zoned for residential development can accommodate between 24,983 and 38,132 dwellings if developed at a density of 19-29 dwellings/ hectare (i.e. 8-12 dwellings/acre). The requirement of up to some 132 hectares necessary to meet strategy requirements from 2008 - 2014, will still leave sufficient zoned residential land throughout the County.

Table 17: Residential Zoned Land (CDP, 2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Developed (acres)</th>
<th>Undeveloped (acres)</th>
<th>Total Land Zoned Residential (acres)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>1238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyle</td>
<td>351.6</td>
<td>760.4</td>
<td>1112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castlerea</td>
<td>121.2</td>
<td>228.8</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlone Environs</td>
<td>442.5</td>
<td>845.5</td>
<td>1288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballaghaderreen</td>
<td>112.6</td>
<td>175.1</td>
<td>287.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cortober</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>79.6</td>
<td>115.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creagh</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>66.5</td>
<td>75.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Density

While these projections are based on modest assumptions about housing density, the Council acknowledges Government Policy which seeks to adopt more sustainable housing densities in order to efficiently manage the consumption of and demand for services (Residential Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DoEHLG, 1999). The Council shall consider allowing higher densities in or immediately adjoining existing towns. The key issue is that each site is different and in some cases a low density may be appropriate, while in other instances a certain increase in densities may be more appropriate i.e. courtyard development in the middle of settlements of some infill sites within a town where it is important to maintain the traditional streetscape.

Population projections and future household size

The original Roscommon Housing Strategy (September 2001) provided forecasts for the number of households, additional households and total population in the County of Roscommon. This table has been revised based on more up-to-date data figures and information where available, including the 2002 and 2006 Census.

It should be noted that detailed statistical releases from the 2006 Census on population and housing will not be made available until May 2007. It has, however, been agreed that a projected population
growth of 1.6% per year should be applied as a safe and reasonable projection for the period to 2014. Similarly, the Housing Strategy has adopted a 0.027% annual decline in the average household size.

The following household and population forecasts (based on 1.6%) for the time period 2006 to 2014, is shown in Table 5.2.8 below. The base figure for number of households in 2002 is that of the total number of private households in the County.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Households</th>
<th>Additional Households</th>
<th>Average Household Size</th>
<th>Population Based on 1.6%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>18,148</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>52,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>20,311</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>58,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>20,710</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>59,646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>21,117</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>60,607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>21,458</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>61,584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>21,880</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>62,576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>22,311</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>63,586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>22,750</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>64,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>23,199</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>65,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>23,572</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>66,709</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Housing Strategy 2008-2014, p. 15

In line with national trends, average household size in County Roscommon continues to decrease. It is assumed that the average household size will decrease to 2.83 persons per household over the period of the CDP 2008-2014. This will have implications for housing demand with an increasing need for smaller dwellings and a greater mix of house types and sizes.

A high proportion of those on the Council’s Housing List are households with a preference for 2-3 bedroom units and the elderly/persons with special needs, who prefer single bedroom units. A key objective of the Housing Strategy is the provision of a suitable range of housing types and sizes; to facilitate the integration of social and affordable housing into existing communities; and, to avoid an increase in social segregation.

Affordability

The Housing Strategy seeks to ensure that housing is available to people with different levels of income and includes an estimate of the amount of social, affordable and voluntary housing required within County Roscommon. On the basis of the assessment undertaken, examining household income, house price and housing demand from 2007/2008-2014, the following demand for social and affordable housing has been identified which is summarised in Table 5.2.9 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Households Formations</th>
<th>Nos. of Units Shortfall</th>
<th>% Shortfall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households Formations</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nos. of Units Shortfall</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Shortfall</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Roscommon Housing Strategy 2008-2014, p.22
The assessment estimates that there will be a total of 771 households in the lifetime of the Strategy that will experience affordability problems and that in excess of 20% of all households in County Roscommon will meet the eligibility criteria specified under the legislation (average c. 26.5%). Therefore there is a need to ensure that 20% of land zoned as residential use in the Development Plan is safeguarded for the provision of social and affordable housing development.

At the present time, County Roscommon has 635 approved applicants on the Housing waiting list with a further 283 applications under consideration making a total of 918. On the basis that a substantial number of these are for rent allowance purposes and to qualify for the rental allowance scheme the Council would still have, at least, 645 households, which was the number on the housing list when the original plan was prepared in March 2005

**New Social and Affordable Housing Provision by Roscommon Housing Authority**

The annual level of provision in Roscommon County in the period 1994-2005, has ranged from a low of 51 units in 1995 up to a peak of 164 units during year 2003.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Social &amp; Affordable Housing Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DoEHLG, ‘Social & Affordable Housing Provision’

The level of housing provision provided is shown in Table 5.2.10 above. This states that a total of 1,099 units have been made available in the 12 year period from 1994 to 2005. This equates to an average social and affordable housing provision of up to 92 units per annum. This figure would rise to 109 units per annum if based on the actual level of provision achieved in the most recent six year period between 2000 and 2005. The total extent of LA Housing Stock belonging to RCC stood at 958 as at the 31st December compared to on the 1st January 2006, representing an addition to the Council of 23 units during the year 2006. Similarly there were 935 units in the Council Housing Stock as at 1st October 2005.

It is difficult for the Housing Department to assess real demand for social housing in an area that is, to match demand (house numbers) with location. Some areas have a number of social houses constructed but are difficult to fill as people may have either moved on to other areas, or the location offered may not be their first preference. For example there were 10 houses built in Ballyforan that are not completely filled, other areas that are proving difficult to fill at present include Elphin, Ballaghaderreen, Castlerea and Ballingare. Applicants who are on the housing waiting list under present policy are allowed to refuse an offer on 3 occasions before they are removed from the Social Housing List. They are also allowed under present policy to re-instate themselves onto the list immediately.

It should be noted that, 66% of Social Housing demand is for 2 bedroom houses to meet the needs of single people, the elderly and lone parents with one child. Social housing is dispersed throughout the county in order to cater for the needs of the applicants as close as possible to their preferred location. Appendix 2 Schedule 1 of the current CDP 2002 provides a full list of LA Housing Land among 27 Towns and Villages. All of this land is serviced. This land bank especially in the larger towns and villages has been depleted during the course of the house building programme. Land is becoming more difficult to acquire, particularly in Roscommon Town, Monksland (Athlone) and Boyle due to increases in land prices.

The Council also considers applications for rural houses for those applicants who meet criteria are in a position to transfer a suitable site to the ownership of the Council. The family must be deriving at least
part of the household income from farming. This is in keeping with the stated policy on rural housing in the CDP. The Council will seek to balance the social and economic needs of rural communities with environmental sustainability. Consequently all proposals for housing in rural area will be considered on their merits. This is in keeping with the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines published by the DoEHLG in 2005.

**Housing Acquisition Programme**

Each year as part of its Housing Programme, and where it proves economical to do so, the LA acquires dwellings at various locations throughout the County. Again due to the increasing cost of second hand houses, particularly in areas of highest need, this option is becoming less attractive, but will continue to be relied upon by the Council where other options are not available.

**Private Sites Programme**

To meet the growing demand and to supplement the traditional housing construction programme, RCC have continued to operate a scheme for the provision of subsidized sites The Council have to date developed 70 private sites in the County. 30 sites in Boyle are subsidized sites. The DoEHLG have provided financial assistance towards the development of these sites. The Council has developed 40 low cost sites in Roscommon Town and the eligibility is the same as that for affordable housing. The applicants can also avail of the LA Loan Scheme, Shared Ownership Scheme or the Mortgage Allowance Scheme. It is intended to develop a further 20 low cost sites at Kilcolman, Ballaghaderreen.  

**Affordable Housing Schemes**

Roscommon County Council continues to provide a mix of social and affordable housing to ensure the best use of lands available while at the same time promoting and encouraging social integration. Within Roscommon County Council area, under this scheme, the Council provides new houses at cost prices and low interest rates, on land owned by them to persons qualifying under the terms of the Scheme.

The main instrument of the present affordability scheme in RCC is that it subsidises the cost of land, not the cost of the building, the effect being to bring cheaper houses to the market available to those who qualify. Affordable housing does not appear to be an attractive option within Roscommon and it appears that the preferred option is to buy a house with the aid of a Shared Ownership Scheme or construct a house to own design by direct labour rather than opt for a house in an affordable housing scheme. RCC do not try to estimate affordable demand, however it was noted that the areas of greatest demand are Athlone, Roscommon Town and Boyle while areas of low demand for affordable housing was noted in Ballaghaderreen and Castlerea.

The Affordable Housing Stock in County Roscommon in early 2007 was 29 units in areas detailed below:

1. Oldwood, Ardsallaghbeg, Roscommon (12 units);
2. The Meadows, Lung, Ballaghaderreen (6 units);
3. Arm, Castlerea (8 units); and
4. Monklands, Athlone (3 units);

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4 Roscommon Housing Action Plan for Social and Affordable Housing 2004-2008, p. 8
5 The Affordable Housing Scheme is different to the term ‘Affordable Housing’ as used in Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended. Under the 1999 Affordable Housing Scheme, LA’s provide newly built houses at a discounted price on their own lands. A site subsidy of up to €31,800 pre house is available from the DoEHLG to assist with affordability. The purchaser can also benefit from a loan of up to 97% of the house price.
Other Social Housing Options

A number of other schemes are available to eligible candidates within County Roscommon including:

- Shared Ownership Scheme
- Traditional Housing Loans
- Extensions of LA houses
- Essential Repairs Grants
- Improvement Works in lieu of LA Housing
- Tenant Purchase Scheme

Voluntary Housing and Co-Operative Sector

The Voluntary Sector has to date provided 81 units and voluntary providers include Frederick Ozman in Roscommon Town (8 units), Roscara Housing Association (6 units), Midland Housing Association (5 units), Athlone and District Hse. Association (3 units), Kiltullagh Vol. Housing Association (4 units), SVP Ballaghaderreen (20 units), Tulsk Voluntary Housing Association (10 units), Cluid Strokestown (13 units), Ros Mental Health Association Ballaghaderreen, (6 units), Roscarra Hse. Association Elphin, (6 units). Of these, 50 units were located within housing estates; 4 were for flats/apartments; 27 units were for one-off dwellings; 35 units were for the elderly; 18 units for the disabled; and, 5 units for the Homeless.

The Voluntary Housing Sector (voluntary housing associations, co-operative associations and community associations) will be actively promoted and encouraged by the Council and it is expected that this will continue over the lifetime of the CDP. Changes may be made to the Voluntary Housing Scheme Initiative that presently operate within the County, particularly with respect to the fact that under the present system all of the Voluntary Organisations are not paid until the applicant has occupied the house. This means that all of the organizations have to incur costs of design/planning application fees as an organizational debt. In order for the co-operatives scheme to work in an optimal manner they require a lot of capital to deliver their projects.

Special Needs including the Elderly

Local Authority housing needs are unique to each county and tend to be non-standard within each county. Needs differ not only in terms of household size and affordability, but also in terms of severity of need, differences in cultural traditions and in accessibility requirements. Special needs include the needs of the elderly, the physically disabled, and, persons with learning disabilities.

The majority of the elderly applicants are unable financially to provide a home of their own and to this end, all schemes coming on line by the LA have accommodation provided which suits the needs of the elderly within the County.

The Housing Department, under the Housing Strategy, builds houses for the elderly which consist of a three bedroom or a 2 bed unit. The ratio of build by type is 2:1. Presently the Housing Section builds 2 (3bed units) for every 1 (2 bed units). If there is no demand in an area for this type of elderly accommodation, the units are then rented out by RCC Housing Section to a single person with a child. It is therefore difficult to separate real demand for the elderly from that of a single person with a child under the present policy. It is estimated that 40 out of the 120 social housing units p.a. may go towards accommodation for the elderly, though the amount actually taken up by the elderly is difficult to estimate. A third of the houses provided each year by RCC will be suitable for the elderly. To date a total of 360 houses have been provided for the elderly population within Roscommon.

Traveller Accommodation

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 requires housing authorities, in consultation with the Traveller Community and with the general public, to prepare and adopt a five year Traveller...
Accommodation Programme by resolution of the Elected Members of the Council, to meet the existing and the projected needs of Travellers in their areas. Under the terms of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, RCC adopted a five year Traveller Accommodation Programme 2000-2004. In 2004, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, under Section 10(1) of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998, directed that accommodation programmes should be for a period of 4 years.

A new four year programme covers the period 1st January 2005 to the 31st December 2008 and was adopted at the Roscommon County Council Meeting on the 21st March 2005. The programme addresses the accommodation needs of existing and proposed needs of the Traveller Community over the programme period. The programme includes the direct provision of standard local authority housing, Traveller specific accommodation, such as Group Housing, refurbishment of the permanent Caravan Parks as required, loans for replacement of mobile homes, and overnight lay-bys. It is an objective of the Council to provide additional and/or expanded facilities for the Traveller Community at appropriate locations, having regard to the level of demand for such facilities and in accordance with the Traveller Accommodation Programme. The Traveller Accommodation Programme 2004 consisted of group housing (10 units), standard housing (16 units), serviced permanent halting sites (21 units) and temporary serviced halting sites (5 units). Traveller Accommodation figures are calculated in addition to the average figure of direct house provision by Roscommon County Council.

Table 21: Projected Traveller Accommodation Needs October 2004- November 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation Type</th>
<th>Existing Families</th>
<th>Projected Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serviced Permanent Halting Sites</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary Serviced Halting Sites</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transient Sites</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Housing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Housing/Vol. Cooperative</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Rented/Sharing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unauthorised Sites</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Families</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Housing Needs of People with Disabilities

Social and Affordable Housing, for people with disabilities, is required with respect to appropriate crisis units, and supported housing, and independent living options. A range of housing options are required to facilitate this category of need. Such housing should not be segregated from the general population, rather it should be integrated within housing estates and between estates and in towns and villages.

The Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines (SRHG’s) 2005 recommends that PA’s should recognize that exceptional health circumstances - supported by relevant documentation from a registered medical practitioner and a disability organization - may require a person to live in a particular environment or close to family support. In such cases, and in absence of any strong environmental, access or traffic
reasons for refusal, a PA should consider granting permission, subject (where appropriate) to
conditions regarding occupancy.¹

The Housing Strategy shall have regard to these Guidelines and to the policies on Rural Housing as
taken within this Plan in relation to accommodation for people with physical and mental
disabilities.
Presently the main provider for housing for special needs is delivered by the Brothers of Charity.

**Housing for the Homeless**

The Homeless Persons Strategy is performed in parallel with the Housing Strategy. At present only
crisis accommodation is provided. Immigrants/foreign nationals who come under the eligibility to stay
long term within the Country are eligible for social housing provision by RCC Housing Section.
RCDB have run a programme in the past for asylum seekers from Chechnya only.

**Provision of Social and Affordable Housing under Part V provision of the Planning and
Development Act, 2000 as amended**

In addition to the direct provision of social and affordable housing, and assistance to voluntary
housing agencies, for such direct provision, RCC proposes to pursue the provisions of Part V of the
Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, in order to facilitate the provision of such housing
alongside private sector developments throughout the County.

The policy for implementation of the Part V provisions, as per S. 96 of the Planning and Development
Act, 2000 – 2006, provides that the objectives of the Housing Strategy in relation to social and
affordable housing shall be implemented by means of conditions attached to a planning permission for
residential development on statutory zoned lands.

Roscommon County Council continue to require a 20% quota of social/affordable housing to be
provided from each housing development within the County, on lands zoned for residential use or a
mixture of residential and other uses. This requirement will be included as a condition of development,
with the exception of an application for development of 4 or less houses, or for housing on land of
0.1h.a. or less as provided under the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2002. Calculations
carried out by the Housing Strategy 2008-2014 have indicated that the maximum 20% requirement
shall continue to be applied across the County. This means that 20% of any land zoned for residential
user or general use must be made available for social and affordable housing.

Presently Part V is the main mechanism for the delivery of Affordable Housing within RCC. RCC
requires the following in order of preference: the acquisition of land, houses, or money in lieu. The
Council will, in reaching agreements under Section 96 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as
amended, have due regard to the Housing Strategy and the objectives contained in this Plan including
different specific objectives in respect of different areas and agreements entered into under the
provisions of the Act.

The Council shall operate Part V of the Act in a way that shall encourage and facilitate a level of
supply, which shall meet the demands of all sections of the housing market. The ratio of social to
affordable houses to be provided shall be assessed on a case by case basis, having regard to local
housing needs, however the 20% requirement shall be met at all times.

The Council in making Part V agreements with the developer shall have regard to;

- The Development Plan and any relevant LAP
- The need to ensure the overall coherence of the development to which the planning
  application relates

¹ Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for PA’s 2005, p. 35
The views of the developer in relation to the impact of the agreement on the proposed development

The need for social integration

All social housing provided under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 in accordance with the Housing Strategy shall be allocated to persons on the Waiting List for that allocation area in accordance with the Council’s Scheme of Letting Priorities. All Affordable Housing provided under Part V of the Act in accordance with the terms of the Housing Strategy shall be allocated in accordance with a Scheme of Priorities for Affordable Housing as adopted by the Council.

As outlined earlier the demand for affordable housing is low in Roscommon and to date this demand has been met by the provision of subsidies and low cost sites. As the output from Part V agreements is increased, it is anticipated that affordable housing provided by this process will generate greater interest. It is intended to meet the affordable housing need by acquisitions of units under Part V agreements rather than developing an affordable housing scheme under the 1999 scheme. The demand for affordable housing shall be reviewed on an ongoing basis and if the need is identified for the development of an Affordable Housing Scheme under the 1999 scheme, this will be provided.

Table 22: Affordable Housing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Units to be obtained by LA under Part V</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Units to be delivered by Voluntary or Co-Operative Housing Bodies under Part V</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: RCC Housing Action Plan for Social and Affordable Housing 2004-2008, p. 29

Roscommon County Council have bought 12 houses under Part V and have only allocated 5. The Council have also provided affordable sites:

1. 40 sites in Roscommon Town (Ardsallagh) are all sold.
2. 2 sites in Cortorber were sold
3. 28 Affordable Sites in Warner Drum are not all sold

**Housing Estate Design, Housing Mix and Housing Types**

The nature of social housing has changed and the pattern of need has become more diverse and is characterized by different household types that have very different housing requirements. The categories of housing need include; the traditional family unit, lone parents, the elderly, the disabled, the Traveller Community, and the homeless. The Housing Section require good quality social and affordable housing standards and requirements.

Refer in Chapter 5 to Urban Design Guidelines
Refer in Chapter 6 to Rural Design Guidelines of this Plan for more detailed specifications

**Policies for Local Authority Housing**

**Policy 139**

Encourage the development of mixed and balanced communities so as to avoid areas of social exclusion

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7 RCC Housing Action Plan for Social and Affordable Housing 2004-2008, p. 29
Policy 140  Retain existing housing stock and generally where possible prevent the loss of residential accommodation

Policy 141  Ensure the provision of a suitable range of housing types and sizes in the consideration of individual planning applications for residential development and in development of Council’s own stock

Policy 142  New residential areas shall be developed as sustainable urban communities, including within them mixed use areas where services including employment and community services can be provided

Objectives for Local Authority Housing

Objective 155  Facilitate the implementation of the Housing Strategy 2008-2014 as incorporated into this Plan

Objective 156  Promote, where appropriate, higher density development on serviced lands in towns and villages whilst having regard to existing settlement pattern and form

Objective 157  Promote more compact development forms including backland development, where appropriate, in towns and villages, while restricting the degree of ribbon development on the edges of settlements.

Policies for People with Special Needs

Policy 143  Recognise the need for people with special needs to have a decent and quality environment in the County and to support local communities, health authorities and other agencies involved in the provision of housing to people with special needs

Policy 144  Encourage the provision of adequate small, self contained living units including those within a complex of facilities, for persons with special needs to maintain their privacy and independent living qualities whilst having the protection of the wider sheltered environment

Objectives for People with Special Needs

Objective 158  Ensure where possible that housing for Special Needs groups is integrated into existing communities and shall be located where possible close to existing communities and to convenience retail facilities

Objective 159  Support proposals for day centres for people with special needs within or close to towns, villages and neighbourhood centres, subject to normal planning requirements

Objective 160  Look favourably on those with exceptional health circumstances including those within the rural community who wish to live in a particular environment or close to family support, subject to proper planning

Policies in relation to Traveller Accommodation

Policy 145  Facilitate the implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2005-2008 as adopted and any subsequent programmes over the lifetime of the CDP 2008-2014
Policies in relation to Social and Affordable Housing

Policy 146 Reserve 20% of land zoned for residential development, or a mix of residential and other uses, to secure the implementation of the Housing Strategy 2008-2014

Policy 147 Secure the provision of social and affordable housing in accordance with the adopted Housing Strategy to meet the needs of all households currently not provided for, including the elderly and those with special needs. Promote social inclusion by encouraging the provision of community facilities, in particular, child care facilities in new and established residential areas.

Policy 148 The Council shall operate Part V of the Act in a way that shall encourage and facilitate a level of supply, which shall meet the demands of all sections of the housing market.

Objectives in relation to Social and Affordable Housing

Objective 161 Require that developers comply with Part V of the Planning and Development Act

Objective 162 Implement Part V provisions as per S. 96 of the Planning and Development Act and ensure that the objectives of the Housing Strategy in relation to social and affordable housing are implemented by means of conditions attached to planning permission for residential development on zoned lands.

Objective 163 Require that a suitable variety and mix of dwelling types and sizes are provided in developments to meet different needs, having regard to demographics and social changes, smaller household sizes, lower formation age, immigration etc.

5.3 LANDUSE ZONING OBJECTIVES AND MATRIX

The Land Use Zoning Objectives and Matrix within this section outlines the zoning objectives for each zone identified in the zoning map. It indicates the uses and type of development, which the Council considers to be appropriate for each zone. It is intended to provide guidance to anyone seeking permission for development as well as the general public. The indication that a proposal is ‘permitted in principle’ in the Matrix does not imply a grant of permission or that a planning application will be successful as each planning application will be determined on an individual basis by the Planning Authority. Equally the indication that a particular type of development is not permitted in any particular category does not rule same out and there may be situations where said could be permitted.

Land uses not listed in the Matrix will be considered on the merits of the individual planning application, the general policies and zoning objectives for the area including the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. Development proposals should be compatible with the Matrix, however, consideration may be given to proposals, which would benefit the local community and are in the interest of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. These proposals will also need to be consistent with the CDP development standards and the CDP requirements on public health, traffic safety, residential amenity, heritage, design and visual amenity.

The following factors have been taken into account in the development of land use zoning principles and objectives.

- Current development and trends in the County
- Current Land use zoning objectives contained in the Roscommon County Development Plan 2002 – 2008, town development plans and other local area plans
The amount of developed and undeveloped zoned and serviced land within the County
Accessibility, availability and location of land for development
Existing and proposed services such as schools, community facilities, etc.
Existing and proposed infrastructure such as public transport, water, wastewater etc.
The scale and pattern of existing development within each town
The natural and built environment and amenities of each town
The principles of proper planning and sustainable development

**Land Use Zoning Objectives**

This plan identifies specific areas for specific types of land use in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development. Objectives for each of these land uses are outlined below. It should be noted that there are several which are common and repeated but which are relevant to the landuses proposed. It should also be noted that the objectives as listed are not exhaustive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TC1 Core Town Centre (Mixed Development)</th>
<th>TC2 Peripheral Town Centre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protect and enhance the special physical and social character of the existing town centre and provide for new and improved town centre facilities and uses such as shopping and retail stores, office development, tourism-related activities and appropriate public services, and any over the shop type uses.</td>
<td>Retain the character and use of existing predominantly residential streets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect and enhance the vitality, function and form of the town centre having regard to any Architectural Conservation Area and the overall status of the heritage in the area.</td>
<td>Provide for the development of mixed-use neighbourhood areas containing a mixture of residential, retail and commercial facilities in an integrated, sustainable setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide for a range of residential and commercial facilities within an attractive accessible environment with adequate provision for associated vehicular requirements – including parking and loading.</td>
<td>Provide for and facilitate mixed residential and business uses in existing mixed use areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve civic amenity by requiring high standards of urban design.</td>
<td>Provide for a range of residential and commercial facilities within an attractive accessible environment with adequate provision for associated vehicular requirements – including parking and loading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage the regeneration of backlands and derelict buildings, particularly the use of upper floors, preferably for residential use, and backlands.</td>
<td>Improve civic amenity by requiring high standards of urban design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prohibit disorderly development of backlands.</td>
<td>Provide for appropriate development on infill sites including residential development and upper floor apartments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Require the inclusion of appropriate open spaces in development in this zone.</td>
<td>Regulate where appropriate any subdivision of existing residential units.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage the regeneration of derelict buildings, particularly the use of upper floors, preferably for residential use, and backlands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prohibit disorderly development of backlands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have regard to ACA’s and the overall heritage of the area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New development in this zone should not prejudice the viability of established land uses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Require the inclusion of appropriate open spaces in development in this zone.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TC3 Outer Town Centre
- Preserve the existing and provide for new residential and appropriate commercial uses.
- Provide for a range of residential and commercial facilities within an attractive accessible environment with adequate provision for associated vehicular requirements – including parking and loading.
- New development in this zone should not prejudice the viability of established land uses.
- Provide for appropriate development on infill sites including residential development and upper floor apartments.
- Regulate where appropriate the subdivision of existing residential units.
- Encourage the regeneration of derelict buildings, particularly the use of upper floors, preferably for residential use, and backlands.
- Prohibit disorderly development of backlands.
- Have regard to ACA’s and the overall heritage of the area
- Ensure new development respects the character and context of the area
- Require the inclusion of appropriate open spaces in development in this zone

### ER Existing Residential
- Protect and enhance the residential amenities of existing and new residential communities and provide a high level of services within walking distances of residential developments.
- Provide for infill residential development at a density and design appropriate to the area and needs of the community.
- Provide for new and improved ancillary social and community services.
- Improve accessibility from these areas to town centers
- Provide for the appropriate retail facilities in addition to local community and social facilities for the immediate community
- Require the inclusion of appropriate open spaces in development in this zone

### NR New Residential
- Provide for new residential development, including a mix of residential options, as well as appropriate local services and community facilities such as recreation, education, crèche/playschool, community buildings, sheltered housing, and corner shops.
- Provide for local shopping, amenity, recreation, education, childcare, community and recycling facilities, public services, public transport, tourist accommodation, and renewable energy options.
- Preserve the residential amenity of the neighbourhood.
- Provide for appropriate retail facilities in addition to local community and social facilities for the immediate local community
- Have regard to the overall heritage of the area
- Require the inclusion of appropriate open spaces in development in this zone

### RC Mixed Residential and Commercial
- Preserve the existing, provide for, and facilitate new residential and commercial uses
- Improve civic amenity by requiring high standards of urban design.
- Provide for infill development at a density appropriate to the area and needs of the community.
- Encourage the regeneration of derelict buildings.
- Regulate where appropriate the subdivision of existing residential units.
### NC Neighbourhood Centre
- Provide for the development of a mix of residential, commercial/retail uses including comparison shops and community facilities around a public/focal space, where appropriate, with associated facilities, within walking distance from the existing town centre, where practicable, which will serve the needs of a new/existing residential area.
- Provide for local services such as medical centre, offices, workshops, crèche, petrol station, waste segregation facility (bring bank), chemist, laundrette, convenience shop and café, where appropriate, to meet the needs of the community.
- Provide sustainable transport linkages such as public transport, adequate cycle and walkways from neighbourhood centres to the town centre and peripheral areas.
- Require the inclusion of appropriate open spaces in development in this zone.

### LC Local Centre
- Protect, provide for and / or improve local centre facilities

### BE Business, Enterprise Park/Light Industry & Warehousing
- Provide for light industry, warehousing and enterprise units and ancillary uses such as training, education, childcare, financial, cafés, hotel, petrol station, fitness centre, parking and recycling facilities.
- Prohibit heavy industry and incinerators/thermal treatment plants.
- Encourage appropriate scale, density, type and location of development to reduce traffic generated and the demand for travel and sustainable modes of transport such as connections to public transport, walking and cycling networks.
- Provide transitional areas with appropriate landscaping where this zone adjoins other land uses.
- Provide for appropriate advertising and advertising structures.
- Provide for construction and demolition waste to be used as fill, with the associated licensing, prior to development of these sites.

### I Industrial Uses
- Reserve lands for the provision of heavy industry, incinerators and thermal treatment and employment related uses.
- Provide for manufacturing and service industry, and storage facilities as well as ancillary facilities such as training, education, childcare, financial, parking and recycling facilities and waste disposal options.
- Provide for appropriate advertising and advertising structures.
- Provide for construction and demolition waste to be used as fill, with the associated licensing, prior to development of these sites.

### CD Construction and Demolition waste
- Provide facilities for the recycling of construction and demolition waste

### CP Car parking / Transport node
- Provide for car parking as well as other transport facilities such as public transport, tour bus parking etc. at appropriate locations and taking account of through traffic.
- Ensure that traffic safety and the car parking requirements are fulfilled.

### PU Public Utilities, Services & Facilities
- Provide for and improve public utilities such as electricity, telecommunications, water, wastewater, gas etc to ensure the long-term sustainability of these services and to meet wider regional and national objectives.
### CE Community & Educational Facilities
- Provide for health, welfare, community, education and institutional uses including schools, childcare, community meeting areas, churches, etc. in close proximity to existing and planned residential communities as well as other ancillary services such as public services and recycling facilities.
- Provide for dual use of community facilities where possible and appropriate.

### RA Recreation, Amenity & Open Space
- Preserve and improve active and passive recreational public and private open space and provide for new leisure & amenity facilities in the town.
- Provide for local amenities and recreational facilities including playing fields and dedicated amenity areas.
- Protect the natural amenity, including waterways.
- Prevent the loss of existing open space, recreation and sporting grounds.

### GB Green Belt
- Protect the setting, character and environmental quality of areas of high natural beauty and safeguard their environmental, archaeological and ecological amenities.
- Provide a visual and environmental buffer, where appropriate, to preserve the natural amenity of the area such as alongside waterways, rivers and floodplains.
- Ensure this area is not used to satisfy the open space provision of adjoining housing developments.
- Prohibit development, which would detract from the visual amenity of the area or result in a loss of recreational open space.

### LA Leisure & Amenity
- Provide for new leisure and amenity facilities such as bowling, swimming pool and hotel/gym/leisure facilities as well as cinema and theatre facilities. Rivers and lakes may be included in this use.

### LT Leisure Tourism
- Consider developments for leisure and recreational based activities including water based activities as well as appropriately scaled coffee shops, hotel, restaurant(s) and public house(s), etc.

### TA Transitional Agricultural Uses
- Preserve the character of rural or edge areas and provide for agricultural development as well as other uses not directly associated with agriculture, such as housing for family members, or those with a housing need, tourist related projects such as caravan parks or campsites, and amenities such as playing fields and parks, in order to avoid a sharp transition between the urban edge and primarily agricultural areas.
- Prohibit development that would create premature demand for infrastructural services.
- Prohibit new residential development to essential housing need.
ZONING MATRIX

The land use zoning matrix details those land uses permitted in principle, open for consideration and not normally permitted, under each use class. It should be noted that this section should be read in conjunction with Ch 12: Development Standards.

Permitted in Principle = √

A use, which is ‘Permitted in Principle’, is generally acceptable subject to the normal planning process and compliance with the relevant policies and objectives, standards and requirements set out in the Plan.

Open for Consideration = O

A use, which is ‘Open for Consideration’, may be permitted where the Planning Authority is satisfied it is compatible with the policies and objectives for the zone, will not conflict with the permitted, existing or adjoining land uses and conforms with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Not Normally Permitted = X

A use, which is ‘Not Normally Permitted’, is one, which will not be considered by the Planning Authority except in exceptional circumstances. This may be due to its perceived effect on existing and permitted uses, its incompatibility with the policies and objectives contained in this Plan or the fact that it may be inconsistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Other Uses

Proposed land uses not listed in the Land Use Zoning Matrix will be considered on an individual basis with regard to the general policies and zoning objectives for the area including the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. All zones should be considered as mixed development zones with a primary use/uses but not necessarily excluding other development that in the opinion of the Council are necessary for the vitality and proper development of the town.

Established Use

Many established uses exist in locations where they do not correspond to the designated land use zoning objective of the area as set out in the Plan. Improvement works to established premises may be permitted where the proposed development would not be injurious to the amenities of the area and is consistent with proper planning and sustainable development.

Transitional Areas

While the zoning objectives indicate the different uses permitted in each zone it is important to avoid abrupt transitions in scale and use at the boundary of adjoining land use zones. In these areas it is necessary to avoid developments that would be detrimental to amenity, for example in zones abutting residential areas, particular attention will be paid to the uses, scale and density and appearance of development proposals as well as to landscaping and screening proposals in order to protect the amenities of residents. It is particularly important to include buffer zones between land zoned as Existing and New Residential and Industrial or Business, Enterprise Park/Light Industry & Warehousing.
### Land Use Zoning Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Core Town Centre (Mixed Development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TC2</td>
<td>Peripheral Town Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TC3</td>
<td>Outer Town Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ER</td>
<td>Existing Residential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NR</td>
<td>New Residential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>Neighbourhood Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE</td>
<td>Business, Enterprise Park/Light Industry &amp; Warehousing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Industrial Uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>Car parking/Transport Node</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PU</td>
<td>Public Utilities, Services &amp; Facilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>CE</td>
<td>Community &amp; Educational Facilities</td>
</tr>
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<td>RA</td>
<td>Recreation, Amenity &amp; Open Space</td>
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<tr>
<td>GB</td>
<td>Greenbelt</td>
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<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>Leisure Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA</td>
<td>Leisure &amp; Amenity</td>
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<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td>Transitional Agricultural Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RC</td>
<td>Mixed Residential and Commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC</td>
<td>Local Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>Construction &amp; Demolition Waste</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Roscommon County Development Plan 2008 – 2014

Page 122
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USE</th>
<th>TC1</th>
<th>TC2</th>
<th>TC3</th>
<th>ER</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>NC</th>
<th>BE</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>CP</th>
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8 Must all small in town centres where serving a butchers shop
9 Excluding car parking ancillary to other uses such as employees car parking at office.
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## Chapter 5: Urban Development

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5.4 TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

5.4.1 Town Centres

Town Centres are important to our quality of life because they are at the centre of our lives as a community. Town Centres are important because of the functional, recreational and social activities i.e. meeting places, which take place in them. Functional activities include the range of goods and services provided and which the community need, including retailing. Community interaction is facilitated by streets and public areas which are safe, busy, and offer varied and interesting retail and other activities.

Town centres are made up of public spaces – streets and the buildings and activities which bound them. The quality of public space including: traffic levels, human scale, buildings which have interesting activities etc., will determine how we view town centres and whether or not social activities will take place there. Concentrating activities by having closely spaced activities and entrances, makes a street more lively. Big buildings, long frontages and few entrances have the opposite effect. Activities which take place at street level are the most important for street life. Street life can be reduced by voids in the street edge, by filling stations, car-parks, large units, and certain uses such as financial institutions which are less interesting than retailing. Shopping provision is a key component of town centres and makes a major contribution to their vitality and viability. It is important that town centres retain retailing as a core function. Town centres should have a 24 hour life and mixed use including residential use is essential for this; e.g. retail activity at street level with residential and services or offices overhead. The vibrancy of any urban area is dependent on the mix of use within it and how the town functions throughout the 24 hour day, which includes the need to preserve existing residential uses in town centres and to ensure that residential use is part of any large town centre development. Health checks which detail the type, size and condition of the different buildings within the town and any change that occurs over time are used to inform policy. This allows issues to be addressed such as the type of development needed to ensure a sustainable mix of use within the town. Maintaining a town centre which has vitality and viability requires ongoing monitoring and proactive town center management including managing parking provision. Priority should also be given in town centres to pedestrians and cyclists.

Town centres give us a sense of place and a sense of identity; they have a history both archaeologically and architecturally and their street patterns and built form have become familiar to us and have a value for that reason alone. Dramatic changes proposed to the built form of towns should be carefully considered.

International research indicates that centres which are most successful and popular are generally those which:

- include a range of facilities focused in a relatively small area and make best use of the already considerable investment in the built environment; these attractions include a mix of shops as well as a wide range of financial, professional and government services together with cultural, entertainment and leisure facilities. The existence of a thriving local residential population can be a positive force for change and the maintenance of quality;
- are highly accessible by a range of types of transport, have sufficient good quality short stay car parking close to shops, have good transport linkages within the centre, and have efficient arrangements for delivery of goods;
- have an attractive amenity in terms of the built environment and townscape, streets and public spaces are considered clean and safe, and have a sense of local identity and character, all of which greatly enhances the attraction of the centre in which the shopping or leisure experience takes place; and,
- have the vision and mechanisms in place to build on these assets, overcome problems, adapt to market and consumer needs; as well as, secure appropriate and necessary improvements.
Chapter 5: Urban Development

Policies for Town Centre Development

Policy 149  Develop a hierarchy of high quality vibrant and sustainable urban centers as well as a range of local and neighbourhood centers within these.

Policy 150  Maintain the future viability of the existing major towns in the County and develop them with an appropriate mix of commercial, recreational, civic, cultural, leisure, and residential uses.

Policy 151  Ensure that businesses and services with a high potential for public transport utilisation by employees and visitors are sited at locations that can be made easily accessible by public transport.

Policy 152  Continue to give priority to the creation and maintenance of a high standard of local physical environment and enhance the character of the area.

Policy 153  Encourage urban centres to contain a range of community, recreational and retail facilities at an appropriate scale to cater for both existing and future residential developments.

Policy 154  Facilitate and encourage residential use within town centers and promote an increase in urban centre populations.

Policy 155  Consider good urban design principles in development of towns, require new development to enhance existing urban areas and improve pedestrian priority within town centres.

5.4.2 Urban regeneration and Derelict Buildings

As well as being one of the strategic aims of this plan, national and regional policy requires an urban consolidation strategy, which actively promotes the consolidation of existing development areas, maintaining the vibrancy, vitality and viability of our towns and villages and securing the appropriate regeneration through development/redevelopment of appropriate derelict sites.

There exists potential within the County, particularly in the urban areas for the redevelopment of many derelict town centre sites. It is noted that any redevelopment of brownfield sites or development comprising infill or backland development should take place in an integrated and planned manner and not in a piecemeal or haphazard way.

In this regard the planning authority will identify sites and provide guidance in terms of development and design, within the Local Area Plans and Village Design Statements/Mini-plans, using best practice criteria as to how these sites should be developed. The development of such sites will require co-operation between landowners and other stakeholders.

Policies for Urban Regeneration and Derelict Buildings

Policy 156  To promote in an integrated and planned manner the optimal development and future use of potential development sites in developed areas and particularly in urban centres, especially redevelopment of brownfield sites or development comprising infill or backland development.

Policy 157  To implement the provisions of the Derelict Sites Acts to prevent or remove injury to amenity arising from dereliction.
Objectives for Urban Regeneration and Derelict Buildings

Objective 164  To identify and secure the development of urban infill sites on a phased basis including brownfield sites, backlands, obsolete areas, and derelict lands. Criteria for site selection will be established using best practices in planning. Each proposal will be adjudicated on its own merits and compliance with development plan policies and objectives.

Objective 165  Within Local Area Plans and Village Design Statements, prepare Development and Design Briefs for urban infill sites, liaising closely with landowners, developers and other relevant stakeholders.

5.5 ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN DESIGN

5.5.1 Building Height

One of the common perceptions in relation to higher densities is that they promote taller buildings. High buildings do not necessarily mean higher densities. Highest densities are generally achieved in medium rise buildings, three to four stories high.

The Residential Density Guidelines view in relation to high buildings is that: in general, low rise buildings which respect the scale and character of Irish towns and cities are appropriate, save for particular cases such as those outlined below.

Higher buildings, i.e. those which are significantly higher than neighbouring or surrounding development, incorporating increased densities may be appropriate in;

- locations specifically identified in Development Plans as being appropriate for higher buildings;
- locations close to an expanse of water or public parkland where a building of greater scale is more appropriate; or,
- a central district, town or city centre location where an increase in massing and height in the form of a contemporary and stylish building, could make a positive contribution to the skyline.

Where buildings of significant height are proposed, however, it is important that the following factors will be taken into consideration:

- The quality of the overall design
- The degree of overshadowing and consequent loss of light caused to surrounding property
- The degree of overlooking (particularly of residential property) and consequent loss of privacy
- The extent to which there is a disruption to the scale of an existing streetscape or landscape, save in cases where this may be intended for civic design reasons
- The extent to which the building detracts from structures or spaces of architectural or historic importance or important landmarks
- Any attractive views from significant vantage points that would be obscured or intruded upon by the building
- The degree of obtrusion of the skyline, save for those in appropriately planned locations
- The scale of the building in relation to surrounding open space, together with the effect of the building on the quality of the space
- The avoidance of local, undesirable micro-climates at ground level

Policy on High Buildings

In general heights should respect local streetscapes; with exceptions which reinforce the urban form or are designed as landmark structures in relation to their particular setting, being acceptable.
High buildings in the right place can have a role; in acting as landmarks that signify urban renaissance and enhancing local identity; in forging a new and exciting image for the regeneration sites; and in delivering more sustainable working and living environments. Care needs to be taken to protect the historic built environment and unique landscape. The objective should be to respect heights and patterns of existing buildings. A high buildings policy should consider topography; urban structure, movement corridors and transport nodes, public spaces, historical assets, prominent landmarks/structures, the identification of important views/vistas in the towns (including panoramic views into and out of the town, views within the town and skyline features) and their vantage points. When locations that would be appropriate for tall buildings are identified; development approaches for these locations (including building size, shape, silhouette, site coverage, relationship to streets and public spaces) and general design issues must also be considered.

5.5.2 Architecture and Urban Design/Building Design

Good urban design is essential if we are to produce attractive, high-quality places in which people will want to live, work and relax. It can be achieved by the way we arrange streets and spaces and how we plan the mass, scale and position of buildings within the landscape. The result is all the things we love about our best neighbourhoods – a clear centre, a place that is easy to walk around and also feels safe, high quality buildings and attractive spaces between buildings. Good design can give us a clear and distinct sense of place in which we take pride.

Urban Design focuses on how urban areas best respond to peoples needs and the manner in which they best respond can be broken down into;

1. the **character of the area** – a place with its own identity; ease of movement – a place that is easy to get to and move through;
2. **continuity and enclosure** – a place where good public and private spaces are clearly distinguished;
3. **quality of public realm** – an appealing place with attractive and successful outdoor areas;
4. **legibility** – a place that has a clear image and is easy to understand;
5. **adaptability** – a place that can change easily and incrementally;
6. **diversity and a mix of uses** – a place with diversity and choice;
7. **sustainability / balance with nature** – a place where a balance has been achieved between the natural and built environment;
8. **value** - a place where value can be created to sustain the desired mix of uses and quality of townscape; and,
9. **inclusivity** – a place which has something for everyone and where a diverse range of user needs are met.

The County Development Plan aims to address the importance of good urban design. The design of buildings is one component of urban design and development proposals should be of the highest quality design. Design of new development will be expected to improve the existing urban fabric and form; and whether innovative, contemporary or more traditional in form, design should take account of the surrounding buildings and complement rather than detract from the existing urban character.

Policies and objectives associated with some of the abovementioned aspects of Urban Design are as follows:

1. **Character of the Area**

**Policy 158** To promote character in townscape and landscape by development that responds to and reinforces local distinctive patterns of development, landscape and culture.

**Objective 166** To require designers to identify and recognise the essential elements of quality which determine the character of an area and then reinforces, or develops it in the proposed development.
2. **Continuity and Enclosure**

**Policy 159** To promote the continuity of street frontages and the enclosure of space by development, which clearly defines private and public spaces and has a hierarchy of open spaces: private, semi-private and public.

**Objective 167** To require designers to demonstrate that the proposed development has continuity and enclosure of spaces and that public and private spaces are defined.

3. **Quality of Public Realm**

**Policy 160** To promote development whose public spaces and routes are attractive, safe, uncluttered and work effectively for all in society, including the elderly and people with a disability.

**Objective 168** To require designers to demonstrate the quality of the design of roads, pedestrian ways, public squares and open spaces as these are as critical in importance as the design of buildings that surround them.

4. **Legibility**

**Policy 161** To promote legibility through development that provides recognisable routes, intersections and landmarks that help people to find their way around.

**Objective 169** To require designers to demonstrate the ease with which the observer can read the relationship between structures, the landscape and the spaces between them as well as the objects within those spaces.

5. **Adaptability**

**Policy 162** To promote development that can respond to changing social, technological and economic conditions.

**Objective 170** To require designers to demonstrate the adaptability of the proposed development

6. **Diversity and a Mix Of Uses**

**Policy 163** To promote development that has diversity and choice.

**Objective 171** To require designers to demonstrate the diversity and mix of the proposed development

7. **Ease of Movement**

**Policy 164** To promote accessibility and local permeability by developments that connect with each other and are easy to move through, putting people before traffic and integrating land uses and transport.

**Objective 172** To require designers to demonstrate that main routes have been distinguished by exploiting vistas, key buildings and landmarks and the activities and functions of the places made visible, thus bringing a sense of liveliness to spaces.
5.5.3 Urban Design and Residential Density

In residential areas the emphasis must be on good design and achieving safe residential environments where public open space is overlooked and therefore more usable; layouts where road design discourages high-speed traffic and allows for greater community interaction; where built form comes first and road layout second – so that these areas are more visually pleasing; and where densities are higher with all the necessary safeguards to protect amenities of residents. It has also been found that sprawling suburban development does not create a sense of identity and community; does not contribute to community interaction; is difficult to provide with public transport; involves roads which may be unsafe for pedestrians and cyclists and encourages the use of cars and high-speed traffic. It is also wasteful of serviced land.

As part of this Plan polices are proposed which recognise that roads fall into different categories and perform different functions: some roads need to be designed for the free flow of traffic and with the needs of motorists to the fore and some need to be designed to inhibit the free flow of traffic and with the needs of other users to the fore. Most residential roads should be designed for slow traffic.

Design and density are inseparable concepts. It is relatively easy to lay-out a housing scheme based on the standards contained within 'Recommendations for Site Development Works for Housing Areas', but to achieve density and provide for good residential amenities – avoidance of overlooking of private open space/back gardens and avoidance of overlooking by opposing windows; creation of more useable public open space; providing for buildings to be positioned to calm traffic, etc.; requires that more effort be put into design.

There is a distinction between the densities which are suitable in town centres and at transport nodes - where higher densities should be achieved, having regard to accessibility to services; and outer urban areas where medium densities are expected. Residential layout and density policies must consider the issue of sustainability and affordability. Also completion of residential estates is an essential factor to ensuring consistency and quality in development.

It is recognised that a good mix of accommodation type, size and tenure provides for the needs of modern communities more appropriately. In this respect quality urban design is considered vital to achieving places that work as well as development that complements its context and contributes to visual amenity. These aspects are further explored in Chapter 12: Development Management Guidelines and Standards.

5.5.4 Design Guidelines for Residential Estates

The design of residential layouts can give a sense of identity to an area, provide for safe outdoor spaces and facilitate community interaction; conversely poor design can allow the development of anti-social behaviour. New development should therefore be responsive to local character and respect the visual context of the area rather than becoming extensions that lack character. Successful developments can be achieved by careful integration with the landscape or built environment using the right materials, forms and landscape elements for the locality relating to the existing built fabric and settlement structure.

The following guiding principles will assist in achieving good residential layout design. This section should be read in conjunction with the Chapter 12: Development Management Guidelines and Standards.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- Provide for consolidation of urban areas rather than urban sprawl and attempt, where possible, to locate new housing to minimise car use for journeys to work, school and other local and community facilities.
To direct new housing to those settlements best able to accommodate it without environmental damage and where it is more likely to meet locally generated needs.

Adopt sustainable construction methods and utilise SUDS and more environmentally sensitive methods of disposing of effluent.

Buildings orientated to maximise solar gain.

LAYOUT AND DESIGN

Conduct full site assessment and design layout accordingly rather than making “one layout fits all”.

Dwellings should be arranged to front onto existing and proposed roads and open space and be dual fronted rather than windowless facades fronting public spaces.

Ensure that new housing development respects and enhances the character of an area and does not spoil the attractiveness or nature conservation of an area.

Ensure new housing is of a high standard of design and layout and provides for a safe and attractive environment with adequate provision for infrastructure, parking, landscaping and private and public play space.

Innovative designs and layouts will be encouraged and the character of an area will be based on a network of communal spaces rather than a hierarchy of roads.

Design should respect the form, materials and detailing of the surrounding area.

Relate the type, size and location of new housing to the needs of the population, including affordability, accessibility and tenure choice. Affordable housing should be the same as other housing in terms of external appearance and spread throughout a development.

Apartments should be designed accordingly to the recommendations contained within the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for Apartments, consultation Draft Guidelines For Planning Authorities, 2007, and any subsequent document.

Arrangement of dwellings to front onto public spaces and roads and public walkways.

Natural surveillance of communal car park areas, open space areas and cycle routes.

Provision of functional and useable public open spaces which integrate play spaces for children.

Security and privacy maintained within private open spaces.

Density will depend on the character of the area, location, and the accessibility of local services.

Existing natural features, hedgerows and trees should be identified and where appropriate protected and integrated into the design in an appropriate manner.

Hard and soft landscaping for all developments.

Bio-diversity in landscape treatment and layout to be encouraged.

ROADS AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

Provide adequate and convenient access to public transport and connections with the wider locality.

Encourage pedestrian and cycle links within developments and outwards from them.

Upgrade existing public spaces where necessary.

Greater importance shall be placed on the layout of houses and other buildings within a development rather than on road layout in order to achieve an improved design quality and promote a sense of community, while continuing to ensure that standards of road safety are not compromised.

Remove cul-de-sacs and long straight roads within housing layouts in accordance with the ‘Traffic Management Guidelines’, Department of Transport, Department of Environment and Local Government.

Support movement by pedestrians and cyclists and reduce conflict between the pedestrian and vehicle.

A greater emphasis will be placed on controlling traffic speed and traffic calming should not be added as an after thought.
• Use of shared surfaces within estates. Where higher densities are proposed more imaginative road design solutions will be sought.
• Parking should be within the curtilage of dwellings where possible. Group parking is acceptable as a more flexible provision for additional parking and visitor parking but must be well overlooked and well lit.
• Courtyard parking may be appropriate if it is overlooked and landscaped to a high standard.
• Bicycle parking is essential.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

• The provision of local facilities within residential developments is required to increase vitality, provide a sense of community and balance the social and economic sustainability of a development.
• In larger developments a range of community facilities within a development will be necessary, in particular on Greenfield sites; e.g. schools, crèches, neighbourhood shopping.
• Local neighbourhood facilities should integrate into the development to build community and reduce the need to travel.
• Community facilities should be located at focal points and as landmark features and assist in the creation of the public realm.
• Creches should preferably be developed as stand alone buildings within a development and should provide a landmark feature and be built in accordance with Childcare (Pre-School Services) Regulations, 1996, and, the Childcare (Pre-School Services) (Amendment) Regulations, 1997, and any associated amendment documents.

Policies for design for residential estates

Policy 165
Ensure high quality in the design of buildings and promote the development of buildings that are accessible, energy efficient and sustainable and that integrate well with and complement surrounding buildings and landscape.

Policy 166
Ensure that all new residential units meet minimum standards of space, room size and storage provision, in so far as is practicable.

Policy 167
Future housing layouts and design must be adaptable to change over time with a variety of accommodation types, sizes and tenures, in addition to designing for future transportation links. Accessibility of public facilities and public transport will determine whether the site is appropriate for higher density development.

Policy 168
In order to achieve sustainable urban areas which serve the needs of communities any residential development proposal which does not provide an appropriate quality of design will not be granted permission, even if identified as land for residential use.

Objectives for design for residential estates

Objective 173
Develop strategies for building height, identifying suitable locations and setting standards for design quality and quality of the public realm.

Objective 174
Attach conditions that aim to ensure completion of development, by requiring the provision of adequate bonds.

Objective 175
Commence, in the second year following the adoption of the CDP, the process of the preparation of ‘Design Guidelines for Housing Estates in County Roscommon’ with emphasis on the provision of quality architecture and urban environments having regard to the Residential Density Guidelines which encourage more suitable urban
development by the avoidance of excessive suburbanisation and the promotion of higher densities in appropriate locations.

5.6 TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT IN URBAN AREAS

Road safety for all road users is an important issue and in town centers and residential areas the needs of pedestrians and cyclists should have priority over motorised transport. The Traffic Management Guidelines, 2003 and the Road Traffic Act 2004, provide for the use of lower speed limits in certain areas, for example, town centres, residential areas and in the vicinity of schools; and for the design of roads to provide for such lower speeds.

Policy 169 During the lifetime of the Plan the Council will consider the introduction of reduced traffic speed limits in certain town centre areas, in residential areas and in areas in the vicinity of schools.

The way in which streets are managed and used promotes or discourages a sense of community and makes them an attractive or unattractive place to live, work, shop etc. Travel need can be reduced by land use policies which facilitate mixed uses and closely grouping different uses. This has been undertaken where possible in the Area Plans in Volume 2 of this Plan.

Parking policy is an important element in planning and transport policy. The level of car parking provided, its location, fee structure and enforcement levels can all have a considerable effect on car use and traffic flow patterns. The availability of convenient and affordable parking in an area can influence people’s decision on their mode of travel and in certain circumstances a reduction in the number of parking spaces may be desirable in congested urban areas. However, this can only be utilised where public transport provides a viable alternative.

Car parking policies must consider various needs such as people with disabilities, commercial vehicles, taxis, motor cycles, etc; as well as the conflicts between all day parking and short stay; and the need for good advance signage. In addition, a reduction in parking standards in town centres encourages development in such areas which might otherwise be forced to locate where land has lower value. These aspects are further addressed in the car parking standards set out in Chapter 12: Development Management and Standards.

5.7 SUSTAINABLE ENERGY AND DESIGN

Ireland’s energy supplies are currently very dependent on fossil fuels mainly oil. The Forfás report of April 2006: ‘A Baseline Assessment of Ireland’s Oil Dependence Key Policy Considerations’ states that Ireland’s ability to continue attracting high levels of foreign direct investment and to provide a supportive environment for Irish industry generally will depend on its capacity to deliver a secure and uninterrupted energy supply at a competitive cost. ‘The high probability that a supply of cheap oil will peak over the next 10-15 years poses a serious challenge for the global economy. We in Ireland are more dependent on imported oil for our energy requirements than almost any other European country and it will take up to 10 years to significantly reduce this dependence. Therefore, it is essential that we now begin to prepare for such a challenge.’ The promotion of renewable energy throughout the county is important both for economic and environmental reasons. Environmentally, the harnessing of renewables for energy production releases no harmful greenhouse gases, reduces local air pollution and produces little or no waste. In addition, renewable energy can contribute to employment generation either directly in the renewables industry or indirectly in the supply industry. Renewable energy comes from natural, inexhaustible sources such as the sun (solar), wind, falling water (hydro), oceans (wave), plants (biomass and biofuels) and the earth (geothermal heat pumps).

Renewable energy can also be derived from a range of waste products (sewage, municipal solid waste and agricultural waste). The Council recognises the significant environmental and economic benefits associated with energy production from renewable resources as well as; the importance of reducing our CO2 emissions and our dependence on oil in an uncertain global market. The technology of
renewable energy is well advanced and widely available. Grants are now available to householders to provide systems in existing or new housing.

The Council will encourage more sustainable development through energy end use efficiency, increasing the use of renewable energy, and improved energy performance of all new building developments throughout the County. This will be achieved by;

- Encouraging responsible environmental management in construction by promoting the highest standards of energy efficiency (which includes sustainable resource management) in new developments so as to reduce carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions arising from construction and use;
- Promoting sustainable approaches to housing developments in spatial planning, layout, design and detailed specification;
- Ensuring high standards of energy efficiency in all housing developments and encouraging developers, owners and tenants to improve the environmental performance of the building stock, including the deployment of renewable energy; and,
- Adapting development which would otherwise have a major negative impact on CO2 emissions;

Energy efficiency has been discussed in several sections of this plan and the following section deals with building construction and energy use.

The Building Control Bill 2005 is intended in part to implement certain provisions of European Parliament directive 2002/91/ec on the energy performance of buildings. Following the enactment of this Bill, in January 2007 any new dwelling that applied for planning permission on or after the 1st of January 2007 will require a BER before they are offered for sale or rent. This requirement will be extended to all new non-residential buildings in July 2008 and to existing buildings offered for sale or rent in January 2009. In addition, all public buildings with a floor area of 1,000 square metres must display a building energy rating BER certificate; and proposals for buildings exceeding 1,000 square metres, must consider the technical, environmental and economic feasibility of using alternative energy systems in the proposed building, and use of such systems has to be taken into account, as far as practicable, in the design of the proposed building. The alternative energy systems to be considered will include—

(a) decentralised energy supply systems, based on renewable energy,
(b) combined heat and power systems,
(c) district or block heating or cooling, if available,
(d) or heat pumps.

Houses being offered for sale or letting must produce details of this energy rating. The requirement that building designs will have to be energy rated for building regulation compliance reasons, facilitates the Council in setting energy requirements for new buildings by giving the means for creating or specifying benchmarks for all buildings based on these national methodologies.

The following considerations will be borne in mind when considering energy efficiency within domestic developments;

- Site layout and associated bio-climatic/passive solar design measures
- Enhanced levels of insulation in walls, floors, glazing and doors
- Reduced uncontrolled air infiltration losses
- Use of healthy and controllable ventilation systems
- Heat recovery systems
- Use of daylight
- Water conservation measures
- More sustainable building materials
- Improved heat generation appliance efficiency, e.g. condensing boilers
• Intelligent heating system configuration and time/temperature/zone/function controls
• Efficient provision of domestic hot water
• Fuel switching to low or zero CO2 emitting fuels
• Energy efficient lighting systems
• Incorporation of renewable energy systems e.g. active solar, heat pumps, biomass
• Provision of appropriate group or district heating systems.

In the case of non-domestic buildings additional options include:

• Heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems
• Electrical energy use including motive power
• Efficient lighting systems and controls
• Building Energy Management Systems
• Occupancy Controls
• Monitoring and Targeting Systems
• Combined Heat and Power (CHP).

In general, the following are proposed;

• Locating new development in an appropriate location and correct orientation to maximise passive design strategies,
• Relating land-use planning to transport and other infrastructure,
• Preserving and enhancing natural features and bio-diversity surrounding buildings,
• Using re-cycled building materials where possible, which in turn can themselves be recycled,
• Choosing an appropriate design life for the building, i.e. flexible and durable, or for reassembly or reuse elsewhere,
• Re-using and improving or using built assets rather than building new,
• Minimising waste in construction and pollution in the use of the building, and
• Minimising lifetime water consumption of the building by the fitting of low-water use equipment and grey water recycling.

Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI) has developed standards for energy performance in dwellings: which they title ‘House of Tomorrow’. These standards measure performance in terms of how much heating is required per unit floor area; which shouldn’t exceed 50 kWh/m² of useful floor area and SEI has produced guidance on how these standards can be achieved. By comparison the performance of new housing based on the Building Regulations is 125kWh/m²/year. The proposed standard would represent a 60% improvement on the standards in the Building Regulations. The Council considers that until a higher energy performance in buildings is set in the Building Regulations the standard to be used in the county should be a performance in terms of how much heating is required per unit floor area shall not exceed 50 kWh/m² of useful floor area.

Policy for sustainable energy and design

Policy 170 Improve qualitative standards of sustainable design in proposed developments in line with the detailed recommendations contained within Section 5.7 and Section 12.3, 12.4 and 12.5 of Volume 1 of the CDP 2008 - 2014.
CHAPTER 6
RURAL DEVELOPMENT
6.1 RURAL DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

There have been a number of factors which have impacted on rural development in the County, and Ireland as a whole, and it is the purpose of this County Development Plan (CDP) to manage the changing character of the County and support its development as an integrated network of vibrant socially and economically successful settlements, as well as supporting and contributing to the economic development of County Roscommon.

The factors which have impacted on rural development include, amongst others;

a) population growth in the County over the past decade, and associated changes in the housing market relating to supply and demand, affordability and lifestyle choice;
b) the changing nature of the agricultural sector, which includes the effects of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reforms on agriculture; and,
c) the urbanization and pressure for development in many parts of the County which may be urban generated.

Based on CSO population projections and recent local trends, a population of approximately 67,000, a rise of 14%, is expected by the end of the CDP in 2014.

The 2006 Census (Principal Demographic Results) shows that Roscommon has the highest average age of population in the country – 38 years, compared to the national average of 35.6 years. However, the trend in relation to age dependency profile continues to show lessening dependency and a move closer to the state’s average.

| Table 23: Age Dependent Population 2006 (those under 15 or over 65 years) |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Roscommon - %               | Ireland - %                 |
| 35.25                       | 31.43                       |

The age dependent population is higher than the state average and is concentrated in the over 65 category rather than the 0-14 years category.

The trend in age dependency has been decreasing from 43.3% in 1991 to 40.2% in 1996, 36.7% in 2002 and 35.3% in 2006. (CSO, Census of Population 2006, Principal Demographic Results)

Net migration levels show that the county is attractive to newcomers as a place to live and work. This will have a positive impact in lessening the county age dependency ratio.

In terms of spatial profile, the preliminary 2006 census information indicates that the areas of significant growth in the county are Athlone West, Kiltoom and Carnagh (neighbouring EDs in the south east of the county adjacent to Athlone); Ballaghadereen; Boyle; Roscommon town and surrounding EDs; Castlerea; Termonbarry and Danesfort, the latter two being close to urban centres outside the county boundary.

Due to the low level of local opportunities in the 1990s, the rate of return for Roscommon graduates has been low. In 2000, only 7% of local graduates returned to the county for their job after graduating. The reversal of such a brain drain has been a key focus of local agencies and the figure has improved to 19% for 2004. Whilst still low, the improvement reflects a belief amongst more young people that greater opportunity exists in terms of career and work/life balance.

Therefore, Roscommon County Council and the Planning Authority will apply policies and objectives which ensure the viability and sustainability of these areas, both economically and in terms of infrastructure and services, whilst providing a range of employment and residential options for its population.
6.2 RURAL ECONOMY

6.2.1 Agriculture

County Roscommon is a largely rural County, with agriculture being the primary land use and a significant source of employment in the County i.e. 13% in the 2002 census. The nature and reliance on agriculture has changed somewhat and the challenge facing the Council is to facilitate the continuance of agriculture, and the broadening of the rural economy, while conserving the landscape, environment and natural diversity of the countryside.

Agriculture is still the predominant land use with 159,508 hectares of farmed land in the County. In terms of food grown, 1,863 ha of land is devoted to crops, fruit and horticulture. In terms of livestock, stock farming accounts for the following animal numbers; 220,804 cattle, 364,064 sheep, and 24,414 pigs and 1,841 horses/ponies in the County. The Census of Agriculture (2000) indicates that 11361 people are employed in agriculture, whether owners or workers, on farm holdings. It is also useful to note that on 229 farms it was indicated that there was gainful non-agricultural activity present which included farm tourism, recreational activities, home crafts, forestry and those activities defined under other.

Between the years 1990-2002, income from agriculture increased by 24.5%, compared to non agricultural wages which increased by 200%. This suggests that the Celtic Tiger had only minimal effects for the farming community. This has been verified by a background report carried out for the NSS 2002-2020, which stated that the ‘net effect of the changes in Irish Agriculture was the raising of the farm viability threshold at the expense of the smaller, marginally economic farms.

The DoEHLG has estimated that by 2010-2015 there will be 100,000 farmers in Ireland and of these only 20,000 will be in full-time agricultural employment, 60,000 in part-time and 20,000 in transition between full-time to part-time. The core commercial farmers will be in the south east whereas the second tier will be heavily dependent on direct CAP payments and will be located in the West (Counties Galway, Roscommon and Mayo), northwest and the Midlands.

COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY (CAP) REFORM

The aim of the Common Agricultural Policy is to provide farmers with a reasonable standard of living and consumers with quality food at fair prices. The way these aims are met has changed over the years. Food safety, preservation of the rural environment, and value for money are now all key concepts.

CAP initially began 50 years ago by subsidizing production of basic foodstuffs in the interests of self-sufficiency, whereas the CAP of today emphasizes direct payments to farmers as the best way of guaranteeing farm incomes, food safety and quality, and environmentally sustainable production. It is contended that severing the link between subsidies and production will make EU farmers more competitive and market oriented, while providing the necessary income stability. More money will be available to farmers for environmental, quality or animal welfare programmes by reducing direct payments for bigger farmers.

Single payment scheme (SPS): The main aim of the single payment is to guarantee farmers more stable incomes. Farmers can decide what to produce in the knowledge that they will receive the same amount of aid, allowing them to adjust production to suit demand. To be eligible for the single payment, a farmer requires payment entitlements. These are calculated on the basis of the payments received by the farmer during a reference period (historical model) or the number of eligible hectares farmed during the first year of implementation of the scheme (regional model).

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1 DoEHLG 2001
Direct payments to Irish farmers form a very significant proportion of Irish farmers’ income. While such payments are very beneficial to farmers they can lead to unforeseen side-effects that can have environmental consequences. Agenda 2000 reforms proposed that cross-compliance with environmental conditions compatible with sustainable agriculture should be matched to such payments by Member States. In 2003, EU farm ministers adopted a fundamental reform of the CAP with a tight budgetary ceiling for the EU-25 until 2013. The financial discipline mechanism is geared towards consumers and taxpayers, while giving EU farmers the freedom to produce what the market wants. In future, the vast majority of subsidies will be paid independently from the volume of production. Member States may choose to maintain a limited link between subsidy and production. These new "single farm payments" will be linked to environmental, food safety and animal welfare standards. Severing the link between subsidies and production will make EU farmers more competitive and market orientated, while providing the necessary income stability. More money will be available to farmers for environmental, quality or animal welfare programmes by reducing direct payments for bigger farms. It was further decided to revise the milk, rice, cereals, durum wheat, dried fodder and nut sectors. The different elements of the reform entered into force in 2004 and 2005.

RURAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION SCHEME (REPS)

In 1992 CAP reform included a provision to introduce agri-environmental programmes in the EU. In response, Ireland initiated the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS) in 1994, which contains financial incentives to improve the quality and visual appearance of the rural environment. At the beginning of 2005 there were approximately 43,000 active participants in the REPS with 29% of those in REPS 3. This represents approximately one quarter of all farms listed but accounts for 1.4 million ha, one third of all land in the county is being farmed in accordance with REPS guidelines and specifications. Adoption of the scheme has been highest in areas where farmers are mainly involved in extensive farming- viz. Connaught, Ulster, the Midland and the Southwest regions. Research by Cummins and Frawley (1998) has established that the participants are generally those with larger than national average farm size in areas of low farming intensity.2

The REPS payment scheme is a whole farm payment scheme and includes an incentive element which may offer a better return to farmers depending on their particular circumstances. This differs from the National Parks and Wildlife Payment Scheme which covers costs and losses only incurred in the management of lands designated as SAC, SPA, NHA or commonage and not already in REPS. The average farm size in REPS is 36.5 ha and the average REPS payment under REPS 3 is €6,092.00. REPS 4 will be delivered as part of the Rural Development Plan 2007-2013. The six west of Ireland Counties account for 41% of total REPS participants and there are 2,480 REPS participants in County Roscommon.

CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE 2000

The Census of Agriculture, 2000, found that there was a 17% fall in the number of active farmers between 1991 and 2000, with the number of family and regular non-family workers engaged in farming also falling by 17.5%.

The average size of farms was found to have increased from 26.0 hectares in 1991 to 31.4 hectares in 2000. There was an increase in the number of dairy cows, other cows and herd size, with a 15% decrease in the number of sheep over the same period. Specialist beef production was the most common type of farming and the next most important was mixed grazing livestock.

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2REPS 3- Assisting Change in Farming National REPS Conference 2005, Financial Impact of REPS
TEAGASC NATIONAL FARM SURVEY

The annual Teagasc National Farm Survey (NFS) 2005, which determines the financial situation on Irish farms by measuring the level of gross output, costs, income, investment and indebtedness across the spectrum of farming systems and sizes found that;

- On 50% of all farms, either the farmer or their spouse has an off-farm job. The highest incidence of off-farm employment occurs in dry-stock systems where extensive beef and sheep production yields low profit margins.
- On 74% of farms, either the farmer or their spouse has some form of off-farm income, through employment, social assistance or pension.

The survey also showed that there are two distinct agricultural groups in Ireland:

- Small part-time farmers engaged in beef and sheep production, yielding low profit margins and highly dependent on direct payments and off-farm employment.
- More dynamic full-time farms, which represent the commercial or viable sector of Irish agriculture and are mainly involved in dairy and tillage farming.
- Small part-time farmers engaged in beef and sheep production, yielding low profit margins and highly dependent on direct payments and off-farm employment.
- More dynamic full-time farms, which represent the commercial or viable sector of Irish agriculture and are mainly involved in dairy and tillage farming.

FARMING PROFILE FOR COUNTY ROSCOMMON 2005

According to the CSO stats for 2005 there were 6,434 full time farmers in County Roscommon, 2,334 are employed full time (a decrease from 2000 figures). There are 4,100 people employed in part time farming within the County (there has been a significant increase in this area since the 2000 stats). The average family farm size within County Roscommon is 20 to 40h.a.

The following are the key aspects in support of the Rural Economy:

- Support agriculture by maintaining the integrity of viable farming areas.
- Develop policies for agricultural diversification.
- Provide for other vibrant, environmentally sustainable and well managed enterprises including the horticulture, forestry, energy and the bloodstock/equestrian sectors.
- Develop policies on sustainable tourism in the county in co-operation with Fáilte Ireland.
- Develop policy in relation to landscape protection.
- Further develop policies in relation to aggregate removal and the protection of sites of geological and geo-morphological interest.
- Investigate the potential with neighbouring County Councils and other agencies for the designation of a ‘geo park’ for the esker belt of South Roscommon, West Westmeath and North Offaly which is considered of international importance.

ORGANIC FARMING

There has been a significant increase in the demand for organic and speciality foods. This has presented an opportunity for farmers to obtain an attractive premium for organic beef, lamb, poultry and venison as well as fruit and vegetables. There are approximately 1,000 registered organic growers within the country. 78 farmers are engaged in organic farming within County Roscommon and there is even an organic centre located at Croghan in North Roscommon. There is undoubtedly a large potential for more farmers to switch to organic farming within County Roscommon.
FAMILY FARM INCOME (FFI) IN COUNTY ROSCOMMON

The average Family Farm Income within the County is €29,536, of this 39% is attained from farming and the remainder comes from social transfers. Figures in 2000 indicated that 50% of FFI was derived directly from farming. This indicates that FFI within County Roscommon has decreased considerably over the last five years.

INTENSIVE AGRICULTURE

Mushroom growing, piggeries, poultry and other intensive animal production units require special treatment. Whilst the Council recognize the role of this sector to contribute towards the economy of the County, it is important that vital environmental qualities of the county are protected. This applies in particular in areas identified as major aquifers and which would be vulnerable to contamination of ground water. It is recognized that in certain cases such activities will be subject to the provision of an Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control Licensing (IPPC) under the EPA Act 1992 as amended. New economic and social forces are changing people’s relationship with the land which necessitates a new approach. The challenge facing the Council it to facilitate the continuance of agriculture and the family farm unit and also to broaden the rural economy, while conserving the landscape, environment and natural diversity of the countryside. Emphasis needs to be placed on encouraging and supporting farmers to ‘add an activity/area within farming that is higher up the economic value chain’ e.g. rural tourism, forestry etc. In addition, more should be done to develop farmers markets at least once weekly in as many settlements as possible and the County Council shall facilitate in their establishment and in the licensing of them.

Policies in relation to Agriculture

Policy 171 Facilitate the development of agriculture and agricultural practices within the County

Policy 172 Facilitate farm diversification and intensification by giving favourable consideration to appropriate new and existing, rural based farm enterprises including agri-business and tourism enterprises such as on-farm visitor accommodation and supplementary activities including health farms, heritage and nature trails, pony trekking and boating.

Policy 173 Protect and ensure the continuing viability of agriculture and horticulture within rural areas and sustain the rural character of the countryside as a valuable resource.

Policy 174 Protect the viability of farms including the family farm unit, and the best quality land, for agricultural and related uses, whilst at the same time facilitating the provision of alternative employment in or close to rural areas to sustain rural communities.

Policy 175 Encourage specialist farming practices e.g. fruit and vegetable/herb growing, flower growing, equine breeding, poultry, mushroom growing.

Policy 176 Facilitate the development of farm enterprises such as processing, co-ops, farm supply stores and agri-business in accordance with the development standards set out in Chapter 12 of this plan

Policy 177 Facilitate the sustainable development of the countryside. RCC recognizes the fact that the most effective means of ensuring the conservation of the rural landscape is to encourage the continued use of agricultural farm holdings. However the Council acknowledges that the diversification of uses on rural land holdings may be necessary in order to ensure the continued viability of agricultural ways of life. In addition cross subsidization between uses and activities may be increasingly necessary in order to make rural farm holdings viable in the coming years.
Chapter 6: Rural Development

Policy 178 Encourage the production of organic and speciality foods to meet the increase in demand for such products

Policy 179 Encourage farmers to ‘add an activity/area within farming that is higher up the economic value chain’ e.g. rural tourism, forestry, rural enterprise etc.

Policy 180 Facilitate the development of agricultural diversification and agri-business whilst seeking to protect and maintain bio-diversity, wildlife habitats, water quality, scenic amenities and nature conservation

Objectives in relation to Agriculture

Objective 176 Facilitate the provision of infrastructural services including broadband to serve the needs of agriculture, in co-operation with the appropriate agencies

Objective 177 Assess all proposals for intensive agricultural development in terms of its appropriateness in relation to the density of waste disposal and the effect of this on the region

Objective 178 Investigate with neighbouring County Councils and other agencies the feasibility in the designation of a ‘geo park’ for the esker belt of South Roscommon Westmeath and North Offaly

Objective 179 Ensure that all agricultural development complies with necessary regulations concerning pollution control and does not impact unduly on natural waters, wildlife habitats or conservation areas

Objective 180 Facilitate the setting up of local country markets devoted to the sale of local agricultural and craft produce and support their role as visitor attractions

Objective 181 Facilitate agricultural development whilst ensuring that development does not have a negative impact on the scenic amenity of the countryside, in particular in areas outlined as high amenity as per the Landscape Character Assessment for this Plan

Objective 182 Have regard to S256 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 when assessing intensive agricultural developments

Objective 183 Ensure the protection of soil, groundwater, wildlife habitats, conservation areas, rural amenities and scenic views from adverse environmental impacts as a result of intensive agricultural practices.

Objective 184 Address the infrastructural deficit so as to serve the needs of agriculture, in cooperation with the appropriate agencies.”

6.2.2 Agricultural Diversification & Rural Enterprise

The continuing decline in full time employment in farming has significant implications for the rural economy and the use of rural lands. The Council will support diversification of the rural economy and in particular, will seek to harness the potential of rural tourism within the County, having regard to the natural assets that the county possesses, the quality of the landscape, the rivers and lakes and fishing/activity centres.

The rural community face new challenges as the agricultural sector re-structures. Chief amongst these challenges is finding employment and income opportunities for farm-based families, in parallel with meeting the need to ensure sustainable development and the protection of the environment and landscape of the County.
The NSS and the White Paper on Rural Development, sets out Government policy and guidance with regard to supporting rural communities. Emphasis is placed on the role of farm diversification as a component in securing and development of the rural economy and its development, as well as supporting the maximum number of family farms.

The County Council shall support agri-tourism in the form of e.g. B&B accommodation, self catering facilities, equestrian centres, outdoor pursuit centres and other similar activities including small scale craft activities. It is noted that normal development criteria in relation to satisfactory access, appropriate location, design and waste management shall be observed.

RURAL ENTERPRISE

Local or rural enterprise is defined as ‘enterprise located in rural areas’\(^3\) Small firms (SME’s) are the main engine of wealth and employment creation and are particularly important in rural areas where opportunities for large inward investment projects are not generally forthcoming (OECD, 1996 p. 40).

The NSS on Rural Enterprise found that the level of economic activity is negatively correlated with the levels of “rurality” with the exception of a few places. Despite economic success over the last 10 years, rural areas are still struggling economically. The more residents that leave their area for work purposes, the greater is the likelihood that they will participate less in their local community and that they will use the services provided in the town and city rather than those provided locally. In the long term such trends will erode the character of rural life. In the absence of alternative sources of work, there has been an exodus from rural areas by traditional dwellers. Employment opportunities and housing are often the determining factors as to whether young people will return to rural areas.\(^4\)

Fitzpatrick and Associates, 2000, commented that there is a danger that an overly heavy burden in terms of expectations is being placed on the shoulders of rural tourism as the only viable alternative to farming. It needs to be balanced by other enterprise activities in order to create a viable rural economy.

HOME BASED ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN RURAL AREAS

Applications for small-scale home-based economic activity in rural areas where the occupants of an existing dwelling are employed at home will be positively considered where the proposal does not generate significant new traffic movements. Home based businesses, which wish to expand beyond employing the household on site, may be required to locate in a village or to another area more suitable to the use proposed; expansion to a full business within the rural area shall be considered on a case by case basis by the PA.

Home based economic activity should if possible be sited either in converted existing farm buildings located adjacent to the main dwelling house, or within the house where the use is compatible with and ancillary to the use of the dwelling as a home. Each case shall be judged on its own merits by the PA.

Chapter 4 Economic Development and Employment provides detailed policies and objectives in relation to enterprises in rural areas

**Policies in relation to Agricultural Diversification and Rural Enterprise**

**Policy 181** In line with national and regional policies, RCC will facilitate and encourage the development of alternative farm enterprises and farm diversification proposals that support the development of alternative or additional rural enterprises which supplement farm incomes and regenerate the rural economy.

\(^3\) Fitzpatrick Associates 2000, p. 19 NSS: Rural Enterprise

\(^4\) Mc Donagh, Renegotiating Rural Development in Ireland, 2001, p. 71
Policy 182 Home based economic activities shall be considered favourably at existing dwellings where, by virtue of their nature and scale, the activities can be accommodated without detriment to:

- The operation of agricultural or horticultural farms in the vicinity.
- The amenities of rural areas.
- The amenities of any adjoining residences.

Policy 183 It is the policy of the council to consider proposals for on-farm based diversification where the proposal is based on an existing farm holding. The proposal is complementary to the agricultural operation on the farm and is operated as part of the farm holding. The proposal does not generate any significant new traffic, either from deliveries or commuting staff. The diversification scheme shall be linked directly to the produce of the farm. It will involve rural recreational activities or farm services.

Policy 184 The Council shall facilitate and encourage small incubator enterprise units/ computer –or other home based business that shows direct improvements to the rural economy.

Policy 185 The Council will encourage the realization of the potential of tourism and agri-tourism as a means of contributing to farm diversification.

Policy 186 Support the sustainable development of the marine aquaculture and fishing industries having regard to the best environmental practices, so as to maximize their contribution to jobs and communities and as an important recreational and tourism activity in the rural economy.

Objectives in relation to Agricultural Diversification and Rural Enterprise

Objective 185 Develop the potential for innovation and diversification in the rural economy as a means of retaining and attracting population into rural areas especially peripheral and areas of declining population and help support the retention of rural services.

Objective 186 Facilitate the development of e-commerce, IT and broadband telecommunications in support of rural enterprises.

Objective 187 Support the active involvement of the rural communities in the provision of services including farm diversification and rural enterprise proposals that will help support rural communities and the rural economy.

Objective 188 Support the widening of the RTI to remote areas not presently serviced.

Objective 189 Continue the rollout of Broadband to rural areas.

Objective 190 Publish a list of funding sources as well as County Enterprise Board support for locally generated enterprises in rural areas.

Objective 191 Promote the development of niche activities such as those relating to food (including value added products), forestry (including wood products and bio energy products), crafts, eco –tourism and agri-tourism including farmhouse holidays, health farms, equestrian activities, bird watching and walking holidays, angling and boating holidays, painting/photography tuition,

Objective 192 Favourably consider the development of appropriately scaled second home, holiday home, B&B development as a contributor to agri-tourism and to the rural economy.
6.2.3 Rural Tourism - An Integrated Approach

The Council is committed to developing sustainable integrated rural tourism; improving the tourism product throughout the County; and developing the rural tourism market in order to offer support to the rural economy.

- Rural Roscommon has a lot to offer the visitor with regard to natural amenities, quality of life and local tradition. RCC supports the establishment of, for example, turf cutting courses for tourists; open farms; short stays on traditional working farms; and, similar rural tourism products.
- The local economy benefits greatly from recreational tourism and local shop keepers, hotels, guesthouses and catering businesses all reap commercial benefits from rural tourism attractions.
- Resources shall be made available to ensure that the potential for increasing countryside recreation with due regard to the landscape, the visitor experience and most importantly the farmers who own and work the natural resources.
- Events such as festivals, fairs and concerts present enormous opportunities for retailers and consideration should be given to this in encouraging the development of new events including regattas and developing a countywide programme of activities for visitors.
- RCC recognises the potential value to the tourism industry of features such as rivers, lakes, and canals. River systems and lakes provide potential for an extensive network for inland travel by water.
- RCC supports the development of marina facilities at key locations along the Shannon, for example at Roosky, where dry dock facilities would allow for boat repairs and the reintroduction of the local regatta would enhance local tourism and visitor numbers. Pumping out facilities must be provided at appropriate locations with an electronic monitoring system to prevent water pollution.
- Whilst RCC recognizes and supports the growing demand for golf courses and leisure estate type developments (e.g. Kilronan Castle Demesne), the heritage qualities of historic demesnes and the integrity of heritage buildings and their settings are to be protected at all times.

Policy in relation to Rural Tourism

Policy 187 RCC shall ensure that the full potential of tourism as an economic and social force is achieved in a sustainable manner with due regard to the impact on local communities and the natural environment.

Chapter 10: Recreation, Leisure and Tourism provides further specific policies and objectives in relation to both Urban and Rural Tourism

6.2.4 Forestry and Bio-Fuels

Forestry is an important renewable resource and will play a key role in sustainable rural development. Currently Ireland has approximately 10.2% of land cover devoted to forestry compared to EU average of approximately 40%, 60% of this is dedicated to broadleaf forests.

The national target set out in the Government’s document “Growing for the Future – A Strategic Plan for the Development of the Forestry Sector in Ireland” 1996 is to have a forestry cover of 17% by 2030. The 2000 CAP Rural Development Plan sets the target for broadleaf planting to 30%. This target is supported by the National Biodiversity Plan 2002.
FORESTRY IN COUNTY ROSCOMMON

Nearly 20,000 ha of forestry has been planted within County Roscommon, representing 8% of the total land cover. Some 11,000 ha of this is on private land with over 8,000 ha in public ownership. Much of this is on marginal land, in particular on Slieve Bawn, across the upper Arigna Valley, close to Strokestown as well as around Ballinlough where it provides a significant element of the Landscape Character. If predictions of decline in the construction industry and falling prices for beef materialize, there is likely to be renewed interest from the farming community for forestry, even in better quality land to the south of the county, particularly following the introduction of the Forest Environment Protection Scheme (FEPS) for farmers in REPS, in addition there is likely to be greater uptake of the Native Woodland Scheme.

RCC recognizes the importance of forestry development as set out in Government policy and acknowledges its potential within the County. Forestry can have a positive role to play in the sequestration of carbon and as a source of bio-fuels. Forests can also become locations for amenity and agri-tourism.

Roscommon has utilised this opportunity in, for example, the redevelopment of Lough Key Forest Park which is a joint venture between Coillte Teoranta and RCC. This unique partnership has allowed the project to avail of NDP and EU funding through the Failte Ireland Tourism Product Development Scheme. Collectively there has been an investment of over €8 million. The main attraction is a new Tree-Canopy –Walk which is based on the Blue Mountain experience in Australia. The tree walk is 250m long and gently rises to over 7 meters from the forest floor offering visitors a very unique tree-top experience before it gently returns to ground level. Other attractions within the park include an indoor adventure centre based on a Swedish technology house, an outdoor play kingdom for children, refurbishment of Moylurg Tower and a visitor café. All of these complement the existing 350 Ha park, caravan and camping utilities, walking trails and bog gardens.

While initial forestation is normally considered exempted development, forestry which would impinge on the character of a landscape considered by this Plan as being of high amenity value, or a view or prospect of special amenity value or special interest, shall not be considered exempt and will require planning permission.

RCC recognizes the many benefits of forestry within the County in terms of economic, recreational and carbon sequestration potential. Forestry as a land use and its ancillary development will be encouraged in suitable areas subject to the recommendations contained within the Landscape Character Assessment. The Council shall seek to ensure that Forestry Plantations will have a greater mix of species and be structurally and spatially more diverse.

In all cases reference to the LCA will be necessary in order to implement the guidelines and all applications requiring planning permission shall have regard to S3.6 of the LCA Report.

BIO-ENERGY SECTOR

Renewable energy production provides for sustainable diversification from more conventional forms of agriculture. Ireland has the lowest use of biomass in the EU so the scope for development of bio-energy in Ireland is significant. There are many bio-fuel sources including forest and wood residues and dry agricultural residues all of which can be combusted to produce heat, electricity or both and can be used as an energy source to fire solid fuel systems. Purpose grown energy crops such as willow and Miscanthus can also be used as dry fuel for combustion. Wet resources such as agricultural slurries, sewerage sludge can also be processed through anaerobic digestion, producing a methane rich gas for combustion. The use of forestry residues for heat generation is likely to have the greatest potential for the West Region in the immediate future. There are opportunities for the use of these byproducts as bio-fuels in the future as well as the promotion of energy crop sector within the rural economy.
It is too early yet to say whether the recent Bio-Energy Action Plan for Ireland 2007 will result in a change of land use towards the production of energy crops such as Miscanthus and Willow. Willow requires high quality fertile soils in low lying sheltered areas which will place it in competition with grain production and it also does not like peaty soils, which will rule it out over much of County Roscommon. Alternatively Miscanthus tolerates a wider range of soils and although it requires plenty of summer rain it may prove attractive to Roscommon farmers.

Best Practice Manuals produced by the Department of Agriculture and Food includes references to landscape and environment and assessors for the grant system should be encouraged to refer to the Roscommon Landscape Character Assessment when considering applications. The manuals also indicate that bio-fuels should be grown close to their intended production units and there may be an increase in applications for Bio-energy Stations.

**Policies in relation to Forestry and Bio-fuels**

**Policy 188** RCC shall facilitate forestation in suitable locations in co-operation with the Forest Service and Coillte Teoranta and in accordance with sustainable Forest Management guidelines including;

- Forestry and Landscape Guidelines in order to enhance the overall landscape, involving shape, scale, diversity, visual force and unity
- Forestry and Water Quality Guidelines including recommendations in relation to sensitive water catchments, cultivation, drainage, fertilizing and storage, the use of chemicals, herbicides and fuels, road making, bridges and culverts and harvesting
- Forestry and Archaeology Guidelines designed to ensure that Ireland’s rich heritage of archaeological sites and artifacts are not damaged by forest operations
- Forest Biodiversity Guidelines to recognize the importance of the maintenance and enhancement of forest biodiversity and implement the objectives in a forestry context of the National Biodiversity Plan such as structural diversity, retained habitats and open spaces, the retention of deadwood, the control of troublesome species and the use of conservation of native species
- Forest Harvesting and Environmental Guidelines to ensure that all forest harvesting operations, including felling, extraction, road and site restoration, are environmentally sustainable

**Policy 189** Facilitate forestation in appropriate locations, in co-operation with Coillte Teoranta and the Forest Service and in line with National policy and the Roscommon LCA (S 3.6 of the LCA Report 2007), while ensuring the no pollution or injury is caused to natural waters, wildlife habitats or conservation areas

**Policy 190** Discourage forestry development in proposed/candidate/adopted SAC’s, NHA’S and SPA’s, in designated Sensitive Rural Landscapes and in water quality sensitive areas

**Policy 191** Promote appropriate forestry related industries and rural tourism

**Policy 192** Prevent excessive forestation that would negatively impact on rural communities i.e. forestry development should be appropriate to the surrounding area in terms of nature and scale and should not allow that residential development becomes isolated when plantations mature

**Policy 193** Promote mixed species forestry and selective rather than clear felling
Chapter 6: Rural Development

Policy 194  The Council will co-operate with Coillte Teoranta, the Forest Service and private land owners in promoting greater public access and recreational use of Forests in the County

Policy 195  Have regard to the Bio-energy Action Plan for Ireland 2007, to the Department of Agriculture and Food Best Practice Manuals and to the LCA when considering significant planting of bio energy crops

Policy 196  RCC shall support the development of the bio energy industry over the Plan period.

Objectives in relation for Forestry and Bio-fuels

Objective 193  Encourage the development of forestry, particularly deciduous forestry and the Willow Biomass as an alternative agricultural land use

Objective 194  Endeavor to ensure that linear felling of trees is not encouraged in exposed or scenic areas and also promote phased rather than clear felling

Objective 195  In cases where forestry development is likely to have adverse effects on public roads, key charges will be levied on developers to defray the improvement and maintenance of such roads

Objective 196  The Council shall endeavor to protect the amenity of local residents by the establishment of an appropriate transition area of 60m from dwellings and associated buildings free from forestry

Objective 197  Co-operate with Coillte Teoranta and the Forest Service in promoting greater public access and recreational use of forest lands within the County

Objective 198  Ensure that the planting of forests within land designated areas is avoided especially proposed/candidate/adopted SAC’s, NHA’S and SPA’s in order to prevent any ‘significant adverse impact on features for which the sites have been designated’. Avoid forestry within designated Sensitive Rural Landscapes and in water quality sensitive areas.

Objective 199  Have due regard to Section 3.6 of the Landscape Character Assessment Report 2007 of County Roscommon and its assessment recommendations as part of this Plan

6.2.5 Wind Farms Developments and Landscape Character Assessment

The Atlas of Wind Speeds\(^5\) indicates that large areas of Roscommon meet technical requirements for the development of wind turbines sites. Roscommon County has a very dispersed settlement pattern and, outside of areas that may be deemed inappropriate on planning grounds, there are few sites left that are more than 400m from a dwelling. Currently there are commercial wind farms in the Arigna Mountains and near Bockagh Hill north of Ballaghaderreen.\(^6\)

The Energy White Paper March 2007 sets out important new policies to reduce fossil fuel dependency, with 33% of energy supply to be met by renewable energy sources by 2020. Wind energy is a significant component of this target. Additional government support and the proposed transfer of the electricity grid from ESB to Eirgrid may result in further applications in County Roscommon.

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\(^5\) SEI’s Wind Atlas is a digital Map of Ireland’s wind energy resources. It provides detailed information on wind speeds, electricity transmission and distribution networks for specific locations around Ireland at national and county levels

\(^6\) Landscape Character Assessment of County Roscommon 2007, p. 29
It is important that the CDP achieves a balance between responding to Government Policy on renewable energy and enabling the County’s energy resources to be harnessed in a manner that is consistent with proper planning and sustainable development.

RCC shall be guided by The Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006 in relation to the location of large wind turbines and the information to be required as part of a planning application. The Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) 2007 is also one of the main policy areas which will inform the issue of suitability of wind farms within the County. The LCA consists of:

1. Landscape Character Types for the County (e.g. River Corridor to the east and west of the county, Hill and Upland, Drumlin Lake-lands, Bog-land, Wet Farmland, Dry Farmland and Bog and Farmland Complex)
2. Landscape Character Areas are unique geographically-specific areas of a particular landscape type. 36 Landscape Character Areas were identified within the County and are detailed in S4.4 of the LCA Report
3. Landscape Values. Each of the landscape character areas have been classified into;
   • Exceptional Value
   • Very High Value
   • High Value
   • Moderate Value

Section 4 of the LCA 2007 provides a clear indication that subject to specific controls, examples of potentially appropriate locations might be found in places such as Arigna Mountains; Bockagh Hill and surrounds; upland near Garranlahan; Greywood Hill uplands; Slieve Bawn and high ground to the east of Lough Funshinagh. The LCA also offers additional information on each character area that will be necessary in order to assess the visual, cultural and environmental impacts of applications for wind turbines should they arise in any of the character areas.

In conjunction with the Policies and Objectives contained in S3.11.1 of this Plan - Renewable Energy the following Polices & Objectives have been included in association with Wind Farm Developments and the LCA Report.

**Policies in relation to Wind Farm Developments and LCA**

**Policy 197** All Applications for wind farm developments shall have regard to the Wind Energy Planning Guidelines 2006 regarding landscape impact of associated development (including roads and tracks, power poles and lines, the control building, wind measuring mast and the compound)

**Policy 198** Assessment of visual impacts of proposals will have regard to the LCA and in particular to the following-
- Immediate visual impact and long distance views
- Scenic Routes and Scenic views depicted in Appendix 1 of the LCA report 2007
- Sites of special value (i.e. the bog land north of Castlerea (LCA 27) and Upper Lough Ree (LCA6) which has been identified as of particular importance for their sense of isolation and tranquility)

**Policy 199** All applications for wind farm developments shall have regard to guidance on the siting and design of wind farm projects that are included in the Wind Energy Planning Guidelines 2006

**Policy 200** Where wind energy developments are permitted on peat-land, the implementation of the following construction guidelines (along with others that are recommended in the Environmental Impact Statement) may serve to reduce impacts, including minimizing habitat disturbance and loss, hydrological disruption and the risk of erosion:
1. A thorough ground investigation, including hydro-geological investigations where appropriate, and a detailed evaluation of the peat, its geotechnical properties and the associate risk of instability and habitat loss or disturbance during construction and operation of the wind energy development, is to be carried out where the depth of peat is in excess of 50cm

2. Avoid construction, if possible, on wet areas, flushes and easily eroded soils

3. Avoid the excavation of drains, where possible, unless it is necessary for geotechnical or hydrological reasons

4. If drains are unavoidable, ensure that silt traps are constructed and that there is only diffuse discharge of water

5. Avoid blocking existing drains

6. Where blasting is being used in or near a peat-land area for borrow pits, foundations etc, the possible effect on the peat stability should be assessed

7. Avoid stock grazing on any disturbed peat until local peat-land vegetation has recovered (e.g. by use of temporary electric fencing)

**Policy 201** Applications for wind turbines be assessed in accordance with;
- Wind Speed Atlas by SEI
- Accessibility to the National Electricity Transmission and Distribution Grid
- The suitability of the site having regard to other land use policies and objectives to protect all aspects of the landscape including visual, cultural and environmental. All wind turbine proposals, irrespective of size shall be subject to full Environmental Assessment (EIA).

**Objectives in relation to Wind Farm Developments and LCA**

**Objective 200** Encourage the development of wind energy in suitable locations in an environmentally sensitive way in accordance with Wind Energy Planning Guidelines and land use policies of the CDP.

**Objective 201** Investigate the potential for relatively small-scale wind energy developments within urban and industrial areas and for small community - based proposals outside the key areas that are identified as being potentially appropriate for wind energy development. Community ownership of wind energy projects enables local communities to benefit directly from local wind energy resources being developed in their local areas, ensuring long term income for rural communities.

6.3 RURAL SETTLEMENT STRATEGY

6.3.1 Background and Strategic Context

**National and Regional Context**

**Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland, 1997**

The focus of this document is on environmental protection and sustainable development and the integration of these considerations into policy at all levels of government to ensure balanced development. The strategy recognises the need for good spatial planning and the inclusion of sustainability concerns in urban and built environment policies. The document highlights the importance of Development Plans in protecting and enhancing the natural environment, in ensuring that developments are properly located, structured and designed and advocates the following: closer coordination between transport and land use planning, high residential densities in appropriate
locations, clear demarcation between urban and rural land-use to help prevent urban sprawl, more sustainable development patterns in larger settlements, maintaining and integrating development into the rural landscape and accommodating genuine rural housing needs.

National Spatial Strategy, 2002

The aim of the NSS is to improve the quality of life of all citizens, bringing jobs closer to where people live, improving our environment and building a strong sustainable economic future for ourselves and our children. The strategy sets out a 20 year planning framework designed to achieve a better balance of social, economic and physical development and population growth in Ireland. The NSS provides guidance for future development by identifying a hierarchy of settlements to accommodate future growth, in order to achieve balanced regional development.

In order to redress this imbalance, the NSS 2002 identifies gateways and hubs that have the capacity to support the stronger urban-rural structure needed to drive the development of these regions. The sustainable rural settlement policy framework in the NSS has four broad objectives:

- To sustain and renew established rural communities and the existing stock of investment in a way that responds to the various spatial, structural and economic changes taking place, while protecting the important assets rural areas possess.
- To strengthen the established structure of villages and smaller settlements both to support local economies and to accommodate additional population in a way that supports the viability of public transport and local infrastructure and services such as schools and water services.
- To ensure that key assets in rural areas such as water quality and the natural and cultural heritage are protected to support quality of life and economic vitality.
- To ensure that rural settlement policies take account of and are appropriate to local circumstances.

The NSS provides guidance on rural housing and, in this regard, it distinguishes between “rural” and “urban” generated housing in rural housing as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA TYPE</th>
<th>NSS 2002 DEFINITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Generated Housing</td>
<td>Housing needed in rural areas within the established rural community by persons working in rural area or in nearby urban areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Generated Housing</td>
<td>Housing in rural locations sought by persons living and working in urban areas, including second homes and holiday homes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The general principle in the NSS is that, subject to satisfying good planning practice in matters of site location, positioning on sites, design and the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and areas of high landscape value, rural generated housing needs should be accommodated where they arise. In relation to urban generated housing, the NSS identifies four rural area types with different circumstances and tailored policy responses as shown in Table 24 below.

Table 24: NSS 2002 Rural Area Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA TYPE</th>
<th>NSS 2002 DEFINITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence</td>
<td>These are rural areas within commuting range of cities and larger towns where the development of urban generated housing in the open countryside is increasing rapidly. The NSS 2002 stresses that development driven by cities and larger towns should generally take place within their built up areas or in areas identified for new development through the planning process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Stronger Rural Areas**
These are rural areas that traditionally have had a strong agricultural base that gave rise to an extensive network of smaller towns, villages and other settlements. The NSS 2002 suggests that the extensive village and small town structure has much potential in accommodating additional housing development catering for persons working in larger cities and towns but desiring a rural lifestyle.

**Structurally Weaker Rural Areas**
These are rural areas that are generally distant from major urban areas with a weaker agricultural base and a weak urban structure, which has led to population and economic decline. The NSS 2002 emphasises the importance of accommodating any demand for permanent residential development, while acknowledging the importance of supporting the urban structure of such areas as well.

**Rural Areas With Dispersed Settlement Patterns**
These are rural areas in some western seaboard areas, notably Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Clare, Kerry and West Cork, where distinctive settlement patterns have evolved in the form of small clusters of housing. The NSS 2002 emphasises the importance of locating new housing in a way that fits with the traditional settlement patterns and strengthens existing patterns of housing.

The NSS places County Roscommon in the West Region, which has as its goal to promote economic activity and build balanced regional development by building on the dynamic role of Galway as a gateway and expanding its influence. The NSS recommends focusing on improving “regional accessibility through advanced communications infrastructure, by road and public transport”; providing “enhanced townscapes and local services”; strengthening the functional links with the midlands region through Ballinasloe and Roscommon along the N6; and providing a link i.e. strategic radial corridor through the Midlands gateway of Athlone to Castlebar/Ballina through infrastructure improvements. Other components of the strategy include:

- Development and expansion of towns such as Ballaghaderreen, Boyle and Castlerea through effective promotion and marketing in association with larger towns, hubs and gateways
- Smaller towns and villages can play a key role in service delivery, and employment support particularly for those areas which are physically remote and peripheral
- Gateways and hubs can support development in smaller villages, where pressure for development exists, through servicing and development initiatives
- Identifying key assets and presenting or assembling a quality tourism package relying on the natural and cultural heritage of areas, such as those located along the Shannon River

The NSS highlights the importance of the availability of social infrastructure in improving the quality of life of the existing population and in attracting internationally mobile labour with in-demand skills. Aims must include the achievement of more cohesive and integrated local urban communities. The NSS broadly sets out the range of services and facilities that contribute to the attractiveness of the various settlements within the country. It is acknowledged that there is a strong relationship between settlement size and the levels of service that can be supported.

In addition, Map 10 of the NSS indicates the major spatial elements in the West Region. According to Map 10, County Roscommon has the following overall features:

- Rural Areas with Strong Potential for Diversification – Includes the eastern areas of County Roscommon along the River Shannon.
- Urban Strengthening Opportunity – Includes Carrick-on-Shannon, Ballinasloe, Castlerea, Ballaghaderreen, Strokestown and Boyle.
- Village Strengthening and Rural Area Opportunities – Includes the majority of County Roscommon further to the west of the River Shannon.
- Gateway – Athlone Town.
- County Town – Roscommon and Carrick-on-Shannon.
- <5000 Town – Ballinasloe.
• 1 500 – 5 000 Town – Castlerea and Boyle.
• Urban Centres (circa 1 000) – Ballaghaderreen.
• Centres in Weak Urban Structure Areas – Elphin and Strokestown.
• National Transport Corridor – Athlone to Ballinasloe/Glaway, Athlone to Roscommon/ Castlerea/Castlebar, Strokestown to Ballaghaderreen, Carrick to Boyle/Sligo.

Regional Planning Guidelines for the West, 2004 - 2016

The Regional Planning Guidelines for the West Region, 2004 – 2016 has been prepared for the Counties of Galway, Mayo and Roscommon. Of relevance to rural development the preferred Strategic Development Option for the Region recommends that;

“To support development in the towns and villages in the region that is in sympathy with the existing built environment and ensures that any approved developments are in keeping with the town/village ethos which may be unique to each town/village

To recognise the need for increased employment opportunities in order to sustain viable rural communities.”

Several strategies/projects have been proposed as part of the Regional Planning Guidelines which are of relevance to County Roscommon and these include;

• The upgrading of roads e.g. the N61 between Roscommon and Boyle (Page 60)
• Encourage the provision of enterprise parks, incubation centres such as the IDA park in Roscommon Town (Page 69)
• Diversify farm production (Page 69)
• Encourage stronger tourism marketing (Page 70)
• Encourage Large Scale developments such as the Lough Key Forest Park Development (Page 74)
• In North Roscommon which includes the towns of Strokestown, Boyle, Ballaghaderreen and Castlerea: focus on tourism, retail development, enterprise parks, roads and food production (Page 86)
• In Roscommon and East Galway which include Roscommon Town, Ballinasloe and the areas covered by the Athlone Environ Plan: focus on decentralisation, economic development, tourism, and there may be potential for an airport on South Roscommon (Page 90)
• The linked gateway of Athlone has a significant connection with the southern section of Roscommon, to which it is contiguous. The Athlone (Western) Environ are strategically important to the development and growth of County Roscommon and will continue to contribute to sustaining the economic stabilisation and growth of the County.

Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region, 2004

According to the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region 2004 (RPG-MR 2004), the development of the linked gateway of Athlone/Mullingar/Tullamore is seen as the critical driver of the regional economy. This gateway forms part of the central area of the region and is located on strategic national infrastructure that justifies the location of large scale industrial, commercial and retail development and which would replace the need for long distance commuting across other regions.

The RPG-MR 2004 identify the need to continue to promote the gateway as a focus for inward investment in business and technology parks, to accelerate growth and investment in the gateway and to provide sufficient infrastructure, facilities and services to support projected population increase, housing needs and economic growth.
Guidelines on Sustainable Rural Housing, 2005

The Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines 2005 (SRHG 2005) were published in April 2005 by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG). The SRHG 2005 represent the final statutory guidelines and replace the earlier Draft Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines 2004, which were published in March 2004.

The SRHG 2005 constitute Ministerial guidelines under Section 28 of the PDA 2000. Under Section 28, Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála shall have regard to Ministerial guidelines in the performance of their functions. According to the DEHLG: “The guidelines are a material consideration both in relation to development plans and in the consideration of planning applications. Planning Authorities are required to review and vary their development plans, where necessary, to ensure that their policies on rural settlement are consistent with the policies set out in the guidelines.”

The Guidelines state that policy for rural settlement must support three overarching policy objectives;

- encourage development needed to sustain and renew established rural communities in both smaller rural towns and villages and wider countryside areas;
- guide development to the right locations in rural areas in the interest of protecting natural and man-made assets in those areas; and
- tailor planning policies to respond to different types of economic social and physical circumstances of different types of rural areas.

The NSS 2002 and SRHG 2005 identify the following rural area types:

Table 25: SRHG 2005 Rural Area Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA TYPE</th>
<th>SRHG 2005 DEFINITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence</td>
<td>These areas will exhibit characteristics such as close proximity to the immediate environs or close commuting catchment of large cities and towns, rapidly rising population, evidence of considerable pressure for development of housing due to proximity to such urban areas, or to major transport corridors with ready access to the urban area, and pressures on infrastructure such as the local road network.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stronger Rural Areas</td>
<td>In these areas population levels are generally stable within a well-developed town and village structure and in the wider rural areas around them. This stability is supported by a traditionally strong agricultural economic base and the level of individual housing development activity tends to be relatively low and confined to certain areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structurally Weaker Rural Areas</td>
<td>These areas will exhibit characteristics such as persistent and significant population decline as well as a weaker economic structure based on indices of income, employment and economic growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Areas With Clustered Settlement Patterns</td>
<td>As set out in the NSS, areas exhibiting these characteristics are generally associated with the western seaboard of counties such as Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Clare and some parts of Kerry and many parts of the Gaeltacht where there are comparatively fewer village or smaller town type settlements compared with other rural areas; instead there tends in those areas to be a prevalence of housing clusters, groups of clusters and occasionally linear development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Map 1 of the SRHG 2005 provides an Indicative Outline of NSS Rural Area Types. According to Map 1, County Roscommon has the following main features:

- Areas Under Strong Urban Influence – Includes areas around Athlone Town, which is part of a NSS 2002 Linked Gateway.
- Stronger Rural Areas – Includes the south-eastern edge of County Roscommon.
• Structurally Weak Areas – Includes the vast majority of County Roscommon.
• Predominantly Dispersed Settlement Areas – No areas included in County Roscommon.

This map is indicative only and further detailed analysis is required to determine the distribution of rural area types at County level. The SRHG, 2005, identify the need to base policies on factual information and analysis of local circumstances and trends.

Background to Village Design Statements (Heritage Council)

This is a project sponsored by the Heritage Council. The methodology is based on experience in England and Wales and aims to provide some guidance for the preparation of design statements for villages in Ireland. The aim of the Village Design Statements is to influence decision makers; informs designers and developers; “manages change” proactively; brings communities together; describes the “visual character” of the village; and complements other strategies and plans.

Local Context

Draft Roscommon Housing Strategy, 2007

The Draft Housing Strategy for County Roscommon County sets out the current and future housing requirements within the county and in particular the requirement for social and affordable housing. The Housing Strategy requires close correlation with the county settlement strategy

Draft Roscommon Retail Strategy 2007

The Draft Roscommon Retail Strategy 2007 provides a strategy for retail developments in County Roscommon, including a localised assessment of the identified retail capacity within the County and the general locations to which it should be directed.

County Roscommon Groundwater Protection Scheme 2003

The County Roscommon Groundwater Protection Scheme 2003 (GPS 2003) identifies Resource Protection Zones for County Roscommon. These would need to be considered in relation to the impact of rural housing developments and associated septic tank and effluent treatment systems on groundwater resources

6.3.2 County Context and Population Analysis

As already indicated in Section 2.8 of the Plan, the preliminary CSO report, 2006, indicates that the population of the County is 58,700. County Roscommon is largely a rural County with a long tradition of people working and/or living in rural areas and it is anticipated that this will continue. The County has a relatively low population density and weak urban structure but the existing towns and villages have an important role as local centres serving the surrounding rural areas.

Figures released by the CSO so far provide useful population data per Electoral Division (ED), which generally consists of a collection of a number of Townlands. According to the preliminary CSO 2006 figures, County Roscommon has experienced an average population growth of 9.2% over the 2002 figure, resulting in a total increase of 4,926 persons from 53,774 to 58,700. In fact it exceeds the overall growth of the state which is 8.1%. Such an occurrence is unknown in the last half century. The population had fallen from 1926 and between 1986 and 1991 it fell by 2,695 persons.

Population growth varies considerably across the County with the highest growth rates of over 40% in Boyle Rural and over 35% occurring around Athlone Town and Environs, Athlone West Rural, with
the lowest being a decline in population of almost 15% in the north of the County in the Creeve DED. The following cautionary notes should be borne in mind at this time;

- Population increases in settlements, or the development of one large housing development in a smaller settlement, could significantly increase the percentage population and could result in a definition of high development pressure which could in reality not be the case.
- Certain of the towns have a very tightly defined urban centre and ED with limited housing opportunities whereas newer housing estates are built in areas still classified within the town, but in terms of the census located in the adjacent Rural ED. This tends to provide a skewed picture of population trends in these areas.
- The table provides percentage increases which in a large ED may be low but the equivalent number in a small ED may be high

These factors will be considered in determining the appropriateness of particular planning applications.

It should be noted at this time that the trend analysis below is based on Electoral Divisions, which are large spatial units that provide a relatively coarse-grained analysis of growth and population trends. More detailed analysis is required at Townland level and at the level of specific settlements to determine the extent of urban development located on zoned or serviced land in towns and villages as opposed to the extent of single rural dwellings in the adjoining rural areas and wider countryside. A significant number of new houses have been built in rural areas, particularly single rural dwellings in the countryside. Following the full publication of the CSO figures for 2006, the new figures will be taken into account and the information below may change.

The broad trends from 2002 to 2006 are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POPULATION TREND</th>
<th>AREA IN COUNTY</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Population Growth (i.e. between 5% and 45% population growth)</td>
<td>1. Athlone Western Environs and Areas Surrounding Athlone Town</td>
<td>This includes the area surrounding Athlone Town and Environs (Athlone West Rural and Crannagh Beg DEDs) as well a significant area extending from Athlone towards Roscommon along the N61 and the western shores of Lough Ree (Kiltoom and Carnagh DEDs) It also includes an area to the south Clonown, Drumlosh, Moore and Cloonburren DEDs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Roscommon Surroundings and Athleague</td>
<td>This does not include Roscommon Town (Roscommon Urban DED), which has retained a stable population, but does include the rural area surrounding Roscommon Town, (Roscommon Rural DED) as well as Drumdaff, Kilteevan and Mote DEDs to the East. It also includes an area along the N60 to the north-west (Cams DED) and an area along the N63 to the south-west (Athleague West DED) as well as Fuerty DED. This area also extends north through Kilbride South, Kilbride North and Carrowduff DEDs toward Castleplunket and Castlerea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Ballaghaderreen Town and Surroundings</td>
<td>This includes Ballaghaderreen Town and surrounding rural areas (Ballaghaderreen DED).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Termonbarry and Roosky</td>
<td>This includes Roosky (Roosky ED), the areas along the N5 (Bumlin and Termonbarry EDs) as well as Kilglass South and Lissonuffy DEDs to the West and on along the Shannon to Lanesborough (Cloontuskert DED).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Areas Surrounding Boyle Town</td>
<td>This does not include Boyle Town (Boyle Urban ED), which has declined in population, but it does include the immediate surrounding rural area (Boyle Rural ED) and outlying areas further to the west (Tivannagh DED).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Chapter 6: Rural Development

| **6. Areas Surrounding Carrick-on-Shannon and Leitrim** | This includes the area to the south-west of Carrick-on-Shannon (Danesfort DED), the area extending from Leitrim Village northwards along the River Shannon (Killukin, Tumna South and Tumna North DEDs), and Cloonetteem DED to the South. |
| **7. Frenchpark and Surroundings** | This includes Frenchpark Town and surrounding rural area (Frenchpark DED), extending from Castlerea along the R361 (Castlerea, Castleplunket and Bellanagare DEDs). |
| **8. Curraghboy and Surroundings** | This includes Rockhill DED and surrounding rural area (Carnagh, Caltragh and Kilcar DED) as well as the outlying areas (Dysart, Turrock, Lackan, Scregg and Lecarrow DEDs). |
| **9. Elphin and Surroundings** | This includes Elphin DED and surrounding rural area (Creggs, Lisgarve, Creeve and Aughrim West) as well as the outlying Kilmacumsey DED. |
| **10. Keadue and Surroundings** | This includes Keadue and its surrounding areas (Keadue and Crossna DEDs). |
| **11. Areas between Strokestown and Carrick-on-Shannon** | This includes the area along the L1406 between Strokestown and Carrick-on-Shannon (Elia and Ballygarden DEDs). |
| **12. Cloonfad and Ballinlough** | This includes the villages of Cloonfad and Ballinlough and their surrounding areas (Killtullagh and Ballinlough DEDs). |

#### Stable Population (i.e. generally between 0% and 5% population growth)

| **1. Roscommon Town** | This includes Roscommon Town, (Roscommon Urban DED) |
| **2. Strokestown and Surroundings** | This includes Strokestown (Strokestown ED), its surrounding areas (Cloonfinlough, Killavackan and Annaghmore DEDs) as well as outlying areas (Cloyonquinn and Kilgefin DEDs) |
| **3. Croghan and Environs** | This includes Croghan and other areas that are not subject to high population growth, are included within the Rural Tax Incentive Scheme for the Upper Shannon Designated Area and are also included in the CLAR area 2006 (Kilcolagh, Easternow, Rushfield, Croghan, Killumod and Oakport DEDs). |
| **4. Ballymoe and Surrounding Areas along the north western periphery of the County** | This includes areas that are not subject to high population growth, are included within the Rural Tax Incentive Scheme for the Upper Shannon Designated Area and are also included in the CLAR area 2006 (Dunamon, Ballintober, Castleteheen, Cooloughter, Cloonfower, Artagh South and Artagh North, DEDs). |
| **5. Areas along the R361 between Castlerea and Frenchpark** | This includes areas that are not subject to high population growth, are included within the Rural Tax Incentive Scheme for the Upper Shannon Designated Area and are also included in the CLAR area 2006 (Fairymount and Baslick DEDs). |
| **6. Other Areas North of Roscommon Town** | This includes the areas to the north of Roscommon Town that are not subject to high population growth and which were included within the Rural Tax Incentive Scheme for the Upper Shannon Designated Area and large parts are also included in the CLAR extended area 2006 (Edmondstown, Kilbryan, Altogowla, Kilmore and Kilglass North DEDs). |
| **7. Athleague and Surrounding areas to the West** | This includes Athleague and Surrounding areas that are included in the CLAR area 2006 (Athleague West, Lismaha and Taghboy DEDs). |
8. Other Areas South of Roscommon Town

This includes the areas to the south of Roscommon Town that are not subject to high population growth and which were excluded from the Rural Tax Incentive Scheme for the Upper Shannon Designated Area and are now included in the CLAR extended area 2006 (Dunamon, Carrowreagh, Creagh, Ballydangan and Thomastown DEDs).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Population Decline (i.e. generally negative population growth)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Areas North of Roscommon Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This includes Boyle Urban, Rockingham, Ballyformoyle, Agahfin, Lough Allen, Ballyfarnan, Breedoge, Buckhill, Loughglinn, Cloonygormican, Ogulla, Tulsk, Killukin, Rossmore, Mantua, Aughrim and Creeve DEDs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Areas South of Roscommon Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This includes Rosmoylan, Taughmaconnell, Castlesampson and Culliagh DEDs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3.3 Rural Housing Strategy and Policies

The Rural Housing Strategy for County Roscommon will be as follows:

*To promote appropriate and sustainable rural development by facilitating rural generated housing needs within the locality within which they arise, subject to satisfying good planning practice, and to direct urban generated housing development to areas zoned, serviced or otherwise considered appropriate for housing in the towns and villages and in any location considered to be a structurally weaker rural area, again subject to satisfying good planning practice.*

In all housing developments in rural areas, the consideration of individual sites would be subject to good planning practice which will involve normal siting and design considerations, which would include site suitability, technical, environmental and amenity considerations as follows:

Table 26: Aspects of Good Planning Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASPECT</th>
<th>PROVISION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traffic Safety</td>
<td>Any proposed vehicular access would not endanger public safety by giving rise to a significant traffic hazard. See 6.3.5 point 4 for developments proposed from national routes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Quality</td>
<td>• Housing in un-serviced rural areas and any on-site wastewater disposal systems are designed, located and maintained in a way that protects water quality, including both surface water and groundwater.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The development plan should include or refer to information regarding the location of any particularly vulnerable water resources whether surface waters such as rivers and lakes or ground water, aquifers and the sources of public water supplies. Section 4 of the SRHG 2005 contains more information on this issue. The aim in providing such information should be for the development plan to offer clear guidance on the existence of such resources in the first instance and to set out the planning authority’s requirements in relation to the approach to housing development in or adjoining these resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The 2003 Roscommon Groundwater Protection Scheme would need to be considered in this regard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Designations</td>
<td>The siting, design and servicing of the development takes account of environmental and/or policy designations in the Development Plan and at national/international level, such as SACs, SPAs, NHAs and Areas of High Amenity Value.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Built and Cultural Heritage

The siting and design of new dwellings takes account of and integrates appropriately with its physical surroundings and other aspects of the natural and cultural heritage and avoids damage to that heritage. The Record of Protected Structures would need to be considered.

## Visual Amenity

The siting and design of new dwellings takes account of and integrates appropriately with its landscape setting so as to minimise any negative impacts on visual amenity. The Views and Prospects would need to be considered. Rural housing design guidelines provide a valuable mechanism for guiding the siting and design of new houses.

## General

The proposed site and development otherwise generally accords with the objectives of the CDP and other relevant plans and strategies. That the capacity of the area to absorb further development, in particular, the following factors will be examined:

- (a) the degree of existing ribbon development in the area;
- (b) the degree of existing haphazard or piecemeal development in the area;
- (c) the degree of existing development on the original landholding; and
- (d) the degree to which applications previously granted on the original landholding have been retained in family ownership.

Utilise the Landscape Character Assessment in informing policy in directing development on the location and siting of new dwellings.

For the purposes of the Roscommon Rural Housing Strategy, *rural generated housing* and *urban generated housing* have been defined as follows:

### Table 27: Definition of Local Housing Need

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Rural Generated Housing| a) Persons who are an intrinsic part of the rural community. Persons who have lived in rural areas for a significant portion of their lives or who have rural roots in terms of their parents being of rural origin. Examples would include farmers, their sons and daughters and/or any persons taking over the ownership and running of farms, as well as people who have lived for substantial parts of their lives in rural areas and are building their homes, such as sons and daughters of families living in rural areas who have grown up in rural areas and are perhaps seeking to build their first home near their family place of residence. Returning emigrants who lived for substantial parts of their lives in rural areas, then moved abroad and who now wish to return to reside near other family members, to work locally, to care for elderly family members, or to retire should also be accommodated.  

b) Persons working full-time or part-time in rural areas. Such persons would include those actively engaged full-time in agriculture, horticulture, farming, forestry, bloodstock, peat industry, inland waterway or marine related occupations, as well as part time occupations where the predominant occupation is farming/ natural resource related. It could also include persons employed locally whose employment would provide a service to the local community or persons whose work is intrinsically linked to rural areas such as teachers in rural schools or other persons whose work predominantly takes place within rural areas. |
Rural generated housing needs will be accommodated in the locality in which they arise, subject to the development proposal satisfying good planning practice and the applicant complying with the definition of rural generated housing need.

Urban Generated Housing

Demand for housing in rural areas generated by persons principally living and working in urban areas, including second homes. Urban generated housing needs will be accommodated in towns and villages and in any location considered to be a structurally weak rural area.

The following *rural housing policies* are considered by Roscommon County Council (RCC) to be appropriate for County Roscommon as a whole:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLICY NO.</th>
<th>POLICY DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy 202</td>
<td>Sustain and renew the rural communities of County Roscommon through the ongoing implementation and monitoring of RCC’s Rural Housing Policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy 203</td>
<td>Ensure that all proposals for rural housing in County Roscommon satisfy good planning practice. This would include all of the considerations listed in Table 26 above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy 204</td>
<td>Ensure that Rural Generated Housing will be accommodated in the locality within which they arise and where the applicant comes within the development plan definition of need, subject to satisfying good planning practice in relation to site location, access, drainage and design requirements and that urban generated rural housing needs should take place within built-up areas or land identified, through the development plan process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy 205</td>
<td>Ensure that all planning applications for rural housing are accompanied by a completed “Rural Housing Application” form. The purpose of this form is to ascertain the need for housing in rural areas and to allow the PA to monitor trends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy 206</td>
<td>Prepare Rural Housing Design Guidelines for County Roscommon within the first year of the lifetime of the Plan. These guidelines will help to inform applicants regarding the design and siting options for new houses and to ensure that new developments harmonise with their rural locations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.3.4 Rural Area Types

There are three distinct rural area types that have been identified in County Roscommon based on the analysis in section 6.3.2 which assesses the population figures from the preliminary 2006 CSO figures defined by DED. (See Map 21) These Area Types include the following:

1. Rural Areas Under Urban Influence

The aim in these areas is to support urban generated housing without compromising rural areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA TYPE</th>
<th>DEFINITION AND POLICY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence</td>
<td>Rural areas within commuting distance of larger towns where urban generated housing in open countryside is increasing and population growth has been significant. The policies for these areas are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1) To accommodate Rural Generated Housing needs in the locality within which they arise, subject to good planning practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) To direct Urban Generated Housing development to areas zoned, serviced or otherwise considered appropriate for housing in the towns and villages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Athlone Western Environ and Areas surrounding Athlone town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Roscommon Town Surroundings and Athleague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ballaghaderreen Town and Surroundings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Termonbarry and Roosky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Areas Surrounding Boyle Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Areas Surrounding Carrick-on-Shannon and Leitrim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Frenchpark and Surroundings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Curraghboy and Surroundings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Elphin and Surroundings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Keadue and Surroundings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Areas between Strokestown and Carrick-on-Shannon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Cloonfad and Ballinlough</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. **Stronger Rural Areas**

The aim in these areas is to avoid ribbon development on the approaches to settlements and to protect the fabric of settlements by restricting development on the outskirts of villages as well as maintaining a stable population base by allowing limited urban generated housing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA TYPE</th>
<th>DEFINITION AND POLICY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stronger Rural</td>
<td>Rural areas that have a stronger agricultural base and/or more developed village and small town structure with a generally stable population. The policies for these areas are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas</td>
<td>1) To accommodate Rural Generated Housing needs subject to good planning practice. New development should be clustered with existing family dwelling or farm buildings, except where inappropriate due to traffic safety, environmental considerations etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) To ensure that individual house developments in rural areas satisfy the housing requirements of persons who are an intrinsic part of the rural community subject to compliance with normal planning criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) To reinforce the existing network of towns, villages and other settlements in the rural areas. This can accommodate additional housing development catering for persons working in larger cities and towns but desiring a rural lifestyle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4) To consolidate and sustain the stability of the rural population and to strive to achieve a balance between development activity in urban areas and villages and the wider rural area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5) Limited urban generated housing may be considered in the DEDs experiencing the most significant population decline, subject to ongoing monitoring, environmental considerations, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6) To direct Urban Generated Housing development to areas zoned, serviced or otherwise considered appropriate for housing in the towns and villages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LOCATION**

1. Roscommon Town
2. Strokestown and Surroundings
3. Croghan and Environs
4. Ballymoe and Surrounding Areas along the north western periphery of the County
5. Areas between Castlerea and Frenchpark
6. Other Areas North of Roscommon Town

These areas, with the exception of Roscommon Town, were included within the Rural Tax Incentive Scheme for the Upper Shannon Designated Area and are also included in the CLAR area.

1. Athleague and Surrounding areas to the West
2. Other Areas South of Roscommon Town

These areas were excluded from the Rural Tax Incentive Scheme for the Upper Shannon Designated Area. Though, with the exception of Culliagh, are included in the CLAR area.
3. **Structurally weak rural areas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA TYPE</th>
<th>DEFINITION AND POLICY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structurally Weaker Rural Areas</td>
<td>Rural areas that are generally more distant from the main settlement centres with a generally weaker agricultural base and/or weaker town and village structure with resulting population decline. The policies for these areas are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1) To accommodate Rural Generated Housing needs in the locality within which they arise, subject to good planning practice and the protection of important landscapes and environmentally sensitive areas, in order to facilitate the expansion of the rural population and the maintenance of essential local services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) To accommodate Urban Generated Housing needs subject to good planning practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) To reinforce and support the existing and/or emerging network of towns, villages and other settlements in the rural areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCATION</td>
<td>1. Areas to the North of Roscommon Town including Boyle Urban, Rockingham, Ballyformoyle, Agahfin, Lough Allen, Ballyfarman, Breedoge, Buckhill, Loughlinn, Cloonygormican, Ogulla, Tulsk, Killukin, Rossmore, Mantua, Aughrim and Creeve DEDs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>These areas were included within the Rural Tax Incentive Scheme for the Upper Shannon Designated Area and are also included in the CLAR area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Areas to the South of Roscommon Town including Rosmoylan, Taughmaconnell, Castlesampson and Culliagh DEDs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>These areas were excluded from the Rural Tax Incentive Scheme for the Upper Shannon Designated Area though, with the exception of Culliagh, are included in the CLAR area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A CAUTIONARY NOTE:** The areas in South Roscommon continue to experience increased development pressure. This is not readily evident when analyzing the CSO figures, as qualified under Section 6.3.2. Map 5 details the percentage population change per DED. In addition to this, aspects such as groundwater vulnerability and prioritization of the N6 development corridor identified in the NSS would seem to indicate that it is not a simple matter of classifying these areas as Stronger Rural Areas or indeed Structurally Weak, but rather that they could be Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence. Assessment of planning applications within a 20km radius of Athlone and Ballinasloe would need to take this into consideration. Until such time as the full publication of the CSO 2006 figures are available fundamental changes in the analysis above will not be undertaken.
6.3.5 Specific Policies

There are a number of issues that require specific policies, including the following:

1. SINGLE RURAL DWELLINGS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

The preceding sections have addressed how the PA views rural generated housing need and urban generated housing need in the context of the three rural area types, namely; Rural Areas under Urban Influence, Stronger Rural Areas and Structurally Weak Rural Areas.

The Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines outline that Planning Authorities in formulating policies recognise the importance to rural people of family ties and ties to a local area such as parish, townland or the catchment of local schools and sporting clubs. They deliver positive benefits for rural areas and sustain rural communities by allowing people to build in rural areas on suitable sites. In this spirit the Planning Authority will support proposals for individual dwellings on suitable sites in rural areas where the applicant can clearly demonstrate a genuine need for a dwelling as indicated in the Table above of Definitions of Local Housing Need.

In addition to the criteria mentioned above, the Planning Authority also recognises that exceptional health circumstances may require a person to live in a particular environment or close to family support. Supporting documentation should be provided to this effect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLICY NO.</th>
<th>POLICY DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy 207</td>
<td>Ensure that individual house developments in rural areas satisfy the housing requirements of persons who are an intrinsic part of the rural community in which they are proposed, subject to compliance with normal planning criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy 208</td>
<td>It is recognised that piecemeal and haphazard development of rural areas close to large urban centres and settlements can cause problems as these centres grow, particularly in relation to: (a) the orderly and efficient development of newly developing areas on the edges of towns and villages; (b) obstructing alignments for the future provision of infrastructure such as roads and electricity lines; and (c) undermining the viability of urban public transport because of low densities. Development of this kind will therefore be strictly controlled.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy 209</td>
<td>Ribbon development means frontage development on any one side of a road and it is undesirable because it creates numerous accesses onto traffic routes, sterilises backlands, landlocks farmland, creates servicing problems (e.g. water supply, drainage, footpaths and street lighting etc, and intrudes on public views of the rural setting.) Development of this kind will be discouraged. The Planning Authority will assess whether a given proposal will exacerbate such ribbon development, having regard to the following: • the type of rural area and circumstances of the applicant; • the degree to which the proposal might be considered infill development; • the degree to which existing ribbon development would be extended or whether distinct areas of ribbon development would coalesce as a result of the development; and • local circumstances, including the planning history of the area and development pressures.</td>
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</table>
In the event that a landowner requires more than one site under the Local Need category, the provision of a cluster form of development appropriately set back into the landscape from a public road will be encouraged in lieu of a dispersed or linear form of development. Each case will be assessed on its merits having regard to natural environment and sustainable development principles.

**Policy 211**

Persons who fit the criteria as set out in Table 27 will be considered for permission

In this spirit the Planning Authority will support proposals for individual dwellings on suitable sites in rural areas/unzoned land, where the applicant can clearly demonstrate a genuine need for a dwelling as indicated in Table 27 above of Definitions of Local Housing Need.

Operationally, the following matters will apply to planning permissions in rural areas with respect to ‘Sterilisation Agreements’ and occupancy conditions:

- ‘Sterilisation Agreements’ should be used only in exceptional circumstances and are not to be applied in areas in need of rural regeneration.
- Any ‘Sterilisation Agreement’ should only cover a portion of the landholding of which the site is the subject of a planning application and should not cover other unattached landholdings owned by the applicant/landowner in other areas.

### 2. RURAL VILLAGES AND CLUSTERS

As indicated in Chapter 2, the Settlement Hierarchy for the County is as follows;

- Tier 1: County Town/Primary Growth Centre
- Tier 2: Key support towns/settlements
- Tier 3: Key satellite villages
- Tier 4: Key villages
- Tier 5: Smaller Settlements
- Tier 6: Dispersed rural areas

It is likely that Local Area Plans and Village Design Statements will be prepared for the smaller towns and larger villages. It is acknowledged that these smaller urban nodes, crossroad type villages and similar centers have much potential to relieve rural development pressures. Such rural centres are considered to contain the potential to consolidate rural development needs and support the maintenance of essential rural social and community infrastructure such as schools, shops, public houses, post offices and local sporting organisations. This is acknowledged in the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines whereby it is stated that using the development plan process and local area plan processes, Planning Authorities should make every effort to harness all of the measures available to them to ensure that sufficient high quality, well located and affordable development can take place in rural villages.

In reality the existing village character of many of these areas proposed, scattered throughout the County has been severely compromised by inappropriate development. It is not the intention of the Planning Authority to support proposals which amount to a line of ribbon development or that has not developed around a nucleus / crossroad with sufficient lower level social and community services present. The provision for non-integrated residential communities is not sustainable and does not accord with the settlement strategy proposed for the County. Such an approach would establish a poor precedent having regard to the proper planning and sustainable development of rural areas and will lead to inevitable servicing issues. In addition, in designating these areas, it is not envisaged that these areas would become major urban centers. The Planning Authority is committed to ensuring that the variety of these settlements located across the County will offer attractive and affordable housing options to meet the needs of the established rural communities, and those wishing to settle in rural areas.
### POLICY NO. | POLICY DESCRIPTION
---|---
**Policy 212** | Housing in rural villages should avoid urban sprawl and suburban type development. The setting of many of the settlements is rich and varied and regard should be had to local materials and local styles. The unique character, vernacular style, and special setting of many of the settlements means that the capacity to absorb large-scale developments is limited. The developer must have regard to the characteristics of the local setting and aim to create a sense of place and identity in any proposed development. All new development shall enhance the local setting and create attractive places to be live, work and take leisure. Development shall be in accordance with the Rural Design Guidelines, to be prepared during the lifetime of this plan.

**Policy 213** | Prepare Village Design Statements for settlements during the life of the plan.

**Policy 214** | When substantial development is proposed for a settlement, this shall be considered having regard to the availability of, or proposals for, the provision of any recreational, community, or other facilities required in the area.

**Policy 215** | A mix of housing is desirable to cater for all sections of the community and ages. There is a particular emphasis on affordability to ensure that local people are not disadvantaged.

**Policy 216** | Ensure that growth in rural villages shall be restricted to local need growth. When submitting an application for any substantial development, the developer shall provide for a housing mix that will satisfy the local need and local growth requirements and shall outline a clear case for the approach taken.

**Policy 217** | Any development, particularly within areas of development pressure, shall maintain a strong settlement boundary that protects the identity of the village.

### 3. RURAL AREAS WITHIN SENSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL AND OTHER DESIGNATIONS

Rural areas with sensitive environmental designations including: Water Source Protection Areas, Areas of High Amenity, National Heritage Areas and Special Conservation Areas. These environmentally sensitive and important landscapes must be protected as they represent some of County Roscommon’s most valuable assets not only in terms of quality of life of the people of Roscommon but also in terms of tourist potential and economic benefit.

- Water Source Protection Areas are designated in recognition of the important role they play in public water supply.
- Areas of High Amenity are designated due to their amenity and recreational potential.
- Special Areas of Conservation are designated natural habitats; Special Protection Areas are designated for bird habitats; and, National Heritage Areas are designated areas of important national heritage.

It is vitally important that these resources be retained and maintained for present as well as future generations. RCC aims to ensure an appropriate emphasis is placed on quality of design and siting in new residential developments in order to ensure that they integrate into existing areas, are mindful of surrounding natural features, and impact minimally on the surrounding countryside and natural landscape of County Roscommon.
POLICY NO. | POLICY DESCRIPTION
---|---
Policy 218 | Ensure appropriately designed quality developments throughout County Roscommon and that the Rural Design Guidelines inform the siting and design of all new rural houses and house extensions.
Policy 219 | Restrict residential development not related to agricultural activities, such as farming and forestry, in all water source protection areas, with the exception of rural housing need, where no alternative exists.
Policy 220 | Consult with the relevant Fisheries Board with regard to development proposals close to or within the catchment of sensitive water courses and/or close to spawning streams within the County.
Policy 221 | Ensure that new housing close to lakes, waterways and high amenity areas be designed to minimise visual impact on the landscape. Views to and from these areas need to be considered when siting new development.
Policy 222 | Prohibit ribbon development especially in pressure areas surrounding lakes and within designated road corridors.
Policy 223 | Prohibit residential development not related to agricultural activities or tourism in all areas of high amenity with the exception of ‘rural housing need’; where there is no alternative site outside the environmentally designated area; and no more than two additional dwellings to be permitted.
Policy 224 | Prohibit proposed new developments, which will have an injurious and adverse impact on designated areas.
Policy 225 | Require natural screening, incorporating native species of trees and hedgerows, of proposed development in sensitive areas defined in the LCA throughout the County.
Policy 226 | Prohibit urban generated or speculative developments in environmentally designated areas.
Policy 227 | Ensure new developments in proximity to environmentally designated esker sites do not impact negatively on scientific and landscape values, and groundwater vulnerability of the esker landscape.

4. DEVELOPMENT ON NATIONAL ROUTES

County Roscommon’s road network provides important transport links to and from other parts of Ireland. It is important to ensure that these links are not compromised by inappropriately located development access causing a traffic hazard and endangering public safety.

POLICY NO. | POLICY DESCRIPTION
---|---
Policy 228 | Minimise new accesses or the intensification of existing accesses onto National Primary and National Secondary routes, outside the 80/100 km/h speed limit zones, in the interests of road safety and in maintaining the free flow and traffic carrying capacity of these roads.
Policy 229  In terms of residential development, a new house will be acceptable only in the following instances:
- Where it is proposed to replace a dwelling. The existing dwelling should be inhabited or, if empty, last used as a dwelling, and the roof and walls should still be substantially intact.
- Where it is for the farmer, as with a retirement dwelling, or for a family member involved with the running of the farm.

Policy 230  New developments requiring access onto National routes outside 50 and 60km/h speed limit zones will only be allowed in the case of:
(a) agricultural developments on farms that have no alternative means of access, e.g. onto a lower category road;
(b) tourism approved projects for long established landholders with frontage only onto National Routes;
(c) the erection of a house on a family holding, for the use of persons specified in the Plan, where no alternative access onto a lower category road is available; and
(d) developments where the siting and design are considered to be appropriate.

Policy 231  A Road Safety Audit is required for all development that incorporates a proposal for a new access to a national road or where the development may give rise to a significant increase in traffic on an existing access to a national road. A traffic impact assessment is required where a development gives rise to a significant increase in traffic.

Policy 232  In the case of a permission requiring access onto a National Route where an existing access is in place, the new house will normally be required to use the same access as the existing house.

Notwithstanding the above provisions, permission will not be granted in respect of sites which do not meet the normal criteria with regard to site size, percolation characteristics and sight distance

5. DEVELOPMENT ALONG REGIONAL ROUTES

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<td>Policy 233</td>
<td>Access for residential development will not be granted onto a regional route including the existing N6 following downgrading, where access to a lower category road is available, and until the preparation of an alternative action plan for the control of developments and associated accesses along the route is developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy 234</td>
<td>Ensuring that necessary new entrances are located in such a manner as to provide effective visibility for both users of the entrance and users of the public roads so that opportunities for conflicting movements are avoided, taking account of all relevant considerations such as traffic levels, typical vehicle speeds, plans for realignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy 235</td>
<td>Identify and protect non-national roads of regional or local importance from unnecessary and excessive individual access points, which would prejudice the carrying capacity and ultimately the function of the road.</td>
</tr>
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6. **HOLIDAY HOMES**

Many parts of County Roscommon are viewed as attractive for holiday home and second home development. If uncontrolled this type of development can have severe detrimental effects on the local quality of life and environment of areas of high natural amenities. Well located, appropriately scaled, sited and screened developments can act as a revitalising force in the structurally weaker rural areas of the County promoting economic development and rural tourism.

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<tr>
<td>Policy 236</td>
<td>Encourage holiday/second home development within established villages or small towns or in distinct clusters in rural areas where appropriate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy 237</td>
<td>Support appropriately designed, scaled, sited and screened holiday/second home development in ‘structurally weaker rural areas’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy 238</td>
<td>Support the conversion, redevelopment and re-use of traditional farm buildings and existing housing stock in rural areas to use as holiday homes where appropriate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy 239</td>
<td>Accommodate small scale enterprises, such as the renovation of barns, outhouses or other existing structures and the construction of an appropriate number of holiday homes for short term rental (normally less than 3 months at a time to any person/family) associated, for example, with an existing permanent residence or active farm/agri tourism enterprise. It shall be a condition of permission that such holiday homes shall not be sold to form a separate permanent residence.</td>
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7. **RE-USE OF EXISTING STRUCTURES AND REPLACEMENT DWELLINGS**

In the past County Roscommon has had a strong tradition of agricultural activity spanning generations. As farm practices have become more efficient and less labour intensive many rural areas have experienced a decrease in local population resulting in vacant residential as well as agricultural buildings. The rich heritage of traditional farm buildings in County Roscommon should be protected.

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<tr>
<td>Policy 240</td>
<td>Promote the conversion, redevelopment and re-use of traditional farm buildings and existing housing stock in rural areas to residential use without applying the requirement of ‘rural housing need’. The replacement of existing dwellings will be facilitated where it can be shown that the original structure was last used as a habitable dwelling and it’s roof, internal and external walls are generally intact. In the case of refurbishment and extension proposals, the scale and architectural treatment of the proposed works should be sympathetic to the character of the original structure and the surrounding area, including adjoining or nearby development. It should be noted that a “Habitable House” means a house which; (a) is used as a dwelling, (b) is not in use but when last used was used, disregarding any unauthorised use, as a dwelling and is not derelict, or (c) was provided for use as a dwelling but has not been occupied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy 241</td>
<td>Discourage the demolition and replacement of traditional or vernacular rural housing whose character merits retention.</td>
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</table>
6.4 RURAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

It is an objective to commence, within the lifetime of the Plan, the preparation of Design Guidelines for Rural Areas. As indicated within the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines, 2005:

“Design guidelines can be particularly useful in articulating in general terms, best practice in relation to the design and siting of houses in rural areas. At the time of writing, about one-third of rural planning authorities have or refer to design guidelines within their development plans. Where possible, planning authorities who do not have such a design guide should put one in place as soon as practicable and should refer potential applicants to such guidance at as early a stage as possible. This can be achieved through mechanisms such as making introductory information pamphlets available at all public offices in a county or the provision of an advisory service through the planning and architectural services of the local authority.” (p.28)

In the interim, as a response to the recommendation given above, the detail contained below has been gathered from the resources provided by a number of other local authorities and provides appropriate guidance in the short to medium term for members of the public, developers and decision makers with respect to rural housing.

In addition, the engagement of a professional architect will ensure that the design will meet the overall objective of integrating into the countryside and incorporating vernacular styles, whilst at the same time ensuring that the objectives of good quality building and use of building materials are incorporated, and that modern energy and living standards are achieved.

New development in rural areas should be absorbed and integrated successfully into the rural setting, i.e. development should harmonise or ‘read’ with the existing traditional pattern of development and not intrude on unspoilt landscapes.

Development proposals in the countryside must be integrated into their rural setting and must satisfy high standards of location, siting and design including scale, massing, orientation, choice of materials and landscaping.

The main elements to take into account when planning a house in a rural setting:

1. Site Selection
2. Site Layout
3. Appropriate House Design
4. Landscape Design
5. Construction Detail Appropriate to Location

Location

The surface character of an area, its topography, vegetation cover, fields and hedgerows, determine the impact of new development. Allied to surface character are the extent and pattern of existing development in a rural area and these factors will determine whether new development can be integrated successfully or not. For example, in areas of open bogland, shoreline and high, exposed terrain, it may be difficult to find unobtrusive sites. In areas of enclosed fields with mature trees, stone
walls, rolling topography and existing development, imaginative use of the site’s natural features can integrate new building unobtrusively into the countryside. Areas of enclosed fields, agriculture-related development and mature tree cover can absorb new buildings without damaging the rural quality of the area, more effectively than open landscapes. Sensitive design will be required in all cases, particularly if buildings are proposed in visually vulnerable, open landscapes. The location criterion, therefore, establishes whether a proposed development will be acceptable in principle, having regard to the general characteristics of the site, its context and visibility from critical viewpoints.

**Siting**

The siting criterion refers to specific site assessment. The site should be sufficiently sized to accommodate a building set back from the road, and make full use of natural features. Essentially good siting is when a building appears to “belong” to the landscape rather than intruding upon it. Careful use of the natural features of the site, any backdrop of rising land, trees or hedgerows and interaction with existing buildings can enhance the presentation of a development.

The building should be sited so as not to break the skyline or shoreline as viewed from distant public vantage points. Use should be made of backdrops of trees, rising land or other buildings.

Siting may also be informed through the traditional form and pattern of existing development as often the older houses alignment attempted to maximize shelter from prevailing winds and utilize sunlight.

**Boundary Treatment**

Landscaping should be considered at the initial planning stage in order to obtain maximum benefit from existing features. Any changes made to the site should help to blend the development into the surrounding landscape.

Hedgerows should be retained and reinforced in so far as practicable; only in exceptional circumstances shall hedgerows be allowed to be removed. The relocation of a hedge or replanting of a native hedgerow may be a requirement of planning permission. Native hedgerow species are recommended for planting, plants of local provenance are always preferable and do not interfere with the genetics of the wild populations.

Trees provide an attractive element to any garden or home and help to blend new housing into the countryside. Native trees are ecologically more valuable than non-native species. RCC will seek to apply the principles and guidance of the document “Landscaping your House in County Roscommon with Native Trees and Shrubs” produced in 2007.

Planting clumps of trees is preferable to single trees, and biodiversity value can be further enhanced, by connecting new planting with hedgerows, woodland edges, rivers and ponds.

**Contours**

It is important when siting a dwelling to pay particular attention to the existing contours on a site to determine if a specifically designed dwelling can be accommodated on a site, making use of and working with the site levels.

In less sensitive locations, it may be feasible to modify the site by excavation to reduce the visual impact of the development. Caution should be exercised in this instance however as excessive excavation can lead to permanent scarring of the landscape.

Consideration should be given to change the internal floor levels to suit the slope. The aim should be to orientate the building with the contours of the land to give it an integrated appearance, provide shelter and reduce heat loss.
It should be noted that wheelchair accessibility needs to be taken into consideration in all the abovementioned proposals.

**Ribbon development**

Orientation of the building relative to the road and existing development is important, especially where it is proposed to terminate a ribbon of development, ‘round off’ existing scattered development or achieve a cluster of development. New development should relate closely to existing groups of buildings, particularly traditional farm complexes, and should not extend strip-like along public roads. In the main, ribbon development and urban sprawl in the countryside will be discouraged.

Urban sprawl means unplanned development expansion along the roads out of towns and villages, whether or not in ribbon form. It gives rise to the same problems associated with “ribboning”, but may have an even greater visual impact and transform the character of the adjacent settlement. However, in certain circumstances, especially where ribbon development is substantially in place and where additional housing will effectively consolidate the ribbon, ‘infill’ development may be permissible.

Similarly where urban sprawl can be ‘rounded off’ or significantly ordered through careful siting of new development, such development may be permissible.

**Derelict buildings**

The Council will encourage generally the restoration of derelict houses in the countryside and sympathetic consideration will be given to proposals to provide replacement dwellings. In the case of both derelict and replacement houses, design proposals should reflect the existing and previous scale, character and external finishes of the derelict/replacement house.

Where it is proposed to replace an existing dwelling house, the house to be replaced should be clearly recognisable as a dwelling house. New dwelling houses permitted under this policy should be constructed on the site of the house to be replaced – i.e. replacement in situ – except in circumstances where a setback is required in order to improve vehicular access or where alternative siting would be preferable in the interests of visual amenity, public health or orderly development.

The Planning Authority is conscious that not all buildings are suitable for reconstruction. Furthermore consideration must also be given to issues of thermal insulation, light etc. In certain circumstances it may be more practicable to reuse materials from such derelict buildings in the new structure.

**Visual impact**

Whilst ribbon development and urban sprawl will be discouraged, applications for single houses will be assessed according to their capacity to be absorbed into the landscape without creating a disproportionate visual impact or giving rise to significant traffic or environmental impact. Visual impact will be assessed also in accordance with the landscape designations indicated in the Landscape Character Assessment in Chapter 8.

**Entrances**

A new entrance should combine the requirement for continuity in the type of boundary with carefully considered linking of walls or hedges to gate piers and gate.

Walls shall be of masonry or rendered and capped block construction. The use of brick must be carefully considered and shall only be permitted where it is in character with the rural area. Wing walls shall be splayed to give an opening at the front boundary of 10 metres. Walls shall normally be a maximum height of 1.1m.
New rural entrances should not be located within the following distances of junctions:

- National Primary Roads: 150 metres
- National Secondary Roads: 100 metres
- Regional Roads: 100 metres
- Local Primary Roads: 40m

The development by itself or combined with another or other development shall not give rise to a traffic hazard.

**Traffic Safety & Sight Visibility**

As per the current, NRA Road Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, the prescribed sight distance where the maximum speed limit applies, is measured 3 metres back from the carriageway edge and are as follows:

- County Roads: 90 metres
- Regional Roads: 150 metres
- National Roads: 230 metres

Further guidance concerning development on non-national routes is available in the publication “Aspects of Road Safety a County Engineers View” (IEI).

New houses in rural areas should seek to utilise existing access points onto roads in the interests of road safety to assist in maintaining the rural character of the area.

**Drainage Requirements for Single Houses**

The wastewater from a large percentage of the population is not connected to municipal sewers. In rural areas much of the wastewater is treated and disposed of on-site by means of individual septic tanks and proprietary effluent treatment systems.

Septic tanks are installed on sites, which have passed a percolation test(s) (to determine that the soil is suitable for treating effluent and using it as a soil nutrient) and a water table test (which has determined that the water table is sufficiently low in the ground to allow the percolation area to operate). Septic tanks require ongoing maintenance by de-sludging; properly operating septic tanks fill up with sludge, which must be removed regularly—once a year is suggested; and by a licensed operator. They also require careful use—some household cleaning agents may be unsuitable for disposal to septic tanks and adversely affect their performance.

Effluent treatment systems are proposed as an alternative method of disposal on sites that are unsuitable for septic tanks, such as sites with percolation that is too slow—very heavy soils. Effluent treatment systems depend on electricity to function and are more dependent on ongoing maintenance than septic tanks. In order to minimise risk, it is important that the highest standards are applied in the design, construction, commissioning and maintenance of these systems. Some sites are unsuitable for any effluent disposal system because of the impact of wastewater, even after treatment.

It is the policy of RCC to require the individual septic tank drainage systems be assessed in accordance with the standards set out in the Environmental Protection Authority, publication ‘The Wastewater Treatment Manual. Treatment Systems for Single Houses’ 2000, or as may be amended. In addition the Council will have regard to the recommendations as set out for single rural houses in the Government’s document on Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines 2005. Where public services are available (or likely to be), the developer will be required to connect to same. Group sewerage schemes may also be provided.
It should be noted that alternative systems will also be considered by RCC for effluent disposal on site, for example reed bed filter systems etc. These systems will need to comply with the standards laid down by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) with regard to these types of systems e.g. Code of Practice: Environmental Risk Assessment for Unregulated Waste Disposal Sites

**Water**

Each dwelling shall have a viable and secure access to a water supply provided to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.

**Design**

The design criterion are aimed at ensuring buildings enhance rather than diminish the visual character of the area. Building styles that are acceptable in an urban or suburban setting are often alien to a rural setting and may not be acceptable. Whilst there is no absolute requirement to apply any particular style, modern or traditional, buildings of simple design in terms of elevational treatment and materials will normally be more acceptable. Access roads and driveways should respect the site contours and cross them gently in order to integrate the building with its entrance and site.

**Construction Elements to take account of:**

1. **ROOFS**

   The roof of a dwelling particularly for single storey is the most visible element of the dwelling. Pitched roofs are the traditional form and nowadays through the availability of alternative roof coverings there is the demand for different shaped roof designs. In order to minimize their visual impact the lowest technically acceptable pitch should in most instances be used for the particular roofing materials. This also has the advantage of minimizing the available surface areas for heat loss. However, other design factors will also be taken into account in arriving at the final design solution.

   Colour is also an important feature of roofing materials and in rural areas darker colours such as black, blue/black and brown slates and tiles would be preferable. The rainwater goods should complement the colour of the roof finishes. The use of the design features in the roof such as hips and window openings will be acceptable if the guiding principles above are followed.

2. **CHIMNEYS**

   The design of the chimneys should be carefully considered. Chimneys on rural dwellings tended to be strong elements in the overall design. In this regard they should visually attempt to replicate this form. In addition the capping details should relate to the local form and design.

3. **WINDOWS**

   In the past, size and shapes of windows were limited by the construction materials and costs, which meant that windows openings tended to be small and away from corners. Consequently openings were surrounded by large areas of solid wall creating what is known as a high solid to void relationship, giving a sturdy appearance to our rural buildings. Today by virtue of improved building materials and bearing in mind the need for good lighting within homes and reduction in energy costs these constraints have been reduced. Current practice therefore tends to lean towards an increasing selection of larger, wider windows in a variety of shapes which often tend to look at odds with the simpler rural style.

   It is acknowledged that brightly lit interiors are desirable and for any room to be adequately lit the area of glass should as a minimum not be less than 10% of the floor area. It is worth noting that highly glazed facades can be achieved in certain locations provided they are conceived with skill in their design.
The simple points to take into account can be summarized as follows:

- Arrange the openings in order to maximize a high solid to void appearance where it matters; work the overall house plans to limit the numbers of openings in some places, using roof lights and ideally arranging main living areas which ideally have the most sun and views, and consideration should be given to the fact that there are more opportunities for highly glazed facades where they are not in full public view.
- Keep the arrangements of the openings simple.
- In general, the size and proportion of windows should be designed such that they are more vertical than they are wide in form.

4. DOORS

The following aspects should be considered when incorporating doors:

- The overall door design should be simple and in particular a clutter of detail should be avoided.
- Doors should bear some relation to the wall frontage on which they are located and also reflect the positions and sizes of the windows adjoining.
- Whilst the door and surrounds need to admit light to the hallway, large glazed panels in doors can look elaborate; a window above or beside a door is often a solution. Fanlights can also be used above the doorways to provide lighting to the hallways.

5. PORCHES

Where porches are incorporated, the following points should be considered:

- Porches should be carefully detailed and built with good quality materials.
- The shape and size of the porch should be well proportioned.
- Introducing a different material for this element only should not be necessary [on simple houses].
- The design should be solid in appearance and treated as solid blockwork as part of the house – the use of Greek columns, or glazed verandas to the front of the house should be avoided.

6. CONSERVATORIES

Conservatories can act as a contrast to the overall bulk of the house, particularly where added to an existing dwelling. They can also where thoughtfully considered and where the intention is to utilize sunspace and solar heating in the design of a new dwelling maximize passive solar heating gains and bring down energy costs. This requires thought been given to the orientation, plan arrangement in the design of the dwelling.

Reconciling the technical and aesthetic requirements can be difficult and requires skill and merely attaching the conservatory to the southern gable of a dwelling is not necessarily the answer. The following should be considered:

- The shape of the sunspace should be consistent with the dwelling to which it is attached.
- The size and location of an ancillary type space requires careful consideration with respect to proportion, size and spatial layout of the house.
- Avoid conservatories that are out of scale with the remainder of the house.
- The construction materials of the sunspace are fundamental to its successful integration within the dwelling design. Many firms, for example, now offer low maintenance roofing framework along with timber to the sidewalls. The use of slate, natural timber and other coloured PVC may be preferable for use.
7. MATERIALS/EXTERNAL FINISHES

The overall intention of the material type and use of materials used in designing in a rural location should be to select the materials that reinforce the texture and colours of the surrounding landscape.

The following points should be considered:

- The number of materials used should be limited.
- Use materials that are indicative of the area.
- Materials such as marble chip finish and some pebble dashes can, not only appear at odds with the locality, but also have a tendency to deteriorate over time and are difficult to maintain.
- Where stone is used it is generally on “grand” structures such as churches, banks and courthouses, or utilitarian structures such as outbuildings, barns mills etc. this created a definitive hierarchy of building in rural building types while at the same time providing a relative uniformity to the appearance of houses in the region.
- The use of plastered walls will generally be acceptable with a preference for nap or dry dash finishes.
- The use of natural stone as a feature on an elevation will generally be acceptable and in areas where stonewalls are a feature of the landscape, full panels of stone will be acceptable. The type of stone used should have regard to the landscape.

Notwithstanding stone used with skill can be very attractive:

- where cladding used to wings or other elements such as garden or boundary walls can provide contrast and help reduce the overall apparent size of the dwelling
- where stone is a predominant landscape feature within the locality it can assist in marrying it with the area
- where in contemporary designed houses it provides a contrast with materials
- if used the stone should generally be of the locality, so that there is a consistency that links it with the other stone structures in the immediate vicinity
- avoid the 2 dimensional affects with stone, which give it a false applied appearance. In particular the addition of one material to merely the front of houses should be avoided
- colour on dwellings should blend with the environment rather than stand out in it

6.5 VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENTS

The villages in County Roscommon have distinctive and diverse characters, which are highly valued by their local residents. As these villages continue to evolve, this process of change needs to be positively managed so that the unique qualities that contribute to their distinctive identities can be protected and enhanced, whilst managing future growth and new development.

‘Village Design Statements’ (VDS) are a good way to help all those involved with planning the future development of these areas to understand their distinctive characters and what makes them such a special place in which to live. A VDS describes the character of a village and provides broad design guidelines which address the qualities which local residents consider worthy of protection or improvement.

With the demand for development increasing in many of the villages in the County the Council has recognized the need to carefully and sensitively manage this development so as to protect and enhance the character of these villages. The Landscape Character workshops with members of the public highlighted the concern from some of Roscommon’s residents that “some of these new developments have used suburban density standards, monotonous road and building design, and inappropriate materials which have failed to complement the 'traditional' character of these villages.”
The Planning Authority recognizes the need to prepare VDS in a number of localities throughout the County. Such design guidance is needed to ensure that new development within the villages is based upon a considered understanding of the village's unique character. New development should be designed in such a way that sympathetically reflects and respects the qualities which local residents value within them.

The VDS become valuable resources for individual householders and businesses, builders, developers, architects and statutory bodies. As every design solution will involve a compromise between competing ideas, the recommended approach is 'how can the best design be achieved within the bounds of meeting required standards, to the benefit of all involved?' They highlights the unique qualities of architectural, historical, archaeological, ecological and geographical importance that contribute to the villages' distinctive character, and provides broad design guidelines.

**Objective 202** Should development be proposed ahead of the completion of a Village Design Statement, RCC may facilitate the preparation of such a Plan, funded by the proposed developer, but independently commissioned and under the direction of RCC.

6.6 BIODIVERSITY

The Heritage Council has produced draft “Guidelines for the production of Local Biodiversity Action Plans” (March 2003). In it, the following definition is provided;

“Biological diversity, or biodiversity, is the term given to the variety of life on Earth and the natural patterns it forms. The biodiversity we see today is the result of billions of years of evolution, shaped by natural processes and, increasingly, by the influence of humans. It forms the web of life of which we are an integral part and upon which we so fully depend. This diversity is often understood in terms of the wide variety of plants, animals and micro-organisms.

Yet another aspect of biodiversity is the variety of ecosystems that occur, such as deserts, forests, wetlands, mountains, lakes, rivers, and agricultural landscapes. In each ecosystem, living creatures, including humans, form a community, interacting with one another and with the air, water, and soil around them. It is the combination of life forms and their interactions with each other and with the rest of the environment that has made Earth a uniquely habitable place for humans. Biodiversity provides a large number of ‘goods and services’ that sustain our lives.’

‘Goods and Services’ provided by biological diversity include:

- provision of food, fuel and fibre eg fish, livestock and crop varieties
- provision of shelter and building materials eg timber for construction
- provision of medicines
- purification of air and water
- detoxification and decomposition of wastes
- stabilization and moderation of the Earth's climate
- moderation of floods, droughts, temperature extremes and the forces of wind
- generation and renewal of soil fertility, including nutrient cycling
- pollination of plants, including many crops
- control of pests and diseases
- maintenance of genetic resources as key inputs to crop varieties and livestock breeds, medicines, and other products
- cultural and aesthetic benefits
- ability to adapt to change”

Of particular relevance for planning is the loss of biodiversity.
“Species, habitats and ecosystems, the planet’s whole natural heritage, is under an ever-increasing threat. Many species and habitats are in decline and in some cases their future is endangered. Irreversible losses have already occurred, with many species having already become extinct, and the rate of extinctions is increasing. The extinction of one species results in the irreversible loss of a unique suite of genetic adaptations that have been acquired typically over very long time scales of hundreds of thousands of years.

Undoubtedly human behaviour now causes, directly and indirectly, considerable loss of biological diversity. Globally, the degradation of biological diversity is principally due to habitat destruction, the introduction of non-native species and overexploitation. The relative effects of these three factors varies in time and location. In Ireland today, habitat degradation and loss is the main factor eroding biodiversity, including through changes in agricultural practices, poorly managed afforestation, drainage, pollution and the impacts of invasive species. The influence of climatic change is becoming increasingly important.”

The Council’s plans in terms of the production of a Biodiversity Plan are detailed further in Section 8.5: Nature Conservation in the Wider Countryside as are detailed policies and objectives relating to Biodiversity in the County.
7.1 INTRODUCTION

Our Built Heritage is a unique resource, an irreplaceable expression of the richness and diversity of our past and the generations who have gone before us. Structures and places have over time acquired character and ‘special interest’, through their continued existence and familiarity. In a changing world they have cultural significance. Co. Roscommon’s Built Heritage consists not only of the grand buildings, such as Clonalis House or Stroketown Park House and cathedrals, like St. Nathy’s in Ballaghaderreen, but also includes the everyday works of local craftsmen, such as the rendered stone buildings, which form the Main Street of our towns; the thatched houses scattered around the county; and the dry stonewall field boundaries, which are so typical of the Roscommon landscape. Milestones, water pumps, bridges, post boxes and shopfronts are also part of the rich built heritage of Co. Roscommon. Ancient buildings and monuments, such as earthworks, raths, ringforts, dolmens, crannógs, abbeys, castles and military barracks trace the evolution of settlement and Built Heritage in Co. Roscommon from the Neolithic age to the present day.

The Heritage Act (1995) includes in its definition of heritage ‘monuments’, ‘archaeological objects’, ‘heritage objects’, ‘architectural heritage’, ‘inland waterways’ and ‘heritage gardens and parks’. The need to conserve the built heritage; awareness of the social and economic benefits of conserving this part of our common inheritance on improving our quality of life; and, also of the place of conservation in policies of sustainable development, has gathered increased recognition in recent years.

7.2 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Local Context:


The Strategy highlights a number of key issues, together with objectives and strategic actions to address them with coordinating agencies listed. In relation to planning it is an objective: ‘to ensure progressive and transparent planning systems in the county. To ensure future development plans, housing strategies and other Local Authority strategies take account of the environment and sustainable impacts of development’. A strategic action to achieve this is ‘facilitate the implementation of planning policy in a sustainable manner that avoids negative environmental impact and adheres to guidelines’.

County Roscommon Heritage Plan

The Co. Roscommon Heritage Plan 2002-2008 has as its aim ‘to create and promote an increased knowledge, awareness and appreciation of the natural, built and cultural heritage of County Roscommon, and to conserve it for future generations’. This plan, which will be renewed within the lifetime of this County Development Plan, represents the commitment of Roscommon County Council to the conservation and promotion of the cultural heritage of Co. Roscommon.

There are three central objectives highlighted within the Plan, namely;

1. To raise awareness of our heritage – To facilitate increasing awareness, understanding and enjoyment of Roscommon’s heritage
2. To collect and disseminate heritage information – To facilitate the development of a comprehensive heritage database for the county, to make this information available to all and to ensure effective use of data in policy formulation and decision making
3. To promote best practice in heritage conservation and management – To promote and advise on best practice standards for heritage conservation and management

The Heritage Plan also contains a range of actions needed to achieve these objectives and provides a framework to enable progress to be measured.
Chapter 7: Built Heritage and Archaeology

Waterways Corridor Studies

A waterway corridor is not defined as a set distance on either side of a waterway but the area, which impacts on, or is impacted by, the waterway. In conjunction with The Heritage Council and other relevant stakeholders, three waterway corridor studies have been carried out for the entire length of the Shannon navigation as it applies to Co. Roscommon.

The overall aims of the studies are:

- To identify ways to manage the waterways corridor environment to the benefit of all, i.e. heritage, land and water-based users;
- To improve understanding of the areas, and by this understanding, ensure retention of the distinctiveness of a place, while allowing for development and evolution of use for the future.

The studies identify and assess the significance of the waterway corridors, and detail policies and actions to retain and enhance the significance. The studies provide a detailed analysis by focussing on the following:

- Landscape and Visual Corridor
- Socio-economic Corridor
- Cultural/Historic Corridor
- Ecological Corridor

National and Regional Context:

International Conventions and Agreements

Ireland has ratified a range of International Agreements in relation to our archaeological and built heritage. Such Agreements place legal obligations on the State in relation to the conservation and management of our archaeological and built heritage, which are given effect through the National Monuments Acts 1930-2004 and the Planning and Development Act, 2000.

UNESCO’s Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage was drawn up in 1972 and ratified by Ireland in 1991. This convention noted that the natural and cultural heritage was being increasingly eroded due to destruction. By ratifying this convention each state recognises that the duty of identifying, conserving and transmitting to future generations this heritage belongs primarily to that state.

In addition the Council of Europe’s Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe signed at Granada in 1985, was ratified by Ireland in 1997. This convention, known as the Granada Convention, provides the basis for our national commitment for the protection of our architectural heritage. It allows us to identify conservation principles, and provides the means whereby we can define what is meant by architectural heritage.

The European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, 1992 (the ‘Valletta Convention’) was ratified by Ireland in 1997. The aim of the Convention is to ‘protect the archaeological heritage as a source of the European collective memory and as an instrument for historical and scientific study’. The Convention provides the basic framework for policy on the protection of the archaeological heritage in Ireland, including providing for consultation between archaeologists and planners in relation to the drawing up of development plans and development schemes so as to ensure that full consideration is given to archaeological requirements.
European Spatial Development Perspective

Heritage importance is also reflected in the European Spatial Development Perspective (1999), which recognises the importance of conservation and cautious management of the natural, built and cultural heritage.

National Spatial Strategy 2002

The principal aim of the National Spatial Strategy is to ensure that the entire country in the future will be able to sustain a better quality of life for the people, a strong competitive economy and an environment of the highest quality. Policies must recognise the ever-changing nature of the built and natural environment and seek to work with and creatively direct change rather than aim to maintain a static state of the environment. The conservation and management of our built and natural heritage is key to accomplishing such aims and is a benchmark for the achievement of sustainability, as our built and natural heritage gives identity and a sense of place to local areas, villages and towns. It is part and parcel of what makes our communities good places to live, to work in and to visit. Conservation and management of heritage is therefore about delivering a high quality of life for everyone.

Regional Planning Guidelines for the West 2004 - 2016

A strategic goal set out in these guidelines is ‘To further improve the quality of life for the citizens of the West Region by promoting the concept of sustainability, protecting the environment and heritage, creating a safe society and sustaining and further promoting a sense of unique cultural identity for the Region together with ensuring access to key services including sporting and leisure facilities’. The guidelines recognise the importance of ensuring that the natural and built heritage is conserved and enhanced, and state that preservation of the quality of heritage is also a major element in sustaining an identity for the region and maintaining biodiversity, educational, amenity, tourism and leisure values.

National Heritage Plan 2002

This states that it is an objective of Government to ensure the protection of our heritage and to promote its enjoyment by all. Roscommon County Council must ensure that all development plans, likely to have a significant impact on heritage, incorporate appropriate provision for the protection of heritage.

Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities

These guidelines aim to support the effort of protecting architectural heritage; including, the criteria to be applied when selecting proposed protected structures for inclusion in the RPS. They offer guidance to Planning Authorities on issuing a declaration on a protected structure and determining planning applications in relation to protected structures, proposed protected structures or the exterior of a building within an ACA. While the guidelines are primarily aimed at Planning Authorities, they are also of assistance to owners and occupiers of protected structures, proposed protected structures, buildings within Architectural Conservation Areas, and to those proposing to carry out works on structures of architectural heritage interest generally.

Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage

These guidelines set out the basic principles of national policy on the protection of the archaeological heritage. A key principle set out in these guidelines, which should apply in respect of development and the archaeological heritage, is that there should always be a presumption in favour of avoidance of developmental impacts on the archaeological heritage and preservation in-situ of archaeological sites and monuments must be presumed to be the preferred option.
National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)

The NIAH is a state initiative managed by the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government. It aims to promote the appreciation of, and contributes to the protection of, the built heritage by systematically recording a representative sample of that built heritage on a nationwide basis.

The NIAH forms the basis for recommendations by the Minister of Environment, Heritage and Local Government for inclusion in the Record of Protected Structures under the Planning and Development Act 2000. The NIAH provides a source of guidance to local authorities for the selection of structures for protection and also supplies data, which helps them to make informed judgments on the significance of building stock in their functional area.

Other Relevant Documents

- Planning and Development Acts 2000-2004 consolidate all previous Planning Acts and are strategic in the approach towards the protection of our built heritage. Part IV of the 2000 Act deals specifically with Architectural Heritage and places obligations on both Planning Authorities and on the owners/occupiers of Protected Structures.
- National Monuments Act 1930-2004 sets out the legislative procedure for protection of all known archaeological monuments.

7.3 BUILT HERITAGE

The Built Heritage of County Roscommon is special and unique, and includes not only works of great artistic and structural achievements but also everyday items, which have been produced by skilled craftsmen of bygone days usually with local materials. Architectural heritage includes monuments, groups of buildings and sites. This built heritage includes all manmade structures and features of the landscape in the county; such as the houses, bridges, towns, demesnes and stone walls. This built heritage has acquired special cultural interest through time and as we enjoy this inheritance we should be conscious of our duty as a society to pass this heritage on to future generations. Built heritage is a non-renewable resource, once lost it cannot be replaced, so it is important that we appreciate what we have and provide adequate protection for the built environment in its existing form. When looking at built heritage we must be open to sympathetic re-use of historic buildings though their original function and use may not be relevant nowadays, if this is the only way that enables the architectural heritage to survive.

Vernacular Architecture:

The value of classical architecture, such as the Bank of Ireland in Roscommon town or Strokestown Park House, is well recognized. However, there is also a value to the less magnificent structures, which contribute greatly to the built heritage of the county, these buildings, many of which are ‘Vernacular’ architecture are built in a style, which developed over time without much outside influence, using local materials such as stone or mud for the structure, lime render to cover the walls, timber sash windows with painted sills, roofed with thatch or in some parts of the county, stone and in later times slate or tin. Buildings such as post offices and post boxes, shops and timber shopfronts and sign lettering, town houses and coach houses, cottages and traditional farm buildings, national schools and churches contribute much to the built heritage of the county. Other features such as stone walls, stiles, piers and gates represent a local style and have great variation from one part of the county to another.

Vernacular architecture is the back-bone of all our towns and villages. However it is becoming increasingly rare, frequently overlooked in development applications and proposals, where demolition and new build over adaptive reuse of traditional buildings is generally the most common approach.
This loss of traditional building stock is a gradual process, but the cumulative impact of losing this layer of the cultural fabric of the county’s built heritage, is a loss of the character and erosion of the architectural integrity of the county.

**Industrial Architecture:**

Our industrial architecture covers structures and buildings, which had specific purposes and functions. There is a broad spectrum of industrial heritage in Co. Roscommon from lime kilns, ice houses such as at Rockingham, navigational structures including harbours such as at Lecarrow, moorings such as at Lough Key, quays and bollards such as at Roosky, canals with their associated infrastructure of locks and lock keepers cottages such as at Albert Canal near Jamestown. Other types of industrial architecture include market houses such as in Frenchpark, Strokestown and Castlerea; bridges such as Mount Talbot, Shannonbridge and Boyle; and power stations and industrial chimneys such as in Ballaghaderreen. Water mills and windmills are also to be found throughout the county, such as at Elphin, St. John’s, Lobinroe, Lecarrow, Athleague, Castlerea, Castlecoote and Boyle.

Each of these features represents an era in the development of the county. Each structure has a story to tell us about the way of life of our ancestors. Some of these sites are still in use for the purpose for which they are originally built, some are now redundant; some have been adapted into new uses, while some are preserved as tourist attractions. All represent an important layer of the built heritage of the county.

Since the mid 1960’s the changing landscape of both our towns and villages in addition to the countryside has been enormous. Much of our built heritage has been lost, but equally much has survived. This built heritage requires ongoing care and maintenance and in particular protection. New uses need to be found for traditional buildings and this may require their adaptation. Retaining older buildings helps pave the way for the advancement of traditional construction skills, which would certainly be lost in a modern building environment. There has been and continues to be, a significant growth in public awareness of our built heritage and with the increase in cultural tourism, which plays a significant part in the tourist economy, the conservation of our built environment contributes to attractiveness of our county as a destination that we can enjoy and be proud of and that others can visit. The retention of the character of historic towns and villages is recognised as being a major attraction and is important in maintaining local distinctiveness for both the local community and visitor alike.

**Policy in terms of Built Heritage**

**Policy 243** Adopt a sustainable approach to the management of the County’s built or cultural heritage.

**Policy 244** Identify and protect the architectural heritage of the county and to manage any change to that heritage in such a way as to retain its character and special interest.

**Policy 245** Promote pride and awareness of the importance and value of our built heritage.

**Objectives in terms of Built Heritage**

**Objective 203** Review and implement the County Roscommon Heritage Plan, with regard to actions relating to cultural heritage.

**Objective 204** Apply conservation principles to all development applications relating to historic buildings and structures. These principles are:

- Research prior to planning work
- Minimum intervention – repair rather than replace
- Respect the setting of the building.
Objective 205 Prioritise sustainable reuse versus demolition of historic buildings, whether protected or not, especially vernacular buildings and town centre buildings. This represents sustainable development and helps foster a culture of conservation and use of traditional building skills.

Objective 206 Seek retention of traditional features such as original windows, doors, fanlights, renders, roof coverings and rainwater goods, where appropriate.

Objective 207 Conserve and protect historic street furniture, such as stone kerbing, milestones, benchmarks, streetlights, manhole covers and ventilation pipes.

Objective 208 Conserve and protect features of the built environment such as stonewalls, pillars, piers, stiles, gates, railings, holy wells, mass rocks, historic telephone boxes, post-boxes and memorials.

Objective 209 Promote the importance of informed decision making with regard to historic buildings by encouraging engagement of a suitably qualified conservation specialist with regard to material specification and application.

Objective 210 Compile and maintain an inventory of all architectural heritage in the care of Roscommon County Council, to be carried out in accordance with NIAH guidelines.

Objective 211 Prepare a conservation policy for buildings of architectural heritage value in the care and ownership of Roscommon County Council and within this framework prepare a conservation plan for individual buildings as appropriate.

7.4 RECORD OF PROTECTED STRUCTURES (RPS)

A protected structure is a structure that Roscommon County Council considers to be of special interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical point of view. Every planning authority is obliged to have a Record of Protected Structures (RPS) that includes structures of special interest in its functional area.

In 2003 Roscommon County Council established the RPS by adding over 260 buildings to the RPS. These buildings were selected on the basis of their inclusion in the 2002 Roscommon CDP i.e. Schedule 13: Buildings and Structures to the Protected. As part of the drafting of this County Development Plan the following two National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) surveys have been consulted;
1. Roscommon Town Architectural Heritage Study 2000 – carried out by Dúchas The Heritage Service

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) forms the basis of the proposed additions to the RPS and the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government has made recommendations for these additions to be made for Co. Roscommon. There are 416 of these structures included on the county NIAH, 90 of which were already on the RPS. It should be noted at this stage that priority has been given to these Ministerial Recommendations. As part of the County Development Plan preparation process owners/occupiers of many of these structures were informed of the proposed additions to the RPS in accordance with Planning and Development Act, 2000. The process followed for compilation of the RPS is to have proposed additions assessed and elected members given the opportunity to make an informed decision on the additions. The planning authority has also considered additions for structures that are of local importance to the record. Structures recommended for addition in 2003 (which do not form part of the NIAH) but not added at that time, have now been included. During the lifetime of the Plan, consideration will be given, to the addition of
other structures such as those highlighted during public consultation on the Draft CDP, as well as those requested for consideration by individuals around the County.

Protection afforded to structures on the RPS applies to all parts of the structure, including its interior, its curtilage (the area of land attached to or associated with a building and usually forming one enclosure with it), and any other structures in that curtilage, as well as specified features in attendant grounds. Protection also applies to all fixtures and fittings forming part of the interior of a protected structure or of any structure within the curtilage. Protected Structure Status does not preclude appropriate development and indeed, “Protection, in relation to a structure or part of a structure, includes conservation, preservation, and improvement compatible with maintaining the character and interest of the structure or part thereof.” [PDA (2000), Part I, S. 2: p 22) Each owner and occupier must ensure that a protected structure, or any element of a protected structure, is not endangered through harm, decay or damage, whether over a short or long period, through neglect or through direct or indirect means. Roscommon County Council operates a conservation grant scheme and the Department of Environment Heritage & Local Government operates a civic conservation grant scheme for civic or public buildings on the RPS, these schemes aim to assist the owner or occupier of a protected structure to undertake necessary works to secure its building fabric.

Policy in terms of the RPS

Policy 246 Conserve and protect structures (i.e. includes conservation, preservation, and improvement compatible with maintaining the character and interest of the structure), or parts of structures, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest.

Policy 247 Review the Record of Protected Structures for Co. Roscommon and to seek to provide advice and information for owners and occupiers of structures on the Record of Protected Structures.

Objectives in terms of the RPS

Objective 212 Review the Record of Protected Structures, within the lifetime of this plan.

Objective 213 View as unfavourable, development which is likely to adversely affect the character of a protected structure or the setting of a protected structure, where the setting is considered to be of importance.

Objective 214 Seek the appointment of a conservation officer, to maintain the Record of Protected Structures, within the lifetime of this plan.

Objective 215 Issue declarations on types of works that would or would not materially affect the character of a protected structure

Objective 216 Promote best conservation practice through advice to owners/occupiers of Protected Structures

Objective 217 Promote high conservation standards.

Objective 218 Raise awareness generally of the value of protected structures.

Objective 219 Promote appropriate use/re-use and repair of Protected Structures, including the implementation of the Conservation Grants Schemes

Objective 220 Compile and maintain an inventory of Protected Structures in the care of Roscommon County Council, to be carried out in accordance with NIAH guidelines.
Objective 221  Prepare a conservation policy for protected structures in the care and ownership of Roscommon County Council and within this framework prepare a conservation plan for individual buildings as appropriate.

7.5 ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION AREAS (ACA)

Buildings or structures grouped together can have an overall quality which makes them of value. An architectural conservation area is a place, an area, a group of structures or part of a townscape which is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or contributes to the appreciation of protected structures; and which is listed as such an area in the County Development Plan. The architectural conservation area could include, for example, a terrace of houses, a street, a demesne, buildings surrounding a square, or any group of buildings, which together give a special character to an area. An architectural conservation area may or may not include protected structures and can include historic places.

Designation as an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) gives protection to the exterior of such structures. Planning permission will be required for any works, which would have a material affect on the character of an ACA.

One Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) had been indicated to date for the County i.e. ‘Bawn Street ACA’ Strokestown, which was included in the Strokestown Local Area Plan 2004. The identification of new ACAs or modification of existing ACAs may be proposed during the lifetime of this plan. A detailed survey, character appraisal and a set of objectives and policies will be produced for each ACA within the lifetime of this plan. General development control guidelines applicable to ACAs are set out in this plan. It is proposed to designate additional Architectural Conservation Areas as follows and as indicated on Maps in the Appendices:

**Boyle:**
- Main Street
- Patrick Street
- Bridge Street
- The Crescent

**Ballaghaderreen:**
- The Square
- St. John’s Terrace

**Castlerea:**
- The Square & environs

**Roscommon:**
- Lanesborough Street
- The Square
- Main Street
- Goff Street/Athlone Road
- Church Street
- Abbey Street

**Policy for ACAs**

**Policy 248**  Protect the built heritage within an area or in the setting of protected structures, through the designation of appropriate Architectural Conservation Areas.

**Policy 249**  Preserve the character of a place, area, group of structures or townscape, which is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or value, or contributes to the appreciation of protected structures, taking into account building lines and heights.

**Objectives for ACAs**

**Objective 222**  Identify areas of special interest, within the lifetime of this plan.

**Objective 223**  Designate appropriate Architectural Conservation Areas, within the lifetime of this plan.
Objective 224  Take such steps as are necessary to ensure the preservation of the special character of those areas.

Objective 225  Consider drafting and adopting Areas of Special Planning Control for specific parts of ACAs.

Objective 226  Promote initiatives to underpin the preservation of the special character of such Areas, such as preparing a guidance leaflet to provide relevant information to owners and occupiers of structures within an ACA.

7.5.1 Development Guidelines for Architectural Conservation Areas

REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING BUILDINGS

- According to the principles of best conservation practice, the reuse of existing buildings is preferable to replacement. Roscommon County Council will always start from the premise that the structure should be retained. Applications for demolition of buildings that contribute to the character of an ACA will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. The onus will be upon the applicant to justify the demolition of the building.
- Where replacement buildings are deemed acceptable, new buildings should take into account existing plots, where possible, in order to retain the existing grain, character and vibrancy of the ACA.
- Where buildings have a negative impact on the character of an ACA, demolition of existing and replacement with buildings of more appropriate design may be desirable (the current condition arising from low levels of maintenance including fire damage will not normally be considered as a negative impact). The replacement buildings should respect their setting.
- Where permission is sought for demolition on the grounds of structural defects or failure, a report containing photographs and drawing(s) indicating locations of photographs will be required, produced by a suitably qualified and experienced professional regarding the existing condition. As part of the justification for any demolition within the ACA on structural grounds, details will be required of repairs/remedial works normally used in similar circumstances and details of why they are not suitable in that instance.
- Details of the design including materials proposed for replacement building(s) will be required in any case where demolition is considered, proposals for a replacement building will be assessed as set out below as part of the consideration of an application for demolition.
- Corner buildings in towns can provide identity and points of orientation, consideration will be given to allowing for higher buildings and appropriate designs to emphasise these locations, which may not be acceptable in other locations. It should be noted that in Irish towns one often finds lower buildings at the corner e.g. pubs, with, for example, a drop down from three-storey to two-storey.

REFURBISHMENT/ALTERATION OF EXISTING BUILDINGS

- Retention of existing materials is preferable to replacement, where replacement materials must be used they will be in the first instance in keeping with the predominant traditional materials used within the ACA, or alternatively as agreed with Roscommon County Council.
- Where new buildings or alterations at roof level are proposed, consideration should be given to the effect of the proposals on the character of the area with regard to roof shape, pitch, angle and length, height, and eaves details, such that they are in keeping with the character of the area in question.
- The provision of dormers, and roof lights may be considered acceptable where they are in keeping with traditional and/or typical examples, which contribute to the existing character. Roof lights should be to hidden pitches where possible.
- Ventilation of roof spaces should be via eaves vents where possible.
Where breaking through internally between adjacent buildings in an ACA, both fronts are to maintain an active function, the disruption of historic material is to be kept to a minimum such that the character is not negatively impacted upon, this is preferable to demolition of one or both structures.

ROOFSCAPE AND CHIMNEYS

- Roof extensions where deemed to be appropriate should always complement the appearance of the existing and adjacent buildings in keeping with the character as set out in the character appraisal or character statement for the ACA.
- Changes to roof pitch angle, ridge height and span of roof can have a significant impact on character, and would be unacceptable to existing buildings except where the changes involve the reinstatement or enhancement of character.
- Telecommunications equipment, ductwork, lift shafts, or other roof plant require planning permission. These should be sensitively located and must not adversely affect the character of the building or where appropriate the roofscape of the ACA.
- The use of modern roofing or re-cladding materials will not be acceptable where it impacts upon the character of the ACA.
- The retention of chimney pots and stacks is preferable to replacement.
- Where replacement buildings or substantial changes to roof structures are permitted within an ACA the use of chimney stacks should be considered in the design to retain existing patterns and to punctuate the roofscape.
- In cases where dormers are deemed to be in keeping with the character and therefore acceptable, traditional designs in keeping with the character and form of the building and the ACA may be acceptable.

FACADES

- Where repairs are to be carried out to traditional renders, the material, its style and detailing should match, as far as possible, the existing. These should be based on lime mortar and not contain cement. Sample panels may be requested to assess appropriateness.
- The stripping of render to expose the underlying stone is unacceptable generally and particularly within the ACA.
- Replacement of traditional finishes with modern style materials will not be considered to be in keeping with the character and will therefore not be granted planning permission other than in exceptional cases.
- Where an external finish has gained an identifiable patina of age such as weathering and lichen growth it will merit special consideration with regard to repairs or replacement.

OVERHEAD WIRE-SCAPE AND DISTRIBUTION POLES

- Roscommon County Council will facilitate where possible and support any initiatives to underground overhead services in the ACAs.
- The removal of redundant services from the facades of buildings will be encouraged.

EXTERNAL LIGHTING OF BUILDINGS AND FEATURES

- Lighting of certain landmark buildings and structures would be acceptable to Roscommon County Council. The method of lighting i.e. type of fitting, fixing method and type of light would need to be specified by the applicant in seeking permission.

ADVERTISEMENTS AND SIGNAGE

- Advertisements to the exteriors of structures within an ACA require planning permission. An application will provide details of impact on the character of the building to which they are
attached, adjacent buildings and to the ACA in general. Details of the fixing method will also be required to ensure minimisation of irreversible impacts on the building in question as part of the planning application.

- Signage fixed flat to the façade of a building is normally preferable to those fixed on brackets perpendicular to the façade.
- Advertising on canopies or elements of street furniture will not generally be permitted in an ACA.

OPENINGS

- Applications for alteration to existing opening sizes and proportions, or for additional openings in traditional buildings within ACAs will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and where they do not detract from the character of the area.
- The replacement of timber windows and doors with modern materials such as PVC or aluminium will not be acceptable within an ACA.
- Where original or old glass survives in windows it should be retained and/or incorporated into repaired/replaced windows.
- Replacement of PVC and Aluminium window frames and doors with timber will be encouraged and facilitated where possible by Roscommon County Council.
- Features such as fine cut limestone window sills and door steps are to be retained and protected from any potential damage.
- External roller shutters will not be permitted within an ACA. Alternative methods of security should be used, if required.

SHOPFRONTS

- Traditional shopfronts should be repaired rather than replaced, with materials matching the original.
- Modern style awnings to the front of commercial premises will not normally be considered to be in keeping with the retention of character in the ACA.
- The provision of new or extended shopfronts would be inappropriate where it/they extend across two or more distinct buildings. Clear vertical distinction is required between distinct buildings.
- New or extended shopfronts should never obscure architectural details of the original building such as sills, stringcourses, or windows.
- The removal of existing traditional shopfronts will only be considered in exceptional cases. Repair will always be preferable to replacement.
- Applications for the provision of new shopfronts shall take into consideration the effect of proposed designs on character of the building, adjacent buildings and the ACA in general, with regard to scale, proportions, materials and detailing. Modern requirements such as newspaper receptacles should be built into the design of new shopfronts as opposed to being tacked on.
- The provision of roller shutters is not acceptable to either new or existing shopfronts. Additional security, where required, should be provided using other methods.
- Traditional sign writing to shopfront fascias may contribute to the special character of a shopfront and it is important to retain or at least cover good examples in a manner such that it can be uncovered at a future date.
- Roscommon County Council may request a method statement with regard to extensive or complicated repair work to shopfronts in advance of works commencing.
- Standard corporate signage is not acceptable within ACAs, such signage is to be provided in a manner in keeping with the character of the ACA.
- Where newspaper receptacles are to be fixed to the façade of a building planning permission is required.
USES

- Applications for change of use from residential to retail will be required to provide an assessment of the impact on the structure and its character, particularly where breaking out ground floor front wall or the provision of signage forms part of the application. Alterations such as the removal of original external limestone steps, and provision of new openings for additional access to upper floors will be considered in relation to its impact on character.

TRAFFIC, STREET FURNITURE, PLANTING

- Any changes to traffic management and parking within ACAs will take into account its designation as an ACA and will seek to retain or improve the character of the ACA in the design and provision of Pay and Display machines, signage, ramps, renewed surfaces, dished pavements etc.
- The Council will actively promote the retention of all surviving original kerbing and cobbles in the ACAs.
- Where agreement is reached with the Council for works to dish footpaths, original kerbs will not be removed, they will be lowered in full and not cut or removed.
- Post boxes, seats, water pumps and other street furniture where in keeping with the character of the ACA will be retained in-situ.
- New street furniture will be of high quality reflecting the area’s status as an ACA and be of appropriate (preferably local) materials.

DEMESNES

- Development within Demesne ACAs should be such that it does not negatively impact upon the designed and natural landscape, the setting of structures within the Demesne or mature trees and wildlife, which contribute positively to the character of the ACA. The original landscape design intentions are to be respected.
- Car parking facilities in Demesne ACAs should be concealed where possible with appropriate planting and landscaping.

7.6 HERITAGE GARDENS, PARKS AND DEMESNES

Heritage Gardens and Parks are areas of natural heritage, and gardens and parks whose plant collections, design, design features, buildings, setting, style or association are of significant botanical, aesthetic or historical interest or which illustrate some aspect of the development of gardening or of gardens or parks\(^2\).

Co. Roscommon has a rich heritage of demesnes, gardens and designed landscapes, associated with the large estates which once existed around the county, the most well known is that of the parkland and many features such as the ice house, tunnels, quay, gazebo’s, bog gardens and deer park of the Rockingham Estate at Lough Key Forest and Amenity Park, near Boyle. The pleasure grounds in Boyle were associated with King House. The gardens at Strokestown Park House have faithfully recreated the original kitchen garden and pleasure garden, both of which served very different purposes in their role as part of the Strokestown Park House demesne. Mote Park in Roscommon now provides a valued public amenity and area for walking to the people around Roscommon town. Demesnes reflect the fashion and social aspirations of their owners and users of their day with geometric layouts being replaced by more “natural” layouts in the 19th century. Aligned to the heritage value of these heritage parks and gardens, they have an economic value. Lough Key Forest and Amenity Park is a longstanding example of the tourism and amenity potential of historic gardens and parks.

\(^2\) A Methodology for the Preparation of County Heritage Plans, The Heritage Council 2001
The Survey of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes, carried out by the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government (www.buildingsofireland.ie) has identified 130 historic gardens and designed landscapes in Co. Roscommon. Not all of these have survived intact, but it is important to recognise the importance of demesne features and to conserve them where appropriate.

**Policy for Heritage Gardens, Parks and Demesnes**

**Policy 250**  Seek the conservation and enhancement of historic gardens and parks, where appropriate.

**Policy 251**  Use the designation of Architectural Conservation Area where considered appropriate to preserve the character of a designed landscape.

**Objectives for Heritage Gardens, Parks and Demesnes**

**Objective 227**  Require that development applications in designed landscapes take into consideration the impacts of the development on that designed landscape and demonstrate that the development proposal has been designed to take account of the heritage resource of the landscape.

**Objective 228**  Preservation by record of features of interest in designed landscapes may be considered, where appropriate.

### 7.7 HERITAGE OBJECTS

Heritage Objects are objects over 25 years old, which are works of art or of industry (including books, documents and other records, including genealogical records) of cultural importance³.

**Objective for Heritage**

**Objective 229**  Conserve and protect heritage objects, which are of importance to the County by securing suitable storage and presentation facilities for these items.

### 7.8 ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE

Archaeology is the study of past societies through the material remains left by those societies and the evidence of their environment, which includes anything made or modified by people from earliest times up to 1700AD. The archaeological heritage of Co. Roscommon includes structures, constructions, groups of buildings, developed sites, all recorded monuments as well as their contexts, and moveable objects; situated both on land and under water⁴. This means that the archaeological heritage is not confined to the archaeological sites within the Record of Monuments and Places. It includes any archaeological site that may not have been recorded yet, as well as archaeology beneath the ground surface, as well as the context of any site⁵.

To date there has been over 4,400 known Recorded Monuments identified in the county. However, new sites and monuments are still being discovered, often during development or building work. Our archaeological heritage can be used to gain knowledge and understanding of the past. It is of great cultural and scientific importance. Only a portion of the material remains of past societies has survived, and this is why all the available evidence is of archaeological significance.

People have been influencing the landscape of County Roscommon for over 6,000 years and the result of this interaction is a diverse collection of burial tombs, settlement sites, artefacts, buildings, industries, art, music, folklore and traditions. Drumlane Dolmen near Boyle and the court tomb in

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³ A Methodology for the Preparation of County Heritage Plans, The Heritage Council 2001
⁵ Ref: Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government
Knockranny Wood just outside Keadue are good examples of Neolithic sites dating from 4000-2000BC. Bronze Age sites dating from 2000BC – 500BC include burial mounds called Barrows, such as Knockadoobrusna close to Boyle Golf Course. Iron Age sites dating from 500BC – 500AD include linear earthworks or ancient roads such as at Cloonburren, near Shannonbridge and Crannógs. Crannógs are tiny circular islands found in most lakes in the county often covered with trees, such as at Tully Lough, near Strokestown. These are man-made dwellings built in shallow water, using timber, stones and other material. They are a very distinctive feature of the Roscommon countryside which, uniquely for Ireland, remained in use up to late Medieval times around the 17th century.

Medieval settlement is still a strong and visible feature of the Roscommon landscape. Ancient Gaelic settlement traditions survived in Roscommon longer than in other parts of the country because of the strong Gaelic traditions of the O’Connor Clan who were Gaelic lords in control of most of Co. Roscommon until a few hundred years ago. Perhaps the most frequently occurring monument found throughout the county is the ringfort. Ringforts are circular earthworks, defined by an earthen bank and external ditch. They were the ‘bungalow’ of their day, having enclosed a dwelling house and other buildings of a Lord or wealthy farmer in the early Medieval period (c. 500 – 1100AD). Known also as Raths, Lios or Dúns, many of these monuments give names to the townland in which they are found. For example, there are three townlands in the county called ‘Rathmore’, meaning big rath or big ringfort. Other settlement types known as ‘moated sites’ were built by the Gaelic lords in Roscommon around 1300AD, such as at Ogulla, near Tulsk. Medieval field systems still survive from this era, especially at Carns, near Tulsk. The deserted Medieval town of Rindoon, situated on the shores of Lough Ree is said to ‘constitute one of the most important complexes of Medieval monuments in the country’. The archaeological significance of late Medieval rural settlement in the landscape of Roscommon, even to this day, is reflected in the research carried out here by the Discovery Programme – Ireland’s national archaeological research body - which has found ‘that we are seeing a native lordship that is consciously aware of maximizing economic return through the careful management of its lands and its people’.

While the landscape features described above reflect the influence of Gaelic settlement on the landscape, the influence of the Anglo-Normans is also to be seen, particularly in the great stone castles of Roscommon and Ballintubber, which were built c. 1300AD. Other surviving elements of Medieval settlement include many churches and ecclesiastical sites around the county. Over half of the graveyards in the county contain within them sites of archaeological importance.

The Archaeological Heritage comprises of:

- Recorded sites and features of historical and archaeological importance included in the Record of Monuments and Places as established under section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994 (Map 23)
- Major sites of archaeological importance in Roscommon in State Ownership or Guardianship, are listed in the table below.
- National Monuments in Roscommon which are the subject of preservation orders are listed on the table below.
- All previously unknown archaeology that becomes known, such as through ground disturbance or the discovery of sites underwater.

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6 Ref: Earthen Banks and Broken Walls, Our Legacy of Ancient Monuments, Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government
7 Ref: Earthen Banks and Broken Walls, Our Legacy of Ancient Monuments, Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government
9 www.discoveryprogramme.ie
10 Ref: County Roscommon Graveyard Survey 2005 © Roscommon County Council.
7.8.1 Record of Monuments and Places

All known sites and monuments in the county are identified and listed for protection in the Record of Monuments and Places, a statutory inventory of sites protected under the National Monuments Acts. The Record of Monuments and Places is a set of 6” maps of County Roscommon with an accompanying index, which shows all the sites, monuments and zones of archaeological potential identified to date in the county. The Record of Monuments and Places is available to the public at the Planning Office of Roscommon County Council and in the County Library Roscommon.

The protection of archaeological heritage is a mandatory objective for Development Plans. Roscommon County Council will work closely with the National Monuments Service of Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, The Heritage Council and the Discovery Programme in securing the protection of archaeological heritage, as well as in developing of policy and identifying sites and zones of archaeological potential. The need to preserve the archaeological heritage in the County is recognised and will be protected through ensuring archaeological considerations are taken into account for developments in sensitive areas. The actual designation and legal protection of archaeological features as National Monuments is outside the remit of the local authority, and provided for under the National Monuments Acts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 28: National Monuments in County Roscommon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RMP No.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>RO032-021----</td>
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<td>RO006-153001-</td>
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<td>RO022-057011-</td>
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</table>
Table 29: Preservation Orders on Monuments in County Roscommon

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monument No.</th>
<th>Townland</th>
<th>Classification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RO005-014015</td>
<td>LOUGH GARAGA</td>
<td>Crannog</td>
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<tr>
<td>RO008-024----</td>
<td>MAGHERABOY</td>
<td>Barrow - ring-barrow</td>
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<tr>
<td>RO008-032001-</td>
<td>GLEBE ((Costello By.)</td>
<td>Castle - unclassified</td>
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<tr>
<td>RO009-026001-</td>
<td>DERRYCOAGH, LOUGH GARAGA</td>
<td>Crannog</td>
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<tr>
<td>RO009-033----</td>
<td>LOUGH GARAGA, PORTNACRINNAGHT</td>
<td>Crannog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO016-033----</td>
<td>MOHEEDIAN</td>
<td>Ringfort - rath</td>
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<tr>
<td>RO017-078----</td>
<td>CARROWNAGLEARAGH</td>
<td>Ringfort - rath</td>
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<tr>
<td>RO017-128----</td>
<td>CARROWNAGLEARAGH</td>
<td>Ringfort – rath</td>
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<tr>
<td>RO023-109----</td>
<td>ANNAGHMORE (Roscommon By.)</td>
<td>Ringfort - rath</td>
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<tr>
<td>RO025-014001-</td>
<td>CARRICK (Castlereagh By.)</td>
<td>Ringfort - cashel</td>
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<tr>
<td>RO028-032----</td>
<td>CLOONANART BEG</td>
<td>Crannog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO028-033----</td>
<td>CLOONANART BEG</td>
<td>Crannog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO028-034----</td>
<td>CLOONANART BEG</td>
<td>Crannog</td>
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<tr>
<td>RO029-117001-</td>
<td>COGGALBEG</td>
<td>Moated site</td>
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<td>RO032-051----</td>
<td>CLOONERKAUN</td>
<td>Non-monument</td>
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<tr>
<td>RO034-035001-</td>
<td>RABRADAGH, RATHMEW</td>
<td>Barrow - stepped barrow</td>
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<td>Barrow - ditch barrow</td>
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<td>BALLINDERRY</td>
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<td>RO041-031001-</td>
<td>TOBERAVADDY</td>
<td>Fortified house</td>
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<tr>
<td>RO045-118001-</td>
<td>CARNAUGH WEST</td>
<td>Ringfort - cashel</td>
</tr>
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<td>RO046-004----</td>
<td>RINNAGAN, WARREN</td>
<td>Town</td>
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<td>RO046-004002-</td>
<td>WARREN</td>
<td>Castle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO056-016----</td>
<td>RAGHRABEG</td>
<td>Bastioned fort</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.8.2 Archaeological Assessment

Government guidance sets out the policy that proposed developments that may (due to their location, size, or nature) have implications for the archaeological heritage should be subject to archaeological assessment.

Such developments include those that are located at or close to archaeological monuments or sites, those that are extensive in terms of area (½ hectare or more) or length (1 kilometre or more) and developments that require Environmental Impact Statements. The archaeological heritage includes National Monuments in the care of the State, archaeological and architectural monuments and sites in the Record of Monuments and Places and the Register of Historic Monuments, Zones of Archaeological Potential in historic towns; the underwater archaeological heritage, including historic wrecks; unknown and unrecorded archaeological sites (including subsurface elements with no visible surface remains); potential sites located in the vicinity or large complexes of sites or monuments, present or former wetlands, unenclosed land, rivers or lakes.\(^{11}\)

\(^{11}\) Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage
Archaeological assessment is an essential first step in the development process to identify the archaeology, if any, present on a site, so as to allow the development to be designed from the start in such a way as to minimize the impacts of that development on the archaeology. This can avoid or reduce costs and delays to the development.

7.8.3 Underwater Archaeology

Under the National Monuments Acts 1930-2004, all shipwrecks over one hundred years old, underwater archaeological structures, features and objects are protected. The potential exists for development to impact negatively on our underwater cultural resource. Development impacting upon rivers and lakes may encounter underwater archaeology.

Policy for Archaeological Heritage

Policy 252 Secure the preservation (i.e. preservation in situ or, as a minimum, preservation by record) of all archaeological monuments included in the Record of Monuments and Places as established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994, and of sites, features and objects of archaeological interest generally. In securing such preservation Roscommon County Council will have regard to the advice and recommendations of the National Monuments Section of the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government, both in respect of whether or not to grant planning permission and in respect of the conditions to which permission, if granted, should be granted.

Policy 253 Protect the archaeological heritage from damage.

Policy 254 Make available appropriate guidance in relation to the protection of the archaeological heritage in the County.

Policy 255 Promote public awareness of the rich archaeological heritage in the County.

Objectives for Archaeological Heritage

Objective 230 Ensure that any development either above or below ground, within the vicinity of a site of archaeological interest shall not be detrimental to the character of the archaeological site or its setting.

Objective 231 Secure the preservation (in situ, or as a minimum, preservation by record) of all sites and features of historical and archaeological interest, such as castles.

Objective 232 Provide guidance to developers and property owners regarding the protection of the archaeological heritage and the archaeological implications of proposed development.

Objective 233 Promote pre-planning consultations in relation to the archaeological heritage with the planning authority and with the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government in its capacity of being charged with the implementation of the National Monuments Acts.

Objective 234 Have regard to the advice and recommendations of the National Monuments Service of the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government, both in respect of whether or not to grant planning permission and in respect of the conditions to which permission, if granted, should be subject.

Objective 235 Ensure that proposed developments, that may (due to their location, size, or nature) have implications for the archaeological heritage, are subject to archaeological assessment.
Objective 236 Seek to designate archaeological landscapes in consultation with the National Monuments Service of the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government, within the lifetime of this plan.

Objective 237 Endeavour to ensure the dissemination of the results of archaeological excavation in a timely and appropriate manner.

Objective 238 At sites where underwater archaeology might be encountered, especially at the three main fording points of the Shannon at Roosky, Termonbarry & Ballyleague, refer development applications to the Underwater Archaeology Unit, via the Development Applications Section of the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government for comment.

7.8.4 Development in Areas of Archaeological Potential – Development Standards

- All developments that may have implications for archaeological heritage should be subject to archaeological assessment. Such developments include those located at or close to archaeological monuments or sites, extensive developments in terms of area covered (ground disturbance of more than ½ hectare) or length (1 kilometre or more) and developments requiring an Environmental Impact Statement. The archaeological heritage includes National Monuments in the care of the State, archaeological and architectural monuments and sites in the Record of Monuments and Places and the Register of Historic Monuments, zones of archaeological potential in Historic Towns; the underwater archaeological heritage, including historic wrecks; unknown and unrecorded archaeological sites (including subsurface elements with no visible surface remains); potential sites located in the vicinity or large complexes of sites or monuments, present or former wetlands, unenclosed land, rivers or lakes.

- Development taking place either above or below ground which is within, adjacent to or might affect sites and features of historical and archaeological interest shall respect the character of the archaeological site and its setting and shall be sited and designed with care for the character of the site and setting.

- Archaeological monitoring may be required in the course of carrying out development works. It shall be a condition of archaeological monitoring that there is a requirement for the stopping (on the advice of the monitoring archaeologist) of all works which might affect elements of the archaeological heritage, the recording of exposed archaeological material, and preservation by record or preservation in-situ of the elements of the archaeological heritage, as appropriate.

7.8.5 Rathcroghan Archaeological Complex

The Rathcroghan area of County Roscommon, located along the N5 between Tulsk and Ballinagare, is the location of a complex of archaeological monuments that are of major national significance. Rathcroghan is the traditional site of the seat of Connaught’s Iron Age elite and the burial place of the pagan kings of Ireland. It is famous in myth, legend and folklore as the location from which Queen Maeve of Connaught set out on her raid to claim the Brown Bull of Cooley, in the epic tale the ‘Táin Bó Cúalnge’.

The landscape of the Rathcroghan area reflects 5,000 years of human activity from Neolithic to Medieval periods. The archaeological characteristics of this landscape have survived largely intact to this day because of the respect and appreciation of the site amongst the local landowners. Conservation of this landscape and of the monuments and their settings, which contribute to this historic landscape, must be balanced with the sustaining of viable land use practices and a viable population in the area. Many of the individual monuments, which together form the archaeological complex of Rathcroghan are National Monuments in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. There are also other important national monuments in private ownership.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RMP No.</th>
<th>Townland</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<td>Glenballythomas</td>
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<td>Linear earthwork</td>
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<td>Enclosure attached to RO21-042017</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>473</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Ring-barrow</td>
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<td>Millean Meba</td>
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<td>Misgaun Meba</td>
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<td>RO022-057010-</td>
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<td>RO022-057011-</td>
<td>Toberrory</td>
<td>Rathcroghan</td>
<td>Guardianship</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Policy 256: Support the implementation of the Rathcroghan Archaeological Complex Conservation Study, as prepared for the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government.

Policy 257: Facilitate sustainable development within the zones of archaeological potential associated with the Rathcroghan site in accordance with ‘Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities (Government of Ireland 2005).

Policy 258: Protect and conserve the vulnerable archaeological and cultural landscape and to conserve and enhance views from and between the 12 key archaeological monuments and 4 key view points as identified in the Rathcroghan Archaeological Complex Conservation Study.

Objectives for the Rathcroghan Archaeological Complex

Objective 239: Devise future planning policy for the Rathcroghan complex having regard to the findings and recommendations of the Rathcroghan Archaeological Complex Conservation Study.

Objective 240: Refer all planning applications within the Rathcroghan complex zones of archaeological potential, to the Development Applications Unit of the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government for comment and to have regard to those comments when making decisions in all such planning applications.

Objective 241: Permit individual housing only in accordance with the Rural Settlement Strategy as set out in Chapter 6 of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2008-2014.

Objective 242: Facilitate modestly scaled development, such as extensions to existing domestic dwellings, sensitively designed and sited agricultural building, reuse of existing buildings and where appropriate, replacement buildings comparable in scale to buildings being removed.

Objective 243: Discourage development along the N5 road as it passes through the Rathcroghan Area, despite what changes may occur to the status of that route, during the lifetime of this plan to conserve intervisibility between 12 key monuments and 4 key view points as per Policy 258.

Objective 244: Local and long distance views shall be assessed via digital terrain modelling and viewshed analysis, their significance identified and prioritized in terms of intervisibility and general interpretation of the archaeological landscape. The 12 key monuments and key view points identified in the Rathcroghan Archaeological Complex Conservation Study shall be the starting point for such modelling.

Objective 245: Carry out a capacity study for the Rathcroghan Complex Study area to assess the capacity of the landscape to accommodate future development. This is necessary because the greatest concern in relation to rural housing is its cumulative impact on the landscape as well as the national and international significance of the Rathcroghan complex landscape which is based on its landscape and intervisibility between the key monuments.
7.8.6 Development in the Rathcroghan Area – Development Standards

Along with the archaeological development standards applied countywide, additional development criteria will be applied to the Rathcroghan Area:

- In order to apply the policy of conserving this significant historic landscape, development applications must be assessed in the policy context as set out in Chapter 6, Rural Areas Within Sensitive Environmental and Other Designations.
- Development applications, which relate to appropriately scaled economic activity, such as tourism related facilities or employment opportunities may be considered, however Section 47\(^\text{12}\) agreements may be utilized to sterilize land from other development.
- All developments that may be considered on the Rathcroghan Plateau (defined by the 120m-130m contour), in the vicinity of the 12 key monuments identified in Section 8.4 to 8.15 and the 4 key view points highlighted as being of significance in Figure 5 of the Rathcroghan Archaeological Complex Conservation Study must be subject to a visual impact assessment to ensure the intervisibility and setting of the monuments is conserved.
- All developments that may be considered within the archaeological zones will be subject to an archaeological assessment requirement.

\(^{12}\text{Planning and Development Act 2000}\)
8.1 INTRODUCTION

Our natural heritage includes the variety of all life around us. The Heritage Act, 1995 defines natural heritage as including flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, inland waterways and heritage gardens and parks.

Conserving this biodiversity - plants, animals and micro-organisms along with our lakes, river, bogs, woodlands, grasslands etc, means maintaining the variety of species and genetic resources, as well as the environment in which different species co-exist and are interlinked. Biodiversity and the natural environment provide us with many of the essentials of life – oxygen, water, food, medicine and places to relax in. It is therefore important that we protect the wealth of wildlife and habitats i.e. the biodiversity, in Co. Roscommon because we are dependent on these for our survival and wellbeing. This biodiversity makes up the landscape of Co. Roscommon and this landscape is also the result of human activities down through the generations. This landscape provides a home, for people, plants and animals and is a unique cultural resource. It contributes to our sense of place, to the local distinctiveness of each part of the county and it contributes to our quality of life.

We share the country of Ireland with 28 species of land mammal, over 400 species of birds, more than 4,000 plant species, over 12,000 species of insect, as well as a huge range of other living creatures. The National Heritage Plan (2002), states that it is an objective of Government to ensure the protection of our heritage and to promote its enjoyment by all. One of the principles of the National Biodiversity Plan (2002) is that the conservation of biological diversity is essential for sustainable development, and for maintaining the quality of human life. In order to maintain quality of life for people, plants and animals we need to ensure there are enough areas in the county where all can flourish.

8.2 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Local Context:


The Strategy highlights a number of key issues, together with objectives and strategic actions to address them with coordinating agencies listed. In relation to planning it is an objective: ‘to ensure progressive and transparent planning systems in the county. To ensure future development plans, housing strategies and other Local Authority strategies take account of the environment and sustainable impacts of development’. A strategic action to achieve this is ‘facilitate the implementation of planning policy in a sustainable manner that avoids negative environmental impact and adheres to guidelines’.

Co. Roscommon Heritage Plan

The Co. Roscommon Heritage Plan 2002-2008 has as its aim ‘to create and promote an increased knowledge, awareness and appreciation of the natural, built and cultural heritage of County Roscommon, and to conserve it for future generations’. This plan, which will be renewed within the lifetime of this County Development Plan, represents the commitment of Roscommon County Council to the conservation and promotion of the cultural heritage of Co. Roscommon.

There are three central objectives highlighted within the Plan, namely:

1. To raise awareness of our heritage – To facilitate increasing awareness, understanding and enjoyment of Roscommon’s heritage
2. To collect and disseminate heritage information – To facilitate the development of a comprehensive heritage database for the county, to make this information available to all and to ensure effective use of data in policy formulation and decision making
3. To promote and advise on best practice in heritage conservation and management – To promote and advise on best practice standards for heritage conservation and management

Action 2.3.3 of the County Roscommon Heritage Plan ‘To prepare a County Biodiversity Plan’ involved the establishment of a County Roscommon Biodiversity Working Group. This is the first step in fulfilment of Roscommon County Council’s requirement under the National Biodiversity Plan to prepare a Local Biodiversity Plan in consultation with relevant stakeholders. This process is being carried out according to the Guidelines for the Production of Local Biodiversity Actions produced by The Heritage Council. This Biodiversity Working Group is a sub group of the County Roscommon Heritage Forum. It is not possible to plan for protection of important plants, habitats, ecosystems, such as turloughs, eskers, bogs, if there is no information available on the nature, extent and importance of these features in the county. Therefore the initial focus of the County Roscommon Biodiversity Working Group is the identification and assessment of the local biodiversity resource.

**Waterways Corridor Studies**

A waterway corridor is not defined as a set distance on either side of a waterway but the area, which impacts on, or is impacted by, the waterway. In conjunction with The Heritage Council and other relevant stakeholders, three waterway corridor studies have been carried out for the entire length of the Shannon navigation as it applies to Co. Roscommon.

The overall aims of the studies are:

- To identify ways to manage the waterways corridor environment to the benefit of all, i.e. heritage, land and water-based users;
- To improve understanding of the areas, and by this understanding, ensure retention of the distinctiveness of a place, while allowing for development and evolution of use for the future.

The studies identify and assess the significance of the waterway corridors, and detail policies and actions to retain and enhance the significance. The studies provide a detailed analysis by focussing on the following:

- Landscape and Visual Corridor
- Socio-economic Corridor
- Cultural/Historic Corridor
- Ecological Corridor

**National and Regional Context:**

**International Conventions and Agreements**

Government policy & legislation on the protection of natural heritage has come about as a result of signing up to several international conventions and increased public awareness about the value of our natural heritage. Ireland has signed up to many international agreements including:

- Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention), 1971 (ratified, 1984)
- Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Berne Convention), 1979 (ratified, 1982)
- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn Convention), 1979 (ratified, 1983)
- Agreement on Conservation of Bats in Europe (Bonn Convention), 1993 (ratified, 1995)
Chapter 8: Natural Heritage and Landscape Character Assessment

- European Landscape Convention, 2000, (ratified, 2002)

To comply with these conventions, two related EU Directives have been implemented, the Wild Birds Directive, 1979 and the Habitats Directive, 1992.

**European Union Directives**

The Wild Birds Directive requires protection for sites, which are of importance to birds, such as listed rare and vulnerable species such as the Whooper Swan, Greenland White-fronted Goose and the Corncrake. It also requires protection for regularly occurring migratory species, such as ducks, geese and waders. Finally it requires protection for Wetlands, especially those of international importance, which attract large numbers of migratory birds each year. The Habitats Directive lists certain habitats and species that must be given protection. This includes habitats such as raised bogs and turloughs. It also includes species such as Otter and Freshwater Pearl Mussel. The application of these Directives is through the designation of sites as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). These designated sites together form ‘Natura 2000’ a network of protected sites throughout the European Union. The directives also have legal requirements for wider countryside conservation and trade in endangered species. The EU Water Framework Directive 2000 aims to conserve the quality of all surface, coastal and ground waters.

**National Spatial Strategy 2002**

The principal aim of the National Spatial Strategy is to ensure that the entire country in the future will be able to sustain a better quality of life for the people, a strong competitive economy and an environment of the highest quality. Policies must recognise the ever changing nature of the built and natural environment and seek to work with and creatively direct change rather than aim to maintain a static state of the environment. The conservation and management of our built and natural heritage is key to accomplishing such aims and is a benchmark for the achievement of sustainability, as our built and natural heritage gives identity and a sense of place to local areas, villages and towns. It is part and parcel of what makes our communities good places to live, to work in and to visit. Conservation and management of heritage is therefore about delivering a high quality of life for everyone.

**Regional Planning Guidelines for the West 2004 - 2016**

A strategic goal set out in these guidelines is ‘To further improve the quality of life for the citizens of the West Region by promoting the concept of sustainability, protecting the environment and heritage, creating a safe society and sustaining and further promoting a sense of unique cultural identity for the Region together with ensuring access to key services including sporting and leisure facilities’.

The guidelines recognise the importance of ensuring that the natural and built heritage is conserved and enhanced, and state that preservation of the quality of heritage is also a major element is sustaining an identity for the region and maintaining biodiversity, educational, amenity, tourism and leisure values.

**National Heritage Plan 2002**

This states that it is an objective of Government to ensure the protection of our heritage and to promote its enjoyment by all. Roscommon County Council must ensure that all development plans likely to have a significant impact on heritage incorporate appropriate provisions for the protection of heritage.
National Biodiversity Plan 2002

This states that is in an objective of Government to secure the conservation, including where possible the enhancement, and sustainable use of biological diversity in Ireland and to contribute to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity globally. Roscommon County Council is required to prepare a County Biodiversity Plan to ensure and promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the county.

Forestry

The Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture and Food is working to ensure that all timber produced in Ireland is produced in a sustainable manner, compatible with commercial timber production and environmental protection. This process is known as Sustainable Forest Management (SFM). The implementation of SFM in Ireland is guided by the Irish National Forest Standard, the Code of Best Forest Practice and a suite of environmental guidelines (relating to water quality, landscape, archaeology, biodiversity and harvesting). A process known as Indicative Forest Strategy (IFS) complements this approach to forestry management. This is a planning tool used to assess opportunities for new forest planting in a given area. The objective of an IFS is to identify the potential that future forestation can make towards the establishment of high quality forests serving a variety of purposes including timber production, forest industry development, off-farm incomes, tourism, amenity and the enhancement of the environment\(^1\). The Forest Service is in the process of preparing an Indicative Forest Strategy for each county.

Landscape and Landscape Assessment, Consultation Draft of Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2000

This draft guidance document provides guidance on carrying out Landscape Character Assessment and recommends that studies be carried out of landscape value and sensitivity for Counties, which would inform Development Control decisions and ensure that developments, supporting tourism for example, do not detract from the character of the landscape.

Other Relevant Documents

The Planning and Development Acts 2000-2004 consolidate all previous Planning Acts and are strategic in their approach towards the protection of our natural heritage. A development plan must contain development objectives for the conservation and protection of the environment including, natural heritage and the conservation of European sites and any other sites which may be prescribed. A development plan must also include objectives for the preservation of the character of the landscape, including the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest.

The Wildlife Act, 1976 and the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 are the principal legislation for the protection of nature in Ireland together with the 1997 regulations bringing the directives into force.

8.3 DESIGNATED SITES

A wide range of different sites have been (or will be) designated under National & EU legislation and under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. There are 25 species and 60 habitats in Ireland, which are recognised by the EU as being in need of special protection, which has lead to a comprehensive network of protected areas being 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 (Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs)). Many of these habitats and species are found in Roscommon and some, such as Turloughs and Active Raised Bogs, are priority habitats because of their importance and rarity. The three main types of site

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\(^1\) Ref: www.agriculture.gov.ie
designations are detailed below. Some sites have multiple designations, for example Ballinagare Bog is designated both as an SAC and an SPA.

Designation of natural heritage sites in Ireland is the responsibility of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The designation process for European Sites is quite lengthy and goes through different stages. When the site is identified for protection it is deemed to be a ‘proposed’ site. When a site has been advertised and landowners notified it is deemed to be a ‘proposed, candidate’ site. When details of the site are transmitted to the EU Commission it is deemed to be a ‘candidate’ site. Once approved by the EU Commission, the Minister of Environment, Heritage & Local Government, formally designates sites. The designation process for NHA’s is set out in the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 and is being implemented by the Minister of Environment, Heritage and Local Government on a phased basis. Prior to their statutory designation, proposed NHA’s are afforded protection through recognition of their value and importance by Roscommon County Council.

**Strategic Aim for Designated Sites**

It is a strategic aim of Roscommon County Council to:

- Protect, conserve and enhance the biodiversity and natural heritage of County Roscommon.
- Identify, protect and conserve sites of natural heritage importance, in co-operation with the relevant statutory authorities

**Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)**

These are the prime wildlife conservation areas in the country, considered to be important on a European as well as Irish level. The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) lists certain habitats and species that must be protected. Ireland introduced the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 (S.I. No. 94/1997) to give effect to SACs under Irish Law. Any development in, near or adversely affecting an SAC should avoid any significant adverse impact on the features for which the site has been designated or proposed for designation. There are 29 SACs in Co. Roscommon, indicated on Map 24 and listed in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Site Code</th>
<th>Principal Habitat</th>
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<tr>
<td>Annaghmore Lough</td>
<td>eSAC</td>
<td>001626</td>
<td>Alkaline Fen</td>
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<td>Ballinturly Turlough</td>
<td>eSAC</td>
<td>000588</td>
<td>Turlough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballynamona Bog &amp; Corkip Lough</td>
<td>eSAC</td>
<td>002339</td>
<td>Active Raised Bog</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bellanagare Bog</td>
<td>eSAC</td>
<td>000592</td>
<td>Active Raised Bog</td>
</tr>
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<td>Callow Bog</td>
<td>eSAC</td>
<td>000595</td>
<td>Active Raised Bog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrowbehy / Cahir Bog</td>
<td>eSAC</td>
<td>000597</td>
<td>Active Raised Bog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castlesampson Esker</td>
<td>eSAC</td>
<td>001625</td>
<td>Orchid Rich Calcareous Grassland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloonchambers Bog</td>
<td>eSAC</td>
<td>000600</td>
<td>Active Raised Bog &amp; Alkaline Fen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloonsanville Bog</td>
<td>eSAC</td>
<td>000614</td>
<td>Active Raised Bog</td>
</tr>
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<td>eSAC</td>
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<td>eSAC</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corliskea/Trien/ Cloonfelliv Bog</td>
<td>eSAC</td>
<td>002110</td>
<td>Active Raised Bog &amp; Bog Woodland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derrinea Bog</td>
<td>eSAC</td>
<td>000604</td>
<td>Active Raised Bog</td>
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<td>eSAC</td>
<td>000606</td>
<td>Active Raised Bog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Errit Lough</td>
<td>eSAC</td>
<td>001637</td>
<td>Turlough</td>
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<tr>
<td>Four Roads Turlough</td>
<td>eSAC</td>
<td>002338</td>
<td>Active Raised Bog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killeghan Grassland</td>
<td>eSAC</td>
<td>002214</td>
<td>Orchid Rich Calcareous Grassland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisduff Turlough</td>
<td>eSAC</td>
<td>000609</td>
<td>Turlough</td>
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<td>eSAC</td>
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<td>Hard Water Lake</td>
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<td>Lough Croan Turlough</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lough Funshinagh</td>
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<td>000440</td>
<td>Active Raised Bog</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

These sites are areas of importance for birds (and often are also important for other types of wildlife). The EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) requires designation of SPAs for listed rare and vulnerable species, regularly occurring migratory species and wetlands, especially those of international importance, which attract large numbers of migratory birds each year.

Any development in, near or adversely affecting an SPA should avoid any significant adverse impact on the features for which the site has been designated. SPAs were given effect in Irish Law mainly under the Conservation of Wild Birds Regulations 1985 (SI. 291 of 1985). There are 6 SPAs in Co. Roscommon, indicated on Map 24 and listed in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Site Code</th>
<th>Principal Species</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belanagare Bog SPA</td>
<td>004105</td>
<td>Wintering Greenland White-fronted Goose, Golden Plover &amp; Red Grouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lough Gara SPA</td>
<td>004048</td>
<td>Greenland White-fronted Goose &amp; Whooper Swan, Great Crested Grebe &amp; Mute Swan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lough Ree SPA</td>
<td>004064</td>
<td>Wigeon, Teal, Pintail, Tufted Duck, Goldeneye, Golden Plover &amp; Lapwing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Shannon Callows SPA</td>
<td>004096</td>
<td>Whooper Swan, Mute Swan, Whooper Swan, Golden Plover, Lapwing &amp; Black-tailed Godwit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lough Arrow SPA</td>
<td>004050</td>
<td>Tufted Duck, Pochard, Goldeneye Little Grebe, Coot Whooper Swan &amp; Mallard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Suck Callows SPA</td>
<td>004097</td>
<td>Greenland White-fronted Goose, Whooper Swan, Lapwing &amp; Wigeon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs)

The Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 substantially strengthened the protection for wildlife previously available under the Wildlife Act 1976. In particular, the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 provides for the designation and conservation of Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs). NHAs are sites that support elements of our natural heritage which are unique, or of outstanding importance at the national level. Any development in, near or adversely affecting a Natural Heritage Area should avoid any significant adverse impact on the features for which the site has been designated. There are 40 Natural Heritage Areas in Co. Roscommon, these are indicated in Map 24 and listed in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Site Code</th>
<th>Habitat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bella Bridge Bog</td>
<td>000591</td>
<td>Raised Bog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrickynaghlan Bog</td>
<td>001623</td>
<td>Raised Bog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornaveagh Bog</td>
<td>000603</td>
<td>Raised Bog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derrycavan Bog</td>
<td>000605</td>
<td>Raised Bog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisanarryagh Bog</td>
<td>002072</td>
<td>Raised Bog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lough Namuckla Bog</td>
<td>000220</td>
<td>Raised Bog</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Moorfield Bog / Farm Cottage
- **NHA**: 000221
- **Character**: Raised Bog

### Suck River Callows
- **NHA**: 000222
- **Character**: Wet Grassland

### Tullaghan Bog
- **NHA**: 001652
- **Character**: Raised Bog

### Corry Mountain Bog
- **NHA**: 002321
- **Character**: Blanket Bog

#### pNHA’s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pNHA</th>
<th>Character</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ardagh Bog</td>
<td>001222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ardakillin Lough</td>
<td>001617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attishane Turlough</td>
<td>001618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballinturly Turlough</td>
<td>000588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballynamon Bog &amp; Corkip Lough</td>
<td>002302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brierfield Turlough</td>
<td>000594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrowreagh Turlough</td>
<td>001624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castleplunket Turlough</td>
<td>000598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloonshanville Bog</td>
<td>000614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corbally Turlough</td>
<td>001627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrigenroe Marsh</td>
<td>000596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corry Mountain Bog</td>
<td>002321 Upland Blanket Bog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cranberry Lough</td>
<td>001630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drum Bridge</td>
<td>001631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drummans Island</td>
<td>001633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fin Lough</td>
<td>001636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fin Lough</td>
<td>001636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hogs Island</td>
<td>001638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilglass &amp; Grange Loughs</td>
<td>000608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilronan Mountain Bog</td>
<td>000617 Upland Blanket Bog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lough Arrow</td>
<td>001673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lough Boderg &amp; Lough Bofin</td>
<td>001642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lough Drumharlow</td>
<td>001643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lough Gaara</td>
<td>000587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lough Glinn</td>
<td>001644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lough O’Flynn</td>
<td>001645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lough Ree</td>
<td>002310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newtown Turlough</td>
<td>001646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rathnalulleagh Turlough</td>
<td>000613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shad Lough</td>
<td>001648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tawnytaskin Wood</td>
<td>001651</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Other Natural Heritage Designations

In addition to the above Protected Areas there are many other designations both statutory and non-statutory, which are concerned with conservation and protection of the natural heritage such as a National Park, Statutory Nature Reserve and Wildfowl Sanctuary; there were none of the two aforementioned sites in Co. Roscommon at the time of preparation of this plan. There are, however, Wildfowl Sanctuaries which are managed by the NPWS. Another natural heritage designation that applies in the county is ‘Refuge for Flora or Fauna’. Under the Wildlife Acts the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government may designate Refuges for wild birds or wild animals or flora and impose protective measures to conserve both the species and their habitats.
Some rare plant species are afforded legal protection by the Wildlife Acts, under the Flora (Protection) Order 1999 (or other such orders). It is illegal to cut, uproot or damage the listed species in any way, or to offer them for sale. This prohibition extends to the taking or sale of seed. In addition, it is illegal to alter, damage or interfere in any way with their habitats. This protection applies wherever the plants are found and is not confined to sites designated for nature conservation. Any major change in existing land-use (e.g., a change from pasture to arable, or a change in fertiliser regime would be covered by this provision).

Development in or near Heritage Areas

Planning authorities must ensure that any development proposal which is likely to have a significant effect on a Special Area of Conservation, Natural Heritage Area, Special Protection Area for birds, or other area designated under statute for the conservation of features of natural or geological interest, or other designated area, is authorised only to the extent that the planning authority is satisfied it will not adversely affect the integrity of the area. Such a proposal must be subject to an appropriate assessment of its implications for the area, if it is clear, on the basis of a preliminary examination, that the project could have a significant effect on the area. All aspects of the proposal, which could, themselves or in combination with other proposals, affect the area’s conservation objectives should be identified.

Policy for Designated Sites

Policy 259 Protect proposed and designated Natural Heritage Areas
Policy 260 Protect proposed and designated Special Protection Areas
Policy 261 Protect proposed and designated Special Areas of Conservation
Policy 262 Protect geological NHAs as they become designated and notified to Roscommon County Council during the lifetime of this plan.
Policy 263 Protect any additional areas that may be designated during the lifetime of the plan by resisting development which would detrimentally impact on the conservation status of those sites
Policy 264 Promote development in these areas, for recreational and educational purposes, where it would not conflict with the preservation and protection of these sites.

Objectives for Designated Sites

Objective 246 Ensure that development in or near or likely to affect a designated site should avoid any significant adverse impact on the features for which the site has been designated.
Objective 247 Require an appropriate assessment of any development as described in Objective 246 above.

8.4 SITES OF GEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE

Geology is the study of the planet Earth as a whole, or in part and the materials of which it is made. It includes study of the processes that act and have acted upon these materials; the products and structures formed by such action and the physical and biological history of the planet since its origin including the history of life preserved as fossils in rocks and deposits at the surface or in layers.
beneath the surface of the earth. It also includes stratigraphic succession, caves, fossil content of any other items of scientific interest, and includes geomorphology, lithology and mineralogy\(^3\).

There is a statutory requirement placed on Local Authorities to have due regard for conservation of geological heritage features under the Planning and Development Act 2000, Planning and Development Regulations 2001, The Heritage Act 1995 and the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000. Throughout County Roscommon it is likely that there may be fossil sites and sites which show examples of particular rock types and formations. It is important that this aspect of our natural heritage is protected and enhanced.

The Geological Survey of Ireland has identified 20 areas of geological interest in County Roscommon. These are indicated in Map 25 and listed in the table below. The Geological Survey of Ireland has identified Castlesampson esker as the best-preserved esker in the country with vegetation typical of dry, calcareous soils.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme Site No.</th>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>IGH Theme - Primary</th>
<th>Easting</th>
<th>Northing</th>
<th>Principal characteristics</th>
<th>Summary description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IGH 10</td>
<td>Road cut NNW of Boyle through Curlews</td>
<td>Devonian</td>
<td>179000</td>
<td>307000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Quarry close by with volcanics exposed. Includes raindrops prints.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGH 8</td>
<td>River Boyle</td>
<td>Lower Carboniferous</td>
<td>179000</td>
<td>302000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sandstone, Lst.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGH 7</td>
<td>Tulsk area</td>
<td>Quaternary</td>
<td>183000</td>
<td>281000</td>
<td>Superimposed drumlins</td>
<td>Superimposed drumlins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGH 8</td>
<td>Roadstone quarry south of Boyle</td>
<td>Lower Carboniferous</td>
<td>183000</td>
<td>301700</td>
<td>Karst Lst., Fissures</td>
<td>Includes karst limestone pavement and fissures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGH 8</td>
<td>Lough Key Forest Park</td>
<td>Lower Carboniferous</td>
<td>184000</td>
<td>304000</td>
<td>Lakeside Exposure</td>
<td>Exposure around the lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGH 15</td>
<td>Altagowel</td>
<td>Economic Geology</td>
<td>190300</td>
<td>318700</td>
<td>Disused Coal Pits</td>
<td>There are accessible localities, which preserve coal workings and the rock sequence, although exposed coal seams will always be difficult to find.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGH 15</td>
<td>Kilronan - Geevagh</td>
<td>Economic Geology</td>
<td>190300</td>
<td>315200</td>
<td>Disused Coal Pits</td>
<td>There are accessible localities, which preserve coal workings and the rock sequence, although exposed coal seams will always be difficult to find.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGH 15</td>
<td>Arigna</td>
<td>Economic Geology</td>
<td>193000</td>
<td>314000</td>
<td>Coal mining heritage centre</td>
<td>Recently opened coal mining heritage centre. Need local knowledge of best sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGH 7</td>
<td>Castlesampson on Esker</td>
<td>Quaternary</td>
<td>194000</td>
<td>240000</td>
<td>Esker, dry calcareous soils, acidic eskers</td>
<td>At present the best preserved esker in the country. Vegetation typical of dry, calcareous soils. Interesting contrast with nearby acidic eskers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^3\) Ref: A Methodology for Local Authority Heritage Officers on the Preparation of County/City Heritage Plans, The Heritage Council.
IGH 12  | Lecarrow clay-pits (Ballybrink Bay) | Mesozoic/ Cenozoic | 198500 | 256200 | Little-studied china clay deposits occur in a hollow in the local limestone.  
IGH 7  | Knocknaool Esker | Quaternary | 198500 | 256200 | Esker  
IGH 1-55  | Mushroom rock: Moyvannan | Karst | 199577 | 247153 | This stone, and others in the immediate vicinity, have been interpreted as marking the former lake margins of Lough Ree. Moyvannan 1 stone is one of the most ‘mushroom-like’ rocks identified by Dunne (1998). She also considered it to be perhaps the definitive example of all those studied.  
IGH 15  | Gortinee | Economic Geology | 202600 | 293500 | Iron ore in tholeiitic volcanics. Mined as early as the 16thC; smelted at Dromod and Arigna.  
IGH 15  | Bencroy/Gubnaveagh | Economic Geology | 204000 | 319000 |  
IGH 15  | Arigna/Creevelea/Drumslig | Economic Geology | 220480 | 86830 | Haematite  
IGH 8  | Roadstone quarry north of Boyle | Lower Carboniferous | 184500 | 298200 | Near metal horseman statue on road to Sligo - west side  
IGH 7  | West of Slieve Bawn | Quaternary | 17000 | 299000 | Ribbed moraines  
IGH 7  | Lough Gara | Quaternary | 17000 | 299000 | Drumlins  
IGH 8  | Cavetown House, Clogher Lough | Lower Carboniferous | 184500 | 298200 |  
IGH 1- | Lough Funshinagh | | | | Disappearing Lake  

These sites are still being assessed, however some may be proposed for designation as Natural Heritage Areas under 16 geological heritage themes, see table below.

| Table 35: 16 Geological Heritage Themes |
|---|---|
| IGH 1 | Karst |
| IGH 2 | Precambrian to Devonian Palaeontology |
| IGH 3 | Carboniferous to Pliocene Palaeontology |
| IGH 4 | Cambrian-Silurian |
| IGH 5 | Precambrian |
| IGH 6 | Mineralogy |
Chapter 8: Natural Heritage and Landscape Character Assessment

| IGH 7  | Quaternary                          |
| IGH 8  | Lower Carboniferous                 |
| IGH 9  | Upper Carboniferous and Permian     |
| IGH 10 | Devonian                            |
| IGH 11 | Igneous Intrusions                  |
| IGH 12 | Mesozoic and Cenozoic               |
| IGH 13 | Coastal Geomorphology               |
| IGH 14 | Fluvial and Lacustrine Geomorphology|
| IGH 15 | Economic Geology                    |
| IGH 16 | Hydrogeology                        |

**Policy for Sites of Geological Importance**

**Policy 265**  Protect from inappropriate development sites of county geological importance

**Objective for Sites of Geological Importance**

**Objective 248**  Seek an audit of important geological sites in County Roscommon, in conjunction with the relevant statutory bodies

**Objective 249**  Raise awareness of the importance of geological heritage and disseminate information on sites of geological importance in County Roscommon, when this information becomes available

**Objective 250**  Impose a planning condition on all major developments that the Geological Survey of Ireland should be notified in advance of any significant ground excavations. This would include quarries, road cuttings, tunnels, major drainage works, foundations for industrial or large buildings and complexes.

8.5  NATURE CONSERVATION IN THE WIDER COUNTRYSIDE

While protected areas, such as those outlined in Section 8.3 cover a significant part of the country, approximately 90% of the country lies outside of this network. There are many other sites, which are of local importance for geology, flora and fauna. In order to plan for the conservation of the most important local sites it is necessary to identify what these sites are and where they are located. Roscommon County Council, through its support for the County Roscommon Biodiversity Working Group and the preparation and implementation of the County Roscommon Biodiversity Plan will gather information on habitats and species of local importance in the county during the lifetime of this plan. The County Roscommon Biodiversity Plan will also guide future data gathering and research projects relating to the biodiversity of the county. This process was started in 2007 by the County Roscommon Heritage Forum, through a project to compile an Audit of Biological Datasets for Co. Roscommon. The objective of this audit is to collect information on Natural Heritage datasets in Co. Roscommon; listing sources and locations of relevant Natural Heritage data for each area; identifying gaps in biological knowledge; and, making recommendations for future work. In this context, Natural Heritage is defined as including but not limited to flora, fauna and habitats.

**Objectives for Nature Conservation**

**Objective 251**  Promote the conservation of biodiversity outside of designated areas, while allowing for appropriate development, access and recreational activity.

**Objective 252**  Carry out habitat mapping for the county to identify significant local habitats in the county. Mapping of habitats should prioritise: Habitats listed in Annex 2 of the EU Habitats Directive; Species listed in Annex 2 of the EU Habitats Directive; and Species listed in Annex 1 of the Birds Directive.
Objective 253  Co-operate with statutory and other relevant agencies to identify, protect and conserve a representative sample of the county’s wildlife habitats of local or regional importance, not otherwise protected by legislation.

Objective 254  Identify, protect and conserve, in co-operation with the relevant statutory authorities and other groups, vulnerable, rare and threatened species or wild flora and fauna and their habitats. These include plant and animal species afforded protection under the Wildlife Acts and the EU Habitats & Birds Directives.

Objective 255  Conserve, protect and enhance important landscape features, such as lakes, rivers, wetlands, stonewalls, hedgerows etc, which form wildlife corridors and link habitats, providing the stepping stones necessary for wildlife to flourish, while also protecting and enhancing surface water and groundwater resources.

Objective 256  Ensure that any development on or near such a site or landscape feature should avoid any significant adverse impact on the features for which the site is considered to be of local importance.

Objective 257  Integrate biodiversity considerations into all Roscommon County Council activities

Objective 258  Ensure that the conservation and management of biodiversity is a key priority in water resource management and other infrastructural projects in the county.

Objective 259  Require that floodlighting proposals for historic structures are accompanied by a Bat Survey, carried out at the appropriate time of year by a suitably qualified person, so as to identify bat species present on the site and to specify mitigation measures required to ensure minimal disturbance to bats, if any, on the site.

Objective 260  Have regard to impacts of floodlighting and public lighting in open spaces and to minimize light intrusion in areas of habitat value.

Objective 261  Have regard to the recommendations of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and any national guidance documents, which may come about during the lifetime of this plan, with respect to potential impacts on nature conservation, when considering development applications relating to activities such as use of jet-ski’s and power boats on sites of nature conservation importance.

Hedgerows

The County Roscommon Hedgerow Survey Report (2005) found that townland boundary hedgerows and roadside hedgerows contain a greater diversity of native shrub species than other hedges. This is due to earlier establishment in the landscape of roadside and townland boundary hedges. The corridor role of hedgerows in facilitating the movement and distribution of wild flora and fauna through the landscape is believed to be enhanced significantly if hedgerows link into other (natural or semi-natural) habitat features. 12% of hedges surveyed in County Roscommon had end links with habitats other than hedgerows.

Hedges are a valuable asset to the county, they add much to the scenic appearance of the landscape and providing many services on the farm. The root systems of hedgerow trees and shrubs regulate water movement in the land and improve the quality of water. Hedgerows are also enormously important for wildlife. They are a habitat for insects like butterflies and bumblebees and provide food, shelter, and nesting sites for birds, from small songbirds to larger birds of prey like the Kestrel and Sparrowhawk. Mammals such as wood mice, hedgehogs, badgers, and bats also depend on hedges for their survival⁴.

⁴ Ref: ‘County Roscommon’s Hedges’, Roscommon County Council 2005
The most common hedgerow tree in County Roscommon by far is the Ash (found in over 60% of hedges). A large proportion of hedges in the county are structurally poor, with a total of 28% being either remnant (the remains of what was once a hedge) or derelict. Birds and other wildlife generally need dense hedges that are in good condition for shelter, protection from predators, and nesting sites. Without management intervention derelict hedges will become remnants in time. 82% of surveyed Roscommon hedges form part of active farm boundaries. Almost two-thirds of the hedges surveyed in the county were found to be long term unmanaged (over 10 years); many have not been managed for decades. Hedges generally need to be managed to maintain their viability. The proportion of hedges managed with excavator machines is very high. This management method is bad for the long-term health of hedges.

It is important that hedgerows be retained where possible, especially townland boundary, roadside hedges and hedgerows linking other habitats, forming a wildlife corridor. However, proper care and maintenance of hedgerows is also important.

**Objectives for Hedgerows**

**Objective 262** Ensure that any development, which impacts on a townland boundary, roadside hedgerows or hedgerows which form links with other habitats and form wildlife corridors; should first seek to retain, translocate or replace with native species of local provenance, these hedges. The overall goal should be to have no net loss of the hedgerow resource.

**Objective 263** The retention, re-location, or re-establishment of hedgerows in planning consents shall be the subject of a bond sought by the Local Authority from those seeking the planning permission. The bond to be returned on the successful retention, re-location or re-establishment of the hedgerows concerned within a given period.

**Objective 264** All mechanical hedge cutting carried out by or for Roscommon County Council should be carried out only by operators who have achieved the Teagasc proficiency standard MT 1302 – Mechanical Hedge Trimming and should be carried out only in the season permitted under the Wildlife Acts 1976 – 2000.

**Trees and Woodlands**

Trees and woodlands contribute to the landscape and visual amenity of County Roscommon. Native trees are particularly valuable as a habitat for invertebrates and bird life and trees provide a carbon sink and contribute to clean air and quality of life in the county as well as providing a valuable source of shelter and acting as a buffer from noise. Woodland sites, such as St. John’s Wood near Lecarrow are of national importance. Many other woodlands survive around the county, especially in demesnes and estates, such as at Rockingham near Boyle, at Castletennison or Kilronan Castle, near Keadue, at Strokestown Park and at Mote Park, near Roscommon. The importance of demesnes as locations for trees and woodland is evident in the number of significant trees recorded in these demesnes by the Tree Council in the Tree Register of Ireland, as Champion Trees in County Roscommon.

**Objective for Trees and Woodlands**

**Objective 265** Discourage the felling of mature trees to facilitate development, and to encourage tree surgery rather than felling, where possible. All these works should be carried out in accordance with the provisions in the Forestry Act 1946.

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5 Ref: ‘County Roscommon’s Hedges’, Roscommon County Council 2005
6 Roscommon County Council has successfully piloted hedgerow translocation on a site in Croghan. See **www.roscommoncoco.ie** for details.
7 Ref: http://www.treecouncil.ie/tree_register_of_ireland.htm
Objective 266  Carry out a tree survey of the county to identify trees suitable for Tree Preservation Orders.

Objective 267  Consider the use of Tree Preservation Orders to protect important trees, groups of trees or woodlands as appropriate, during the lifetime of this plan.

Objective 268  Undertake an assessment of the condition and potential hazard of roadside hedgerow trees, with mitigation measures specified.

Objective 269  Provide information to householders on landscaping gardens with native trees and shrubs

Objective 270  Commit to using native species wherever possible in its landscaping work and on Roscommon County Council property

Eskers

Eskers are glacial features found in south Roscommon, composed of narrow ridges of sand and gravel. Eskers are important because of their cultural, geological and natural heritage qualities. In ancient times they were used as roadways, in more recent times they are being used for extraction of the sand and gravel required by the construction industry. The glacial soil of eskers provides a habitat for many rare plants and for species-rich dry calcareous grassland of a type listed, with priority status, on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. Roscommon County Council recognises that there is a need to balance the requirements of aggregate extraction with the requirements of conservation of these important landscape features, allowing them to survive and achieve their educational, tourism and recreational potential.

Objectives for Eskers

Objective 271  Identify eskers of local importance, and conserve them from inappropriate development, within the lifetime of this plan.

Objective 272  Assess applications for quarrying activity in proximity to eskers, with respect to the importance of the esker to the landscape, scientific value or amenity value of the esker.

Peatlands

Peatlands or bogs, as they are more commonly known, are a distinctive feature of the Co. Roscommon landscape. Bogs are a unique habitat, rich in wildlife possessing a combination of plants and animals that have evolved especially to thrive in a bog. Bogs can also be considered a living history book, containing within them semi fossilized plant remains and human artifacts, such as stumps of bog pine from trees that grew about 4000 years ago and ‘toghers’ or ancient wooden roadways which were built from the Bronze Age up to the medieval, from c. 2000 BC up to c. 1500 AD before the bog grew over and concealed them. ‘Bogs are important controllers of water levels in river catchments, providing a source of water in dry conditions and soaking up excess water during wetter periods8’

Blanket bogs are found on the high ground, such as Kilronan Mountain in the north of the county. Raised bogs are found throughout the rest of the county. Active blanket bogs and active raised bogs are considered to be priority habitats, listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. Peatland sites of European and national conservation importance are designated, as explained in Section 8.3 of this chapter.

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8 Ref: ENFO WL12 Irish Raised Bogs
Objective for Peatlands

**Objective 273** Identify peatlands of local ecological or archaeological importance, and conserve them from inappropriate development, within the lifetime of this plan.

**Objective 274** Seek hydrological reports for significant developments within and close to peatlands so as to assess impacts on the integrity of peatland ecosystems.

**Objective 275** Support projects which plan for future re-use of industrial cutaway bogs as sites for habitat creation, amenity use and economic use, such as the ‘National Wetlands Wilderness Park’ proposed for the Mount Dillon group of Bord na Mona bogs on the Roscommon – Longford border.

Turloughs

‘Turloughs are lakes, which disappear for part of the year, leaving a floor covered with grasses, sedges and herbs. They occur in limestone areas west of the Shannon and are unique to Ireland. Turloughs are unique because of the geology that underlies them, their importance for controlling ground water, the plant communities that survive there and the birds and animals that thrive on them. Turloughs are priority habitats listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. Turlough sites of European and national conservation importance are designated, as explained in Section 8.3. At least a third of the turloughs in Ireland has already been drained. It is important to identify turloughs of local conservation importance and to be aware of the hydrological impacts of development on turloughs.

Objectives for Turlough

**Objective 276** Identify turloughs of local importance, and conserve them from inappropriate development, within the lifetime of this plan.

**Objective 277** Seek hydrological reports for significant developments within and close to turloughs so as to assess impacts on the integrity of the turlough system and associated groundwater levels.

Wetlands, Watercourses and Fens

‘Wetlands are simply lands covered with water – lakes, rivers, marshes, fens, bogs and other waterbodies whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, still or flowing water. A fen is a wetland habitat with a permanently high water level at or just below the surface. Its principal source of nutrients is from surface or ground water and the substrate is an alkaline to slightly acid soil. The vegetation of fens is diverse and usually dominated by sedges and brown mosses. Wetlands are a significant feature of the landscape in Co. Roscommon, such as the Shannon and Suck Rivers and their associated callows or floodplains are major habitats. Wetlands are of importance for their habitat value and the rich wildlife that they provide a home to. However, wetlands have another importance – drainage; much of the surface water, which remains on land in Ireland is stored in wetlands. However wetlands, including fens, are under increasing threat from drainage, reclamation and development. The EU Water Framework Directive and the Ramsar Convention provide guidance for the protection of wetlands.

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9 Ref: A Long-Lived Wilderness – The Future of the North Midlands Peatland Network, John Feehan, 2004
10 Ref: ENFO BS9 Turloughs
11 Ref: ENFO BS9 Turloughs
12 Ref: ENFO FS7 Wetlands in Ireland
13 Ref: ENFO BS35 Irish Fens
Objective for Wetlands, Watercourses and Fens

Objective 278 Identify wetlands of local importance, and conserve them from inappropriate development, within the lifetime of this plan.

Objective 279 Protect, conserve and enhance wetlands of local importance.

Objective 280 Support the work of the National Wetlands Wilderness Park committee\(^\text{14}\).

Objective 281 Promote awareness and educational opportunities relating to wetlands in the county

Objective 282 Ensure that the County’s wetlands are retained for their biodiversity and flood protection values.

Objective 283 Require a suitable environmental assessment of all proposed flood prevention works.

Objective 284 Ensure that where flood alleviation works take place the natural heritage and landscape character of rivers, streams and watercourses are protected and enhanced to the greatest extent possible.

Heritage Parks and Gardens

As set out in Chapter 7, Section 7.6, Roscommon County Council recognizes the natural and cultural heritage value of 130 or so heritage gardens, demesnes and parks within the county. Along with their architectural importance, heritage parks and gardens may be an important record of landscape design phases over the past four hundred years and may contain habitats and species, such as a gene pool of rare fruit trees or plants, champion trees (see Trees and Woodlands section above) and species which are increasingly rare.

Objectives for Heritage Parks and Gardens

Objective 285 Encourage sensitive development, which does not lead to a loss of, or cause damage to, the character, the principal components of, or the setting of parks, gardens and demesnes of special historic interest.

Objective 286 In order to facilitate development, a condition of planning permission may include seed or cutting collection from rare plants surviving in a heritage garden or park, in order to facilitate survival of a rare species.

Objective 287 To co-operate with the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government and other interested groups to facilitate the protection, promotion and enhancement of heritage gardens and parks in the county, such as those 130 listed for Co. Roscommon on [www.buildingsofireland.ie](http://www.buildingsofireland.ie)

8.6 INLAND WATERWAYS

Inland waterways are canals, canalised sections of rivers and lakes, navigation channels in rivers and lakes, and their associated navigational features\(^\text{15}\). There are 8 inland waterways in Co. Roscommon, all of which are connected to the Shannon Navigation, these are indicated on Maps 14 and 26 and listed in the table below.

\(^{14}\) Ref: A Long-Lived Wilderness – The Future of the North Midlands Peatland Network, John Feehan, 2004

\(^{15}\) A Methodology for the Preparation of County Heritage Plans, The Heritage Council 2001
Table 36: Inland Waterways in Co. Roscommon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waterway</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>River Shannon</td>
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<td>Boyle River</td>
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<td>Boyle Canal</td>
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<td>Jamestown Canal</td>
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<td>Carnadoe Waters</td>
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<td>River Suck</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lough Allen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecarrow Canal</td>
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These waterways have a rich built, natural and cultural heritage associated with them. The industrial archaeology of these inland waterways provides us with a means of learning about our past. The bridges, locks, lock keepers cottages, harbours and navigation markers found along the inland waterways represent engineering skills and workmanship dating from the 1700’s to the present day. Inland waterways provide a valuable habitat for many diverse species of flora and fauna. Their cultural value is represented in the local history of trade and commerce, also employment and traditions that each waterway brought to the towns and villages it passed through.

Nowadays, inland waterways have an economic value, in terms of tourism attractions with potential to generate revenue. They also have a quality of life value, valuable to locals and visitor alike. They provide access to places where people can walk along towpaths and enjoy the surroundings of the waterside.

**Policy for Inland Waterways**

**Policy 266**  Have regard to the recommendations set out in the ‘Waterways Corridor Study 2004 - A Study of the area surrounding Lanesborough to Shannonbridge’, Waterways Corridor Study 2004 - The Shannon River between Roosky and Lanesborough’ and the ‘Waterways Corridor Study 2005 – A Study of the area surrounding the Upper Shannon navigation down to Roosky, including the Boyle River, Lough Allen, Lough Key and the Carnadoe waters’ (www.roscommoncoco.ie)

**Objectives for Inland Waterways**

**Objective 288** Maintain and preserve the aesthetic value of inland waterways and the waterway corridors in the county from the impacts of dispersed and highly visible development, whilst discouraging speculative development and protecting water quality.

**Objective 289** Support the growth and development of local communities within the inland waterway corridors whilst maintaining their distinctive character.

**Objective 290** Prepare local area plans/village envelope plans to encourage consolidated development within existing settlements within the waterway corridors.

**Objective 291** Prepare design guidelines for the siting of buildings within the waterway corridors.

**Objective 292** Prepare a combined Local Area Plan for Ballyleague/Lanesborough to direct development and regeneration, within the lifetime of this plan. The plan must address access to the waterway, recreation and tourism, and the provision of suitable infrastructure to enable development.

**Objective 293** Seek to enhance public access to inland waterways as a condition of any development granted along inland waterways.
8.7 ALIEN INVASIVE SPECIES

There are many alien species of plant and animal, now common in Ireland, which are not actually native, but were introduced in the past, outside their natural past or present distribution such as Hedgehog, (Erinaceus europaeus), Rabbit (Oryctolagus cuniculus), Pheasant (Phasianus colchicus) or Pike (Esox lucius). These though alien, are no longer considered to be invasive species. Invasive alien species are those whose introduction threatens native biological diversity.

Specific habitat types currently under threat in Ireland from invasive species include freshwater river systems, ponds, mesotrophic lakes, native woodland, lowland heath, coastal floodplain, coastal saltmarsh and coastal sand dunes. A variety of native species are also threatened by invasives, including red squirrels, whiteclawed crayfish, red deer and earthworms\textsuperscript{16}. The threat to biodiversity in County Roscommon by invasive species is real. One invasive species, Japanese Knotweed, for example, is found in several locations around the county. Earth from areas infested with Japanese Knotweed should never be moved, as this is the main cause of its spread. Roscommon County Council recognized the threats posed by invasive species and supports the work of the Western Region Zebra Mussel Control Initiative, based in Galway County Council. Roscommon County Council will support other initiatives to raise awareness of the dangers of the spread of invasive species. Further information on this issue is available on www.alienspecies.ie.

**Objectives for Alien Invasive Species**

**Objective 294** Support initiatives, which reduce the risks of invasions, help control and manage new and established invasive species, monitor impacts, raise public awareness, improve legislation and address international obligations.

**Objective 295** Implement conditions as appropriate, as part of a grant of a planning permission or a waste permit, to prevent spread of invasive species.

**Objective 296** Encourage the use of native species in amenity planting and stocking and related community actions to reduce the introduction and spread of non-native species.

8.8 NATURAL HERITAGE AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The economic potential of a rich and well-conserved landscape and biodiversity is now recognized as being of major importance for its tourism potential. Studies carried out by The Heritage Council have found that there is public recognition of the economic and tourism enhancement benefits to be gained by protecting our heritage\textsuperscript{17} (See chapter 10 ‘Recreation, Leisure and Tourism’ for details).

8.9 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

The Landscape Character Assessment forms an integral part of this Development Plan and should be read in conjunction with it.

For a more detailed LCA of the Lough Key Area see Map 44 and the Lough Key Area Plan 2008 – 2014.


\textsuperscript{17} Ref: Heritage Council Survey, Topline Results, October 2004
9.1 INTRODUCTION

Roscommon County Council recognises that building strong and inclusive communities is a key element in achieving sustainable development. Access to cultural, social and community facilities is central to promoting a sense of community and social inclusion. In addition to economic development, sustainable communities require the provision of and access to education, health, childcare services, recreation and leisure amenities, community support services, and a good quality built environment. The Council aims, where possible, to respond to individual communities and their needs.

Community infrastructure also includes traditional local services such as small shops, post offices, and licensed premises as these also help to preserve and enhance a sense of community at local level. In addition to this, the enhancement of a sense of place and belonging within communities is hugely dependent on opportunities to meet, interact and form strong social networks. It is important to retain these services, where viable.

For some members of the community there are more barriers in accessing the same opportunities, facilities and services, whether through age, gender, disability, unemployment, location, origin or language barriers. Social inclusion refers to the manner in which all members of the community are integrated in an equal manner, and it seeks to reduce barriers such as those mentioned above. Specific policies and actions will be required for these people, in order to enable them to obtain the same quality of life as the remainder of the community, which is crucial to a strong and inclusive community.

9.2 STATUTORY AND POLICY CONTEXT

In relation to the compilation of this chapter the Council shall have regard to all National, Regional and Local policies. In particular the;

Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended

Contained within Section 10(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, is a list of mandatory objectives to be incorporated into Development Plans. A number of these objectives relate to social infrastructure, either directly or indirectly.

National Spatial Strategy (NSS), 2002-2020

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) and the Regional Planning Guidelines for the West (RPG’s) emphasise the importance of developing strong, vibrant and sustainable communities. The National Spatial Strategy sets out considerations for enhancing quality of life and places emphasis on the quality of open spaces, public parks and amenity areas as features that can positively contribute to a good quality of life.

Regional Planning Guidelines for the West, 2004-2016

The Regional Planning Guidelines call upon Planning Authorities to adopt objectives that provide for community, cultural and social needs of all persons and communities through the provision of satisfactorily dispersed and easily accessible social and community infrastructure. Such objectives are seen as vital contributory factors in ensuring the delivery of a high quality of life.


The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAP Inclusion) has been prepared in a different context to the original 1997 National Anti-Poverty Strategy. Income support targets (social welfare rates and pensions) have now been achieved and, in line with the National Economic and Social
Council (NESC) report on the Developmental Welfare State, there is greater emphasis on services and activation of these as a means of tackling social exclusion.


Facilitated and serviced by the Community and Enterprise section of Roscommon County Council, the RCDB aims to develop an integrated, sustainable and people-centred framework for the development of the county. Developing and implementing the Ten Year Strategy which includes economic, social and cultural development began in 2002 and will continue until 2012.

Other Relevant Documents/Policies:

- National Development Plan, 2007
- National Disability Strategy, 2004
- National Children’s Strategy, 2000
- Department of Education & Science - Statement of Strategy, 2003-2005
- Childcare Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2004
- Roscommon Common Vision – a ten year strategy for economic, social and cultural development, 2002-2012

9.3 SOCIAL INCLUSION AND DISABILITY

The National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) 1997-2007 defines poverty using the following description;

“People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living, which is regarded as acceptable by Irish Society generally”.

As a result of inadequate income and other resources, people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities, which are considered the norm for other people in society. Different groups of people are at risk of poverty for different reasons e.g. living in disadvantaged urban or rural areas can contribute further to poverty. Despite a significant population increase since 2002, Roscommon remains a notably rural County with several isolated areas. Many of the policies and objectives that underpin this County Development Plan are informed by the desire to promote Social Inclusion and reduce poverty and deprivation. Ensuring social inclusion, reducing poverty and deprivation are some of the principal challenges facing society and Local Authorities at present and for the foreseeable future.

Social inclusion refers to a series of positive actions to achieve equality of access to services and goods, to assist all individuals to participate in their community and society, to encourage the contribution of all persons to social and cultural life and to be aware of and to challenge all forms of discrimination.

The concept of social exclusion recognises that for many people life is difficult and not just because of the absence of money or resources. Social Exclusion can be described as a set of processes which push people out to the edge of society, therefore preventing them from being able to participate fully in society.

County Roscommon has a broad range of existing social and community infrastructure available to residents throughout the County. However, there is a deficiency in the provision of community facilities in many areas throughout the county and adequate provision should be made for sport, recreational and other public amenities particularly in communities where there has been a significant
increase in population. The provision of these facilities such as childcare, health and social infrastructure is fundamental to establishing communities and promoting quality of life, social inclusion and sustainable settlements.

Roscommon County Council is committed to the promotion of disability awareness, supporting policies against their impact on equality / disability, and providing people with disabilities access to services. The Council has signed up to the Barcelona Declaration (1995), which aims to meet the needs of disabled people by developing and implementing inclusive policies in relation to housing, transportation and access to public buildings and information. Accessibility within the internal physical structures (lifts, toilets etc) is covered by Part M of the 2002 Building Regulations. In response to the Barcelona Declaration and Disability Strategy, the Council will seek to implement the County’s Disability Action Plan 2005-2007.

Travellers are a group that has traditionally felt excluded from many aspects of mainstream society. Roscommon County Council supports a number of educational programmes for Travellers, including training courses for Travellers and Homework Clubs. The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 requires Local Authorities in consultation with Travellers to prepare and adopt a Traveller Accommodation Programme to meet the existing and projected accommodation needs of Travellers. The drawing up of the programme is assisted by the Local Traveller Consultative Committee which is representative of Travellers, Members of the Council and Council Officials. The first Programme adopted was for a period of 5 years. In 2004, The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, under Section 10(1) of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998, directed that the next accommodation programme should be for a period of four years. The new four-year programme covers the period 1st January 2005 to 31st December 2008 and was adopted at the Council Meeting of the 21st March 2005.

9.3.1 CLÁR and RAPID Programmes

CLÁR (Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais) is an investment programme for disadvantaged rural areas and is overseen by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. CLAR provides funding and co-funding to Government Departments, State Agencies and Local Authorities in accelerating investment in selected priority developments. These measures support physical, economic and social infrastructure across a number of sectors, e.g. roads, water & sewerage, enhancement of areas, community and sport initiatives, electricity, health and telecommunications. The measures reflect the priorities identified by the communities in the selected areas following consultation with the Department. The entire County of Roscommon, apart from Drum, Kiltoom and Monksland, are eligible under this scheme.

The RAPID Programme (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) Investment for this programme comes under the remit of the National Development Plan. The RAPID programme aims to promote community participation, service integration and investment to the RAPID areas of Roscommon. RAPID programmes are operated locally by Area Implementation Teams, facilitated by a local coordinator and consists of a diverse range of participants (representatives from state agencies, local partners, community, County Council and Town Council) working together to improve local people’s lives, as well as co-coordinating the provision of resources in an area.

Policy for Social Inclusion and Disability

Policy 267 Ensure that inclusion is an integral part of the design and delivery of all programmes and services and ensures effectiveness and efficiency in delivery of social inclusion work.

Policy 268 Continue to develop linkages between agencies and organisations and co-ordinate social inclusion work in the county.
Chapter 9: Social and Community Facilities

Policy 269 Identify levels of need based on disadvantage and qualify and analyse the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized people.

Policy 270 Encourage and promote the renewal of disadvantaged areas, with specific reference to the principle of targeting investment in disadvantaged areas through the implementation of commitments outlined in the RAPID and CLAR Programmes throughout the County, and the utilisation of the Council’s Development Contribution Scheme to form a basis for the improvement of existing community and recreational facilities and the funding of new facilities in disadvantaged areas.

Policy 271 Develop accessible infrastructure to support the development of heritage, arts, sport and tourism.

Policy 272 Promote and develop the county Arts Centre; and explore the development of cultural infrastructure (fixed and mobile) for the county.

Policy 273 Develop a more co-coordinated and strategic approach to cultural development in the county.

Policy 274 Integrate arts and cultural plans into operational plans for public services in the county. Develop a policy to ensure maximization and promotion of “percent for art schemes” (a percent of overall cost of capital project can be sought by public bodies for arts works).

Policy 275 Develop a cultural plan for the county to include arts, sport, heritage, tourism and language. Also, develop a plan to utilise artists, performers, sports personalities and friends of Roscommon to promote Roscommon at home and abroad.

9.4 COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Strategic Aims

- Roscommon County Council will promote the use of existing buildings and lands to the benefit of the wider community, subject to available resources.
- It is an objective of the Council that all groups should be enabled to participate fully in the life of the community and that language or other barriers should be addressed so that all groups have the opportunity to live full, active lives and to integrate and contribute to community life.

Access to social, community and cultural facilities plays an invaluable role in promoting social cohesion and a sense of community. The availability of a range of such facilities can often have a significant bearing upon where people decide to reside or locate a business. Roscommon County Council recognises that community facilities play an integral role in promoting a sense of community and can enhance a person’s quality of life.

Growth in County Roscommon’s population and level of housing (demand and supply) in recent years has resulted in the need for additional quality open space and recreation opportunities for residents, particularly those living in urban areas. The provision of a broad range of facilities is important in enhancing a sense of community, for example childcare facilities, crèches, libraries, playgrounds, playing pitches, local and community services (post offices, youth clubs, banking facilities, community centres, etc.), Education (National and Second Level Schools), Third Level Institutions and Colleges of Further Education. Most villages throughout the county have facilities for some organised field based sports. In addition, there are several equestrian facilities and golf courses. There are also a number of walking routes such as the Suck Valley Way and the Miners Way. Public swimming pools are located in Roscommon Town and Castlerea. The Roscommon Arts Centre is a multi-disciplinary and multi-purpose arts space situated in the heart of Roscommon town. The centre
provides opportunities for the local community to actively engage with a range of art-forms through participatory and performance based activities.

However, there are new and additional facilities, which are required to help achieve balanced sustainable development at neighbourhood level. There is a recognised lack of community facilities in certain communities within County Roscommon, which needs to be addressed. There should be equal access to community facilities for all, in order to help to enhance education, health and personal development. Community facilities are required by all as they encourage cohesive, healthy and equal lifestyles, hence an overall better quality of life.

Roscommon County Council is committed to retaining and facilitating the provision of accessible essential services, such as Roscommon County Library and its local branches, for all members of the community through prudent and inclusive planning. Roscommon County Council Library Services Development Plan 2006-2010 supports the economic, cultural and social development of County Roscommon through the integration of services at local level and aims to provide and develop a comprehensive, quality, modern and accessible library service for people of all ages in the county. It is critically important that a wide range of social and community facilities be provided within the County. However, Roscommon County Council can only facilitate and encourage the provision of a range of services such as education, social services and health facilities as it does not fall within its remit to provide these services. Roscommon County Council fully supports the County Development Board “Roscommon Common Vision” as a mechanism for the co-ordination of local delivery of these community services.

The Planning and Development Act 2000 provides for the possibility of allocating funding for community facilities from the approved Development Contribution Scheme. The Council supports the use of Development Contribution funds for the provision of new facilities and the improvement of existing facilities for the people of County Roscommon.

The inclusion of all sectors of society must be considered in planning for open space, sports, recreation and community facilities. Roscommon County Council is committed to the needs of those with disabilities and acknowledges the change to a more multicultural society is being experienced at this time. It is an objective of the Council that all groups should be enabled to participate fully in the life of the community and that language or other barriers should be addressed so that all groups have the opportunity to live full and active lives and to integrate and contribute to community life.

It is important that the needs of young people are addressed through the provision of sports and recreation facilities, youth clubs and supervised places to meet which will help them to develop skills and abilities, will reduce incidence of anti-social behavior, increase the security and quality of live for all members of the community.

The provision of a range of facilities throughout the county, is one of the key objectives of this County Development Plan. It must be acknowledged however, that the delivery of certain facilities will be dependent upon reaching a population threshold to make these financially and functionally viable. The Planning Authority’s role in this regard is to ensure that sufficient lands for the purposes are identified within the development plan areas. It should be noted however that, the reservation of sites for education and other community facilities by appropriate zoning is potentially problematic, as it does not guarantee the timely provision of a necessary community facility. Education, which is not within the functional responsibility of the Local Authority, is a case in point. Nonetheless, the Planning Authority will continue to liaise with the relevant departments concerning plans in preparation.

The inclusion of all sectors of society must be considered in planning for open space, sports and recreation facilities. The County Development Board Strategy 2002-2012 provides a mechanism for the co-ordination of local delivery of community services. Standards for the provision of all public facilities will accord with Part M of the Building Regulations to ensure that they are accessible to those with disabilities. The change to a more multicultural society is being experienced at this time.
and needs to be addressed in policy. It is an objective of the Council that all groups should be enabled to participate fully in the life of the community and that language or other barriers should be addressed so that all groups have the opportunity to live full, active lives and to integrate and contribute to community life.

**Dual Use of Educational Facilities**

The provision of buildings to serve community facilities is costly and, in this regard, it is considered that dual-use of community and public buildings should be encouraged, where possible. Schools and other educational premises represent a valuable resource in terms of land and buildings, which are generally only utilised on a part-time basis. The dual use of schools and other educational facilities can contribute towards the provision of community and cultural facilities for the wider community. It should be noted that this is dependent on the education service not being compromised i.e. dual use should occur during school holidays and after school hours. The DoEHLG Guidelines on Childcare Facilities, 2001 recommend the use of school premises to cater for after school care. School authorities are encouraged to consider how they can assist in addressing the demand for community facilities. Roscommon County Council will promote the use of existing buildings and lands to the benefit of the wider community, subject to available resources. Opportunities will also be sought to ensure that proposed new educational and other community facilities are specifically designed to facilitate dual use.

**Children and Young People**

The National Children’s Strategy, Our Children (2000), is a ten-year plan, which endeavors to get agencies working together to improve the quality of children’s lives. The recent development of a Play Policy for County Roscommon will assist in determining the need and location for the provision of playgrounds throughout the County. The vision contained in the Roscommon Play Policy, 2005 – 2008 is “To make Roscommon a child-friendly county in which opportunities for safe, challenging and varied play are accessible to every child”. Policy statements include:

- Pursuing integration in the design and provision of facilities in order that those with different physical abilities, cultures and genders can benefit from playing together;
- An amount is to be included for play provision in the next scheme of development contributions and a programme for provision to be adopted;
- Compliance will be monitored with the provision of a play facility in all new childcare facilities; and,
- Continue to develop the public library service for children.

It is important that the needs of young people are addressed. The provision of sports and recreation facilities, youth clubs and supervised places to meet will help them to develop skills and abilities, will reduce incidence of anti-social behavior, increase security and quality of life for all members of the community. Roscommon County Council will therefore seek to address the need for additional facilities for young people throughout the County.

**Senior Citizens**

In relation to Community Facilities, Senior Citizens must be catered for and the inclusion of the needs of Senior Citizens should be central to any good community policy. Roscommon County Council endorses the need for each local community to plan and provide a range of services and supports to enable Senior Citizens throughout the County to maintain the optimal level of health, independence and dignity. Despite the fact that the local Planning Authority does not have direct responsibility for providing such services, it has responsibility for regulating the development and use of land in the public interest to meet the requirements for development. Good design is also fundamental in creating a safe and barrier-free environment which is easily accessible and manage able by Senior Citizens. The rural transport initiative is an important factor for this group to ensure accessibility to social outlets, health services and shops.
Policy for Community Facilities

Policy 276  Provide for the future well being of the residents of the County by ensuring the provision of necessary community services and facilities.

Policy 277  Support the provision of facilities for young people and teenagers within the County.

Policy 278  Facilitate social inclusion and access for all to community facilities.

Policy 279  Roscommon County Council endorses the need for each local community to plan and provide a range of services and supports to enable Senior Citizens throughout the County to maintain the optimal level of health, independence and dignity.

Policy 280  Promote the retention of existing services, particularly in disadvantaged areas and seek the provision of neighborhood facilities concurrent with new development.

Policy 281  Ensure the provision of affordable childcare throughout the County in consultation with the Roscommon County Childcare Committee, the County Development Board and the Health Service Executive.

Policy 282  Facilitate and develop a hierarchy of open spaces throughout the County to provide greater opportunities for recreation and amenity.

Policy 283  Facilitate the development of primary, post primary and third level educational facilities to meet the needs of the County.

Policy 284  Ensure that adequate lands and services are reserved/zoned to cater for the establishment, improvement or expansion (where possible) of primary and post primary educational facilities.

Policy 285  Promote the development of outreach programmes between businesses and the third level institutions in adjoining Counties.

Policy 286  Co-operate with the Health Service Executive and other statutory and voluntary agencies in the provision of health, community, social facilities and services for the aged population.

Policy 287  Ensure that adequate lands and services are available for the improvement, establishment and expansion of health and related services.

Policy 288  Support local sports and community groups in the development of facilities through the reservation of suitable land and the provision of funding where available and appropriate.

Objectives for Community Facilities

Objective 297  Endeavour to continue to develop and improve the services provided on an ongoing basis through the provision of a high standard of library services.

Objective 298  Support the regeneration and repair of the area behind the convent gym in Roscommon Town and retention as open space for future sporting/recreational use.
Objective 299  Implement the Play Policy for County Roscommon in conjunction with the County Development Board and other agencies.

9.5  CHILDCARE PROVISION

Increasing numbers of people in the workforce and changing lifestyles have increased the demand for childcare facilities in our communities. The provision of childcare facilities is subject to the Child Care Act and the Child Care (Pre School Services) Regulations of 1996. There are approximately 1,317 childcare services throughout the County, which are categorised into sessional, full daycare, child-minding and private and community services. There are also approximately 14 after-school services and 12 parent and toddler groups in the county. The need to develop and expand social infrastructure such as childcare provision which supports the lifecycle needs of people working and living in the county, is a priority of Roscommon County Council. The Council therefore recognises that the provision of properly run and conveniently located childcare facilities throughout the County is a fundamental element of social infrastructure required to enable people to engage in accessing education, employment and social networks.

Government policy seeks to increase the number of childcare places and facilities available, and to improve the quality of childcare services for the community. Planning Authorities obtain guidance on childcare provision from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government’s document “Planning Guidelines on Childcare Facilities” (2001), which sets out guidance on polices and objectives to be included in development plans. Roscommon County Childcare Committee is currently devising a Childcare Strategy for the County, in response to these guidelines.

The Council will support the Roscommon County Childcare Committee’s Childcare Strategy and will continue to participate in workshops organized by the Committee to develop their Strategic Childcare Plan. The Roscommon County Childcare Committee will play an integral role in the development of a coordinated approach to quality childcare in the County. It will be important that the Strategy highlights the need to increase the provision of quality childcare within the County as well as the deficiency of such facilities in rural areas, and the need to balance the provision of childcare across the County.

It should be noted that applications for childcare facilities in a residential area will be assessed on the basis of their impact in terms of noise, loss of residential amenity, traffic generation and general disturbance. In general, the factors to be considered in determining a planning application for a childcare facility will include proximity to public transport, the nature of the facility, numbers and ages of children, adequate parking for staff, and set down areas for customers, to name but a few.

Policy for Childcare Provision

Policy 289  Support the Roscommon County Childcare Committee, the County Development Board and the Health Service Executive in formulating policy to ensure the provision of affordable childcare throughout the County.

Policy 290  Encourage the provision of childcare facilities as an essential part of residential schemes, places of employment such as industrial/business parks, and in close proximity to schools.

Policy 291  Promote the location of childcare facilities in settlement centres, on sites which are convenient to public transport and pedestrian access.

Policy 292  Support the multi-functional use and provision of buildings and opportunities to maximise the use of existing physical resources / infrastructure within County Roscommon.

Policy 293  Support the development of stand-alone, outdoor play areas, in consultation with the County Childcare Committee, subject to funding.
Objective for Childcare Provision

**Objective 300** Implement the Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, June 2000).

9.6 HEALTH

Responsibility for the provision of health-care facilities within County Roscommon lies with a number of public, voluntary and private agencies. The Health Service Executive is the primary agency responsible for delivering health and personal social services.

Healthcare Policy has altered from traditional hospital-based care towards community based care. There is an increased emphasis on meeting people’s needs at primary care level by local sector teams. Day care centres, sheltered housing, family resource centres, health centres, youth work programmes, residential care centres for children and those with disabilities along with other community services require locations which are easily accessible and are integrated with new and existing communities. Roscommon County Council will therefore support proposals for new health centres provided they are located in town, village or neighbourhood centres, are located on sites which permit access for people with disabilities, are accessible to public and private transport, and are located close to or within walking distance of residential development. The Council will continue to work alongside key health providers to assist in ensuring a greater quality of life for all.

Policy for Healthcare

**Policy 294** Support the development and expansion of health/medical facilities in conjunction with a network of community based primary care facilities, in suitable locations.

**Policy 295** Facilitate the accommodation of healthcare functions at suitable locations in liaison with the appropriate health authorities

9.7 EDUCATION

Education, and the provision of adequate education facilities, has an integral role to play in developing sustainable and balanced communities. The existence of such facilities can increase the attractiveness of an area for business and families. Roscommon County Council has no direct responsibility for the provision of education. Decisions regarding the future requirements for education facilities are primarily the responsibility of the education authorities. There is however, onus on Council to reserve sufficient lands to meet the likely future demands for community facilities including education.

The Department uses the following operating assumptions when planning additional school accommodation:

- On average 11.9% of the population at any given time are of primary school going age.
- On average 8.5% of the population at any given time being of post primary school going age
- On average each dwelling has an occupancy rate of 2.95 people
- Department of Education and Science site size area guidelines suggest schools with 12 to 31 class units should be 1.22 Hectares / 3.0 Acres and School with 32 class units should be 2.03 Hectares / 5.0 Acres
- Department of Education and Science site guidelines suggest 12 acres – 4.87 hectares are needed to accommodate a traditional post-primary school with 600 to 800 pupils and all additional ancillary accommodation. It should be noted that the school curriculum requires among other things that science labs, a sport hall, wood working rooms etc are provided as part of the school. This figure also includes sports pitches etc.
Roscommon County Council manages the Higher Education Grants Scheme under the Local Authorities (Higher Education Grants) Acts 1968-1992. The Higher Education Grants Scheme is adopted by the Members of Roscommon County Council on an annual basis. The scheme provides grant aid in the form of maintenance and fees to eligible third level students pursuing degrees and post-graduate courses in approved institutions, and universities in Ireland, and EU member states. Eligibility is subject to a means test.

There are currently 94 primary schools and 8 post-primary schools throughout County Roscommon. Having reviewed the population increase proposed during the lifetime of the Plan, the estimated increase equates to an additional 1000 primary pupil places and 800 post primary pupil places. This in turn relates to the need to provide an additional 40 primary classrooms (using a pupil:teacher ratio of 25:1), and 1 new post primary school. Based on current information, existing schools within the County may absorb some of the additional pupils however the Department of Education and Science recommends that provision should be made within the CDP to cater for future educational needs of the County primarily through the designation of land for this purpose.

The Council will seek to enhance opportunities for learning throughout the county by continuing to liaise with school authorities in order to meet the need for primary and secondary school provision wherever practical. Schools should be located on easily accessible sites and applications for education developments will be expected to meet the Council’s Standards with regard to car-parking, building design, landscaping and access for people with disabilities. These standards will be applicable whether the proposed development is for a new educational facility or an extension to an existing resource. New facilities should be located, where possible, close to or within the main residential areas in order to reinforce a sense of community and to ensure that walking, cycling and public transport are suitable options.

Policy for Education

Policy 296 Facilitate the development, improvement and building on existing education and training services and facilities and to eliminate educational disadvantage.

Policy 297 Support the development of an integrated education and training plan to support access to further and third level education, ensuring ongoing adult education and training, and ensuring that quality lifelong learning opportunities are available to all.

Policy 298 Consult with the Department of Education regarding the location and provision of adequate educational facilities.

Policy 299 Facilitate the provision of schools by ensuring suitable lands are zoned in Development Plans and Local Area Plans.

Policy 300 Limit new development in urban areas where necessary social infrastructure including but not limited to schools and community facilities are available."

Calculations have been carried out concerning the number of schools required per zoned area for the period of the Plan taking into account New Residential Development as well as that required based on the population projections within the Housing Strategy 2008 – 2014. The proposed provision is based on the Housing Strategy 2008 – 2014 as well as knowledge of the provision within the County as a whole. Therefore, the following is recommended:

1. The PA will encourage and facilitate the provision of at least 1 new primary school and the extension of the existing school within the HodsonBay/Barrymore area. It should be noted that the PA will in the first instance consider the expansion of existing facilities on adjacent land. During the LAP process the PA will liaise with relevant stakeholders to identify appropriate sites.
2. The PA will encourage and facilitate the provision of at least 1 new primary school, an extension existing primary school and expansion of existing secondary school within the Monkland/Bellanamullia area. It should be noted that the PA will in the first instance consider the expansion of existing facilities on adjacent land. During the LAP process the PA will liaise with relevant stakeholders to identify appropriate sites.

3. The PA will encourage and facilitate the expansion of the existing schools i.e. single storey could be made two storey within Roscommon Town. It should be noted that if additional schools are required the PA will in the first instance consider the expansion of existing facilities on adjacent land and if necessary, during the LAP process the PA will liaise with relevant stakeholders to identify appropriate additional sites.

4. The PA will encourage and facilitate the expansion of the existing schools within the Castlerea area. It should be noted that if additional schools are required the PA will in the first instance consider the expansion of existing facilities on adjacent land and if necessary, during the LAP process the PA will liaise with relevant stakeholders to identify appropriate additional sites.

5. The PA will encourage and facilitate the expansion of the existing primary school within the Ballaghaderreen area. It should be noted that if additional schools are required the PA will in the first instance consider the expansion of existing facilities on adjacent land and if necessary, during the LAP process the PA will liaise with relevant stakeholders to identify appropriate additional sites.

6. The PA will encourage and facilitate the provision of 1 new primary school within the Creagh area. It should be noted that if additional schools are required the PA will in the first instance consider the expansion of existing facilities on adjacent land and if necessary, during the LAP process the PA will liaise with relevant stakeholders to identify appropriate additional sites.

7. The PA will encourage and facilitate the provision of 1 new primary school within the Cortober area. It should be noted that if additional schools are required the PA will in the first instance consider the expansion of existing facilities on adjacent land and if necessary, during the LAP process the PA will liaise with relevant stakeholders to identify appropriate additional sites.

8. The PA will encourage and facilitate the provision of 1 new primary school or the expansion of the existing one on adjacent lands as well as the expansion of the existing schools within the Boyle Area. It should be noted that if additional schools are required the PA will in the first instance consider the expansion of existing facilities on adjacent land and if necessary, during the LAP process the PA will liaise with relevant stakeholders to identify appropriate additional sites.

9.8 LIBRARIES

Service Provision

Roscommon County Council: Library Services provides for the cultural, education, recreation, information and learning needs of people of all ages throughout the county and strives to provide and develop a comprehensive, quality, modern and accessible service. It acts as centre for knowledge and learning, as a resource for culture, tourism and the imagination, as a resource for children and young people, as an access to information communication technologies and as a vital community facility and public space.

During 2006, the library service, as part of the Library Development Plan framework consultation has identified a number of service provision issues, under which a range of objectives are placed. These service provision measures include; Physical Infrastructure; Access and Social Inclusion; Information Communications Technology; Children’s and Schools; Archives and Local Studies; Management and
Resources; Marketing and Promotion; Reading and Learning; and, Customer Care and Focus. The library service engages in a range of projects and initiatives that support the broad information society and social inclusion strategies to provide for democratic participation.

The libraries are stocked with a variety of material on an extensive range of subjects. The collection development policies are designed to provide an updated and balanced stock across all areas. While books and the printed word remain one of our core mediums, other materials such as audiotapes, music, cassettes, CDs, DVDs, language learning packages, microfilm and microfiche, prints, videos and maps are also available.

**Information Communication Technologies**

The development of ICT infrastructure and the delivery of services to public through online means is an integral part of our service strategy. Significant progress in implementing aspects of these strategies is ongoing and includes:

- The continuation of the Public Library Automation Programme under which falls the new Changing Libraries Project. It aims to provide greater access to library collections and services.
- Upgrading of the online capacity to provide stable network connections for the Library Management System and Public Internet Access Computer facilities.
- Provision of online resources to widen the boundaries of library reference services.
- Application and receipt of grants from the Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government for information technology projects,
- Participation in the new national Borrow Books/Library Loans Online service, which was implemented in 2006, which allows for universal access to collections.

**Archives and Local Studies**

The library service carries a statutory responsibility and a commitment for the management, custody, care, preservation and delivery of all aspects of the archives and local studies records as well as access by the public. The strategies for the development of the archives include:

- Implementation of a continuous collection development policy of acquiring material relating to the historical and heritage of the county,
- Conservation of original holdings, provision of greater public access for study, research, and involvement in national initiatives.
- Continued response from the Archives section to requests and queries for information.
- Addition of further microform holdings to supplement and facilitate public access.
- Provision of digital book scanning equipment to facilitate research and printing from newspaper collections.

**Children’s and Schools Library Service**

Delivery to some 96 primary schools in the county is provided on a number of occasions during the year to exchange and update stock. Block loan facilities are also provided to teachers for specific remedial and school project requests. Funding of stock is supported by the Department of Education and Science with a per capita grant of €4.52 per pupil for the 6353 pupils registered. School visits, author visits, library activities, primary school quiz’s, and participation in national events such as Children’s Book Festival are examples of organised events.

**Projects and Development**

The library service is engaged in a number of projects and plans for the development and improved delivery of services. During 2006 grant aid approval was received for the provision of a new mobile
library vehicle and following the tender process, the vehicle was built and delivered at the end of 2006. Funding was also received from the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government under the Changing Libraries Project for the provision of free public access to historical maps in partnership with the Ordnance Survey Ireland. Plans and discussions are also ongoing in relation to the development of library services at Castlerea Prison.

During 2006 the Library Services Development Plan 2006 – 2010 was prepared. In terms of process it was channelled through public consultation, presented through the Strategic Policy Committee, and adopted by Roscommon County Council. The plan outlines a number of service provision strategies, objectives and actions and its purpose is to provide a documented structure for action and provide a structured framework for the development of services over the next number of years.

Promotions and Publicity

A comprehensive calendar of events was coordinated and organised during 2006, to promote and raise awareness of library activities. The wide-ranging involvement and participation in both local and national events for service promotion included the following World Book Day; Seachtain Na Gaeilge; Bealtaine Festival Exhibition; Book Launches; Library Development Plan; Ryder Cup; Seminar and Public Sessions on Tracing Your Family History; Oral History/Heritage Week; Children’s Book Festival activities; and, Science Week Ireland. An events programme is prepared annually including world book days, world poetry, book launches, local exhibitions and promotions, summer activities for children (storey-telling, arts & crafts, workshops etc.), Heritage Week events and Children’s Book Festivals.

The library service will continue to engage in a number of other service related issues, proposals and projects, which are considered to be central to the wider development of the libraries programme and implementation of the Library Development Plan 2006 – 2010.

Policy for Libraries

Policy 301  The Council will endeavor to continue to develop and improve the services provided on an ongoing basis.

9.9  MUSEUMS

“Museums are not for profit institutions that collect, safeguard, hold in trust, research, develop and interpret a collection of original objects on loan for the public benefit”. They function publicly as places where people learn from and find inspiration and enjoyment through the display and research of original objects.

A designated museum is one designated by the Minister under the National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997, as a museum which may “lend to, borrow from, or exchange with any other designated institution any cultural objects in the collection of the institution on such terms and conditions as may be determined by the institutions concerned”.

Roscommon County Council recognises the value of providing and supporting the development of a designated county museum to collect, store and display items of cultural, historical & scientific importance. Roscommon County Council recognises the service provided by existing heritage centers and museums in the county.

Policy for Museums

Policy 302  Maintain and expand cultural activities and services throughout the County including archiving, National Records and the provision of an Observatory
Objectives for Museums

Objective 301 Access National Museum artefacts and return to public display in Roscommon, where possible.

Objective 302 Investigate the feasibility of the provision of a designated County Museum Service with curator and support staff, within the lifetime of this plan.

Objective 303 Identify a suitable site for the development of a designated county museum, within the lifetime of this plan.

9.10 ARTS AND THEATRE

The Roscommon County Arts Plan 2003-2009 sets out policies and objectives for the promotion of a wide variety of arts and participation in the arts. The Council will support the implementation of the Arts Plan. The implementation of the Percent for Arts Scheme will enable the funding of artistic enhancement of public capital projects such as roads, bridges and housing by commissioning art works for such projects.

The County Development Board promotes the development of accessible infrastructure to support the development of heritage, arts and sport including the promotion and development of a county Arts Centre and the development of cultural infrastructure (fixed and mobile) for the County. It also aims to develop a more coordinated and strategic approach to cultural development in the county including the integration of arts and cultural plans into operational plans for public services in the county. It also aims to develop a cultural plan for the county to include arts, sport, heritage and language; and develop a plan to utilise artists, performers, sports personalities and friends of Roscommon to promote Roscommon at home and abroad. Roscommon County Council supports the initiatives set out in “Roscommon Common Vision”.

9.11 BURIAL GROUNDS

Historic Graveyards

The County Roscommon Graveyard Survey, carried out in 2005, identified 287 graveyards around the county. In terms of religious denomination, 65% of graveyards in the county are Catholic, 8% of graveyards in the county are Church of Ireland and 25% of the total graveyards surveyed were Children’s Burial Grounds. There is one Quaker graveyard in the county. Just over one third of all graveyards in the county are in the ownership of Roscommon County Council, the remainder are in church ownership or are located on private land.

Over half the graveyards in the county are on the Record of Monuments and Places. This is important as it means that these are protected under the National Monuments Act 1930-2004. Such historic graveyards are the oldest in the county and contain structures and burials from the earliest phases of Christianity up to the present. Some graveyards also have associated churches, mausoleums, vaults or other structures, which are protected under the Planning and Development Acts, because of their architectural or other value.

Historic graveyards often contain a rich natural heritage, which may have been relatively undisturbed for years, providing a valuable habitat for insects, birds and mammals. They contain a rich flora of native wild grasses, flowers, shrubs and trees. Historic graveyards can provide an oasis for wildlife in a sea of managed farmland or buildings.

Historic graveyards provide an insight into the skills, crafts and lives of those who built them and are buried within them. Ancient building techniques, such as vaulted or carved stonework, dry stonewalls and ironwork such as gates and railings represent the skills available in each locality at that time. Headstone inscriptions can provide an insight to the lives lead at different times in the past in each
part of the county as they are frequently found to include information on a person’s livelihood or cause of death. Images carved on headstones are also richly symbolic.

Historic graveyards contain within them a wealth of archaeological and architectural heritage - such as churches, bullaun stones, carved stones, rare plants, native grasses and dry stonewalls etc and may be protected under the National Monuments Act or the Planning & Development Acts. The County Roscommon Graveyard survey contains details on the ownership and status of all graveyards in County Roscommon. This can be viewed on www.roscommoncoco.ie or in the County Library, Roscommon.

**Objectives for Burial Grounds**

**Objective 304** Protect the cultural and natural heritage of historical burial grounds within Co. Roscommon and ensure their management and maintenance is in accordance with the principles of best conservation practice.

**Objective 305** Require that all works proposed to be carried out in graveyards, which are Recorded Monuments, are notified two months in advance, to the National Monuments Service of the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government, as required under the National Monuments Acts, and that recommendations regarding the carrying out of proposed works are complied with, as a condition of any grant aid from Roscommon County Council.

9.12 FIRE SERVICE

The protection of life, property and the environment by the efficient and effective prevention and control of fires and other emergencies form the main objectives of the Fire Service. Roscommon County Council maintains six brigades: Castlerea, Elphin, Roscommon, Boyle, Ballaghaderreen and Strokestown. In addition, Athlone Town Council provides the service, by Agreement, in the Southern part of the County. A new fire station and headquarters has been completed at Circular Road, Roscommon Town.

The primary legislation and statutory basis for the Fire Service is the Fire Services Act 1981. It directs both fire fighting and fire prevention and comes under the control of the Minister of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

**Statutory Context**

**Legislation and Regulation**

- The basis of the law that establishes the role of the fire service in conducting fire prevention activities is at national level.
- The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government nationally establishes the minimum fire safety standards for new building construction i.e. Building Regulations and Building Control Regulations.

**Enforcement**

Fire and life safety Legislation and Regulations are enforced at Local Government level:

- Certain classes of Buildings are exempt from routine fire and life safety inspections: i.e. Single family dwellings and Buildings owned by National Government.
- Specific laws and regulations exist which apply to the use of specific items e.g. smoke detectors in private residences and labelling of certain types of furniture in public assembly areas.
- Fines and/or imprisonment and/or closure of business may result from the inspections of premises.
Advice

- The National Safety Council is the statutory body primarily charged with the responsibility of giving advice to the public on fire safety matters.
- Eolas and the National Standards Authority of Ireland (N.S.A.I) are the national organisation for testing or otherwise identifying minimum standards for building materials or fire protection equipment that are used as fire prevention measures.

Training

- Specific fire prevention and protection measures for life safety form a large section of a Fire Officer’s Training Programme provided by the Fire Services Council. The examination of plans, inspections of various types of buildings, and the presentation of fire safety talks and seminars are the primary activities administered by fire officers in assuring fire and life safety in buildings throughout County Roscommon.

9.13 PLACENAMES

County Roscommon has a rich and varied tradition of place names. There are 2,090 townlands in the county, each with a distinctive name, reflecting the natural and man-made features or history of the locality. Naming of new developments, such as residential developments, streets, and shopping centers should reflect the local place names, history, culture and heritage or topographical features as appropriate. This is important for retaining a sense of place and local distinctiveness in an age of rapid change. The use of Irish language place names is encouraged, where possible and should be easily pronounced by non-Irish speakers.

Objectives for Place-names

Objective 306 Within the lifetime of this plan, to establish Coiste Logainmneacha Ros Comáin - The Place names Committee of Roscommon, to advise on and approve names of new developments.

Objective 307 That the naming of new developments, such as housing estates, streets, shopping centers etc. shall reflect the local place names, history, culture and heritage or topographical features as appropriate.

Objective 308 Ensure that the use of Irish language place names is encouraged, where possible and should be easily pronounced by non-Irish speakers. The Place names Committee of Roscommon County Council shall approve names of new developments in advance. Signage should be of appropriate size and material and shall be erected in a timely manner.

Place-names Committee / Coiste Logainmneacha Ros Comáin:

It is proposed that a Place-names Committee be formed for County Roscommon. This committee, which could be known as Coiste Logainmneacha Ros Comáin, would meet regularly to consider proposals for naming of new residential and other developments. An Coiste may provide a translation and advisory service to businesses in the erection of bi-lingual signage.

An Coiste may be comprised of elected members and officials of the County Council. It may also be considered that co-option of other expertise from outside the County Council would be useful. This may involve contact with relevant local people on an ad hoc basis.
The proposed procedure is as follows:

- Upon receiving planning permission, developers will be required through planning conditions to submit 3 proposed names for each proposed development, reasons why the proposed names have been chosen and a site location map for the proposed development.
- Roscommon County Council Planning Section will forward place name proposals to Coiste Logainmneacha Ros Comáin for consideration.
- Coiste Logainmneacha Ros Comáin will check Irish versions of names for correct spelling and grammar.
- An Coiste may decide to accept one or reject all the names proposed, and may decide to involve public consultation in this process.
- In the case where all names have been rejected alternative names may be suggested by An Coiste
- The selected name will be forwarded to the developer. The developer may choose to accept the proposed name or to re-negotiate.
- The developer will then submit the final place name choice to the Planning Section

9.14 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FORA


North Roscommon Community Forum was established in 1997 and its purpose is to give a voice to the community and voluntary sector in a number of ways. It brings affiliated voluntary and community groups together so that the forum can present a strong, independent, united voice of the community, share knowledge and experiences and promote development, growth and change. The Forum is open to a broad range of community groups and voluntary organisations. Groups already participating include those involved with community development, community resource centres, social care, young people, heritage, enterprise development, employment creation, rural tourism groups.

One very important role of the Forum is to facilitate the representation of, and participation by, community and voluntary groups in the North Roscommon area in matters relating to the work of Roscommon County Development Board (RCDB). This involves Forum representatives sitting on the County Development Board which enables networking and collaboration between RCDB and the Forum, and the groups and organisations it represents.

Forum representatives also sit on the Strategic Policy Committees and Social Inclusion Measures Working Group of Roscommon County Council. Their presence on these bodies facilitates two-way communication between the community and local government by bringing the views of the community organisations to local government and by feeding back relevant information to the member groups of the Forum. The Forum also has representatives on a number of other local agencies and regional bodies including

° Roscommon County Childcare Committee
° Roscommon Partnership Board
° Roscommon County Enterprise Board
° Arigna Leader Company
° Co Roscommon Heritage Forum

The Forum plays an important role in providing practical assistance and support to its member groups and organisations. This assistance includes helping groups to identify funding sources and make grant applications, facilitating members looking for particular types of training, as well as helping to deliver great insurance deals for members.
Funding for voluntary and community groups is available from a wide range of organisations including:

- Government Departments & Agencies
- Dormant Accounts Fund
- National Lottery
- Trusts & Non Governmental Organisations

9.14.2 South Roscommon Community Forum

The work of the South Roscommon Community Forum is to;

- Source funding and supports for projects
- Give hands-on assistance
- Give professional support and information to assist groups
- Give groups an opportunity to meet with Community and voluntary organisations throughout the county to share ideas and experience
- Act as a voice and lobby on behalf of the Community and voluntary sector at a county level
- Provide a mechanism for the voluntary and community fora to be represented on the RCDB, the Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) and other structures
- Establish networks with other community fora throughout the country
- Organise training and workshops to help groups in their work

While the South Roscommon Community Forum don't award grants to community groups and volunteer organisations, they are able to provide help and advice when applying for government aid for many projects. Listed below are some projects which have been successful with their assistance in terms of grant aid;

1. Many sports groups have received assistance to apply for funding to develop local sports facilities. Successful projects include the new Fuerty GAA development at Mulhern Park, where the local club were awarded €200,000 through the Sports Capital Programme run by the Department of Tourism and Sport.
2. An area of waste ground in the village of Ballyforan was transformed by the local Tidy Towns Group into an environment Education Park for the local community. SRCF assisted the group to access funding and provided technical assistance.
3. Training courses are also provided to community groups and voluntary organisations.
4. The CAIT Mobile Computer Suite is managed by SRCF and is available to voluntary/community groups who wish to provide IT Training in their local community centre.

The SEED Third Level Outreach Course is a joint venture between SRCF and Waterford Institute of Technology. The aim of the course is to create awareness of sustainability and give participants the knowledge and skills to create environment base educational projects in their own locality.
CHAPTER 10
RECREATION, LEISURE AND TOURISM
10.1 INTRODUCTION AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

“It is vitally important to maintain and improve on the strength of Ireland West’s Regional identity. The diversity of the regional identities on the island of Ireland has been and will be the catalyst for the sustainable development of tourism in the future. Roscommon’s unique location in the Ireland West region along the Shannon coupled with its tradition of culture and heritage should form an integral part of the Ireland West regional identity.”

The main aim of this County Development Plan regarding recreation, leisure and tourism is to provide for the future wellbeing of the residents of the County by:

- Promoting the growth of economic activity and increasing employment opportunities in Tourism
- Protecting and improving the quality of the built and natural environments
- Ensuring the provision of necessary infrastructural and community services.
- Sustaining traditional rural communities and rural activities.
- Promoting a balance of development across the county, by developing a hierarchy of high quality, vibrant urban centres and clearly delineated areas of growth.
- Utilising the surrounding natural environment and natural resources, to the benefit of the County, in a managed way that does not compromise these resources.
- Providing for a vibrant, environmentally sustainable and well-managed agricultural and related enterprises, horticultural, forestry and bloodstock sectors and to support alternative enterprises, farm diversification and agri-tourism projects to ensure the continued development of sustainable rural communities.
- Encouraging the continued sustainable development of rural communities without compromising the physical, environmental, natural, cultural and heritage resources of the County.

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) places County Roscommon in the West Region, which has as its goal to promote economic activity and balanced regional development by building on the dynamic role of Galway as a gateway and expanding its influence. The RPG’s recommend the development and expansion of towns such as Ballaghaderreen, Boyle and Castlerea through effective promotion and marketing in association with larger towns, hubs and gateways. It also recommends identifying key assets and presenting or assembling a quality tourism package relying on the natural and cultural heritage of areas, such as those located along the Shannon River, enhancing hotel facilities, improving regional road access and improving awareness through marketing.

“Ireland must continue to trade on its ‘green’ image, a mark of quality, which is attractive for tourism and all investment. Protecting this environmental quality will be crucial”.

The NSS highlights the importance of developing sectors such as tourism, enterprise, local services and other sources of off-farm employment, which will be the mainstays of a strong rural economy. Efficient agricultural, marine and natural resource sectors are also vitally important. The rural landscape is also central to Ireland’s Tourism Industry and in response to the decline in agriculture in rural areas it is proposed to support these affected communities through promoting diversification in enterprise, local services and tourism. In developing a tourism product it is important to build the following things; the central locations of the key towns at the intersection of national road and rail routes; the attractiveness of the village structure; and the natural resources of the rural areas.

The Regional Planning Guidelines 2004-2016 (RPG’s) recognise the importance of ensuring that the natural and built heritage is conserved and enhanced, and state that preservation of the quality of

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1 Submission made by the Western Regional Tourism Authority (Ireland West Tourism) on behalf of tourism interests in the region to the Tourism Policy Review Group
2 National Spatial Strategy
heritage is also a major element sustaining an identity for the region and maintaining biodiversity, educational, amenity, tourism and leisure values. They advocate the importance of encouraging a stronger tourism market; diversified farm production and encouraging large-scale developments such as Lough Key Forest Park development.

The NSS indicates that tourism potential should not be maximized at the expense of the natural assets of County Roscommon and supports the promotion and marketing of the inland waterways, walking and cycling trails, and the historic assets of the County as well as the provision of the necessary support infrastructure and access.

10.2 OPEN SPACE AND SPORTING PROVISION

_It is the aim of the Planning Authority to facilitate the provision of improved amenities throughout the county and to promote the renewal and environmental improvement of neglected areas._

Open space is an important consideration in the plan making process, whether it is a regional facility; open space to serve a town; or open space which is provided as part of a residential development. Open space is important for the health and well being of the entire community and particularly youth. The main function of the County Development Plan in relation to open space is in ensuring that sufficient land is allocated for such use and that development control standards require its provision as part of new development.

The NSS sets out considerations for enhancing quality of life and an emphasis is given in this context to the quality of open spaces, public parks and amenity areas as features that can make a key contribution to a good quality of life. The Planning Authority supports the provision of high quality sports centres, public spaces and parks throughout the county in order to provide people with opportunities for outdoor recreation within relatively easy reach of where they live and work. The Planning Authority also recognises that public open spaces must be maintained and those facilities such as Loughnaneane in Roscommon Town must be retained. In addition, green belts and walks along canals, rivers and lakes should be maintained, where appropriate, for their amenity and tourist values and adequate open space and playground facilities should be provided throughout the county. In this regard the Planning Authority supports the development of clear criteria regarding the utilisation of these areas as well as correct servicing.

New urban developments must provide and maintain public open space. Existing healthy trees should be retained where possible and developers are encouraged to plant trees and hedgerows, which are native to the area.

“Roscommon Common Vision”, the County Development Board (CDB) Strategy 2002–2012 encourages the development of all sports activities and new sports facilities. This will be achieved through the Roscommon Sports Partnership Strategic Plan 2006-2011. Roscommon Common Vision focuses on the following aspects:

- Catering for a life long relationship with sport;
- Attending to the needs of high performing sports persons within the county;
- The development of a Sports Partnership and developing a Regional Sports Infrastructure Plan; and,
- The Irish Sports Council, the statutory development agency for sport in Ireland, has as an objective to increase opportunities to participate in sport at local level and to enhance access to sports and recreation for all, with the support of organisations such as local authorities.

RCC supports these initiatives with a view to ensuring that the facilities are there for those who desire to play sports, to encourage more locals to become involved in sports within the County, as well as attracting more visitors to the county.
It is vital that important green areas, open spaces, sports and other recreational facilities be identified and mapped so that they can be protected; and in order that locals and visitors alike may be made aware of them. RCC recognises that there is a need for a comprehensive open space and recreation policy incorporating policies for the provision of recreational space and facilities to meet the variety of needs that exist in the County. It is considered that sports and recreational facilities are important for enabling people to live a full and active life and these should therefore be provided in line with population growth and residential development.

In relation to providing facilities, the development contribution scheme will enable some support for the provision of public open space throughout the county.

**Policy for Open Space and Sporting Provision**

**Policy 303** Develop a hierarchy of multifunctional active and passive recreational spaces and facilities to serve all ages.

**Policy 304** Strengthen, extend and consolidate green belts at both strategic and local levels.

**Policy 305** Consider the community’s overall need for open space provision and take this into account in relation to its zoning functions.

**Policy 306** Ensure that public open space provided as part of new development is of high quality and designed and finished to ensure its usability, security and cost efficient maintenance.

**Policy 307** Provide for the needs of young people at suitable locations through supporting youth groups, youth sports and arts activities and providing facilities to encourage the involvement of young people in activities and gatherings.

**Objectives for Open Space and Sporting Provision**

**Objective 309** Support the implementation of the County Play Policy in providing for and facilitating play throughout the County.

**Objective 310** Utilise standards for the provision for public open space within new residential developments to assess development applications.

**Objective 311** Implement the Council’s Development Contribution Scheme as it relates to the improvement of existing recreation and leisure facilities and the funding of new recreation and leisure facilities in tandem with new developments.

**Objective 312** Ensure that fully equipped playgrounds to appropriate standards are provided within all new housing developments of in excess of 20 units.

10.3 INTEGRATED TOURISM AND RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Integrated Tourism is tourism that is linked to the economic, social, cultural, natural and human structures of the region where it occurs. Integrated tourism seeks to make the most of these structures. Integrated Tourism aims to retain local ownership and control of resources and activities with maximum benefits to the area. It encourages tourism that is based on local physical, economic, social and cultural resources and local relationships so that tourist experiences are place specific. It is also sensitive to scale, which is appropriate to local circumstances and supports sustainability of resources and activities in ecological, economic and cultural terms. It encourages complementary components within tourism, between tourism and other economic and social activities and encourages local
empowerment through local participation, decision-making, control and self-confidence. RCC supports these aspects of integrated tourism and sustainable tourism development by facilitating greater inter-agency cohesion and better targeting of resources enabling the protection of the resources which currently attract visitors and upon which future tourism can be based.

Roscommon has a long-established tourism industry that displays integration with the natural and cultural environments as is experienced in Lough Key Forest Park, the Una Bhan Rural Tourism Co-op, the Cruachan Ai Heritage Centre and the Athleague Angling and Visitor Centre in addition to Loughnaneane Park and public facilities such as swimming pools and libraries. RCC recognises the need to build on these facilities and support niche markets for example cycling holidays, archaeological and nature tours, English language learning tours, and specialist markets such as activity holidays, environmental or cultural based tourism.

RCC supports the development of a Strategic Spatial Plan for Tourism within the County identifying the following:

- Existing and proposed tourism features,
- Existing and planned transport routes and linkages,
- Settlement hierarchy including functions relative to tourism and other economic drivers and activities, and
- Sensitive environments.

Policy for Integrated Tourism and Recreational Development

Policy 308 Provide for the sports and recreational needs of the County, by upgrading and maintaining existing facilities and providing for new facilities as required. Facilities provided should be designed with flexibility in mind so that they are multifunctional and ensure maximum usability by a variety of groups and members of local communities. Facilities should be widely accessible to ensure that sports and recreation may provide a forum for social inclusion and integration and the Council will work with sporting organisations and clubs to achieve widespread availability of facilities.

Policy 309 Ensure that recreational activities are safe places for all users and that one group of users do not enjoy public facilities at the expense of the safety of others or the quality of the environment.

Objective for Integrated Tourism and Recreational Development

Objective 313 Identify strategic locations where public open space and parks should be provided, so that they may be useable by a large proportion of the local community and so that they may facilitate the enjoyment of other amenities such as rivers, lakes, canal, picturesque landscapes, views or features of our natural heritage, or to retain areas of ecological interest and biodiversity value.

Objective 314 Support the development of a Cultural Plan for the county to include arts, heritage, language and sports in order to raise awareness of the quality of life available to locals and visitors and the development of a method of profiling artists, performers, sports personalities and friends of Roscommon to promote the county at home and abroad.

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3 Teagasc-Integrated rural tourism development in the west of Ireland: Learning from tourists and tour organisers
4 County. Roscommon County Development Board’s review “Roscommon Common Vision”
10.3.1 Walkways/Cycleways

An important component of an integrated tourism strategy is sustainability and the use of more sustainable forms of transport. There are a number of walking/cycling routes as well as walking clubs throughout the County. Walking Clubs include the Cloonfad Walking Group, The Suck Valley Walkers, The Boyle Curlew Walkers, The Ballaghaderreen Mountaineering and Walking Club. Walking routes include Sli na Sláinte, National Waymarked Ways including the Suck Valley Way and The Miner’ Way and The Derrylahan Loop.

There is a need to recognise the importance of walking and cycling in County Roscommon from a local as well as tourism perspective. RCC supports the development of tourist walks and cycle routes which consider local requirements as well as economic potential and endeavour to meet these needs on an ongoing basis. RCC recognises that improvements need to be made to walking routes throughout the county and cycle paths need to be provided along public roads where possible. Walking and cycling routes should be designed to incorporate current thinking and best practice from experience in other locations in order to create more people friendly places. Road safety for pedestrians and cyclists is an important issue in tourist areas and lower speed limits and priority over motorized transport should be provided, where appropriate.

The development of walking and cycling trails should be encouraged as well as local enterprise such as bicycle renting and walking/cycling tours. The introduction of a Walking Festival, including a programme of walks, cultural and social events, should be considered in order to attract visitors and celebrate the diverse landscape and heritage of County Roscommon.

Roscommon is justifiably renowned for walking and has some fabulous walks such as The Suck Valley Way and The Miners Way and Historical Trail which both form parts of the 31 way-marked ways which are marked through www.walkireland.ie. Failte Ireland also has a network of trails available to walkers.

However, Ireland has seen a rapid decline in the number of cycle tourists, with the number of overseas visitors in this market declining from 130,000 in the year 2000 to just 60,000 in 2005. Research has found that this is, in part, due to the lack of safe and traffic free cycling routes as well as lack of facilities for cyclists. It should be noted that Failte Ireland has a Cycling Strategy for the Western Region.

### Walking Routes in County Roscommon

**Sli na Sláinte** is a health promotion initiative introduced in 1996 and aimed at encouraging people of all ages and abilities to walk for pleasure and good health. There are four main Sli na Sláinte trails in County Roscommon.

**The Suck Valley Way** is a 100km walk, which crosses the lowland farms, boglands and callows of the River Suck with their numerous lakes and drainage channels.

**The Miners’ Way and Historical Trail** is a route, which passes north of Lough Allen, meanders through the coal mining territory of the Arigna Mountains, on to Lough Key Forest Park, Boyle and over the Curlew Mountains into Sligo.

**The Derrylahan Loop** is a circular walk along a series of grassy pathways, bog tracks and old boreens or ‘green roads’ into the heart of ancient Cloonfad.
**Policy for Walking and Cycling Routes**

### Policy 310
Facilitate the establishment of a register of all walking and cycle routes within the county and support the preservation, protection and adding of additional walking and cycle routes, including waymarked ways.

### Policy 311
Facilitate the improvement and development of walkways and cycle ways throughout the county, through promotion of routes such as the Suck Valley Way and Slí na Sláinte and through the provision of new routes where appropriate. Routes should take full advantage of existing amenities such as riverbanks and lakeshores so as to facilitate their enjoyment and exploit their tourism value.

### Policy 312
Facilitate the upgrading of the Slí na Sláinte walking routes throughout the county.

### Policy 313
Facilitate the provision of cycle paths along public roads and in tourist areas, where appropriate.

### Policy 314
Encourage walking and cycling by ensuring that a network of safe, well-marked and maintained rights-of-way, walking, cycle ways and footpaths are provided in mountainous, lowland and tourist areas and throughout the county.

### Policy 315
Support and promote national programmes to develop walking and cycle routes including the Irish Trails Strategy and the Cycle Strategy for the Western Region.

### Policy 316
Support the investigation of the potential for off-road walking and cycling trails in the county; and for the development of linkages between existing trails and others in adjoining counties; and support national trail development policy including the Irish Trails Strategy.

**Objective for Walking and Cycling Routes**

**Objective 315** Promote walking, rambling and cycling as appropriate recreational and tourism activities within the County.

**Objective 316** Promote the co-operation with representative bodies, local groups and landowners in order to support in a sustainable manner the development of walking and cycle routes as a tourism based economic resource.

### 10.3.2 Public Swimming Pools

Swimming pools are not only an important recreational activity for locals and visitors alike but have additional health and fitness benefits. At present there are two public swimming pools in County Roscommon, one in Roscommon town, the other in Castlerea. In addition to public swimming pools, many of the larger hotels, such as the Hodson Bay Hotel in Kiltoom and the Abbey Hotel in Roscommon, now have leisure facilities including swimming pool, gym facilities, sauna, steam room, jacuzzi and various fitness classes. This offers additional choice to the paying public. The Planning Authority recognizes the benefits public swimming pools provide for the local community, particularly children, and also those provided for tourists and visitors. The Planning Authority...
supports the development of new swimming pools within County Roscommon and the establishment of local swimming clubs as well the provision of swimming lessons in schools.

**Policy for Public Swimming Pools**

**Policy 317** Support the provision of new public and private sector swimming pools in appropriate locations throughout the County.

### 10.3.3 Arts and Theatre

County Roscommon has a lot to offer the visitor with regard to Arts and the Theatre. There are three arts venues owned by RCC, which are either arts venues or have the arts as a core function; the Roscommon Arts Centre in Roscommon, King House in Boyle, and the Old Courthouse Theatre in Frenchpark. There are a number of other non-arts buildings throughout the county that host arts events occasionally such as Strokestown Park House and the Angling and Conference Visitor Centre in Athleague.

Each year many local communities organize events throughout County Roscommon as part of Heritage Week with the aim of building awareness of our built, natural and cultural heritage thereby encouraging its conservation and preservation\(^5\) as well as acting as a draw for tourists.

The County Arts Plan 2003-2009 sets out policies and objectives for the promotion of a wide variety of arts and encourages participation in the arts. Its four strategic objectives are as follows:

1. Awareness and appreciation – Promote public awareness and appreciation of the value of the arts.
2. Access – Provide access to the arts for the entire community.
3. Participation – Promote and enable participation in the arts for the entire community.
4. Professional Development – Develop the capacity and capability of the arts sector.

The Arts Plan sets out policies and objectives for the promotion of a wide variety of arts and to increase participation in the arts. The Council will support the implementation of the Arts Plan including the “percent for art schemes”, which will enable the funding of artistic enhancement of public capital projects such as roads, bridges and housing by commissioning art works for such projects or channeling funds towards the development of the Arts in the County e.g. Youth Orchestra. It is considered that all areas as they develop should have an artistic element, be it through imaginative architecture, design of the public realm or through quality landscaped open spaces for example. It is considered that all areas as they develop should have an artistic element, be it through imaginative architecture, design of the public realm or through for example quality landscaped open spaces.

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**Annual Arts Festivals/Summer Schools**

1. **The Boyle Arts Festival**,  
2. **The Strokestown Poetry Festival**,  
3. **The O'Carolan Harp Festival** in Keadue,  
4. **The Douglas Hyde Conference** and  
5. **The Douglas Hyde Summer School** in Ballaghadereen a week-long festival of traditional Irish music including tuition in tin whistle, flute, fiddle, button accordion, banjo, concertina, sean nós singing, comhrá Gaeilge and a full programme of recitals, lectures and concerts and runs during early summer.

**Annual Community Festivals**

1. **The Castlerea Festival**, and  
2. **RosFest** in Roscommon town.\(^5\)

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\(^5\) [http://www.heritageweek.ie](http://www.heritageweek.ie)
Policy for Arts and Theatre

Policy 318  Support the development of artistic tourism throughout the County including the facilitation of new festivals and other events including ‘rainy day’ events for visitors such as exhibitions, musical entertainment and theatre.

Policy 319  Promote and nurture the arts throughout the County through supporting the implementation of objectives contained in the County Arts Plan and working with those involved in the Arts throughout the county to develop community and traditional art initiatives.

Policy 320  Support the initiatives set out in “Roscommon Common Vision” particularly the development of a more co-ordinated and strategic approach to cultural development in the county including the integration of arts and cultural plans into operational plans for public services in the county. The development of a cultural plan for the county to include arts, sport, heritage and language as well as utilising artists, performers, sports personalities and friends of Roscommon to promote Roscommon at home and abroad.

Policy 321  Provide for artistic elements in new and existing development by encouraging the use of the “percent for art schemes” and other initiatives.

Policy 322  Improve arts and cultural facilities throughout County Roscommon.

Policy 323  Foster and develop arts information networks.

Policy 324  Promote initiatives to develop new audiences and provide access to arts for all.

Policy 325  Promote the involvement of the wider community in the arts.

Policy 326  Encourage the development of artists.

Policy 327  Support arts and culture events and activities.

Objectives for Arts and Theatre

Objective 317  Work with Fáilte Ireland, the Arts Council and other relevant bodies to promote and develop the arts and tourism sectors in Roscommon.

10.3.4 Access to recreational lands

The issue of access to recreational lands is becoming of increasing importance.

Policy regarding access to recreational facilities

Policy 328  It is the policy of RCC to preserve and enhance the existing public rights of way to recreational areas including upland areas, lakeshores, river-bank areas and heritage sites, in accordance with the sustainable management practices and the overall amenity of these areas and where necessary to establish new ones in co-operation with landowners and the local community.
10.4 TOURISM

10.4.1 Introduction

The island of Ireland has long had an image of a less crowded and green environment, beautiful scenery, welcoming people and a distinctive and accessible heritage and culture. Tourism based upon these natural and cultural resources has in turn provided an economic and social benefit. However, there are challenges in ensuring that these natural resources, upon which tourism depends, are maintained and enhanced in the future.

Sustainable tourism provides a high quality product based on, and in harmony with, a high quality natural environment. Adverse impacts upon local communities, built heritage, landscapes, habitats and species are minimized while the economic benefits accruing to local communities are maximized. Tourism is continually evolving and the product offered must reflect this evolving market.

Nationally there has been a general increase in leisure time and expenditure in leisure, recreational and tourism-related activities. This has been accompanied by increased participation in a wider range of sport and leisure activities. County Roscommon possesses extensive natural resources and an environment of nationally significant scenic value. This, combined with its attractive towns and vibrant cultural heritage, provides a major opportunity for the development of tourism.

It is the aim of the Council to ensure that the full potential of tourism as an economic and social force is achieved in a sustainable manner with due regard to the impact on local communities and the natural environment.

The NSS identifies three broad areas:

- Established tourism areas - containing premier international tourism destinations ranging from cities such as Dublin and Galway, to the highly developed ‘tourism districts’ in parts of County Kerry and the Mid West.
- Developing tourism areas – containing high amenity areas close to the main cities and certain inland areas associated with water-based recreation where tourism is beginning to have a significant effect.
- Undeveloped tourism area – containing inland river valleys, many parts of the canal network like the Royal and Grand Canals, where significant potential for tourism based development exists but has not developed as yet.

County Roscommon contains several developing tourism areas such as Lough Key in the North and Hodson Bay in the South, as well as undeveloped tourism areas such as the Lecarrow, Boyle and Jamestown canals, and areas along the River Shannon and the River Suck. The NSS advocates the enhancement of already successful areas by building up their tourism capacity. It also promotes the development of tourist potential in undeveloped areas by encouraging strategic opportunities in tourism niches, for example new tourist centres, heritage and natural landscapes, inland waterway circuits, tourism clusters and urban generated rural recreation.

Tourism in Roscommon tends to be a relatively underdeveloped resource and relies heavily on natural resource based tourism, especially waterways and their inland location. Tourism is small-scale and based on limited and special interest markets mainly inland cruising, angling and to a lesser extent walking. The county has seen recent investment in recreational facilities with the County Council’s development of the water based activity centre at Hodson Bay and investment in the private sector in new spa and hotel accommodation developments.

The number of visitors in Ireland continues to rise with over 7.4 million overseas tourists visiting Ireland in 2006, of which 1.4 million visited the Western Region providing €469m of revenue.

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6 Teagasc-An approach to developing tourism in rural areas: Lessons learned from a regional case study
Between 2001 and 2006, the number of overseas visitors to Roscommon has increased from 54,000 to 58,000. County Roscommon’s proportion of overseas visitors to the Western Region has decreased from 4.8% to 4.1%. Despite the many attractions that the county has to offer, the number of overseas visitors in 2006 remained very low in comparison to Galway with 1,179,000 visitors or Mayo with 308,000 visitors.

Given the importance of tourism to the local economy it should be highlighted that the revenue share of the County has increased from 4.1% in 2001 to 4.5% in 2006. In addition, revenue per visitor was relatively high at €362 per visitor (Visitors to Galway spent €399 per person and to Mayo €316 in 2006).

Table 37: Tourism Statistics for Roscommon and the Western Region (Overseas Visitors)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area/Year</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visitors (000’s)</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Regional Visitors</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue (€m)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Regional Revenue</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€ per visitor</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>362</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Roscommon

Galway

Visitors | 997 | 970 | 951 | 1029 | 1019 | 1179 |
Revenue | 305 | 307 | 326 | 350 | 347 | 356 |

Mayo

Visitors | 314 | 306 | 290 | 303 | 283 | 308 |
Revenue | 94 | 98 | 95 | 98 | 78 | 92 |

Western Region

Visitors | 1120 | 1190 | 1159 | 1250 | 1235 | 1412 |
Revenue | 416.2 | 419.7 | 434.2 | 460.4 | 441.1 | 469.2 |
Visitor nights | 6302 | 6132 | 6256 | 6603 | 6345 | 6829 |
Nights/visitor | 5.63 | 5.15 | 5.40 | 5.28 | 5.14 | 4.84 |

Note: Although Failte Ireland collates regional domestic visitor number/revenue data, this data is currently not collected at county level.

While the total number of visitors to the Western region in 2006 was 2.7m almost half of these, or 1.23m, were domestic visitors i.e. visitors from Ireland. Roscommon has traditionally benefited from the domestic tourism market, particularly for short visits and this market is likely to become increasingly important. The challenge for the future is to attract greater numbers to the county, provide better facilities and attractions and to foster a longer stay and greater regional and seasonal spread holiday product. Coupled with this, organizations that manage tourism need to work together with the common aim of sustainable tourism development.

Sustainable Tourism is defined as:

- socially and environmentally considerate;
- drawing on the natural beauty and character of the area;
- small in scale and developing slowly;
- supporting the local economy and employing local people;
- caring about quality;
- bringing conservation and recreation benefits; and,
- developing at a pace and scale which ensures that the assets of the area, both natural and cultural, are not diminished in the long term.
Policies for Tourism

Policy 329  Encourage and assist development and tourist bodies in the provision of adequate recreational and tourism infrastructure as well as tourist oriented facilities in the County.

Policy 330  The Council shall also co-operate with neighbouring LA’s and other agencies to promote and establish sustainable tourism initiatives in less–developed tourist destinations, particularly marginalised rural areas. Although rural tourism remains a relatively small niche in the overall tourism industry it can play a vital role for local communities including the farming community throughout the County.

Objectives for Tourism

Objective 318  Support the sustainable increase the volume of visitors, revenue per visitor, their average length of stay and seasonal spread; whilst protecting and conserving those natural, built and cultural features that form the resources upon which the County’s tourist industry is based.

Objective 319  Advance the development of Tourism by the provision and extension of, amongst others;
- existing amenities particularly water based activities;
- the provision of medium and long-distance walking routes in collaboration with land owners; and,
- the provision of accommodation including self catering and local services, the enhancement of towns and villages including the increase in bed numbers, the provision of key infrastructure including parking, public facilities and access to scenic areas.

Objective 320  Facilitate the provision of the following:
- further flagship enterprises,
- ecologically-sensitive access to the county’s lakes and rivers,
- improved access into the county
- the development of cycle and walking routes
- outdoor activity-based tourism, and,
- the encouragement of public and private investment in such facilities

Tourism encompasses two broad types: Rural Tourism and Urban Generated Tourism. Rural Tourism is based on local amenities, natural heritage and farm diversification projects to enhance the local rural economy and involves rural activities and services including accommodation facilities. Urban Generated Tourism focuses on the urban environment and includes built heritage such as; the theatre and arts; civic tours; art galleries; cultural events and festivals with accommodation; as well as amenity based tourism in an urban setting. Interconnectivity between Urban Generated Tourism and Rural Tourism, where visitors wish perhaps to stay in a rural area, but visit the urban setting or vice versa, must be accommodated. RCC acknowledge the need to facilitate Rural Tourism as well as Urban Generated Tourism within the County of Roscommon.

The NSS observes that tourism activity is often focused on areas with an otherwise weak economic base and as a result can have a positive influence on regional development. It indicates factors that drive this including:
- The tourism resource base in an area - including natural resources like climate, topography, culture entertainment facilities and shopping.
- Access - in terms of ease of and cost effective international access via ports and airports, local access through road and rail/bus networks and information about attractions and facilities.
- Visitor preferences – current preferences in holiday experiences and how this alters over time.
Key issues affecting tourism in the county are; a lack of investment; difficult access; national and international marketing and promotion of tourism in the county; and a lack of countrywide; and cross-country co-operation.\(^7\) Examples of initiatives which can be undertaken include; the need for there to be joint cooperation between Boyle and Carrick-on-Shannon for tourism promotion in the area; and the need to promote economic development linkages and enterprise parks etc in Boyle and Carrick-on-Shannon.

**Policies for Tourism**

**Policy 331** Support the promotion and marketing of tourism within the county, nationally and internationally in order to encourage increasing numbers of visitors.

**Policy 332** Encourage the development of tourism centred on culture, language and heritage.

**Policy 333** Seek the best balance between permitting developments, which facilitate the expansion of the industry and protecting the eco-systems and cultural ethos, which is uniquely attractive to visitors.

**Objectives for Tourism**

**Objective 321** Support and promote, with the co-operation of private landowners, public access to heritage sites and features of archaeological interest, coastal areas, mountains, rivers, lakes and other natural amenities.

**10.4.2 Roscommon Tourism Strategy**

**Fáilte Ireland**

Fáilte Ireland - Tourism Development Strategy 2000 – 2006 indicates that tourism in Ireland is a growing sector with earnings growing from £1.3bn in 1993, £2.5bn in 1999, and almost £4.3bn in 2005. It has identified the need to adopt a policy in relation to the carrying capacity of the most popular destinations and spreading tourism to other parts of the country. It also identifies the Environment as a key product and that there is a need for constant vigilance to protect the key assets of tourism, and in particular our scenic landscapes.

The Strategy has objectives to facilitate the development of a number of new tourism growth-poles around the country and to develop, in a sensitive way, the untapped potential of some of our least developed tourism areas. The strategy identifies opportunities for the development of the middle Shannon centering on Athlone as the hub of a comprehensive tourism development of the Shannon Corridor; development of a strongly branded “Lakeland” product; and using the assets of heritage, golf, equestrian, walking and cycling routes, ecology and waterways to develop strong centres for special interest activities and rural tourism. RCC supports the objectives of the Fáilte Ireland - Tourism Development Strategy 2000 – 2006 and subsequent strategies. The Council also recognises and supports the work done by the many agencies such as Fáilte Ireland and the Roscommon County Development Board, in promoting tourism in County Roscommon.

**Roscommon County Development Board**

“Roscommon Common Vision” sets an overall framework within which public bodies in the county will deliver their range of services over the next decade. A Strategic Goal for Roscommon is:

- “To develop and enhance the economic well-being in County Roscommon so as to facilitate existing and future economic growth, in line with balanced regional development.”\(^8\)

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\(^7\) Roscommon County Retail Strategy 2002-2008

\(^8\) County. Roscommon County Development Board’s review “Roscommon Common Vision”
It highlights Tourism among its key issues and indicates the need for a marketing strategy of tourism in the County. Its objective is to ensure tourism becomes a key productive sector activity through the implementation of the County Tourism Strategy. Strategic actions include:

- Implementing the Roscommon Tourism Strategy
- Developing a marketing plan for the county
- Developing a tourism labour-force recruitment network; promote and support the development of one project of scale
- Encouraging good environmental practices e.g. through the Tidy Towns Network
- Developing and maximizing the tourism potential of the Shannon River
- Investigating the potential of places of record, archaeology, and genealogy.

**Roscommon County Tourism Strategy**

Roscommon County Tourism Strategy 2002-2007 indicates that any Integrated Tourism Marketing Programme should include the dispersal of tourism throughout the Region away from large urban centres and the large accommodation providers. This would serve to centralise tourism in particular sectors of the market and particular geographical areas and not to discriminate against the smaller tourism and accommodation providers who may have less to offer the visitor. There may be a need to survey every small town and village in the County in terms of what they can provide for the visitor. In North Roscommon the opportunity exists to develop Lough Key and its environs as a natural amenity and major tourist attraction as well as the potential to develop a major tourism trail in the Rathcroghan area based on the untapped archaeological significance of the area. In addition in the South there is potential for angling; archaeology and tourism to be further developed along the River Shannon corridor as well as the River Suck in this area.

RCC supports the policies and actions of the County Tourism Strategy. The Council agrees that the role of Tourism is of growing importance in Roscommon, in particular, in light of the need to diversify the rural economy and to strengthen the tourism industry in accordance with National and Regional Policy and Guidance. The council supports the promotion of our tourism product and the provision for development that will allow the industry to flourish. The Council also recognizes and supports the work done by the many agencies such as Failte Ireland and RCDB in promoting tourism in County Roscommon.

**Policies regarding the Tourism Strategy**

- **Policy 334**  Support the initiatives of the Roscommon County Development Board, the Cultural Implementation Group, other agencies such as Failte Ireland, and individuals involved in promoting tourism in the county.

- **Policy 335**  Encourage and support increased coordination, cohesion and linkages between agencies such as Failte Ireland, Roscommon County Council and Roscommon County Development Board (RCDB)

- **Policy 336**  Support the Regional Tourism Authorities and other bodies that enable counties to work together on joint marketing, clustering, transport and tourism infrastructure.

- **Policy 337**  Promote the development of new locations offering unique attractions and experiences that respond to the market demand for “getting away from it all” and have authentic cultural experiences.

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*Submission made by the Western Regional Tourism Authority (Ireland West Tourism) on behalf of tourism interests in the region to the Tourism Policy Review Group*
Policy 338  Support the establishment of a Tourism Forum in order to provide a platform for people and organisations involved in cultural activities to discuss and showcase their activities and achievements.

Policy 339  Support the development of a marketing strategy as outlined in “Roscommon Tourism Strategy 2002-2007”.

Policy 340  Provide a platform for revised marketing programmes by presenting ‘new features of Roscommon’ or the West to visitors, which is based on originality and builds on that which is ‘uniquely Roscommon’.

Policy 341  Involve the community extensively in the development of tourism products for the county.

Policy 342  Support the compilation of a new 5-year Tourism Development Strategy for County Roscommon

Policy 343  Assure an advocacy role within our limits, for example;
1. Marketing Roscommon to its own community,
2. New product development,
3. Special events and festivals such as sporting, cultural and arts.

Policy 344  Influence, facilitate and encourage tourism product development through;
   i. Attractions, events, sports and entertainment,
   ii. Upgrading of existing properties and infrastructure by both private and public sectors,
   iii. Working closely with Fáilte Ireland and private enterprise to create and environment for investment in new and existing tourist development.

Objective regarding the Tourism Strategy

Objective 322  Participate in the development of a series of brochures for Roscommon, which are information rich, build on its uniqueness, and focus on aspects such as heritage, archaeology, water-based tourism etc.

10.4.3 Economic Development and Employment

The NSS identifies Roscommon town as the County Town and indicates that the County has a combination of weak and remote areas. Ballaghaderreen, Boyle, Castlerea and Strokestown are identified as ‘Urban Strengthening Opportunities’ and it is recommended that their physical attraction and heritage conservation be utilized as selling points. It also recommends that in areas of ‘Weak Urban Structure’ such as Elphin and eastern parts of the County, key assets should be identified and quality packages assembled for marketing. In ‘Weak and Remote Areas (with population decline)’ such as many rural parts of the County, including some Clár areas, new rural tourism resources and natural resource based development should be promoted.

The RPG’s recommend a focus on decentralisation, economic development, tourism in Roscommon and East Galway, which include Roscommon Town, Ballinasloe and the areas covered by the Athlone Environ Plan.

The Job Creation Strategy for Roscommon (2002-2007) indicates that there are approximately 1200 persons employed in the tourism and hospitality sectors in the County. However it has the second lowest figures for bed nights. It is an objective of this strategy to increase the market size of the Retail and Tourism sectors in County Roscommon. The county’s tourism structure and visitor share are both weak but the current development of flagship projects will help to directly increase numbers and bed
nights as well as act as a catalyst for further private investment.\textsuperscript{10} RCC supports the initiatives contained in the Job Creation Strategy (2002-2007) and recognises that new concepts to encourage private sector investment should be created through clustering, such as the Tourism Enterprise Zone in Lough Key Forest Park.

**Policies in relation to Economic Development and Employment in relation to Tourism**

**Policy 345** Support the provision of tourism related developments that promote the redevelopment of derelict sites. However, such development, as with all tourism proposals must be capable of being satisfactorily screened and assimilated into the landscape. It shall not be located in areas, or close to areas, where an unsatisfactory level of visually unsympathetic development has already taken place.

**Policy 346** Enhance economic development through community based tourism initiatives.

**Policy 347** Assist in opening up opportunities for job creation and promotion of small, medium and micro enterprises.

**Policy 348** Encourage growth in the tourism industry, which will contribute to future employment growth and income creation whilst ensuring balanced development and environmental sustainability throughout the County.

**Objectives in relation to Economic Development and Employment in relation to Tourism**

**Objective 323** Promote the provision of small business management courses for tourism service providers.

The Council will work to develop the potential for growth in sustainable Tourism in County Roscommon in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland and local communities. The County Development Plan aims to facilitate tourism wherever possible without compromising the environment or the natural and built heritage. The goal is to support skills development for the native population and other workers by facilitating home-based economic activities where appropriate, but which does not impact negatively on the quality of life in the vicinity.

Investment in infrastructure such as water and roads must be maintained in order for economic development to take place. RCC aims to provide flexible zonings within the County Development Plan and Local Area Plans in order to facilitate economic development and achieve sustainable transport patterns.

**Policies in relation to Economic Development and Employment in relation to Tourism**

**Policy 349** Support the marketing of a tourism package for Roscommon in conjunction with Failte Ireland.

**Policy 350** Identify, target and provide support to “Champions” and entrepreneurs who could drive and become involved in tourism related projects in the short, medium and long term.

**Objectives in relation to Economic Development and Employment in relation to Tourism**

**Objective 324** Facilitate the drafting of “How to” brochures to assist those wanting to become tourism service providers.

\textsuperscript{10} Roscommon Job Creation Strategy 2005-2007
10.4.4 Tourist Facilities and Infrastructure

County Roscommon has significant natural and cultural heritage attractions such as landscape, inland waterways and historical artifacts. The County has many tourist facilities such as fishing, boating and swimming and cultural infrastructure as well as beautiful countryside and natural amenities. Roscommon’s low lying nature allows for the development of golf courses and there are three 18-hole courses in the County, in Roscommon town, Carrick-on-Shannon and Athlone, and two long established 9-hole courses at Strokestown and Castlerea. There are also 9-hole courses at Ballaghaderreen and Boyle.

Examples of other facilities within the County include those in, amongst others, Roscommon Town. These facilities include Roscommon Racecourse, which hosts one-day and two-day meetings in between May and October each year. Loughnaneane Park is a 14-acre recreational area situated northwest of Roscommon town and bordered by the ruins of Roscommon Castle, a dramatic and imposing 13th Century Norman Castle. The Park includes a crannog known locally as the Hill o’ Bones, a wildflower meadow, bird walk, lake feature, mounds, children’s playground and car park. The playground is a special facility within the Park. It has been designed to cater for children up to twelve years.11

Roscommon County Library has branches in Roscommon, Ballaghaderreen, Boyle, Castlerea, Strokestown and Ballyforan and provides opportunities for exhibition and readings, on a limited basis. It administers a substantial collection of Archives and Local Studies material relating to the history and heritage of the county and co-operates with a number of local and national organisations and groups to deliver a programme of events every year including Seachtain na Gaeilge, Bealtaine, Heritage Week and Science Week.12 Libraries are an important access point to the Internet and email, which are becoming more important in the distribution of information on artists, arts events and opportunities; as well as in providing information for locals and visitors. The library also provides Internet access for all.

Roscommon Museum has a unique collection of artifacts relating to the history of the county, the town and its people. It is run by the County Historical and Archaeological Society on a voluntary basis and generally opens during the summer months. At present the museum occupies an area within Roscommon Tourist Office, which also opens during the summer months. RCC recognises the need to establish a designated County Museum, which will house the historic and archaeological artifacts of the County, facilitate access to National Museum artifacts and return them to public display in Roscommon. The Council also recognises the need to establish a permanent designated Tourist Office to be a “One-stop-shop” providing a full range of services for the visitor including accommodation listings and bookings, maps and information on the natural and built amenities of the county and places of historic interest, tour itineraries, book and local art and craft sales and exhibitions of local art. RCC support the establishment of a County Tourism body to help promote the County.

11 http://www.roscommoncoco.ie/services/recreation/recreation.html
12 Roscommon County Council Development Plan 2006-2010
The tourism industry is based upon products which are marketed and sold to visitors. As well as accommodation and transport (and arguably landscape and culture) these may include: “paying” attractions such as museums; and recreational facilities such as walks and cycle tracks, which are also used by the local community. New and repeat visits are encouraged by ensuring that the quality of the tourism product remains high and diverse. It is also essential that visitors are aware of the products on offer and that signage is appropriate and reliable.

Policy in relation to Tourist Facilities and Infrastructure

Policy 351 The Council shall investigate funding opportunities for the further development of flagship tourism products; suggested products for further expansion would be the new Forest and Activity Park at Lough Key, Boyle, including the tree top canopy walk and other activities and Strokestown Park House. Medium term funding and marketing will be focused on one such flagship project.

Policy 352 Support the development of a designated County Museum to display our rich history and heritage.

Policy 353 Support and facilitate the development of new tourism facilities and services throughout the county.

Objectives in relation to Tourist Facilities and Infrastructure

Objective 325 The Council shall facilitate the creation of golf courses, pitch and putt courses and driving ranges in the countryside provided that such development does not contravene any other polices or objectives of this Plan

Objective 326 Establish a full-time tourism information centre in Roscommon Town and identify towns within the County where information centres could be opened, within the lifetime of this plan.

Objective 327 The Council will encourage resort type development and the upgrading of former demesnes and estates, heritage properties and products subject to good planning practice

Objective 328 Co-operate in the compilation of tourism brochures, which can be distributed via tourist information offices, key retail outlets and at tourist information signboards.

The re-development of Lough Key Forest Park, in Boyle Co. Roscommon is a joint venture between Coillte Teo. and Roscommon County Council. This unique partnership has allowed this project to avail of National Development Plan Funding through the Tourism Product Development Scheme.

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Keadue won the National Award in the Tidy Towns in the 2003 Competition, being declared Ireland's tidiest town and best-kept village.

Lough Key, in the north of the County, is one of the most beautiful lakes in Ireland including an observation tower, ice-house, wishing chair, underground tunnels and beautiful wooded islands. Its immense range of habitats encourages a huge diversity of wildlife and birds such as summer visitors; the cuckoo, tern, willow warbler, whitethroat and blackcap. Lough Key is also home to a number of historical and archaeological treasures such as the 19th century ruins on Castle Island, ruined churches on various islands, Trinity Bridge and the Bog Garden. Tourist facilities include a fully serviced and landscaped caravan park, tearooms and shop.
The redevelopment of Lough Key includes a tree canopy walk, the only one of its kind in Ireland which allows the visitor to experience trees at a height. The “pay to play” facility and the interpretative centre offer up to date tourism facilities for visitors. The Boda Borg is a Swedish Technology Puzzle House and its incorporation in to this project ensures that even in wet weather visitors have activities to entertain them.

Lough Key Forest Park was at its height of activity in the 1970's. Since then it has declined but this redevelopment will put Lough Key Forest Park back on the map as a major tourism attraction in the West of Ireland. We expect visitor numbers to increase steadily over the coming years and feel that that capital investment in this project will prove extremely worthwhile.

The Regional Planning Guidelines (2004) encourage large-scale developments such as the Lough Key Forest Park Development. It should be noted however that the Council emphasises that the development of Flagship Projects should not be promoted as the single most important necessity for tourism growth. Emphasis should be placed on tourism development throughout the entire Lough Key area and sustainability is paramount in this regard. RCC supports the upgrading of facilities, where appropriate; the promotion and marketing of the area within the county, nationally and internationally; the development of new tourism facilities and services that enhance the natural and unique qualities of the area, promotes health and well being; and the regeneration and conversion of buildings along river for tourism related uses should be encouraged. The Council also supports the development of sustainable tourism within the region through initiatives such as the Greening Irish Hotels Programme, which aims to develop and implement environmental best practice structures across the hospitality industry by encouraging hotels etc. to become greener by saving energy and making better use of their resources such as waste energy and water conservation.

**Policy in relation to Large Scale Tourist Developments**

**Policy 354** Support the development of Lough Key and its environs as a natural amenity and major tourist attraction.

**Policy 355** Facilitate the provision of facilities for tourism i.e. swimming, fishing and small boating as well as washrooms and toilets, seating and benches along the shoreline of the lakes.

It is recognised that there is a potential to develop a level of tourism and educational development around Boyle in the astronomical area and this will be facilitated and encouraged by the Planning Authority.

**Policy in relation to niche tourism**

**Policy 356** Support the development of niche tourism and educational initiatives in the astronomical area.
Boyle, nestled at the foot of the Curlew Mountains between Lough Gara and Lough Key, is a centre of great beauty with an abundance of history and archaeology to awe any visitor. It is renowned for its trout and coarse fishing. The main street was originally the avenue leading to King House, the 18th century Georgian seat of the Kings, later Earls of Kingston. The house later served as a military barracks and now as ‘King House Interpretive Galleries & Museum’ contains a number of exhibitions which tell the history and elaborate pageantry of the Connaught kings and chieftains as well as the history of Boyle and the King family by means of 3-dimensional displays, audio-visual media and special effects. Boyle Abbey is a beautifully restored example of a 12th Century Cistercian Abbey with a small interpretive centre sited in the gatehouse. Frybrook House is a circa.18th Century Georgian style house situated close to the town by the river containing some of the finest examples of Georgian decorative plasterwork in existence, and an Adams fireplace. Other important houses in County Roscommon include Clonalis House in Castlerea, which has a collection of material relating to the O’Connor family, the Coronation Stone and the Harp of Turlough O’Carolan. RCC supports the provision of a local museum including an interpretive centre for the Battle of Curlews. In addition, it is acknowledged that Boyle needs to be developed as gateway to Lough Key.

There are a wide variety of other heritage products in the County, for example, Strokestown. Strokestown was declared a Heritage Town in the year 2000. It encompasses a single broad avenue leading directly to the gates of Strokestown Park House, a fully furnished Georgian Mansion with pleasure garden and the National Famine Museum, dedicated to explaining the history of the Great Irish Famine. In addition, to Strokestown Park House the town is also home to the County Roscommon Genealogy and Heritage Company which provides a valuable service to this increasingly popular visitor activity. These Heritage products throughout the County need to be supported, encouraged and upgraded.

Some existing unique tourist facilities in the county include Elphin Windmill, which is the only working windmill in the West of Ireland, Úna Bhán Rural Tourism, which gives visitors the opportunity to experience the art of cheese making, sheep shearing, brown bread making and visits to local sites, The Suck Valley Development Visitor Angling Conference Centre & Riverside Cafe in Athleague, is located on the 100km Suck Valley Waymarked Way Walk and provides angling & walking holiday packages. Another unique facility is the Dr. Douglas Hyde Interpretive Centre in Ballaghaderreen where Dr. Hyde’s contribution to Ireland is highlighted in an exhibition with the use of informative charts, maps and photographs. Other facilities include Castlecoote House, the Derryglad Folk Museum, the Sean Úi Neachtain Centre and the Knockcroghery Clay Pipe Museum.

There is potential for angling, archaeology and tourism generally to be further developed along the River Shannon corridor in this area. Unlike other parts of the country there is a distinctive lack of health and wellness facilities in County Roscommon, aside from those such as the Hodson Bay Leisure Centre. The Shannon Corridor and its calling points, Shannonbridge, Hodson Bay, Lecarrow, Gailey, Portrun, Lanesborough, Cortober, Tarmonbarry, Roosky, Drumharlow, Cootehall and Battlebridge. The Planning Authority supports tourism development in these areas particularly river and boating related tourism.

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Glendeer Open Farm in Drum is a 6-acre open farm with a large collection of native and exotic animals. The pet farm opened in 1991 and has won several awards. The farm also provides self-catering accommodation for those seeking a family holiday or a quiet country getaway.

Cruachan Ái Heritage Centre has many archaeological remains, which are located close to the centre, from Stone Age to the Historic period, and are interpreted, in bright, modern exhibition rooms. The central focus of the Cruachan Æi Heritage Centre, opened in 1999, is the Cruachan site including the Rathcroghan Mound, one of the best preserved Celtic Royal Sites in Europe close to the medieval village of Tulsk. The centre was developed to highlight, interpret and celebrate the rich archaeological heritage of the area and to act as a focus for community activities. It has also been successful in attracting tourism to the area and creating direct and indirect employment opportunities.

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13 http://www.visitroscommon.ie
Policy 357  Support the development of tourism related facilities particularly river and boating related tourism at calling points along the River Shannon.

Roscommon is an agricultural County with a beautiful natural landscape, which encourages the visitor to relax and pursue healthy aims. RCC supports the development of health and wellness facilities such as day and overnight spas as well as health farms and yoga and meditation centers within the county. There is an opportunity to develop a purpose built spa hotel with educational facilities for promoting health, located in a scenic location and benefiting from the availability of local produce. There needs to be a focus on new products, new activities and events, new links to culture and unique homegrown products in order to attract national and international appeal. The Council supports the development of eco farming, organic products and markets, eco tourism, walks within areas of natural heritage in line with the development of health and well being facilities.

Policy 358  Support the development of eco-farming, organic products and markets, eco-tourism, walks within areas of natural heritage in line with the development of health and wellbeing facilities

Objective 329  Support the expansion and maximise the potential of the Rathcroghan area of County Roscommon based on its untapped archaeological significance, in co-operation with the Community and the DoEHLG

Public Transport is important with regard to bringing visitors into the County from the rest of the Country. There are bus links to Belfast, Dublin and Galway. The introduction of new trains in 2008 and plans to increase the frequency of service on the line to a minimum of two hourly will create the potential for more visitors from Dublin and Sligo. Knock International Airport is located close by with Shannon and Galway Airports accessible, but further away. There is a need for the improvement and upgrading of transport links to and within the county. The RPG’s suggest that there may be potential for an airport in South Roscommon, which requires further investigation and a feasibility study.

There is a need for the improvement and upgrading of other physical infrastructure throughout the county. RCC will continue to facilitate and be centrally involved in the upgrading of all infrastructures throughout the County; this includes the provision of facilities within tourist areas such as toilet facilities, accommodation, access to amenities, and signage, where appropriate and, as required.

The County has a wide range of existing social and community infrastructure available to residents and visitors to the area. However, there are new and additional facilities that are required to help achieve balanced sustainable development at local level. The provision of such facilities and social infrastructure is key to establishing communities and promoting quality of life, social inclusion and sustainable settlements. RCC supports the provision of services for the community, community tourism and heritage projects, and is dedicated to providing equality of access for everyone to cultural activities for both passive and active participants and the promotion of multi-culturalism through programmes, festivals and arts events involving people for various backgrounds and cultures. The Council is committed to the promotion of disability awareness, to proofing policies against their impact on equality / disability and providing people with disabilities access to the social and physical services as well as to services in accordance with the Barcelona Declaration of 2002.

Policy in relation to Tourist Facilities and Infrastructure

Policy 359  Facilitate the development and expansion of existing and new tourist routes throughout the County, to include historical and cultural elements, environmental and recreation, general interest and amenities, which will satisfy the needs of the domestic and international visitors.
Policy 360 Facilitate the provision of increased mooring facilities at 4/5 chosen locations along the Shannon and allow select types of commercial/tourism development along the riverside to provide for an economic gain from the Shannon.

Policy 361 Facilitate and be involved in the upgrading of all infrastructure, including the provision of facilities within tourist areas, throughout the County.

Many overseas and domestic tourists rely on private motor vehicles to access tourist attractions and recreational facilities. Innovative transport methods can reduce reliance on such forms of transport and increase the use of other, more sustainable, means of transport such as buses and bicycles.

Policy 362 Evaluate public transport provision and, where appropriate, provide support for alternatives to the use of private cars to access visitor attractions.

Policy 363 Support the development of improved linkages throughout the county in order to facilitate future economic development including, amongst others, the upgrading of the N63 and N61 as one of the major transport linkages within the county.

Policy 364 Promote cycle and pedestrian-friendly development layouts, infrastructure and facilities, in all new tourism development.

Objectives in relation to Tourist Facilities and Infrastructure

Objective 330 Facilitate the development of access/routes and appropriately designed public/tourism facilities by the Office of Public Works at monuments in State Care in the County.

Objective 331 Identify tourist routes through the County in co-operation with the County Development Board, Fáilte Ireland and local communities, and facilitate their establishment within the lifetime of this plan.

The following are some of the places of interest/visitor attractions within County Roscommon. See Map no. 34).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Places of Interest/Visitor Attractions</th>
<th>Examples in County Roscommon</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amenity Areas</strong></td>
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<td>(open space amenity areas utilized for recreational purposes)</td>
<td>Hodson Bay Amenity Area</td>
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<td>Lough Key Forest Park Amenity Area</td>
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<td>Stroketown Park</td>
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<td>Loughnaneane Park, Roscommon</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Portrunny Amenity Area</td>
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<td>Keade Heritage Park</td>
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<td>Castlerea Demesne</td>
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<td>Lake O’Flynn Amenity Area</td>
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<td>Ballaghaderreen Town Park, Ballaghaderreen</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Knockranny Wood Amenity Area</td>
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<td>Cavetown Lake Amenity Area</td>
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<td>Lakeside Amenity Area, Ballinlough</td>
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<td>Lakeside Amenity Area, Lough Allen</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Places of Interest</strong></td>
<td>Elphin Windmill</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Frybrook House, Boyle</td>
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<td>Roscommon Jail, Roscommon Town</td>
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<td>Roscommon Arts Centre, Roscommon Town</td>
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<td>Roscommon Town Race Course</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Angling &amp; Visitors Centre, Athleague</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Theatre Company, Frenchpark</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Arigna Mountains</td>
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<td>Curlew Mountains</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Great Houses** | Clonalis House, Castlerea  
Strokestown Park House, Strokestown  
Castlecoote House, Castlecoote  
Woodbrooke House, Carrick on Shannon |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| **Abbey/Castle** | Boyle Abbey, Boyle  
Lough Key Forest Park, Boyle  
Galey Castle, Knockcroghery  
Rindoon Castle, Lecarrow  
Fuerty Abbey, Fuerty  
Ballintoher Castle, Ballintoher  
Kilronan Castle, Boyle |
| **Archaeological/Monastic Site** | Ardcarn Monastic Sites, Ardcarn  
Rathcroghan & Glenballythomas earthworks, Rathcroghan |
| **Heritage Centers/Museum** | King House, Boyle  
Arigna Mining Experience, Arigna  
Roscommon County Museum, Roscommon  
Drum Heritage Centre, Drum  
Strokestown Famine Museum, Strokestown  
Roscommon Heritage & Genealogical Centre, Strokestown  
Derryglad Folk Museum, Curraghboy  
Claypipe Visitors Centre, Knockcroghery  
Hells Kitchen Rail Museum, Castlerea  
Cruachan Ai Heritage Centre, Tulsk  
Una Bhan Rural Tourism, Boyle  
Dr. Hyde Interpretative Centre, Frenchpark |
| **Important Flora/Fauna** | Lecarrow  
Curraghboy  
Suck Callows  
Lough Funshinagh  
Shannon Callows |
| **Golf Course** | Roscommon Golf Course, Roscommon  
Strokestown Golf Course, Strokestown  
Athlone Golf Course, Hodson Bay  
Castlerea Golf Course, Castlerea  
Carrick-on-Shannon Golf Course |
| **Viewing Points** | View of Roscommon Town from Mote Park  
View of Lough Allen  
View of Drumharlow Lake  
View of Kilglass Lake  
View of Lough Ree, Hodson Bay |
| **Horse Riding Centers** | Situated in/close to: Roscommon Town  
Ballymacurly, Ballaghaderreen, Ballyleague, Creagh |
| **Pet/Animal Farm** | Glendeer Pet Farm, Athlone  
Tullyboy Animal Farm Visitor Centre, Tullyboy |
### Cross/Stone/Grave
- Emlagh Cross, Emlagh
- Castlestrange Decorated Stone
- Grave of Turlough O’Carolan, Keadeen
- Castlestrange Decorated Stone, Athleague
- Rock of Doon, Boyle

### Farmers Market
- Boyle Farmers Market, Boyle
- Roscommon Farmers Market, Roscommon

### Cathedral/Church
- The Sacred Heart Church, Roscommon
- Ardcarne Church
- Elphin - ruined 13th century Cathedral, Elphin
- St. Nathy’s Cathedral, Ballghaderreen

### Forest/Woodland
- Mote Park Forrest, Roscommon
- Lough Key Forest Park, Boyle
- St. Johns Wood, Lecarrow

### Water-based Activity/Activities
- Lough Ree
- River Suck
- River Shannon
- Kilglass Lake
- Lake O’Flynn
- Drumharlow Lake

## Tourism Signage

Tourist signage is important with regard to the development of tourism in County Roscommon. Many tourists visit County Roscommon each year and even more pass through the county on their way to the West Coast. The wealth of natural and built heritage in the county should encourage passing visitors to stop a while and sample the delights of the county. This does not happen at present because there is little tourist information to be gathered by visitors while wandering around the countryside and towns of Roscommon. The Tourist Offices, located in Roscommon Town and in Boyle, are seasonal and there is a need to update existing maps and provide a comprehensive map of the County which would be available at various tourist establishments to guide visitors to the County. Tourism potential in County Roscommon could be aided significantly by the production of a comprehensive tourist map and the introduction of information boards at all heritage sites indicating important local as well as countywide sites. Uniform signage with one clear design format and a unique county logo, like the familiar Fáilte Ireland shamrock logo, should be produced and marketed at home and abroad.

Tour organizers and locally approved guides should be considered the ‘gatekeepers’ of local amenities. RCC encourages the recruitment of local tour guides and establishing trails including river tours as well as the development of facilities such as restaurants on boats and barges along the river to cater for river tours and visitors to the area. The Council supports the development of a permanent designated tourist office in Roscommon Town and the production of travel itineraries to guide visitors around the wonderful sights of County Roscommon. Many tourists use the Internet to gather holiday information and the updating and upgrading of existing tourism websites for the county should be a priority.

Access to heritage sites is a major issue in County Roscommon. A Heritage Access Audit of County Roscommon was commissioned by the County Roscommon Heritage Forum in order to identify heritage sites with public access, including, special needs access. The survey report and database

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14 Teagasc-Integrated rural tourism development in the west of Ireland: Learning from tourists and tour organisers
contains details of 82 heritage sites around the County. Each site is described under the following headings:

- Grid reference
- ‘Discovery map’ series number
- Site description
- Access details
- Disabled access details
- Signage
- On-site interpretation
- Parking & facilities present
- Ownership.

Not all of the sites included in the audit have public access and improvements could be made at some of the sites. RCC supports the initiatives of the County Roscommon Heritage Forum and other agencies involved in heritage throughout the County.

It is an objective in “Roscommon Common Vision” to increase and promote knowledge of Roscommon’s local history and heritage among the public agencies and visitors to the county by developing a policy on traditionally accepted, original and historical place names. RCC support the initiatives of this strategy. Structures of architectural/archaeological significance should be named, developed, clearly sign posted and protected.

The NRA is carrying out a 4-year re-signage programme from 2006-2009. The N11 will be the first road to be re-signed and will be used as a template for all other national roads. A re-signing programme must be progressed within the county as soon as possible. Signs that are designed as guides to the location of tourist facilities and attractions will be permitted under license outside built up areas subject to:

- Being limited in number to the minimum required for that purpose
- Subject to the provisions contained within the PDA and Regulations, 2000 and 2001 respectively, as amended

**Policy in relation to tourism signage**

**Policy 365** Remove illegal signage, repair and replace existing signage on tourist routes and paths such as cycle paths.

**Policy 366** Encourage and support the improvement of access, signage and tourist information services including integrated welcome, directional and interpretative signage

**Policy 367** Work with Fáilte Ireland, the NRA, and other bodies to develop standardised and branded signage for tourism facilities and tourist attractions in the County.

**Policy 368** RCC will endeavour to provide adequate access and signage facilities to all publicly owned heritage sites, where appropriate and funds permit.

**Objectives in relation to tourism signage**

**Objective 332** Promote County Roscommon as a tourist destination and work with the tourism sector to ensure that facilities and attractions are adequately signposted.

10.4.5 Integrated Rural Tourism

Integrated Rural Tourism (IRT) is directly and positively linked to the economic, social, cultural and natural resource in rural areas. It is an approach to tourism development, which is sensitive to the
nature of local resources, traditions and opportunities and endeavours to optimise the use of resources and shares the benefits throughout the area.15

Tourism is a key sector for the county that needs to be developed to offset the effect of the decline in agriculture and the lack of Foreign Direct Investment. The RPG’s recognise the need for increased employment opportunities in the west in order to sustain viable rural communities and have proposed strategies such as diversifying farm production and encouraging stronger tourism marketing. RCC recognize the need to develop an attractive environment for enterprise and enhance the entrepreneurial spirit of the county in e.g. tourism ventures, which at the same time ensures the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

In order to promote balanced regional development, in accordance with the NSS and RPG’s, and boost rural tourism, an area needs to be self sufficient with a full range of services to include, for example, accommodation, farmer’s markets, organic produce, activity holidays, walking/cycling facilities, golf, fishing, boating and swimming facilities. Organic local produce should be marketed for their health benefits as well as the development of local cookery schools and organic restaurants.

Policy for Integrated Rural Tourism

**Policy 369** Facilitate tourism development in towns and villages. This also benefits rural development through the creation of value added enterprises and sustainable employment which attracts and directs tourists to surrounding rural areas. This will include encouraging clustering of products to increase linkages within and reduce leakage from, the local economy e.g. linkages between providers of accommodation and local farmers/niche food producers

**Policy 370** Promote rural tourism in an environmentally sustainable manner which contributes to increased employment opportunities and benefits the environment

Objective for Integrated Rural Tourism

**Objective 333** Work with the County Enterprise Board and others, to promote rural development and enterprise.

Opportunities for alternative and supplementary employment for farm families, such as off-farm employment, multiple activities and agri-tourism, will be crucial to the survival of many rural communities in County Roscommon. Agriculture is supported as the most important rural land use though emphasis is placed on encouraging and supporting farmers to “add an activity/area within farming that is higher up the economic value chain” e.g. rural tourism, forestry etc. RCC supports the development of farmers markets i.e. at least once weekly in each electoral area, and aims to facilitate the planning and licensing of them, in addition to the existing ones on Roscommon town and Boyle. Rural Roscommon has a lot to offer the visitor with regard to natural amenities, quality of life and local tradition. RCC supports the establishment of, for example, turf cutting courses for tourists, open farms, short stays on traditional working farms and similar rural tourism products.

Policy for Rural Tourism

**Policy 371** Support on-farm tourism accommodation and supplementary activities such as, health farms, heritage and nature trails, pony trekking and boating.

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15 Teagasc-Integrated rural tourism development in the west of Ireland: Learning from tourists and tour organisers
Policy 372  Encourage, where appropriate, the reuse and refurbishment of agricultural buildings for tourist facilities and accommodation. To facilitate the development of agri-tourism, consideration will be given to units of holiday accommodation on agricultural holdings which will remain an integral part of the landholding. These units shall be sited within or adjacent to the existing farm complex, appropriately designed, with safe effluent disposal and satisfactorily assimilated into the landscape.

Objectives for Rural Tourism

Objective 334  Promote the development of niche activities, such as those relating to food (particularly value-added products), forestry (e.g. wood products), crafts, eco-tourism and agri-tourism, for example farmhouse accommodation, open farms, farm holidays, health farms, equestrian activities, bird-watching holidays; painting/photography tuition, angling tourism, field studies and hill-walking (with the co-operation of the landowners).

Objective 335  Promote rural / agricultural diversification through the sustainable use of natural resources e.g. tourism, forestry, energy production.

Objective 336  The Council shall restrict development which might be detrimental to scenic and heritage assets in cSAC’s, pNHA’s & SPA’s and within areas designated Sensitive Rural Landscapes as proposed in the Landscape Character Assessment that accompanies this Plan.

Objective 337  Integrated rural tourism shall be undertaken in close collaboration with local farm owners/local communities and their needs.

Objective 338  Tourism-related development will be required to have a high standard of design, with consideration given to the potential impact on the surroundings in terms of scale and intensity. All ancillary landscaping should seek to blend in, and any signage should also be appropriately designed.

Objective 339  Due regard shall be had to the policies and objectives as outlined within the Landscape Character Assessment contained within this Plan.

Objective 340  Encourage new holiday home developments to locate within either established villages or small towns and/or in distinct clusters in rural areas capable of absorbing such developments.

The Greenbox is an area in the North West of Ireland including all of counties Leitrim and Fermanagh as well as parts of neighbouring counties Donegal, Sligo, Cavan and Monaghan. It is a unique region and is Ireland’s main eco tourism destination. County Roscommon has much to offer in terms of eco-tourism including a range of walking and cycling trails and a unique natural landscape. The development of health farms, activity centers etc. in the county will enhance it as an eco-tourism destination as well as bringing increased economic benefits to rural areas.

The Bréifne project aims to establish an internationally recognised quality tourism brand image for the northwest of Ireland centred on the region’s rich and diverse natural and cultural heritage. Roscommon, Leitrim, Cavan and Sligo County Councils and Fermanagh District Council in association with the Geological Survey of Ireland, the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland and the Academy of Irish Cultural Heritages (University of Ulster) propose to realise this through the development of a marketing strategy and the creation of a host of natural and cultural resource based products. These products will assist in the development and enhancement of sustainable tourism and rural economic development in the “Bréifne Mountains” region of northwest Ireland, for the economic

16 http://www.ehsni.gov.uk/other-index/events/eco-eye/ecoeye-prog-content.htm
17 http://www.Bréifne.ie
benefit of all parts of the region in a non-contentious manner. The concept is based on the idea of “Cultural Parks”. Products will include:

- An established, and internationally recognised and marketed brand image for the region,
- A comprehensive, GIS based natural and cultural resource inventory and database for the entire region,
- A booklet and DVD pack illustrating, and explaining the more than 600 million year history and physical evolution of the region
- A “Bréifne Mountains” region website
- A heritage guide overview publication,
- A series of district based walk, cycling and tour publications,
- A series of road signs and information stations,
- Guide and GIS training courses for local communities,
- A high profile, international conference within the region to launch the products,
- Extension of the Cuilcagh/Marble Arch European Geopark to include at least the rest of Cuilcagh Mountain with an intended extension to include Slieve Anierin,
- Establish a framework within which derivative products, services and activities will be developed.

RCC supports the development of projects, which promote sustainable tourism based on cultural resources like the Greenbox and Bréifne initiatives and supports the extension of these particular initiatives into other areas of County Roscommon.

**Policy for Rural Tourism**

**Policy 373** Support rural tourism that would meet and create demand for authentic, rural, cultural, ‘quality of life’ tourism experiences in a way that promotes and supports the environment and builds on the ‘Green Clean’ image.18

**Policy 374** Promote Roscommon as an eco-tourism destination based on its extensive walking and cycling routes and natural heritage, and encourage the development of health farms, activity centers and other developments, which will sustain eco tourism.

**Policy 375** Support the development of sustainable tourism initiatives like the Greenbox and Bréifne projects.

**Objectives for Rural Tourism**

**Objective 341** Identify, in the short, medium and long term, the most viable projects to be incorporated into the tourism trails.

**10.4.6 Tourist Accommodation**

RCC recognises that tourism must be developed as one of the key sectors within the County. Key towns and villages act as tourist centers and the facilities and services they provide are crucial to the development of the tourist potential of the County. Appropriate tourist accommodation and facilities must be provided throughout the County for this purpose. The RPG’s emphasise the need for more tourist accommodation and facilities in the County particularly in Roscommon town and Boyle. Tourism facilities should be developed in a sustainable manner to add to the tourism potential. RCC promotes improvement in the overall appearance of these towns and villages through its Town Renewal Schemes, Urban and Village Renewal Programme, Tidy Towns Initiative and enforcement of the Derelict Sites Act. Tourist developments have a special role in revitalizing towns and villages, and

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18 Submission made by the Western Regional Tourism Authority (Ireland West Tourism) on behalf of tourism interests in the region to the Tourism Policy Review Group
RCC supports the development of appropriate tourist accommodation in existing town and villages throughout the County.

**Policy in relation to Tourist Accommodation**

**Policy 376**  
Encourage tourism in the county through effective location of a full range of tourist accommodation.

**Policy 377**  
Direct tourism based development, where appropriate, into existing settlements where there is adequate infrastructure to service the development and where they can contribute to maintenance of essential rural services.

**Policy 378**  
Ensure, in all tourism related development, high standards of design and landscaping, with consideration given to the impact of the proposal on its surrounding in terms of scale and intensity.

**Policy 379**  
All tourist development should be designed for and take particular consideration of the needs of the disabled and the elderly.

**HOTELS**

The Fáilte Ireland “West Fact Card 2005” indicates that 25% of visitors to the West of Ireland stay in hotels with 34% staying in guesthouses or B&Bs and another 10% staying at tourist hostels. Although there are a number of excellent hotels in the county, additional large and high quality hotels are required, especially North Roscommon. RCC recognizes that tourism type developments should be prioritized in key areas such as Boyle, and should include the provision of appropriate hotels in key areas as well as focus on encouraging and supporting local enterprise such as B&Bs. This will boost the economy of the region as a whole and these areas in particular.

Interest in health and wellbeing has increased over the past few years with the development of spas, health promotion and education centers throughout the country and there is an opportunity to boost tourism potential by providing unique health products as part of hotel developments at key locations in the county.

The EU Flower Eco-label is an eco-label for tourism facilities that aims to contribute to sustainable tourism by awarding and promoting good initiatives. The EU Flower Eco-label aims to change the practices and behaviours of tourism actors including enterprises, authorities, guests, local communities, and to involve them in increasing their responsibilities towards their own environment.

**Policy in relation to hotels**

**Policy 380**  
Prioritise hotel development and promote the development of high quality hotels in tourist areas and in key towns and villages throughout the County.

**Policy 381**  
Ensure high standards of architectural and urban design in all new tourist accommodation and facilities.

**Policy 382**  
Encourage hotels and guesthouses to save costs and minimise environmental impacts through membership of an eco-labelling scheme such as EU Flower Eco-label

**HOLIDAY HOMES**

There can be high demand for tourist accommodation and holiday homes in areas of natural beauty or close to a tourist attraction. RCC aims to address holiday home development in a positive and sustainable way to revitalise rural areas whilst ensuring that such development does not prejudice the vitality, environmental quality and character of the rural community throughout the County.
Residential development will be restricted to local housing need only in areas of high natural amenity in order to help protect the natural beauty of the area. The clustering of appropriately scaled holiday homes in or adjoining small towns and villages is preferred. These developments will relate sympathetically to the scale and level of development and facilities in the locality.

**Policy in relation to holiday homes**

**Policy 383** Support the development of holiday homes in appropriate locations such as existing villages or small towns or in rural areas capable of absorbing them and where services are readily available.

**Policy 384** Support the development of clustered holiday homes in appropriate locations where environmental integration can be achieved.

**Policy 385** Ensure that the scale of development is of modest proportions and relates to the size of the settlement.

**Policy 386** Ensure that the design of the holiday home development is of a high standard including the preservation of boundary characteristics and site features, adequate car parking provision, waste storage area and public lighting.

**Policy 387** Accommodate small scale enterprises, such as renovation of barns, outhouses or other existing structures and the construction of one or two holiday homes for short term rental (less than 3 months at any one time) associated with an existing permanent residence or active farm/agri-tourism enterprise. It shall be a condition of permission that such holiday homes be retained within the ownership of the complex/ permanent dwelling and shall not be sole to form a separate permanent residence.

**Policy 388** Individual holiday home units must be designed and sited so as not to have an adverse impact on the character or setting of settlements or the amenity for existing residents. Suburban style housing estate layouts should be avoided.

**Policy 389** Proposals to reinstate, conserve and/or renovate existing, vacant, derelict or disused buildings for holiday accommodation will be given favourable consideration subject to normal planning, environmental and engineering criteria.

**Policy 390** Accommodate appropriately sited holiday home development as they arise, subject to normal planning considerations in relation to siting and design in rural areas of low development pressure.

**CARAVAN AND CAMPING SITES**

The provision of sites for caravans and camping is an important element in the accommodation of holiday makers. The Fáilte Ireland “West Fact Card 2005” indicates that 2% of visitors to the West of Ireland stay in Caravan and Camping Sites. There are several caravan and camping sites in County Roscommon, the Lough Key Caravan and Camping Park, Willowbrook Caravan and Camping Park in Ballaghaderreen, Hodson Bay Caravan and Camping Park near Athlone, and the Gailey Bay Caravan and Camping Park in Knockcroghery. Caravan and camping parks can be visually obtrusive particularly in high amenity areas or areas of outstanding natural beauty. However, RCC recognises the need to provide tourist accommodation for all price ranges and a variety of lifestyles, therefore, all caravan and camping park proposals are required to ensure that the design, operation and impact do no unreasonably affect the amenity of the surrounding landscape.

While touring caravan sites tend to be less obtrusive than static sites, the provision of new facilities will be assessed against strict planning, design and environmental criteria: development will be resisted in areas already well provided for and in areas of landscape vulnerability and sensitivity.
Reference should be made to Bord Failte’s “Guidelines for Development of Caravan and Camping Sites” (1982).

**Policy in relation of Caravan and Camping Sites**

**Policy 391** Facilitate the development of “Camper Van” halting facilities at appropriate locations subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area

**Objective in relation of Caravan and Camping Sites**

**Objective 342** Ensure that future caravan, camping and parking facilities in scenic areas will not be visually intrusive or impact on sensitive environments such as lakes and rivers, by requiring appropriate siting, layout, design and natural screening.

**10.4.7 Retail Tourism**

The retail element is one of the key factors in the development of tourism throughout the County and the continued vitality of established tourist destinations. There is a commonly held view that a retail element can downgrade the value of cultural attractions. This is a perception that needs to be changed. A retail element can enhance a cultural experience as well as bring economic benefits to an attraction. The RPG’s advocate a focus on tourism, retail development, enterprise parks, roads and food production in North Roscommon including the towns of Strokestown, Boyle, Ballaghaderreen and Castlerea. County Roscommon must look to tourism as a source of potential retail income.

County Roscommon is fortunate in its location close to Galway, Sligo, Athlone and within reasonable reach of Dublin and the North. Improved connectivity and infrastructure from these cities and towns will help develop the tourism economy of County Roscommon. From a retail perspective, it is people within the County, from the West Region and within Ireland who contribute most to retail turnover in the County. Although shopping is an important part of the travel experience it is unlikely international tourists visit Roscommon to shop. It is important to provide for the requirements of tourists from home and abroad. To encourage international visitor expenditure appropriate shops and services should be facilitated, to enable the County to better exploit its tourism potential. These may include hotels, arts and crafts galleries, craft outlets/villages, tourist shops at important tourist destinations, local markets and shops specialising in outdoor pursuits, such as angling and water sports. The Retail Export Scheme is a scheme whereby visitors from outside the European Union can purchase goods to take home with them and benefit from tax relief on goods purchased. This scheme should be widely promoted within the County to encourage tourists to purchase more goods and to increase tourism related sales.

**Policy for Retail Tourism**

**Policy 392** Promote collective public and private sector marketing of County Roscommon as a leisure and retail tourist destination, within Ireland and abroad.

**Objectives for Retail Tourism**

**Objective 343** Increase understanding of and promote the Retail Export Scheme throughout the County

Events such as festivals, fairs and concerts present enormous opportunities for retailers and consideration should be given to this in encouraging the development of new events and developing a countywide programme of activities for visitors. Environmental enhancement schemes, such as improvements to streetscape and pavement, should be introduced in key towns and villages throughout the County to upgrade and enhance the public realm.

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19 http://www.revenue.ie/index.htm?/leaflets/vatexp.htm
20 Chapter 10 Policies and Actions, Draft Roscommon County Retail Strategy 2007
Chapter 10: Recreation, Leisure and Tourism

Policy for Retail Tourism

Policy 393 Encourage the establishment of new events such as festivals; fairs etc., in appropriate locations, to promote increased retail tourism throughout the County.

Objectives for Retail Tourism

Objective 344 Facilitate the production of a programme of activities for tourists and visitors to the County.

Objective 345 Facilitate the establishment of Environmental Improvement Schemes to upgrade and enhance the public realm in key towns and villages throughout the County.

10.4.8 Marine Tourism

“Ireland's natural endowment of marine and water-based resources is strategically important to the tourism industry, as many commercial and leisure opportunities are dependent on it. The water-based tourism and leisure sector makes an essential contribution to the overall quality and experience of the holidaymaker in Ireland, and the strength of our island image and culture is often utilised as a key attractor in overseas marketing and promotional campaigns.”

Marine tourism accounts for a great proportion of the numbers of visitors to the county each year. Visitors flock to areas such as Lough Key in the north of the county, the River Suck to the west, and the River Shannon to the east, to enjoy the beauty of the lakes and rivers and to take part in many of the activities on offer. Roscommon offers extensive walks, fishing, boating and swimming. Not only do visitors come to experience these traditional activities but also the number of marine leisure users has increased dramatically in the past few years creating new focuses for marine tourism within the county.

The recreational and tourism potential of water based activities can support the reinforcement of Roscommon as a tourism destination within the Western Region. The development potential of marine resources in the context of marine tourism, marine sports and recreational activities will promote economic development at county as well as regional level. There is a need to integrate the requirements of the marine leisure sector with the needs of other marine sectors in order to provide a network of high quality marine leisure facilities throughout the whole County.

The RCDB supports the development of a National Strategy on Marine Tourism and in association with Failte Ireland West promotes the Marine Sector - Travel, Stay, Fish, and Play. RCC recognises the potential value to the tourism industry of features such as rivers, lakes, and canals. River systems and lakes provide potential for an extensive network for inland travel by water.

The Marine Institute indicates that there is a strong domestic and overseas market for boating, angling and water sports and that the best way to realise the wealth potential of water-based tourism and leisure is to work toward preserving the natural environment and freshwater resources, to improve facilities and access to water, to encourage and support young people from a wider range of socio-economic backgrounds to participate in water-based sports and leisure activities in order to benefit local communities in areas where the opportunities for development are most concentrated. The Marine Institute Development Strategy for Marine and Leisure Infrastructure (2002) sets broad criteria indicating suitability of areas for development as water-based leisure centers in order to assist

investment decisions. The report identifies indicative locations throughout Ireland with potential for the development of boating facilities.

RCC supports the development of marina facilities at key locations, particularly along the Shannon, for example at Roosky where dry docks facilities would allow for boat repairs and the reintroduction of the local regatta would enhance local tourism and visitor numbers. Pumping out facilities must be provided at appropriate locations with an electronic monitoring system to prevent water pollution.

Policy in relation to Marine Tourism

Policy 394 Promote the Marine Sector and all agencies, national, regional and local involved in water-based tourism.

Policy 395 Support the development of a lake management plans/lakes management plans.

Objective in relation to Marine Tourism

Objective 346 Facilitate the development of a National Strategy for Marine Tourism in conjunction with key stakeholders and the Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism, Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland.

Objective 347 Support tourism type development including appropriate infrastructure and ancillary services throughout the county and particularly in areas with significant tourism amenities such as Boyle and Lough Key, and Athlone and Lough Ree.

Roscommon’s network of piers, slipways and marinas are an essential part of local infrastructure and serve many sectors of the economy. There needs to be a focus on developing new facilities in key locations and upgrading existing facilities to maximise the range of marine leisure activities that can take place at each site. There is a growing national and international interest in marine leisure activities in Ireland. A good network of inland infrastructure needs to be developed to provide safe berthing and launching facilities and providing links, where possible, to other regions and coastal areas, for example along the Royal and Grand Canals. The Grand Canal links Dublin to the River Shannon at Shannon Harbour, west of Banagher, east of Athlone and south of Roscommon, while the Royal Canal reaches Longford town and the River Camlin, a tributary of the River Shannon, at Tarmonbarry.

The Waterways Corridor Study 2004/2005 consists of a study of three areas, the area surrounding the river from Lanesborough to Shannonbridge, from Roosky to Lanesborough and the Upper Shannon including the Boyle River, Lough Allen, Lough Key and the Carnadoe Waters. The Heritage Council has identified projects for the regeneration of the waterway corridor and actions, which can be realised over a ten-year period. RCC supports the regeneration of waterway corridors throughout County Roscommon and the promotion of the unique ecology and wildlife, and activities associated with these waterways, in co-operation with organisations such as the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland, The Heritage Council and the Royal Canal Amenity Group.

Policy in relation to the Waterway Corridors

Policy 396 Support the regeneration of Waterway Corridors throughout the County.

Roscommon County Council is currently developing a Boat Training Centre and Aquarium at Hodson Bay, which will provide an additional range of tourism facilities for South Roscommon and Lough Ree. The Planning Authority supports the development of a Sailing Club in the County, in the vicinity of Hodson Bay or Portrun. The Planning Authority supports the development of sailing activities such as sail training, sailing tours, pleasure boat cruises and passenger boats as well as water sports such as wind surfing, kayaking, canoeing, water skiing and scuba diving, where appropriate, throughout the county. RCC supports the development of water-based pursuits such as angling, fishing, marine
mammal watching, swimming and the development of new facilities such as aquariums, maritime museums, interpretative centres, training and education facilities and the production of comprehensive lake and river guide/tour maps for the county.

**Policy in relation to the waterways in the County**

**Policy 397** Support the establishment of water-based activities in the Lough Key area as well as other appropriate areas throughout the County, such as Lough Ree.

**Policy 398** Support the development of a Sailing Club in the vicinity of Hodson Bay or Portrun.

In Ireland, the main concentrations of tourism, with the exception of Killarney, hug the coastline, with the inner core of the country remaining relatively underdeveloped. For this reason a new pilot tax relief scheme has been launched which provides incentives for the sustainable development of tourism in several counties along the River Shannon including Roscommon. The scheme supports the development of new tourism infrastructure or the refurbishment of existing tourism infrastructure with guidelines being drawn up by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland and the Department of Finance. While RCC supports this scheme, the Council supports the inclusion within the scheme of all areas of Roscommon that border the River Shannon.

There is an opportunity to capitalise locally on new regional, national and international markets as well as promoting healthy lifestyles and general well being through marine leisure activities and pursuits. Healthy activity has an important role to play in creating a sense of identity and belonging, and bringing people together.

**Policy with regard to marinas**

**Policy 399** Support the development of a marina where the associated activity already exists or where there is appropriate demand for such a facility.

**Policy 400** Ensure marinas provide adequate water depth, berthing arrangements for pleasure craft, navigation aids, pontoon lighting, fire safety equipment, toilet facilities, a sufficient level of road access, car parking, direct access and walkways to boats.

**Policy 401** Facilitate the development and upgrading of the marina at Lough Key Forest Park.

**Policy 402** Support the upgrading of facilities at Doon Shore.

**10.4.9 Environmental Considerations**

In pursuit of sustainable tourism it is imperative that the high quality landscape and environment which attracts visitors to Roscommon is undiminished by future development. A high quality product must be developed in harmony with a high quality natural environment, minimizing adverse impacts upon local communities, built heritage, landscapes, habitats and species. Tourism related enterprises should be encouraged to reduce their impact upon the environment by reducing their energy demand, increasing recycling and utilizing best practice procurement policy.

Fáilte Ireland’s Tourism Development Strategy, 2000 – 2006, focuses on eco-tourism as a growing specialist market but notes that to benefit fully from it, an enlightened conservation policy in relation to our flora and fauna and their natural habitats, including protected sites, must be in place. All leisure and tourism activities must not impact negatively upon the environmental quality of County Roscommon or adversely affect other users of facilities.

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Chapter 10: Recreation, Leisure and Tourism

Policy in relation to environmental considerations

Policy 403  Protect the natural resources on which tourism is based through the enforcement of policies in relation to landscape, architectural conservation areas, inland waterways, water quality, natural heritage, rural housing, holiday home development and wind farm development.

Policy 404  Facilitate the drawing up of visitor management plans where necessary at sensitive visitor attractions.

Policy 405  Support best practice environmental management including energy efficiency, waste management, procurement and recycling in accommodation providers and tourism enterprises in the County, through the use of accreditation and eco-labelling.

Policy 406  Ensure that the potential negative impacts of one activity over another are carefully considered at planning application stage.

Policy 407  Ensure that the facilitation of tourism and development related tourism does not impact negatively on the environmental quality or result in the deterioration of the quality of the tourism product.

Objective in relation to environmental considerations

Objective 348  Promote the development of tourism in a sustainable manner and encourage the provision of a comprehensive range of tourism facilities, subject to location, siting and design criteria, the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and other planning considerations.

(For additional policies and objectives in relation to environmental issues, see also policies and objectives for Rural Tourism, Section 10.4.5 above)

There is an abundance of natural heritage with tourism potential throughout Roscommon. The natural heritage of Roscommon includes raised bogs, which though plentiful in Ireland are unique in Europe and should be protected with regard to this ‘bigger picture’. Raised bogs are a flat landscape and provide views for miles with the potential for attracting tourists through unique initiatives such as turf cutting and painting weekends etc. Other natural features in the Roscommon landscape include Callows, to the south of the county along the Shannon and Turloughs, which are uniquely concentrated in Roscommon, these disappearing lakes are a haven for birds and other wildlife. Roscommon is a low county and it’s many, slow, meandering rivers and lakes provide opportunities for tourism related activities such as boating, fishing and other water related activities. Its low-lying flat farmland and undulating eskers and drumlins provide a unique landscape for tourists and visitors. Tourist initiatives could include organic farming workshops, wetland flora and fauna identification, hedgerow history and management as well as other workshops, which introduce the visitor and locals to the beauty, history and culture of the Roscommon countryside.

Policy 408  Support alternative enterprises, farm diversification and agri–tourism projects to ensure the continued development of sustainable rural communities.

There are many unique forms of ancient and recent built heritage in County Roscommon. The County Development Board aims to build up tourism centred on culture, language and heritage. Rathcroghan, for example, is given the same importance/value as Tara. There is potential to develop a major tourism centre base in the Rathcroghan-Tulsk area of Co. Roscommon based on its untapped archaeological significance. In line with sustainability, EU and National policy, and Fáilte Ireland’s Tourism Development Strategy 2000 – 2006, no development or activity will be facilitated at the expense of our environmental quality or the preservation of the value of the principal tourism product itself, the landscape.
There is a great opportunity to develop sustainable tourism initiatives in the County. RCC recognize the necessity of reducing water pollution throughout the County, particularly that associated with disposal of wastewater and solid waste, in order to ensure that the natural heritage and wildlife of the County is maintained.

RCC is dedicated to the protection of the unique natural heritage of County Roscommon through the designation of Natural Heritage Areas, protection of Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protected Areas and Areas of High Amenity, through restricting inappropriate development in areas of high ecological, scenic and environmental importance, such as Lough Key and environs, and through the development of sustainable tourism initiatives. RCC supports the production of a comprehensive lake management plan in order to analyse the carrying capacity of the County’s lakes and their immediate environs.

The Council also encourages building design, which is sympathetic to the natural environment in areas along riverfronts, canals or parklands. The EU adopted the Energy Performance in Buildings Directive in 2002, in an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. RCC supports the development of low energy buildings within the County particularly those located in areas of natural amenity.

The Fáilte Ireland’s Tourism Development Strategy 2000 – 2006 notes that the conservation of our built heritage is an important environmental issue.

The unique natural and built heritage of County Roscommon must be preserved mindful of the need to facilitate the enjoyment of places of interest, natural beauty and tourist potential. Access to amenities, signage and the provision of facilities, such as toilet facilities and accommodation will be provided, where appropriate and without impacting negatively on the natural amenities of the area. The Council aims to balance protecting and enhancing such natural assets while also developing appropriate access and facilities.

**Policy with regard to heritage and environmental aspects of tourism**

**Policy 409**  
Protect and conserve for current and future generations those natural, built and cultural heritage features that form the basis of the County’s tourism industry, including areas of important landscape, lake and river scenery, areas of important wildlife interest, historic buildings and structures and the traditional form and general appearance of towns and villages.
CHAPTER 11
IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

Roscommon County Council
Comhairle Chontae Ros Comáin
11.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of a County Development Plan is to set out the planning authority’s policies and proposals for the sustainable development and use of land within its area in accordance with the requirements of legislation, ministerial guidance and directives and other relevant policies and plans. The plan provides the strategic framework to guide new development to appropriate locations and sets out clearly defined criteria against which proposals for development can be judged. A plan must contain certain objectives (e.g. roads, water supply, protection of amenities, zoning) as listed in Section 10:2, Planning & Development Act 2000 and may also include other objectives listed in the first Schedule of the Act. The Council is required to assess development proposals in accordance with the policies and objectives set out in this plan. It outlines criteria and standards to guide development, the details of which shall be subject to further analysis in the development control process.

Upon the adoption of a new Development Plan, both the private and public sector will consult the development plan as a means of guiding investment decisions. Influence from Roscommon County Council shall emanate from its ability to implementing the policies and objectives contained within this Development Plan as the lead Development Agency for the County and also as in the pivotal role of ‘enabler’. However this duty is hindered by limited resources and thus emphasis shall be placed on the Council attaining greatest usage in terms of financial and human resources, amongst other organizations and individuals as well as from itself.

The achieving of specific objectives contained in the Development Plan is dependent on resources and a number of possible financial sources, including various EU programmes and grants, the National Government, the Local Authority itself and the Private Sector. Developers shall be obliged to meet the objectives of this plan including those in the realm of physical and social infrastructure, into all of their development proposals. These proposals shall also assessed by their compatibility with the relevant local policy framework which consists of the various Local Area Plans and this Development Plan. These lower level plans will adhere to the Development Strategy contained in this County Development Plan. Certain objectives especially important physical infrastructural components will need Government funding and support. It is acknowledged that the implementation of this development plan shall not be straightforward and may be restrained by a number of elements, most notably the economic climate, political support, allocated Local Authority funding and the availability of funding from other sources. Statutory Development Plans are not guaranteed a budget for the funding of projects or implementation of objectives once it is adopted. The Local Authority shall commit itself however to ensure that all objectives are realized by utilizing the full extent of its legal powers including such means as compulsory acquisition.

Within the development plan, there are numerous proposals that lie beyond the remit of the Council. These functions include such vital services such as public transport or education. Although the Council shall endeavor to meet all the objectives it has set in the Plan, it is limited by its lack of control over the provision of certain services such as education and public transport.

11.2 PHASING

The Council shall require that the proposed development projects have essential facilities in place prior to the habitation, letting or selling of units. These essential facilities include road infrastructure, water, sewage, social and community infrastructure, etc. Furthermore it is the intention of the Council that the implementation of Development Plan shall be carried out in a logical and sequential approach in accordance of the proposed development strategy.

Developers shall also be made aware that in many situations development will be preceded by the obligation to create a Local Area Plan or Framework Plan. Also, all zoned areas are or will be, subject to wastewater drainage and water supply schemes which are currently at different stages of planning. The sequence with which these schemes are or will be advanced, determines the sequence and phasing of development.
Phasing may be permitted on the basis that it ties in with such large scale developments or the provision of key infrastructure (i.e. road proposals identified on the Development Objectives Map). However development is still open to refusal on the grounds of incomplete infrastructure provision.

11.3 PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

A Public Private Partnership (PPP) involves a partnership agreement between the public and private sector for the delivery of specific projects relating to public services and infrastructure. Such an approach can ensure a commitment to funding due to interlinked public and private assistance, and aims at ensuring the most economically efficient manner of development.

Education, local services, health, housing, public transport, roads, solid waste, water/waste water and other public services can benefit from the approach of a PPP. Other partnership approaches will be pursued with other state and public organisations, such as the Irish Sports Council (under their recent initiative to create a new national network of sports partnerships to meet the needs of sport at local level), Bord Fáilte and the Arts Council.

11.4 ADDITIONAL FUNDING

11.4.1 Urban and Village Renewal Grants

The Urban and Village Renewal programme will support projects aimed at enhancing the public realm such as streetscapes, public buildings, squares, parks and riverfronts, cycling and pedestrian facilities. This grant scheme is administered by the Department of the Environment and Local Government. It is a grant scheme for Local Authorities to carry out environmental improvements. Under the NDP 2007-2013 (National Development Plan) regarding the allocation funding, priority will be accorded to projects encompassing and demonstrating good urban design, innovation, appropriate scale and cost effectiveness. Projects will, therefore, be required to compete for funding under the new investment programme. While there will be emphasis on the Gateways and Hubs identified in the National Spatial Strategy there will also be available for county and other towns. Funding will also be available to support renewal and remediation works in small towns and villages, with an element of competitive assessment.

11.4.2 NeighbourWood Scheme

The NeighbourWood Scheme offers considerable support to local authorities, community groups, and environmental NGOs and private woodland owners to work in partnership to develop appropriate woodland amenities in and around villages, towns and cities. The NeighbourWood Scheme is administered by the Forest Service, Department of Agriculture and Food and funded under the Regional Operational Programmes of the National Development Plan, which is co-funded by the European Union. The scale of the proposed woodland areas can vary from local parks within residential areas, to larger woodland areas situated along the urban fringe or in greenbelts, as well as existing woodlands located outside towns and villages and used by local communities for amenity and recreation. This scheme can be used to develop new woodland on parts of sites identified for future housing, thereby establishing amenity facilities for future residents. The NeighbourWood Scheme provides funding for three areas, namely for the establishment of new neighbourhoods, improvement of existing neighbourhoods, and the installation of recreational facilities into new or existing neighbourhoods.

11.4.3 EU Structural Funds

The Structural Funds were created to help those regions, within the European Union, whose development is lagging behind. The aim is to reduce the differences between regions and create a better economic and social balance within and between Member States. Structural Funds are allocated to Member States following the submission of a plan to the European Commission. This programme
identifies a number of areas for funding, two of which are the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund. There also exists a separate programme, which is co-financed by the structural funds called Community Initiatives. Such EU programmes can be a valuable source of investment, through which specific policies and objectives, as identified in this plan can be implemented.

Many other programmes, alongside those listed above, may be of value with regard to the implementation and finance of this Development Plan. It is intended that various agencies, including voluntary groups, professional institutions, public and private bodies, and other organisations will be encouraged to participate whenever possible, in the implementation of the policies and objectives of this plan.

11.4.4 The Combat Poverty Agency

This Agency, which comes under the aegis of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, is a national statutory organisation in Ireland dedicated to advising on ways to prevent and eliminate poverty and social exclusion. It works for the prevention and elimination of poverty and social exclusion in Ireland and provides funding for voluntary and community groups engaged in anti-poverty work.

11.4.5 The Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism.

Through the availability of National Lottery Facility Funding, the Department of Tourism, Sports and Recreation administer the Sports Capital Programme. This programme provides funding to voluntary sporting and community organisations at local, regional and national level towards the provision of sport and recreational programmes.

The Sports Capital Programme, which is advertised on an annual basis, allocates funding to projects that are directly related to the provision of sports facilities and are of a capital nature and is administered by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism.

Funding can be allocated to the following organisations under the programme:

- voluntary and community organisations, including sports clubs;
- national governing bodies of sport and third level education institutions, where it is evident that the proposed facility will contribute to the regional and/or national sporting infrastructure; and
- in certain circumstances, schools, colleges and local authorities (see the Guidelines, Terms and Conditions to the 2007 Programme for more information)

The Recreational Facilities Scheme enables voluntary community organisations to provide equipment and modification to existing community sports facilities. This body in its support of community organisations and the development of sporting/recreational facilities, acts as a valuable source of funding for the implementation of recreational and community facility objectives. This Department also supports Local Drugs Task Forces and community-based responses to the drugs issue.

11.4.6 Other Sources of Additional Funding

These are a wide of additional funding sources that were not mentioned here. It is recommended that with the amount of funding sources available that the following websites are checked to see a list of funding organisations or programmes and to determine eligibility.

- www.cidb.ie/comhairlevcs.nsf
- www.open4community.ie/roscro/Default.aspx
11.5 DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTION SCHEME

The Planning Authority, taking into consideration the capital expenditure necessary for the provision of infrastructure required to facilitate development, will require financial contributions as indicated in the Development Contributions Scheme in relation to drainage, water supply, roads, open space, public transport proposals, car parking and other infrastructure necessary for the development of an area. This scheme has been carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (or other relevant legislation as may be enacted from time to time). Such contributions include the capital expenditure necessary for the provision of public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in the County, and that is provided, or that it is intended will be provided, by or on behalf of the Council.

Section 48 defines public infrastructure and facilities as:
- the acquisition of land,
- the provision of open spaces, recreational and community facilities and amenities and landscaping works,
- the provision of roads, car parks, car parking places, sewers, waste water and water treatment facilities, drains and watermains,
- the provision of bus corridors and lanes, bus interchanges facilities (including car parks for those facilities), infrastructure to facilitate public transport, cycle and pedestrian facilities, and traffic calming measures,
- the refurbishment, upgrading, enlargement or replacement of roads, car parks, car parking places, sewers, waste water and water treatment facilities, drains or watermains, and
- any matters ancillary to the above.

Roscommon County Council adopted the ‘County Roscommon Development Contributions Scheme’ on 16th February 2004 and it is due to be reviewed in tandem with this review of the County Development Plan. Whilst this Scheme can remain in effect for a period of 6 years, it is likely that this Scheme will be reviewed following the adoption of this Draft Development Plan in accordance with the review procedures incorporated into the Scheme. The ‘County Roscommon Development Contributions Scheme’ is available for inspection in the Planning Department of Roscommon County Council and on the Council website www.roscommoncoco.ie/Publications/. This document shall be used to determine how much a proposed development must pay towards the development contribution scheme. The level of contributions is updated in March of each year in accordance with the Wholesale Price Indices for Building & Construction published by the Central Statistics Office.

11.5.1 Special Development Contributions

Under Section 48(2) (c) Roscommon County Council may levy an additional special contribution on an individual development, where costs which are not covered by the scheme are incurred in respect of public infrastructure which benefits the proposed development or is necessary for the development to proceed. Where payment of such a contribution is required, the condition shall specify the particular works carried out or proposed to be carried out by or on behalf of the County Council. The level of this contribution will be determined having regard to the direct impact of the proposed development on publicly provided infrastructure, improvements to road infrastructure to facilitate development, the estimated tonnage per annum, likely haulage route of materials to and from a site, etc.

11.5.2 Supplementary Development Contribution Scheme

The Council may require development contributions in accordance with a supplementary development contributions scheme adopted by the Council under Section 49 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (or other relevant legislation as may be enacted from time to time) towards the cost of public infrastructure projects or services. These include the provision of particular rail, light rail or other public transport infrastructure, including car parks and other ancillary development; and the provision of particular new roads, sewers, waste water and water treatment facilities, drains or watermains and...
ancillary infrastructure. The Act also makes provision for special contributions for particular works necessitated by a development.

11.5.3 Exemptions

In certain circumstances exemptions will be granted for developments, these have been listed in the body of this report as well as in the new Development Contribution Scheme which is being prepared in tandem with this CDP.

11.6 MONITORING & REVIEW

Roscommon County Council shall undertake to meet its commitments to the Planning & Development Act 2000 Section 15 (1) that requires a Planning Authority, within the terms of its powers, to ensure that the objectives set out in the development plan are secured. Section 15 (2) also commits the Manager of the Planning Authority to report to the elected members on the progress made in achieving the plan’s objectives with two years of making the plan.

In addition to the above, the Act requires the planning authority to commence the review of the plan not more than four years after its adoption. The implication of these requirements for planning authorities is that the development plan requires regular monitoring and evaluation. Development plans must be able to respond to changing circumstances over the period of the plan. Regular monitoring of the relationship between the plan and changes in the wider policy context, development pressures and local priorities are important if the policies and objectives are to remain effective and relevant. The impact of policies and specific objectives should, wherever possible, be capable of quantification. Effectively the development plan making and review process is now continuous.

11.6.1 Annual Operational Plans

The Planning Authority is committed to securing the Development Strategy presented for County Roscommon in this Development Plan.

11.6.2 Implementation Body

It is proposed to produce a series of monitoring reports in addition to other planning related data as required by the Government. These monitoring reports relate to the key areas of:

- Housing – the monitoring of residential land availability, the supply of housing land, the implementation of the Housing Strategy with regard to the delivery of social and affordable housing.
- Employment – the monitoring of employment land availability and the supply of strategic employment land.
- Planning application statistics – the monitoring of the Rural Area Types and the operation of the Rural Housing Policy
CHAPTER 12
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

Roscommon County Council
Comhairle Chontae Rós Comáin
12.1 INTRODUCTION

It is an obligation of the Council to ensure that planning permissions granted under the Planning Acts are consistent with the policies and objectives set out in the County Development Plan, and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. These standards are intended to give information and a general guideline as to the Planning Authority's requirements regarding particular aspects of proposed developments but they are not intended to be inflexible. The standards are intended to give an indication of the criteria the Council will take into account when assessing applications for new developments. These standards and guidelines are complimentary to the overall development strategy and the individual objectives and policies of the development plan.

Potential applicants are advised to contact the Planning Authority prior to lodging a planning application particularly in the case of large developments and those requiring an Environmental Impact Statement. Prior consultation with the Planning Authority can reduce delays in the planning process.

12.2 GENERAL DEVELOPMENT

The council shall look to maintain a clear distinction between towns, villages and their surrounding countryside, and discourage ribbon development and the non-sustainable use of land and resources, which means consolidating existing towns and villages. Good urban design is essential if communities are to be fostered where people want to live and work. It can be achieved by arranging spaces, streets, densities and scale that combined can create a sense of place and community.

12.2.1 Building Lines

The building line required will relate to the nature and design of the buildings being proposed, and the nature of the layout of the area. The function of building lines in the urban environment is to:

- Provide protection from the noise and fumes associated with traffic;
- Allow for the provision of off-street car-parking;
- Allow for future road development; and,
- Ensure that new development is consistent with neighbouring development and appropriate in the context of the surrounding streetscape.

However, in certain circumstances it may not be in the interests of the proper planning and development of an area to enforce a rigid figure for building lines, for example, where the introduction of a pre-set building line would disrupt the continuity and flow of the streetscape. Therefore, in respect of appropriate building lines for specific areas and in the interests of maintaining good townscape, the Planning Authority will examine each application on its own merits.

In rural areas, development should be set well back from the road. Whilst no specific setback is required, it is unlikely that a development closer than 20 metres to the centre line of the road will be allowed. Where development is proposed which involves the infill or extension of an existing cluster of buildings, the existing building line will normally be required to be retained. For high-density urban developments, buildings will be permitted at the inside edge of footpaths in suitable circumstances. Where buildings are proposed in proximity to scheduled maintainable water channels/stream a minimum set back of 10 metres is required on either side of the channel.

12.2.2 Access for Persons with Disabilities and the Mobility Impaired

All new developments shall have access for persons with disabilities and those who are mobility impaired. Such access will be incorporated into the design of the building as an integral part of the proposal. Part M of the Building Regulations (1997) as revised and any other updates, sets out the design requirements of persons with disabilities. These design requirements relate, in particular to
access, internal circulation, parking and sanitary facilities. These have to be taken into consideration in the design of new and existing structures that allow public access to, for example, schools, libraries, shops etc.

The Planning Authority is committed to facilitating the provision of a range of house designs to meet with the requirements of the housing needs of people with disabilities. There is a need to ensure a variety of housing types to provide accommodation for people who have disabilities. In order to improve the supply of suitable housing choice for the future, accommodation for people with disabilities should be included in all housing estates of 10 dwellings or more. Further detailed information regarding building design and publicly accessible outside areas can be found in “Building for Everyone” published by the National Disability Authority, 2002.

12.2.3 Light Pollution

There has been an increased tendency to illuminate buildings to an excessive degree incorporating lighting that gives rise to glare on public roads. It shall, therefore, be a policy of the Council to minimise light pollution. Details of any external lighting scheme intended as part of any new development shall be submitted as part of the planning application. Applicants will be required to demonstrate that the lighting scheme proposed is the minimum needed for security and working purposes.

12.2.4 Noise

The Council will seek to ensure that new development does not cause an unacceptable increase in the noise and pollution levels affecting surrounding properties. In considering planning applications for residential development in areas adjoining major roads, the Council will have regard to any Noise Maps and Noise Action Plans relating to the site location in accordance with the EU Directive on Assessment and Management of Environmental Noise as implemented by the Environmental Noise Regulations (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2006).

12.2.5 Drainage

Developers will be required to provide efficient systems of drainage with separate surface water drains, taking account of flood levels and of possible increased precipitation arising from climate change. Where development is proposed in proximity to a scheduled maintainable channel, provision must be made to ensure that the effectiveness of the existing embankment system is not impaired. In particular provision should be made to ensure that the existing embankment system will not be adversely affected by the discharge of run-off either directly or indirectly to the back drains of the embankments unless appropriate provision is made to accommodate such run-off.

12.2.6 Conservation of Water

The Council recognises the need to protect or conserve high quality drinking water within the County. In accordance with the Council’s Conservation/Leak Detection Programme, where new residential development is proposed a boundary box will be required with a facility of installing a flow meter. In the case of non-residential development, all new development will be required to install a flow meter prior to connection.

The Planning Authority will require the installation of economy/double flush type water closets in all dwellings. Premises with public toilets and urinals will be required to have a flow control device to prevent continuous flushing and operation during periods when the premises are not in operation. The use of low flush toilets, grey water systems, low flow tap and showerhead fittings and rainwater recycling measures are also encouraged.
12.2.7 Wastewater Treatment

The Council recognises that large areas outside the mains sewerage system are dependent on individual wastewater treatment facilities. Where such systems are used it is important that they are installed and maintained to the highest possible standards and that they conform to the requirements set out in the EPA Waste Water Treatment Manual and more up-to-date standards if issued. Individual treatment systems will only be permitted in serviced areas under the most exceptional circumstances.

12.2.8 Flood Risk and Protection

New development will be required to meet the following criteria;

- Development, which is sensitive to the effects of flooding, will not be permitted in flood prone or marginal areas.
- Appropriately designed development, which is not sensitive to the effects of flooding, may be permissible in flood plains provided it does not reduce the flood plain area or otherwise restrict flow across floodplains.
- Development must so far as is reasonably practicable incorporate the maximum provision to reduce the rate and quantity of runoff.
- For developments adjacent to water courses of a significant conveyance capacity any structures must be set back from the edge of the watercourse to allow access for channel clearing/maintenance. This would usually be a minimum of 10 metres.
- Any new development must be designed and constructed to meet the following minimum flood design standards:
  - For urban areas and where development (existing, proposed or anticipated) are involved - the 100 year flood
  - For Rural areas or where further developments (existing, proposed or anticipated) are not involved – the 25 year flood
  - Where streams open drains or other water courses are being culverted – the minimum permissible culvert diameter is 900mm

12.3 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT (To be read in conjunction with Chapter 5: Urban Development)

12.3.1 Residential Development (Qualitative)

It is the policy of Roscommon County Council to encourage the establishment and maintenance of high quality sustainable residential communities. The creation of residential areas with a “Sense of Place” should be the priority. In the making of places, road layout and the movement of vehicles should not dictate the internal layout of a housing scheme. The design of new residential development should provide for a network of functional and aesthetically pleasing public, semi-private and private spaces rather than merely a hierarchy of roads. The Council will seek to ensure that new housing development incorporates the principles of urban design and that future developments are well integrated with the form and framework of the existing town or village. New housing development will be required to meet the following criteria:

- It will be a satisfactory residential environment which meets the needs and as far as possible, the preferences of residents and fosters the development of community.
- It will integrate new housing into the natural and built environment in a manner that makes a positive contribution to the overall environment in the locality.
- It will encourage energy efficiency both during the construction phase and during the lifetime of the development by sensitive design and layout as well as taking into account the topography, orientation, and, surrounding features of each site.
- It should be of a scale and layout appropriate to the size and form of the town and village.
• It will not have an adverse impact on areas or buildings of historic or architectural interest, or on sites of nature conservation or archaeological importance.
• It will provide attractive conditions for walking and cycling with linkages to adjoining residential areas, town or village centres, amenities and open space areas. Pedestrian and vehicular movements within housing areas should be convenient, safe and pleasant. Within larger estates a clear hierarchy of spaces and roads should be apparent. Priority should be assigned to the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.
• It will provide for adequate functional open space areas linked to adjoining open space areas, where practical. Open space should be located at accessible points within the development. In particular, the layout of roads and footpaths and open space should facilitate children to move freely and safely around their neighbourhood, and to be able to play in front, or within sight of their homes i.e. where practicable public open spaces should be overlooked by residential development. Movement through estates should be guided by principles of security, with opportunities for crime and anti social behaviour minimized e.g. pedestrian alleyways should be well lit, overlooked and provide sufficient space for pedestrians and cyclists between estates or between parts of estates.
• Residential areas should be designed to reduce traffic speeds where appropriate as under the Traffic Management Guidelines and the Road Traffic Act 2004 to provide a safe environment for children to play, with traffic calming measures being considered. Roads in residential estates shall be laid out so as to discourage the incidence of through traffic. Long straight roads which tend to encourage speeding shall also be discouraged on safety and environmental grounds.
• Promote natural surveillance. Properties should face the street and address corner sites- no rear gardens should back onto roads or open space. This should help promote a sense of ownership, territorial responsibility and community.
• A detailed landscaping plan must be prepared as an integral part of the overall development of the estate and submitted as part of the planning application for the development. Planting will need to be carefully considered in communal areas and overshadowing of public lighting and footpaths should be avoided.
• Consideration should be given to the growth rate of the species and also to the level of maintenance required for the landscaping. The lowest level of maintenance should be required particularly in housing estates. The developer will be responsible for the laying out and planting of all landscaped areas.”
• Car parking should generally be provided within the curtilage of the proposed dwellings. Where this is not possible rear parking courts or on-street parking can be provided if this can be viewed from the dwelling. Large parking courts will not be permitted. Underground parking will also be an option subject to acceptable access, circulation and parking space dimension standards, provision of good ventilation and standards of personal safety.
• In all estate and apartment development proposals, provision shall be made for a secure, and well-screened, refuse storage and collection point area. A minimum space sufficient for 3 wheelie bins will be required for each residential unit. Roads and access to these areas should be suitable for easy servicing and turning by emergency vehicles. Provision should also be made for a ‘Bottle-Bank’ facility. Proposals for terraced housing developments must provide adequate storage space for bins if external access to the rear gardens is not proposed.
• Bicycle Parking: Well-designed and secure bicycle parking areas should be provided for terraced housing.

The Council may require prospective developers of housing estate developments (especially in some of the smaller settlement areas) to submit a report that provides an assessment of the likely impact of their development in relation to (amongst others):

• Architectural Integrity and historic identity;
• The need for community / health facilities;
• Accessibility to community facilities and services;
• Public transport facilities and services;
• Crèche/ childminding facilities;
• Educational facilities and provision;
• Recreation and sport facilities and provision;
• Environmental, sociological and privacy needs of residents

The successful design of residential development will depend on a coherent and unambiguous design brief. In dealing with applications for residential development over 0.2 hectares (0.5 acre) or for more than 15 residential units, the Planning Authority will require the submission of a design brief as part of the application documents. The principal functions of a design brief will be:

• To ensure that the key characteristics of the local context are taken into account from the outset.
• To establish the overall form of the development based on the density and layout of buildings and spaces.
• To indicate how the layout of roads, streets and open spaces contribute to the spatial hierarchy, as well as linking the development to the rest of the vicinity.
• To indicate how the quantitative and qualitative criteria, which inform the design have been adhered to.
• In housing developments containing 15 or more units a mix of house types and sizes should be provided. Variety in design, within a unified concept, is desirable.
• This may be achieved through scale and massing, roof profiles, materials and decorative details. In smaller schemes, i.e. less than 15 houses, uniformity in design and finishes may be desirable and necessary.

12.3.2 Residential Development (Quantitative)

All houses should have an area of private open space, exclusive of car parking. Minimum rear garden size shall conform to the Recommendations of the Residential Density Guidelines for Local Authorities (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 1999), or any updates of this document. Good design in housing layouts, the configuration of houses and their relationship to each other, to open spaces and roads should aim to provide layouts with adequate private open space and screening so as to achieve freedom from observation and have adequate amounts of daylight.

The Residential Density Guidelines (1999) indicate that whilst 22.0 metres distance between opposing first floor windows is an accepted minimum in new residential design, the council at its discretion allow situations where this is not rigidly enforced. In cases of innovative design where overlooking into living areas does not occur and required levels of open space are met, this figure may be reduced. A separation distance of 35 metres should be considered in the case of overlooking living room windows and balconies at upper floors. The following should also be taken into account in the design of housing schemes:

1. The use of adequate screening devices and landscaping elements is permitted where appropriate to ensure that private space is free from undue observation.

2. Where proposed development of significant height is located close to existing development, the Planning Authority may require daylight and shadow projection diagrams to be submitted. The recommendations of ‘Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice’ (BRE 1991) or B.S. 8206” Lighting for Buildings Part 2 1992: Code of Practice for Daylighting’ should be followed in this regard.

3. The Council will take a more flexible approach to quantitative open space standards and put greater emphasis on the qualitative standards. Open space should be located in a central position and act as a focal point for the estate and retain where possible, existing site features. The Council will not accept adequate amounts of open space being poorly located or unsuitably shaped. This results in underused spaces and in some cases spaces which encourage
anti-social activity. The design and layout of the network of public open spaces shall take into account, and make provision for, the need for level areas of sufficient size to accommodate informal sports activities for children. However, to ensure that there are adequate safeguards in place to avoid over-development and to assist the planning authority in their assessment of planning applications, in general the following standards are recommended. In greenfield sites or those sites for which a Local or Action Plan is appropriate, public open space should be provided at a minimum rate of 15% of the total site area. This allocation should be in the form of useful open spaces within residential developments and, where appropriate, larger neighbourhood parks to serve the wider community. In all other cases, public open space should be provided at a minimum rate of 10% of the total site area.

4. The council requires that the space between dwelling houses and lateral boundaries to be 3 metres or greater or at minimum 3 metres between each house, pair of semi-detached houses or terrace of houses for maintenance purposes. Where development has been established the existing building lines shall be maintained. The council also requires that housing developments over 20 units shall have a formal fully equipped children’s play area, the design of which will be agreed with RCC and comply with relevant national and European standards. Lighting will also be a consideration.

5. The Council may require the submission of a Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) as part of an application where new developments might have a significant impact on the safety and capacity of the road network. The TIA shall be prepared in accordance with the Traffic Management Guidelines Manual published by Department of Transport with the DTO in 2003.

12.3.3 Residential Density

Strict adherence to maximum density standards is not recommended. Regard should be had to “Residential Density – Guidelines for Planning Authorities”, (DoEHLG, 1999) or any updated versions, as well as, the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for Apartments (DoEHLG, 2007). The Planning Authority in assessing planning applications for residential development will have regard to the policies and objectives outlined in these Guidelines. The emphasis should be on providing quality housing environments based on innovation and a design led approach with proposals appropriate to each site and location. The aim is to make the most efficient use of land and infrastructure and to protect urban green spaces and the quality of life.

The Council recognises that there are locations within the county where increasing the density of residential development may be appropriate within town areas. Such an approach would encourage a more sustainable form of urban development through the avoidance of excessive suburbanisation and consumption of Greenfield lands, and, ensures a more economic use of existing infrastructure and serviced lands. A further benefit would be the reduction in the dependence on the use of the private motor car. It is also recognized that the fall in average household size coupled with the growth in overall population levels means that there shall be greater promotion of the need for a more varied range of dwelling type and size than has been provided.

The use of zoned and serviced land to its maximum will assist in achieving the objective of satisfying housing demand as will the provision of a greater proportion of dwellings more suitable to changing and smaller household sizes. However, the council shall acknowledge that inappropriate high density has adverse effects and acknowledges that the essentials for high density development are a high quality of design and layout and a good quality living environment, including the availability of shopping, transport, community, recreational and leisure infrastructure.

Higher density will not be encouraged in rural villages where the car is the dominant form of transport and where employment, community and education facilities within the villages are restricted.
In providing for a range of residential densities, consistent with the need to ensure high quality residential environments, it will be the policy of Roscommon County Council to actively encourage the use of acknowledged “best practice” design guides from the U.K. and Ireland and to consider the approaches in such guides as a reference point for qualitative assessment of such schemes.

12.3.4 Residential Site Development Standards

1. Services

In general, applications for in depth housing development on unserviced and unzoned lands will be regarded as premature. Where water and/or sewerage infrastructure is privately provided, the type and design shall be in compliance with the standards set by the Planning Authority. All sewerage systems shall conform to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and public health standards as well as have regard to the EPA Wastewater Treatment Manuals-Treatment Systems for Small Communities, Business, Leisure Centres and Hotels (1999). Individual and/or group schemes will be required to connect up to the public sewerage scheme once it is provided.

All services, including electrical, television, telephone and broadband cables, shall be laid underground. Provision shall be made for the siting of transformer stations pumping stations and other service buildings in unobtrusive locations. The developer shall also ensure that footpaths and lighting are in place by the time of occupancy. For guidance on services associated with residential developments, refer to Recommendations for Site Development Works for Housing Areas, by the DoEHLG (1998).

2. Art Work

Proposals for housing developments of over 20 units shall provide a monument/art feature or similar in a prominent and/or central location in the development to act as a focal point.

3. Naming of Developments

The names of residential, commercial and community developments including roads shall reflect local place names, particularly townlands, or local names which reflect the landscape, its features, culture or history of the area in which the development is located. Also considered will be the names of historical persons associated with the area. The use of Irish names will be encouraged. The applicant shall provide an explanation of the origin/inspiration for the name with the compliance proposal. The Planning Authority shall approve the name chosen prior to the launching of any advertising campaign for a development by the developer. Name plates should be fixed to walls and buildings where they can be seen. All houses within housing estates or comprehensive street developments shall be provided with numbers and/or names, which shall be visible from the adjoining roadway. Each separate road within an estate shall be provided with a distinctive name or nameplate with a range of house numbers at the head of the road.

4. Maintenance and Management

Section 34(4) (I) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 – 2004, provides for the inclusion of conditions attached to a planning permission regarding the maintenance and management of a proposed development. This includes the establishment of a management company or the appointment of a person to carry out such management (including waste management) or maintenance. Once the development is complete, provisions for estate management should be created in order to maintain the amenity, quality and visual quality of a development. Details of the management company, inclusive of the framework of the management company, must be agreed with Local Authority prior to the commencement of development:
- Establish a management company, with a board, including representatives of the residents, to oversee estate management.
- Develop policies in relation to the overall appearance of the development as well as to maintenance of common areas.

12.3.5 Apartments

Apartment developments have a role to play in meeting the accommodation needs of the young, mobile sectors of the community, small households and as tourist accommodation. Apartments are also important in mixed use developments providing security when located above shops and community facilities and have a valuable role in creating new streetscapes in urban areas. The Council will consider such developments particularly in the towns and larger village centres provided they are compatible with surrounding areas; would not give rise to adverse impacts on the amenities of adjoining properties, or on areas or structures of historic or architectural interest; and, can be provided with adequate car parking facilities. The development of apartments can adversely affect the amenities of the area - increased traffic generated coupled with car-parking requirements; lack of commitment to (public and private) open space maintenance (particularly when residents may not be the home owners); increased noise; nuisance and general disturbance. Applications shall have regard to ‘Residential Density – Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ including any new upgrades, the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for Apartments (DoEHLG, 2007) and to the requirements below:

- They may be acceptable within housing developments when planned and constructed as part of such development but will only be permitted where a satisfactory degree of separation from standard suburban housing, in terms of design height and layout is achieved to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.

- The Council will ensure that the standard of accommodation is suitable and will not permit apartment developments where the floor area of the apartment is less than the following minimum requirements:

| Table 38: Minimum floor area requirements for Apartments |
|---------------------------------|---|
| One bedroom                     | 45 sq m |
| Two bedroom / 3 persons         | 63 sq m |
| Two bedroom / 4 persons         | 73 sq m |
| Three bedrooms / 5 persons      | 86 sq m |

Further minimum requirements can be found in the draft Design Standards for Apartments (DoEHLG 2007)

- The subdivision of existing dwelling houses into apartments/ flats will not generally be permitted within residential estates designed and developed for single-family occupancy.

- The maximum heights of apartment developments in residential zones or in areas with a suburban residential character will be determined on a site-by-site basis by the Planning Authority and the scale and character of existing developments in the area will be taken into consideration. To this end, it will be necessary to have adequate open spaces in addition to parking space and tree screening so that a satisfactory transition from the scale of any neighbouring buildings of lower height may be achieved.

- In the case of apartment blocks, particular attention must be paid to the location of the communal open space for the residents. This open space should not be unduly overshadowed by the blocks and shall be laid out in such a fashion to provide for ease of maintenance. The issue of public open space is being addressed as part of the review of the 1999 Residential Density Guidelines and the Council will have regard to these.
• It should be required that, in the case of apartment and duplex style schemes, private open space will be provided in the form of landscaped areas, courtyards, terraces/patios and balconies. Roof gardens should also be considered, provided that they are easily accessible, secure and attractively landscaped. Fuel, recycling and bin storage areas shall be provided at ground floor level.

• Car parking areas should be broken up by planting in an inconspicuous manner and yet provide for reasonable convenience of users. Only minor areas of car parking, primarily for visitors, will be permitted between the block and the road boundary. The form of construction of garages must be considered from the visual viewpoint not only at ground level but also from the upper floors of the flat blocks.

• Car parking spaces will be calculated on the basis of 2.0 spaces per residential unit. Where development is likely to involve significant letting, an innovative car-parking layout should be proposed to accommodate increased car parking within the curtilage of the site, above the standards outlined above. Visitor car parking will be calculated on the basis of 1 space per 2 apartments.

12.3.6 House Extensions

Extending existing dwelling houses to meet changing family needs is an acceptable form of development which is viewed positively by the Council. The design should ensure that the extension forms an integral part of the main dwelling unit capable of reintegration for single family use. Development proposals should have regard to the following:

1 The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (1999) publication on ‘Residential Density Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ and any updates, in considering the existing site density and remaining private open space.
2 The size of the extension should be suitably designed, having regard to the size of the existing house and houses in the vicinity;
3 High quality designs for extensions will be required that respect and integrate with the existing dwelling in terms of height, scale, materials used, finishes, window proportions etc.
4 Pitched roofs will be required, where appropriate, except on some single storey rear extensions. Flat roof extensions visible from public areas should be avoided.
5 Dormer extensions should not obscure the main features of the existing roof, i.e. should not break the ridge or eaves lines of the roof.
6 Front dormers should normally be set back at least three-tile courses from the eaves line and should be clad in a material matching the existing roof.
7 The development should not have an adverse impact on the amenities of adjoining properties;
8 Site coverage should be carefully considered to avoid unacceptable loss of private open space or encroachment on wastewater treatment infrastructure.
9 In urban areas the development should not result in the loss of any off street parking
10 In some circumstances a gap of 1.5m to be retained between the extension and the neighbouring dwellings so as to prevent dwellings which were intended to be detached from becoming a terrace.
11 Proposed side extensions must retain side access to the rear of the property.

The Council will consider on their merits, exemptions to the above policy in the case of adaptations required to provide accommodation for people with disabilities.
In dealing with detached units to provide ancillary accommodation for family members (granny flats) the Council shall have regard to the following:

- Vehicular Access to the flat should be shared.
- Required separation distances from wastewater treatment systems
- Garden areas should be shared
- The unit should not consist of more than a combined living/kitchen/dining area, WC bathroom and no more than two bedrooms.
- The unit will be conditioned to restrict the use to the enjoyment of the main dwelling.
- The flat shall not be let or sold, other than as part of the overall property

12.3.7 Backland Development

Development of backlands, including the construction of extra dwellings in back gardens may result in inappropriate and disorderly development and can have an adverse effect on the residential amenity of adjoining properties. This may also result in the overloading of infrastructure and in missed opportunities for integrated renewal. Backland development will be considered if:

- There is no loss of privacy to adjoining dwellings.
- The access arrangements would not significantly increase noise and disturbance to existing dwellings.
- There is adequate off-street parking.
- There is adequate provision of private amenity space.
- The scale and design of the dwelling is compatible with the character of the buildings in the surrounding area.
- There are no issues of overshadowing.
- Existing trees or natural features are retained, where possible.

In the event that a large plot of land, located in a backland location, is the subject of a development proposal, an indicative layout of the overall development intentions for the land will be required.

12.3.8 Use of Upper Floors for Residential Purposes

The Council shall encourage the owners of commercial properties to use upper floors for residential use where a commercial use is not required or feasible. Their use for living purposes would contribute to the revitalisation of urban areas. The Council shall also promote new mixed use developments such as “upper floor residential” over “ground floor retail”.

12.3.9 Change of Use of Existing Houses in Existing Residential Schemes

Conversions of houses and apartments to other uses will not normally be permitted, except where specified in zoning matrix. The conversion of houses to apartments in predominantly single family dwellings will not normally be permitted as such conversions would lead to deterioration in the residential amenities of these areas. However, in the subdivision of large houses and houses on primary traffic routes in the town centre may be permitted under certain circumstances; where such factors as the extent of open space within the site boundaries, tree planting, car parking spaces, etc. would permit satisfactory conversions. Individual units should be self contained with their own bathroom facilities, refuse bin storage areas and washing/drying facilities which are accessible to the occupants of that unit.

12.3.10 Derelict Sites

The council will continue to take appropriate action in accordance with the provisions of the Derelict Sites Act 1990 and amendments to ensure the elimination of dereliction as it occurs. The council will
encourage re-development of these sites in both rural and urban areas and facilitate well designed new
development which utilises backlands, close to the town centre.

12.3.11 Residential Care Homes

The Council recognises the need to provide for a range of accommodation for those who require
supervised care. In considering applications for care homes the Council will have regard to the
following:-

- The existing social facilities and demand within the area. In locations where there is a
grouping of a particular user group applications should include an assessment of the impact on
local services.
- The impact on the physical character of the area such as car parking levels, private amenity
space.
- The impact on noise and disturbance from additional traffic.
- The standard of accommodation and facilities offered. In large developments or developments
which are not located adjacent to local facilities the provision of prayer rooms /chapels, shops
etc. will be required.

12.3.12 Parking in Front Gardens

The cumulative effect of removal of front garden walls and railings damages the appearance of
suburban streets and roads. Consequently, proposals for off street parking need to be balanced against
loss of amenity. Where permitted, driveways should:

- Not have outward opening gates.
- Have a vehicular entrance not wider than 3 metres.
- Have an area of hard standing (per parking space = 2.5 m x 5 m).
- Retain the balance as garden.
- In most cases have gates, walls and railings made good.

Where adjoining householders intend to construct driveways, a more efficient use of garden space can
be achieved by the use of a shared vehicular entrance to serve both houses. Alterations necessary to
the footpath will be carried out by the County Council at the applicant’s expense, or by the applicant at
the applicant’s own expense, under the supervision of the County Council.

12.4 RURAL DEVELOPMENT (To be read in conjunction with Chapter 6: Rural Development)

12.4.1 Rural Residential Considerations

It is the purpose of this County Development Plan to manage the changing character of the County and
support its development as an integrated network of vibrant socially and economically successful
settlements, supporting and contributing to the economic development of the County, of its
neighbouring authorities and of the Region. In terms of applications, for single rural houses, the
council will take into account the possible negative impact on the social, demographic and economic
structure of towns and villages by uncontrolled random “urban-generated rural housing.”
Environmental considerations will be taken into account. The council is aware of the need for housing
in rural areas for people who wish to work in a rural location as well as for those who are part of the
rural community. This will be balanced against the positive benefits that new housing can bring to a
rural area or parish. The County Council is aware of the need for housing in rural areas and the
categories of persons and the rural area types to which the policies apply as set out in Chapter 6,
Section 6.3.1 and 6.3.2. Occupancy clauses will be strictly enforced as it is reasonable to expect that
where an applicant is given planning permission for a rural housing proposal on the basis of having
links to the rural area, that the dwelling shall be occupied for a specified period by the applicant,
members of the applicant’s immediate family or by any other person who has similar links save for exceptional circumstances.

The use of occupancy clauses shall be examined and these should only be used in exceptional circumstances. The Council, in accordance with the guidance given in the DoEHLG Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2004), will resist ribbon development, primarily on grounds of visual amenity, reinforced on occasions by road safety reasons. It is not the intention of the Planning Authority to support proposals which amount to a line of ribbon development or that has not developed around a nucleus / crossroad with sufficient lower level social and community services present.”

12.4.2 Siting Guidelines

Development proposals in the countryside must be integrated into their rural setting and must satisfy high standards of location, siting and design including scale, massing, orientation, choice of materials and landscaping. In selecting a location for proposed development in rural areas, including housing, regard should be had to the topography and vegetation cover so as to integrate the proposal with the existing landscape. The good use of natural features, such as enclosed fields with hedgerows or stonewalls or the rolling landscape, can help to integrate a new building into the open countryside. Consideration should also be given, especially in vulnerable open areas, to the visibility of the proposal, including long-distance views. Proposals must avoid the disruption of existing views from tourist routes or important vantage points on public roads.

The development site should be large enough to comfortably accommodate the proposal and to allow for any required set back from the road. Careful use of the natural features of the site, any backdrop of rising land, trees or hedgerows and interaction with existing buildings can enhance the presentation of a development. Landscaping proposals can also enhance a development, but these take time to establish and mature.

The design of a proposal should reflect its setting, including the topography and the scale, height and character of existing buildings. Modern and traditional styles are generally acceptable, but buildings should be kept simple in terms of elevation and materials, especially in the countryside. Wherever possible, buildings should be built into sloping land rather than sited on platforms sitting on the side of a hill. Particular care needs to be given to ancillary elements, such as car parking, access roads and driveways (which should respect site contours, crossing them gently) and garages and outhouses, (which should be grouped with the house rather than standing alone). Wherever possible, traditional hedgerows or stone walls should be retained and/or reinstated and are preferable to fencing. Trees and shrubs appropriate to the Irish landscape should be used. In seeking high standards of design safety, clear layout and access for people with disabilities, should have a high priority. The development by itself or combined with another or other development shall not cause a traffic hazard.

12.4.3 Site Study

Therefore when considering the development of a dwelling on a particular site, it is recommended that the initial step be the preparation of a site study. Ideally this should be prepared before working on the design of the house and the site layout plan. The purpose of this study is to:

- Record and consider information on the site and its surroundings;
- Identify design problems and opportunities presented by the site;
- Influence the design of the house which will protect the landscape’s character.

For example, the site study should include drawings to show:
The site:

- The site contours;
- Trees and hedgerows;
- Existing Buildings;
- Existing Access points;
- Drainage and services;
- Fences, boundaries and easements;
- Any notable features or characteristics of the site;
- Any historic or archaeological features;
- Water courses.

The surrounding area:

- The location and use of surrounding buildings;
- The difference in levels between the site and surrounding properties and the level of the public road;
- The type of houses/buildings in the surrounding area
- Roadside features such as poles and footpaths; and,
- The design and layout of the house should show how it relates to the study and improves the existing rural character.

12.4.4 Septic Tanks / Wastewater Treatment Systems

The provision of septic tanks or waste water treatment systems and their associated percolation systems shall comply in full with the requirements of the Environmental Protection Agency Wastewater Treatment Manuals. In all cases, Site Characterisation Reports as detailed in the above manuals shall be submitted with each planning application. A Site Suitability Report, including a detailed site layout plan (scale 1: 500), prepared by the designers of a wastewater treatment system shall also be submitted.

12.4.5 Water Supply

Where no public water supply is available, a potable water supply must be provided in accordance with National Standards.

12.4.6 Tree and Hedgerow Preservation

Where mature trees and/or substantial hedgerow are located on lands that are being considered for development, a detailed tree survey may be required with the planning application. In such cases, all trees with a diameter of 300mm and above 5m from ground level should be included. Trees should be surveyed by reference to species, branch canopy, spread, shape, height and condition. Where a development, located on lands zoned for development necessitates the removal of hedges/trees, the Planning Authority will require the removal of same to be identified with the planning application and a detailed replanting proposal to be submitted.

This proposal should provide for the replacement of at minimum an equal amount of similar indigenous hedgerows/tree planting within the overall scheme. The replacement of hedgerows/trees shall have due regard to the ecological function of hedgerows as a wildlife corridor and shall not work in isolation to the remaining hedgerow network. Where trees or hedgerows are to be preserved on a development site, it is essential that the trees be protected by the erection of secure fencing prior to any site or engineering work commencing and that no material be stored within the fenced area and that no vehicles have access to the fenced area. The local authority may require the submission of a site management plan to ensure the protection of retained trees and hedgerows within the site.
To ensure that trees and hedgerows are protected on a site and that the agreed landscaping as per a condition of planning permission is carried out, a bond lodgement may be required. Development will be discouraged and generally not permitted where there is a likelihood of damage or destruction, either to trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order or those, which have a particular local amenity value, nature conservation value, or special/historical interest, even though they may not be listed in the Development Plan.

12.4.7 Access and other ancillary works

New accesses are often a visible feature of new buildings in the countryside and on occasion can be more obtrusive than the building itself, particularly if they include ornate walls, gates and fencing. Wherever possible, access to a new building should be taken from an existing lane-way. Where a new access drive and services, such as electricity and telephone lines, are required, they should be underground. Access driveways should respect site contours and cross them gently, thus integrating the building with its entrance and site.

Sweeping driveways which create a suburban emphasis and access arrangements, will not be acceptable. While adequate visibility at the road access is necessary in the interests of road safety, access driveways surfaced in tarmacadam and with concrete kerbing can look out of place in the countryside and less formal solutions should be sought. The traditional field pattern should be preserved and roadside and field boundary hedges and stone walls retained or reinstated following any access works.

12.5 RETAIL DEVELOPMENT (To be read in conjunction with Chapters 4 and 5)

Having regard to the recommendations of documents such as the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities published by the Department of Environment and Local Government (2000), it is generally the objective of the Planning Authority to encourage central locations for new retailing activity and consider the needs of residential neighbourhoods in catering for local shopping needs.

The criteria to be determined in the assessment of significant planning applications for retail development are as follows:

- All applications for retail developments should be subject to the sequential test and alternative locations must be considered. Where an application for a retail development outside of the town centre is lodged to the planning authority, the applicant should demonstrate that all town centre options have been assessed and evaluated and that flexibility has been adopted by the retailer in regard to the retail format;
- Impact on the town centre, including cumulative impact;
- The baseline information and capacity/impact assessment is accurate and transparent;
- There is a demonstrable need for the development;
- Its contribution to town centre improvement;
- Its contribution to site / area improvement;
- The quality of access by all modes of transport;
- Its role in improving the competitiveness of the County;
- Its role on sustaining rural communities;
- Any other Development Plan considerations.

In considering retail developments the Council will require:

- Adequate provision of parking for people with disabilities in addition to parking for parents with young children
- Provision of recycling bring centres to be located in accessible locations
- Provision of covered bicycle parking
It is also recommended that the applicant should address the following criteria:

- Support the long term strategy for town centres as established in the development plan and not materially diminish the prospect of attracting private sector investment into one or more town centres.
- Cause an adverse impact on one of more town centres, either singly or cumulatively with recent development or other outstanding planning permissions, sufficient to undermine the quality of the centre or its role in the economic and social life of the community.
- Diminish the range of activities and services that a town centre can support.
- Cause an increase in the number of vacant properties in the primary retail area that is likely to persist in the long term.
- Ensure a high standard of access both by public transport, foot, private car so that the proposal is easily accessible by all sections of society.
- Link effectively with an existing town centre so that there is likely to be commercial synergy.

The overall design strategy will normally reflect variety (by the use of differing shop fronts, set back, signs, etc.) within a unified design. The design and layout of buildings, including materials, should discourage graffiti and other forms of vandalism. Service areas etc. should be out of sight of surrounding residential and pedestrian area. Tree planting and landscaping must form part of the overall design of the shopping centre, plans of which must be prepared by fully qualified landscaping architect.

### 12.5.1 Shop Fronts

Shopfronts are one of the most important elements in determining the character, quality and image of retail streets in County Roscommon. Traditional shop front designs and nameplates over shop windows should, where possible, be preserved and in these situations regard should be had to Architectural Heritage Protection - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DOEHLG 2005). Contemporary shopfronts shall be designed to traditional principles of scale, proportion and detailing of the existing streetscape.

The following guidance points are intended to assist in the achievement of a higher standard in shopfront design:

- Traditional shop front designs and nameplates over shop windows should, if at all possible, be retained and preserved.
- Where new or replacement shopfronts are proposed, the use of traditional materials will be favoured. The excessive use of illuminated plastic or neon signs is not considered appropriate.
- The design of new shopfronts should relate primarily to the architectural characteristics of the buildings of which they form part. Shopfronts should also reflect the scale and proportion of the streetscape.
- In developing new shopfronts, the actual building design, materials, colour and detailing of the building should all be taken into account.
- The quality, texture and the colour of materials used are of paramount importance. The painting of natural brick or stone is generally unacceptable. Where elements of the original shopfront framework remain, efforts should be made to retain them in order to assist in integrating the new shopfront with the building as a whole.
- The level of workmanship is a significant contributing factor in shopfront design. High quality detailing is necessary in order to maintain a good appearance in shopfronts.
- Canopies and awnings should be made of durable and, where possible, traditional materials and should not cause a cluttered appearance.
- Security shutters should have where possible, internal lattice shutters or toughened / laminated glass.
Chapter 12: Development Management Guidelines and Standards

12.5.2 Shopping Centres

Shopping centres must conform to the highest urban design standards. The design must ensure that the proposed centre will be integrated with, and be complementary to, the streetscape where it will be located, or in accordance with detailed urban design framework. It is a requirement of the Planning Authority that proposals for major retail centres such as shopping centres and food outlets are accompanied by specific measures to address the following issues:

- The scale of the proposal in relation to its planned catchment and existing floorspace provision including a Retail Impact Study on established centres.
- The ability of the proposal to be adequately serviced in relation to car parking, public transport and pedestrian and cyclist access and facilities.
- The creation and enclosure of, good pedestrian space at an appropriate scale.
- Activities and uses that keep the centre alive, both during the day and evening, e.g. stalls, cafes and public houses. The inclusion of residential uses, particularly flats and maisonettes, as an integral part of the centre, in order to increase the evening activity and security of the centre.
- The provision, within the overall design of the centre, of public facilities such as childcare facilities, toilets, advice centres, public telephones, etc.
- Service areas should be out of sight of surrounding residential and pedestrian areas. Tree planting and landscaping must form part of the overall design of the centre, plans of which must be prepared by a fully qualified landscape architect.

12.6 OFFICE / INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENTS (To be read in conjunction with Chapters 4 and 5)

12.6.1 Office Development

The County Council will encourage office development to be located in established centres as well as use of vacant or under-utilised upper floors for office development. Outside of the town/village centres, applications for office development will be considered within an industrial and business park, on industrially zoned lands or where infrastructure has been provided, in line with the principle of sustainable development.

12.6.2 Industry, Warehousing and Business Park Developments

Industrial and commercial development is favoured in or adjacent to settlements where infrastructure has been provided and in line with the principle of sustainable development. These developments on greenfield sites will be required to satisfy minimum requirements for design regarding location, layout, finishes, access, tree planting and landscaping, boundary treatment, water supply, drainage, and effluent disposal. In addition, sufficient space shall be reserved within the curtilage of the site for parking of all employees’ and visitors’ cars, for the loading and unloading of vehicles, and, that adequate rear access to business premises is made. Adequately screened on-site storage shall be provided for raw materials, waste products and finished goods.

Other requirements include a high standard of design, finish, layout, and landscaping. All new developments shall be designed to provide access for all and shall include parking areas for people with disabilities at the main entrance, equal access toilets, and, access to floors above ground level. Proposals for developments that would generate a large volume of HGV traffic should not be located where they would encourage movement of such traffic through residential areas. Areas between the building and the road boundary may include car parking spaces, provided an acceptable landscaping scheme is incorporated. Industrial/warehousing/business park developments should present a pleasant aspect helped by tree planting, the careful design of signage, screening of storage space and unobtrusive loading and parking space. Various unit sizes shall be provided to cater for the differing needs of potential occupants.
The Planning Authority will require details of the nature of the proposed activities and of the means of controlling effluents, noise, light, solid waste and gaseous emissions from these activities, together with ameliorative measures as part of a planning application. In assessing an application for development the Planning Authority will weigh the development against its impact on the environment.

12.7 CONVENIENCE FOOD SHOPPING

Where practicable, new convenience retail development should be located within a town centre or within a designated neighbourhood or district centre serving a large residential community. Accessibility is the key to the success of such developments and such proposals should be accessible by all modes of transport particularly pedestrians and public transport. As large convenience shops attract customers carrying out large weekly shopping, it is important that such development should also be served by adequate car parking. Out of centre sites for this type of retail development require careful assessment, subject to the sequential test assessment and their potential impact on nearby centres. The maximum size of supermarkets is 3,000 square metres net sales, as defined in the Retail Planning Guidelines.

12.8 DISCOUNT FOOD STORES

Discount food stores typically have a floor area of approximately 1,500-1,800 sq. metres gross and are served by a surface car park with approximately 80 – 100 spaces. The preferable location for such development is again in the town centre or designated district centre or neighbourhood centre. The potential role that discount food stores have in anchoring small centres or neighbourhood centres is recognised in the Retail Planning Guidelines and thus it is appropriate to permit such development within neighbourhood centres. Such developments are also often suited to brownfield industrial sites located in proximity to residential areas. Important criteria in assessing applications for a discount food store include; impact of the development on the urban design character of the town; accessibility; and, particularly by car.

12.9 DISTRICT CENTRES

It is likely that as Roscommon continues to grow in population terms, that there may be demand for the development of district centres to cater for newly developing residential estates. District Shopping Centres can play an important role in the County retail offer, especially in the convenience provision within the county. The development of such centres should only be developed in areas where large scale residential expansion is envisaged/proposed.

12.10 RETAIL WAREHOUSE PARKS

It is recognised in the Retail Planning Guidelines that, in general, retail warehouses do not fit easily into town centres given their size requirements and the need for good car parking facilities. It is therefore, appropriate to group these facilities into planned retail parks on the edge of the town centre if such sites are available or in an out-of-centre site, if the applicant can demonstrate that there are no suitable edge of centre sites available. Criteria for assessing retail warehouse applications include scale and design of the development, appropriate vehicular access and the quantitative need for such development.

As stated in the Retail Planning Guidelines, individual retail units should not be less than 700 sq metres and not more than 6,000 sq metres in size. These figures are gross floor area, including storage and garden centres. In respect of retail warehouse developments outside town centres, it is essential that the range of goods sold is restricted by planning condition to bulky household items such as DIY products, carpets, furniture, and electrical goods. Failure to do so may have a negative impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre area.
12.11 FACTORY OUTLET CENTRES

It is stated in the Retail Planning Guidelines that the success of these centres depends on drawing customers and visitors from a wide catchment area, including tourists, and there may be implications for existing tourist centres and established town centres, even those some distance from the proposals. Criteria for assessing such development should therefore focus on whether such a development is located in a strategic enough location to capture expenditure from a very wide catchment area. Such a development must be within easy reach of Dublin and in the interest of sustainability, preferably be located adjacent to or even within an existing town centre. Again, as such facilities are primarily geared towards the car borne customer, vehicular accessibility and adequate car parking are key factors.

12.12 RETAIL WAREHOUSE CLUBS

Retail Warehouse Clubs as stated in the Retail Planning Guidelines share many of the characteristics of large retail outlets and therefore should be treated as any other large retail development. Such development should therefore be located within or on the edge of existing town centres and there should be a demonstrable need for its development both qualitatively and quantitatively. Particular consideration should be given to the design of such developments as often they have a retail warehouse type format and thus may be inappropriate within the traditional town centre. As such facilities are geared towards bulky shopping such facilities must also be served by adequate car parking.

12.13 LOCAL SHOPS & PETROL FILLING STATIONS

Local shops play an important role in providing for daily top up shopping. They are also often easily accessible to the elderly and disabled. The development of such local shops should be encouraged in the smaller towns and villages in the counties and also in residential areas in the suburbs of the larger estates in the principal county towns. Such developments should be easily accessible to all sections of society.

Local shops attached to petrol filling stations are a growing sector of the retail market. Such facilities do play an important role, particularly in serving some of the more isolated rural communities. However, care should be given to the development of such facilities on the edge of town centres as they may have a negative impact on established convenience outlets within the town centre. As stated in the Retail Planning Guidelines, the size (net sales area) of such retail units should not exceed 100 sq metres.

New petrol stations and refurbished existing stations will be required to have a high standard of overall design and architectural layout to ensure an attractive development that integrates with and enhances its surroundings. The forecourt canopy should be integrated into the overall design and sited so that it does not dominate the surrounding buildings. Applications must be accompanied by detailed landscaping and screening proposals, providing details of the type, location and timescale of planting. Another necessity in applications is details of signage and their proposed location. Advertising should not interfere with visibility lines, be visually intrusive or interrupt the continuity of streetscapes.

Petrol filling stations must be located on the outskirts of the town but inside the 50km or 60km speed limits and the creation of a traffic hazard must be avoided. The preferred location is on the near side of the roadway on the way out of town. However, the Council will seek to avoid the proliferation of such uses along a stretch of road, or within a particular area in a town or village where such development may result in loss of visual and residential amenity. Applications for motor fuel filling stations will not be supported by Council where a proposal is likely to lead to an impairment of the visual or residential amenity of the area through intrusive commercial frontage and signage, nuisance, disturbance or excessive traffic movements.
Where petrol filling stations are proposed in rural areas, traffic safety will be of paramount importance. They would be best placed in villages or in close proximity to other compatible uses such as shops and post offices etc. The expansion or addition to existing such businesses would be preferable.

A road frontage of at least 21.5 m is required for a new petrol station. The frontage must be kept clear of any structures (with the exception of the boundary wall) for a depth of not less than 4.5 m from the street or roadside boundary of the site. No pump, hose pipe or other service may be situated less than 4.5 m from the street or roadside boundary of the site, nor may it be adapted to serve a vehicle standing on the public street. Where petrol pumps and other services are sited not less than 9m from the street or roadside boundary of the site, the street frontage of the station may be reduced to 12m. The station should not have more than two vehicular openings onto a street. The width of each opening should not exceed 7.5m. The street or roadside boundary of the station shall be defined, except at openings, by a wall or railing to a height of not less than 0.5m over the level of the adjoining street. Kerbs and footpaths shall be dished in accordance with the detailed requirements of the Roads Authority.

The following standards must be observed in relation to the siting of filling stations near a junction:

- where the street width is greater than 15m a vehicle entrance or exit shall not be sited nearer to a road junction than 33.5m, in the case of a junction with a street 15m in width or over, or 23m in the case of a junction with a street of between 7.5m and 15m in width;
- where the street width is less than 15m a vehicle entrance or exit shall not be sited nearer to a road junction than 23m in the case of a junction with another street 7.5m in width or over;
- where the junction occurs on the opposite side of the street from the petrol station site, no vehicle entrance or exit may be sited nearer than 23m to the junction where the width of the intersecting street exceeds 7.5 m;
- where the street is of a dual carriageway type, no break in the central strip shall be permitted under any circumstances to serve the petrol station.

Persons intending to seek permission for the development of a new motor fuel station are advised to consult with the Fire Officer in relation to the installations for the storage and distribution of dangerous substances.

12.14 PUBS / NIGHTCLUBS / AMUSEMENTS CENTRES

Applications for the above uses shall be considered with regard to the following issues.

- The amenities of nearby residents, i.e. noise, general disturbance, hours of operation, litter and fumes.
- Prevent an excessive concentration of any of the above uses in a particular area.
- Noise at the boundaries will be carefully monitored and noise insulation measures will be required at the time of the submission of the planning application. An important consideration for the local authority is the number and frequency of events in such facilities.
- The planning authority shall insist that proper litter control measures are in place prior to the opening of any premises.
- The larger leisure complexes which contain a mix of uses, e.g. cinema, bowling, and restaurant, will be treated on their merits

12.15 FAST FOOD OUTLETS/ TAKE-AWAYS

Proposals for the development of these facilities will generally only be acceptable in areas of mixed use activity such as town or village centres. The cumulative impact of a number of take-away restaurants in any particular area will be considered in the assessment of any application. Impacts such as noise, litter, disturbance and traffic, will also be taken into consideration.
Stringent controls will be applied with regard to litter collection and façade design. The latter may necessitate the alteration of corporate images in order to assimilate into the character of the area. The Planning Authority will impose restrictions on opening hours as a condition of planning permission.

12.16 AUTOMATIC TELLER MACHINES

The provision of automatic teller machines (ATMs) will be strictly regulated, having regard to the following:

- The need to protect the character of the building or shopfront they are to be incorporated into, in particular, Protected Structures/Architectural Conservation Areas.
- The design and location must be such that they are accessible to all.
- In general, there should not be more than one ATM in any one shopfront so as to avoid the creation of a dead shopfront.
- The need to control the amount of litter generated by these machines. On principal shopping streets, at Protected Structures and in Architectural Conservation Areas, electronic receipts only should be available
- Signs and logos shall be discreetly incorporated into the overall design.
- The avoidance of a traffic hazard.
- The operators must apply litter control satisfactory to the County Council.

12.17 ADVERTISING

Outdoor advertisements can play a vital role for both industrial and commercial enterprise that is well located and sympathetically designed advertising, whether attached to a building or free standing can contribute to the character and vitality of commercial areas, particularly at night. In towns and villages, uncontrolled advertising detracts from the character and identity of settlements and if located at junctions or in competition with traffic signs, can give rise to traffic hazard. Advertisements which are used sensitively and sympathetically and which enhance the appearance and vitality of an area shall be permitted.

The number of signs attached to a building in such areas should be limited and no sign should be excessively obtrusive or out of scale with the building façade. As with shopfront design, the Planning Authority will require commercial interests, especially chain outlets, to restrain the use of their corporate image advertising where these are considered to be too dominant. All advertisements and advertisement structures, other than those exempted under Part II, Second Schedule of the 2001 Planning and Development Regulations shall be the subject of a formal planning application. Commercial signage and advertising will be limited to commercial built-up areas where it is already a feature. Within towns and villages, the following general policy will apply:

- The location of signage should be such as to prevent it leading to obstructions to visually impaired or interfering with access on footpaths.
- The size and scale of signs should not conflict with those existing structures in the vicinity;
- The number and positions of signs should not unduly clutter the building façade or streetscape.
- High level advertising will not be permitted; signs should be positioned at or below ground floor fascia level; signs will not be permitted above eaves or parapet levels
- The following types of advertising will not be permitted by the Council, and will be actively discouraged:
  - the use of plastic, PVC, perspex and neon signs or lettering or detailing on any exterior;
  - internally illuminated box fascia signs;
  - internally illuminated projecting signs, whether fixed or hanging;
Chapter 12: Development Management Guidelines and Standards

12.17.1 Advertising Hoardings

Advertising hoardings rely for their impact on size, scale and location and are thus usually detrimental to the character of the area in which they are situated and in some cases contribute to a traffic hazard. However, they can help to screen derelict or obsolete sites awaiting re-development, in certain circumstances.

- Outdoor advertising shall not be permitted on proposed or existing protected structures or within the vicinity of such, in such a way as to detract from the visual quality of their setting.
- In all other cases, regard to the visual impact of a proposed advertising hoarding and potential of traffic hazard arising from same will be imperative.
- The scale of display panels must be related to the scale of the buildings and streets in which they are located.
- Where illuminated hoardings are proposed, their effect on the streetscape during the hours of darkness and on the amenities of the area, will be considered.
- Display panels may form part of the visual screening around building sites or sites awaiting re-development. In such cases, temporary permissions will be considered where appropriately sized panels form an integral part of an overall boundary treatment and do not comprise more than half of the total surface area of such treatment.
- As a general rule, planning permissions for outdoor advertising will be limited to a maximum of three years in the first instance, to enable the position to be reviewed by the Planning Authority in light of changing circumstances at the end of that period.
- The number and scale of hoardings in the vicinity of the site will be a material consideration.

12.17.2 Fingerpost Signage

The erection of fingerpost signs on public roads require a licence or planning permission from the Planning Authority and should comply with the following:

- Directional signs for major tourist attractions and community purposes will be considered but product advertising will not be permitted.
- Signs must have a standard size and colour and be maintained by the owner of the premises advertised.
- Signs which interfere with the Local Authority’s directional signs or which contribute to visual clutter will not be permitted.
- Signs will not be permitted where they detract from areas of amenity or interfere with views and prospects.
12.17.3 Rural Advertising

No advertising hoardings (billboards) will be permitted in the open countryside. Consideration may be given to the provision of advertising panels at lay-bys outside built up areas, where facilities in these areas can be listed, and the traders can advertise in a fashion that would provide information to passers-by without interference to the amenities of the area. If external illumination is proposed, documentation shall be provided that clearly shows that the blight or glare from such illumination will not adversely affect pedestrian and vehicular traffic or adjacent properties. The use of trailers as advertising signs is considered to be a material change of use of the land and requires planning permission.

12.18 TOURISM (To be read in conjunction with Chapter 10)

The Council recognises that tourism development can make an important contribution to the economy of the county. In particular, it is acknowledged that tourism provides jobs and investment in parts of the county that might not otherwise benefit from economic development. The Council will encourage and facilitate in co-operation with relevant agencies involved in tourism, the improvement of the existing amenity and viewing areas as well as the provision of additional areas where required. The Council will protect the amenities of the county from insensitive or inappropriate development, particularly any development that threatens the tourism resources of the county.

The Council will seek to ensure that features that make Roscommon attractive to tourists will be protected not just from other forms of development, but from the adverse effects of the tourist industry itself. The relationship between tourism and the environment must be managed in a way that tourism continues to support local communities and remains viable in the long term.

Tourism developments will need to take the following into consideration:

- The provision of well researched, justified and imaginative integrated projects which include a realistic combination of the following:
  - Hotel facilities including conference and leisure facilities.
  - Indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, e.g. golf, swimming, equestrian activities.
  - European park style caravan / self contained / chalet accommodation.
  - Entertainment facilities.
  - Tourist related leisure facilities including walking and cycling.
- they do not contravene the Landscape Protection Development Policies,
- they relate sympathetically to the scale and level of activity in the locality,
- they will not adversely affect the character or appearance of the countryside,
- they will not result in detrimental impact on road safety or the free flow of traffic and will not require improvements which would detract from the character of rural areas,
- they will not have an adverse impact on the character or siting of settlements or the amenity of existing residents.
- they will not have adverse impact on sites of nature conservation value or archaeological importance or structures of architectural or historic interest,
- any new dwellings associated with tourism development are of a good standard of design and are sympathetic to the landscape in terms of their siting and materials.

12.18.1 Rural Tourism

While seeking to ensure that most tourism development locates in or close to towns and villages, the Council recognises that by its nature, some tourism development may require other locations. Such development may be acceptable if it accords with Landscape Protection Policies and provides a range of facilities which would also be made available to the local community.
12.18.2 Caravan and Camping Parks

Design and layout must be of a high standard with an emphasis on innovation to provide an integrated
design concept linking residential units to well located communal areas, on-site facilities and
amenities. Reference should be made to *Bord Failte’s ‘Guidelines for Development of Caravan and
Camping Sites’*(1982) and any updates.

Where additions, to or infilling on existing caravan parks or sites are considered, the County Council
will apply the following standards:

- a comprehensive landscaping scheme must form an integral part of site development. Sites
  should be located to take advantage of existing natural screening. New planting should be
designed to reinforce existing landscape features including hedgerows, woodlands, trees and
shrubs. Landscaping proposals should provide for generous planting in groups and zones
using indigenous species. The scheme should be prepared by a qualified and competent
person;
- parks and sites must connect to existing water and wastewater treatment infrastructure where
  this is available without placing unsustainable demands on these services;
- private wastewater treatment infrastructure must meet the County Council’s planning and
  environmental protection standards and criteria. An adequate daily supply of potable water
  and water storage must be provided to service each unit. Sanitary facilities and/or permanent
dwellings should not be located within 9 metres of any pitch. Sites should be accessible to
local utilities and have adequate on site scavenging services;
- parks and sites should be provided with adequate roads and parking areas with at least one
  parking space per pitch and an appropriate number of additional spaces for visitors. Clear
  spacing in all directions must be provided around each pitch. Entrance/reception areas should
  be provided with adequate parking and turning facilities. Public lighting should be provided at
  low level and intensity;
- developments should not detract from the privacy and amenity enjoyed by local residents.

Sites should be designed and laid out so that residential property is not overlooked.

12.18.3 Holiday Homes

In general, proposals should address holiday home and second home development in a positive and
sustainable way. Second home and holiday home type development can raise concerns regarding
long-term sustainability, effects on the affordability of housing in rural areas for permanent rural
dwellers. Therefore, individual holiday homes or cluster of holiday homes will generally not be
permitted in the open countryside unless they are attached to rural leisure resource based at that
location. Holiday units should be designed and sited so as not the have an adverse impact on the
character or setting of settlements or the amenity of existing residents. Proposals for holiday homes
should be located in existing settlements, where they can avail of existing services, or designed as
clusters in other appropriate locations, where they can be integrated into the environment. Where
permission for holiday homes has been granted and buildings constructed and it is proven to the
Planning Authority that this use is not viable within 4 years for the date of completion, the houses may
be used for domestic use, subject to satisfactory waste disposal as well as proper planning and
sustainable development. Planning permission will be required for such a change of use.

Overall there should be an emphasis on innovation in design and layout providing for an integrated
development linking units to open space and facilities. Suburban style housing estate layouts will not
be acceptable. Existing site features including trees and hedgerows should be retained to form part of a
comprehensive landscaping scheme, and a management company should be established to manage the
overall development, as well as, the repair and maintenance of any private wastewater treatment
system.
12.18.4 Tourist Advertisements

Such signs require a licence and shall be sized and colour coded in accordance with the DoEHLG Memorandum, ‘Criteria for the Provision of Tourist Attraction and Accommodation Signs’ (1998). In addition, such signs shall:

- comply with road safety standards in relation to sight distances, official road signs,
- junction layout and other requirements;
- be constructed of materials approved by the Planning Authority;
- be maintained by the owner of the premises advertised;
- be located on a route to the premises from the nearest town or village; and,
- be limited in number to the minimum required for their purpose.

12.18.5 Diversification

The Council encourages the diversification of the rural economy and for the further development of tourism. There is an existing range of attractions which can be further developed for tourists while also preserving the rural character and amenity of the open countryside, these include farm tourist accommodation, fishing, equestrian pursuits and other secondary activities such as health spas, cooking schools, adventure centres etc. These all encourage people to stay longer in the County. Proposals for such development must be properly located and must not interfere with or detract from areas of special amenity value or nature conservation. The Council will also seek to facilitate and encourage the re-use of redundant farm buildings of vernacular importance for appropriate owner-run agri-tourism enterprises subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

12.18.6 Recreation (To be read in conjunction with Chapter 9)

The Council attaches great importance to the retention and creation of areas of recreational and amenity open space. It is important for physical and mental health that everyone, particularly children, the elderly and those with disabilities should have easy access to public open space. Recreation forms an important component of life and encompasses many activities with major land use implications. The Council recognizes the increasing concern felt by many communities that open space with recreational and amenity value should be protected from development and adequate provision made for future use.

It will be important to ensure that adequate recreational facilities are available in conjunction with, or even ahead of, new housing development. In particular, provision should be made for both local and regional scale parks, where these do not already exist. In addition to outdoor recreational facilities, there is a demand for high quality indoor recreational facilities both to meet current demand and to facilitate future population growth. The natural environment should be promoted as an accessible amenity for sport and recreational activity having due regard for safety and issues of environmental sustainability.

1. Sports

The Council recognizes that sport is an essential component of everyday life, playing a valuable social, cultural and economic role, providing enjoyment for people, a livelihood for some, and promoting a healthy lifestyle. The Council is committed to enhancing the range and quality of sports facilities and to ensuring that there is reasonable public access to sports facilities.

2. Play/ Recreation Opportunities for Children

The promotion and provision of children’s recreation facilities is vital in adding to the provision of accessible, local amenity space. The provision of a child friendly environment will be promoted in accordance with the Roscommon County Play Policy 2005-2008 and ‘Ready, Steady, Play-A National
3. **Events**

The Council shall promote and facilitate the promotion of holding events throughout the county where such events require an outdoor event licence. The Council will ensure that they comply with the provisions of Part XVI of the Planning and Development Act 2000-2004.

4. **Cycling and walking**

The County Council will address the need to encourage walking and cycling by ensuring that safe cycle ways and footpaths are provided as part of all new development areas and between new and existing developments and where possible are introduced into existing development, as resources allow. The Council will also facilitate the improvements which need to be made to the Sli na Slainte walking routes throughout the county. In addition through better design incorporating current thinking and best practice from experience in other locations, more people friendly places can be created. In areas already developed which are experiencing traffic problems, it will be necessary to work with existing infrastructure in order to create an improved environment. Much of this can be dealt with in the section in the proposed Urban Design Guidelines or Residential Development Design Guidelines and within the individual Town and Local Area Plans.

5. **Swimming Pools/ Leisure Centers**

The public swimming pools in Roscommon and Castlerea are important sources of recreational activity. In addition to public swimming pools, many of the larger hotels now have leisure centres which include gym facilities and swimming pools and this offers additional choice to the paying public. These facilities should be of high quality and designed and finished to ensure their usability, security and cost efficient maintenance as well as being highly accessible to all persons.

6. **Marinas**

New commercial marinas will normally be required to locate in or close to existing centres, such as Boyle, Knockvicar, Cootehall, Cortober, Roosky, Tarmonbarry, Ballyleague, Portrunny, Lecarrow, Athlone and Shannonbridge. This will facilitate the economic provision of onshore facilities and contribute to the expansion of the nearby villages and towns as tourism centres. Smaller marinas for the mooring of boats may be more widely distributed, but will be required to have good road access. The development of single jetties and moorings may be acceptable at some locations, such as picnic or landing areas, where their siting and design is appropriate. However, the Council will monitor the number of such jetties and moorings to ensure that there is not an undue proliferation of these facilities.

7. **Private Harbours & Jetties**

At existing private dwellinghouse sites where the site forms part of the lake or river shore the property owner or a group of individual immediately abutting property owners may be permitted to form a small harbour/jetty on his/her/their own lands or on the lake bed subject to consent or licence being provided by Waterways Ireland. The size of such developments will be limited to the site owners needs for their own private boating activities. Such small harbours/jetties will be required to be designed and operated to best engineering standards and designed to prevent the threat of pollution.

Floating jetty type facilities will be encouraged in the first instance where appropriate.
It will be a requirement of the Planning Authority that the quayside and land around any such harbour or jetty will be kept in a tidy condition and in particular the storage of un-seaworthy boats or unsightly equipment will be prohibited.

### 12.18.7 Sustainable Tourism Planning Control Checklist

The following checklist is for applications for planning permissions for new development. The list can be applied to all new development including new tourism related development. For most applications a simple but honest assessment – yes or no- is all that is necessary.

Not all questions will be relevant to any particular applications, but some or most will be. If the answers to these questions are mainly “Yes”, then the development proposal is likely to contribute to sustainability. Mainly “No” answers suggest the proposal will conflict with sustainability principles.

1. **Land, Buildings, Resources and Waste**
   (a) Is the proposal on a “Brownfield” (previously-used) site or in existing vacant building(s)?
   (b) Does the proposal use land, energy, water, soils, minerals and materials prudently? (E.g. Does it minimise land-take; does it incorporate energy/water saving devices; is it orientated to take advantage of sunlight: does it re-use other materials?).
   (c) Does the development avoid floodplain?
   (d) Have opportunities been taken to incorporate the use of renewable energy sources? (e.g. wind, hydro, solar, CHP).

2. **Natural Environment – Landscape and Wildlife**
   (a) Are valuable wildlife habitats protected or enhanced? (e.g. designated sites, woods, hedges, wetlands).
   (b) Will the proposal increase broad-leaf tree and hedge cover?
   (c) Does the proposal safeguard landscape quality and retain open countryside.

3. **Pollution and Climate Change**
   (a) Is the quality and volume of water safeguarded? (Ground-water, surface water and drinking water).
   (b) Are air, noise and light pollution prevented in the proposals?
   (c) Has allowance been made for projected climate change impacts? (e.g. more storms, flooding, subsidence)

4. **Transport and Access**
   (a) Are measures proposed to reduce the number of car or lorry journeys to the development?
   (b) Is the development accessible to all modes of transport? (Incl. Walking, cycling, public transport)
   (c) Is access available for all people? (Incl. Elderly and those with disabilities).

5. **The Local Economy**
   (a) Does the proposal increase employment opportunities for local people?
   (b) Will local goods and suppliers be used wherever possible so that income is re-circulated locally?

6. **Local Needs and Local Views**
   (a) Will the development also help to meet other local/community needs (e.g. by supporting services).
   (b) Have local people had a chance to contribute ideas or opinions?

7. **Quality, Local distinctiveness and Culture**
   (a) Is a high quality of building design and materials incorporated?
(b) Does the proposed design protect and enhance local heritage, diversity and distinctiveness?
(c) Will the development assist participation in – or – access to – arts, culture and heritage?

12.19 COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The council shall seek to ensure that community facilities are provided in tandem with housing developments as well ensuring there is an adequate proximity to all essential services such as shops. Development contributions that have been applied to housing developments should be used to provide extra community facilities.

12.20 SCHOOLS

Sites required for a primary school shall comply with the requirements of the Department of Education and Science publication *Planning Guidelines for Primary Schools* (2000). Provision must be made within the site for adequate car parking (at a rate of 3 per classroom), bus parking, pick-up/drop off areas, informal hard surface play area, and areas for organised sport activities. The County Council in association with the school authorities will endeavour to provide pedestrian crossings, road markings and footpath provision where required. Provision should be made in secondary schools for all forms of organized sporting facilities. School buildings should be multi-functional and available for community use outside school hours.

12.21 NURSING HOMES

There is a continuing and growing need for nursing homes and in urban areas such facilities should be integrated wherever possible into the established residential areas, where their residents can expect reasonable access to local services. In determining planning applications for change of use of a residential dwelling or other building to nursing/elder care home, the following factors should be considered:

- compliance with the standards as laid down in the Statutory Instrument No. 226 of 1993, i.e. Nursing Homes (Care and Welfare) Regulations, 1993
- the effect on the amenities of adjoining properties
- suitable private open space
- proximity to local services and facilities
- the size and scale of the facility proposed – the scale must be appropriate to the area

12.22 CHILDCARE FACILITIES

The provision of childcare facilities is subject to the Child Care Act (1991) and the Child Care (Pre School Services) Regulations of 1996 and any relevant updates. The Planning Authority recognises the need for properly run and conveniently located childcare facilities throughout the County. It is the policy of Roscommon County Council to implement the Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG 2001). Applications for childcare facilities in a residential area will be assessed on the basis of their impact in terms of noise, loss of residential amenity, traffic generation and general disturbance. In general, the factors to be considered in determining a planning application for a childcare facility are as follows:

(1) Nature of the facility:
(2) Numbers and ages of children
(3) Adequate parking for staff and set down areas for customers
(4) Hours of operation
(5) Open Space provision and measures for management of same
(6) Description of cumulative impact when taken together with other childcare facilities in the vicinity.
(7) Impact on residential amenity and mitigation measures, if appropriate
Chapter 12: Development Management Guidelines and Standards

(8) Local traffic conditions
(9) Proximity to public transport

The Council recommends that applicants seek the advice of the Roscommon County Childcare Committee, Health Service Executive, and other relevant bodies in the design of childcare facilities prior to the submission of applications for planning permission.

- In general to discourage the complete conversion of existing semi-detached and terraced dwellings within housing estates to childcare facilities. The childcare use should remain secondary and the bulk of the house should be retained for residential purposes.
- In new housing estates, purpose built facilities are normally required.
- Appropriate provision of at least one childcare facility to cater for 20 places in developments of 75 houses, including local authority and social housing schemes in accordance with DoEHLG Guidelines. This standard may be varied depending on local circumstances.

12.23 NEIGHBOURHOOD FACILITIES

The provision of local neighbourhood facilities is considered essential in all areas of large scale housing development e.g. Monksland/Bellanamullia Area. Their provision helps foster a sense of community, limits pressure on existing services and facilities, and restricts the potential number of traffic movements. The need for the facilities will be assessed by the Planning Authority and will be dependant on the scale of the development proposed and the existing level of provision of facilities in the area. They should be integrated into the overall design of the scheme, easily accessed and well designed, and should not impact on the amenity of adjoining residents. Where a number of developments are proposed adjacent to each other, developers are encouraged to provide a design solution that integrates the facilities into the overall development of the area. These facilities shall be provided at the expense of the developer.

12.24 AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY

Agricultural activity remains an important contributor to the economic and social viability of rural areas. Agriculture is a key source of employment and is critical to the well being of the rural economy and to maintaining population in rural areas.

12.24.1 Agricultural Buildings & Structures

The design, scale, siting and layout of agricultural buildings should respect, and where possible, enhance the rural environment. In visually sensitive areas the Council will seek to group together and site buildings in an appropriate manner, and require the use of harmonious external materials to minimize obstruction on the landscape. The use of dark coloured cladding, notably dark browns, greys, and greens are most suitable for farm buildings, and roof areas should be darker than walls.

12.24.2 Diversification

The Council recognises the need for farm diversification to enable farming to remain a viable part of the county’s economy. It will facilitate and support farmers in the change from full to part-time farming. Part-time employment opportunities, which enable farmers to continue to maintain a viable farm, will be encouraged.

The Council will support vibrant, environmentally sustainable and well managed agricultural and related enterprises, horticultural, forestry and bloodstock sectors and to support alternative enterprises, farm diversification and agri–tourism projects to ensure the continued development of sustainable rural communities.
12.24.3 Agriculture and the Environment

The Council will require that agricultural developments comply with the Department of Agriculture’s ‘Guidelines on Control of Pollution and Farmyard Wastes’, 1985. The Council will exercise its powers under the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended and under the Water Pollution Act as amended (1990) to ensure that agricultural development will not cause pollution to watercourses. All new and existing agricultural developments will be required to ensure that all effluent, including yard run-off, is collected and stored within the confines of the development. When assessing the adequacy of effluent handling facilities the following will be considered to be soiled waste: Slurry; Soiled water run-off; Milk washings; Silage effluent; and, Dungstead.

The Council will encourage farming practices and production methods that have regard for conservation, landscape protection, the protection of wildlife habitats, endangered species of flora and fauna and water quality. The Council supports the ethos of the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPs) as it promotes sustainable agriculture systems which conserve water, soils and genetic resources

12.25 CAR PARKING

All developments shall be required to provide adequate provision within the site for servicing of the proposal and for the parking and manoeuvring of vehicles associated with it. Parking accommodation will be expected to locate within, or in close proximity to, the site of the proposed development, and will normally be established behind the building lines in each development. The minimum parking requirement shall be calculated in accordance with the standards as laid out in Table 39.

The layout and design of roads in housing developments shall have regard to the "Traffic Management Guidelines" issued jointly by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the Department of Transport and the Dublin Transportation Office (2003):

- Requirements for numbers of car parking spaces are set out in Table 39.
- In dealing with planning applications for change of use or for replacement buildings, allowance will be made for the former site use in calculating the car parking requirements generated by the new development;
- Where the provision of on-site parking is not possible, the Council may, in exceptional circumstances, accept a financial contribution in respect of the shortfall in the number of spaces. This will however be at the discretion of the Council, and is likely only to apply to small scale town centre locations where the Council has provided, or intends to provide additional public car parking spaces.
- Parking and service spaces must be located on site so as to prevent road/street obstruction, and should be located where possible to the rear and side of buildings and in such a manner to ensure minimal injury to the amenity of adjoining premises;
- Planting and landscaping of all car parks shall be required.
- Parking facilities for mobility impaired drivers and their vehicles shall be provided at the general rate of 2 to 5 per 100 spaces, such spaces shall be proximate to the entry points of the proposed buildings.
- The parking spaces shall be proximate to the entry points of the proposed buildings.
- The parking standards for residential development will be reviewed in town centre locations and where innovative design principles are adopted. In such cases grouped parking will be encouraged
- Where reference is made to Floor Area, it refers to gross floor area, unless otherwise indicated
- Standard/Minimum parking dimensions shall be 2.5 X 5.0 metres
- For Primary and Secondary schools a bus circulation area may be required
Table 39: Car Parking Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residential</th>
<th>Car Parking Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dwelling houses</td>
<td>2 per House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartment/Flat</td>
<td>2 per apartment / flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest House/ B&amp;B</td>
<td>1 space per bedroom*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>1 spaces per bedroom*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostel</td>
<td>1 space per bedroom or 1 space per 10 bed dormitory*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motel</td>
<td>1 space per bedroom or 1 space per 10 bed dormitory*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caravan/Camping Site</td>
<td>1 space per pitch*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Facilities are required for the set down and pick up for cars and coaches

Note: Large complex development may be assessed separately with regard to the circumstances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commercial</th>
<th>Car Parking Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shops (&lt;250m² gross)</td>
<td>Retail Floorspace 1 space per 20sq.m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shops (250 – 1000m² gross)</td>
<td>Retail Floorspace 1 space per 14sq.m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shops (&gt; 1000 m² gross)</td>
<td>Retail Floorspace 1 space per 10sq.m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banks</td>
<td>1 per 14 sq.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Garages</td>
<td>To be determined by PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offices (Town Centre)</td>
<td>1 space per 25 sq.m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross Floorspace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offices (Office Park)</td>
<td>1 space per 20 sq.m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross Floorspace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Houses / Restaurants/Lounge Bars</td>
<td>1 space per 7 sq.m net floor area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot Food Take Aways</td>
<td>Minimum of 10 spaces per unit or 1 space per 10 sq.m of retail space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance Halls/ Ballroom/ Disco</td>
<td>1 space per 3 sq.m*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinemas, Theatres, Stadia</td>
<td>1 space per 5 seats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Centres: Public Areas</td>
<td>1 space per 25 sq.m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churches / Church Hall</td>
<td>1 space per 5 seats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitals / Nursing homes</td>
<td>1.5 per bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surgeries</td>
<td>2 spaces per consultants room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petrol Filling Station</td>
<td>2 spaces per pump plus requirement for other uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carwash</td>
<td>5 waiting spaces without interference to other spaces or the public road</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* For buildings which have mixed use the calculation will be based upon the highest demand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industrial</th>
<th>Car Parking Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Man. Ind./ Light Ind. Gross Floorspace</td>
<td>1 space per 50sq.m*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showrooms: Gross Floorspace</td>
<td>1 space per 50 sq.m*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warehouses: Gross Floorspace</td>
<td>1 space per 100 sq.m*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garages</td>
<td>1 space per 50 sq.m*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Facilities are required for the parking and turning of vehicles serving the development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Car Parking Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athletics Playing Field</td>
<td>20 per track/field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>1 space per 25sq.m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funeral Home</td>
<td>1 per 5 sq.m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>3 spaces per classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td>3 car spaces per classroom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Roscommon County Development Plan 2008 – 2014  Page 308
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Childcare facilities</th>
<th>1 car parking spaces per staff member + 1 car parking space per 4 children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Golf driving range</td>
<td>1 per 2m of base line/ per trap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf/pitch and putt courses</td>
<td>6 per hole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports Clubs incl. swimming pools, tennis courts. Etc</td>
<td>2 per court, 5 per 100m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stadia</td>
<td>1 per 3 seats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowling Alley</td>
<td>3 per Lane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pool / gym</td>
<td>1 per 10 sq.m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Centre</td>
<td>1 per 5 sq.m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bicycle Parking Standards**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relevant Cycle Parking Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dwelling houses and flats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supermarkets and large stores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warehousing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre, cinema, church, stadium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotels, guest houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lounge bars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function room, dance halls, clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note: one stand = 5 units**

Where the parking standards shown in the above table do not cover the type of development proposed, the requirement shall be calculated relative to the most appropriate standards.

### 12.25.1 Loading and Unloading

In addition to the general car parking requirements, service parking space may be required for cars or other vehicles necessary involved in the operation of the business or a particular building, e.g. delivery and collection of goods. In all major developments of an industrial/commercial nature, developers will be required to provide loading and unloading facilities sufficient to meet the likely demand of such development. Off-street loading facilities shall be designed to conform to the following requirements:

- Loading spaces may be enclosed within a structure, and must be if located within 15m of the curtilage of the residence where the use involves regular night operation.
- There shall be appropriate means of access to a street or road as well as adequate manoeuvring space.
- The maximum width of driveway openings at the street boundary shall be 7.6 metres and the minimum width shall be 3.6 metres.

Loading facilities shall be provided and maintained as long as the use exists. All reasonable precautions shall be taken by the owner or occupier to assure availability of required facilities to the delivery and pick-up vehicles. The Planning Authority may modify the requirements of loading and unloading facilities in any specific case where it appears that it would be in the interest of the proper planning and sustainable development of the areas to do so.

Identify areas for loading bay adequate to meet local business requirements and in order to assist with traffic flow in towns such as Castlerea.
12.25.2 Heavy Vehicles

The indiscriminate parking of heavy commercial vehicles or machinery in residential areas detracts greatly from the amenities of these areas and traffic safety concerns. The Planning Authorities will cooperate with all other bodies that exercise control over this type of parking, to eliminate the nuisance created.

12.25.3 Cycle Facilities

Cycle routes and bicycle parking shall be well provided for in new office, residential, retail and employment generating developments. The National Manual for the Design of Cycle Facilities in Urban Areas (2006) will be the basis for informing the design of cycle facilities. All long-term (more than three hours) cycle racks should be protected from the weather. From a security viewpoint cycle racks should not be located in out-of-the-way locations and shall be conveniently located, secure, easy to use, adequately lit and well posted.

12.26 TRANSPORT (To be read in conjunction with Chapter 6)

In order for the road network to fulfil its primary function in an era of rapid growth in car ownership and freight movement, it will be necessary to limit the number of accesses and junctions to the network. Failure to do so would result in:

- Traffic hazard and congestion;
- Reduction in carrying capacity;
- High maintenance costs;
- Inadequate return on public investment.

The Council will not approve a proposal that will create a serious traffic hazard. The positioning of the access, the ability to obtain adequate sight lines and the number of existing accesses and junctions on the stretch of road will all be taken into account. The standard of sight lines required will vary according to the type of road. In siting and designing the access, existing hedgerows and trees should be retained where possible. The replacement of hedgerows removed with indigenous species will be viewed favorably by the Council. Car parking standards (Table 39) will also be required to ensure that proposals do not result in cars or delivery vehicles parking on the public road.

12.26.1 National and Regional Roads

The National Road network should provide safe and efficient links between the principle towns and villages and thus contribute significantly to the economic prosperity of the county and state as a whole. Chapter 6: Rural Development; Section 6.3.5 Specific Policies provides specific policies and objectives with regard to development on National and Regional Routes.

The policy relates primarily to proposed developments located on national roads outside the 50 kph speed limit zones for towns and villages, but also addresses development proposals planned for other locations which, because of their potential to generate high volumes of traffic, could have significant implications for national roads in the area concerned. Development control shall seek to channel traffic from new development onto existing local roads and in this way use established access points to gain entry onto national roads and shall have regard to Policy Statement on Development Management and Access to National Roads published by the NRA (National Roads Authority) in 2006.
12.26.2  Sightlines

As per the current, NRA Road Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, the prescribed sight distance where the maximum speed limit applies, is measured 3 metres back from the carriageway edge and are as follows:

- County Roads: 90 metres
- Regional Roads: 150 metres
- National Roads: 230 metres

Further guidance concerning development on non-national routes is available in the publication “Aspects of Road Safety a County Engineers View” (IEI)

New houses in rural areas should seek to utilise existing access points onto roads in the interests of road safety to assist in maintaining the rural character of the area.

12.26.3  Public Transport

The council shall fully support the RTI scheme in Roscommon and acknowledges the contribution that the Artbus RTI (Ardcarne Rural Transport) and Aughrim-Kilmore RTI have made to rural communities in the north west and north east of Roscommon respectively and will encourage any attempts to expand this scheme to other parts of the county. Proactive efforts will be made by the council to consolidate development in areas which have a close proximity to public transport services.

The Council shall encourage developments that attempt to harness the benefits that would be derived from establishing new commuter rail links that may be proposed. The Council supports the creation of a Provincial Bus Service as proposed in the Regional Planning Guidelines for the West 2004 – 2016.

12.27  RENEWABLE ENERGY/EFFICIENCY (To be read in conjunction with Chapter 3)

The Council is committed to assisting in the development of alternative energy sources for environmental as well as energy policy reasons. Regard will be had to guidelines in dealing with wind energy proposals in so far as they impact on the proper planning and development of the area, as detailed in Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006), which superseded the 1996 guidelines. Regard will also be had to the ‘European Best Practise Guidelines for Wind Energy Development’, (European Wind Energy Association). The development of renewable energy sources, together with measures aimed at a reduction and more efficient use of energy, are priorities, nationally and at European level, on both environmental and energy policy grounds. The EU Directive on renewable energy requires that Ireland produce 13.5% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2010 which can assist the national need to curb greenhouse gases as required by the Kyoto agreement.

In particular, the following matters will be considered by the Council in the assessment of applications for wind farms.

1. The likely visual impact of the proposal.
2. The likely noise that will be generated by the proposed wind farm (both the mechanical noise from the turbines and aerodynamic noise from the blades).
3. The likelihood of electromagnetic interference with radio transmissions or with telecommunications.
4. The ecology, archaeology, geology and heritage of the area in which the wind farm is proposed.
5. The safety issues associated with the proposal including matters such as clearance from overhead power lines, the location of the site in proximity to roads and so forth.
6. The potential impact of the proposal on surrounding land uses.
7. The impact of the construction of the wind farm on access roads and local amenity.
Any proposals for the development of wind power will need to be supported by both a technical and an environmental statement prepared to an acceptable standard. In this regard applicant’s applying for wind energy developments are advised to consult with the Planning Authority before detailed proposals are drawn up. Consultations should also be held with the appropriate bodies, such as Department of Transport, Energy and Communications, the Irish Energy Centre and the ESB.

The following are some of the conditions which will apply where Wind Farms are permitted:

- Blades must rotate in the same direction
- Layout should be compact
- Solid towers should be used
- All grid connection within the site to be underground.
- Limited fencing to be permitted on any part of the site
- Access roads to be unsurfaced, where possible
- Structures must be decommissioned at the life expiry of the farm and the site reinstated

Conditions requiring bonds to ensure satisfactory completion will be attached to permissions.

**12.27.1 Micro Renewables**

Micro-renewables is the term used to describe a non-commercial renewable energy development, which provides heat and/or electricity to a single end user (e.g. a single dwelling house, office or community facility). While micro-renewables generally refer to the actual renewable energy technology/ development, micro-generation refers to the production of heat (less than 45 kilowatt capacity) and/or electricity (less than 50kW capacity) from zero or low carbon source technologies. Micro-renewables come in the following different forms.

- Micro Wind Energy
- Heat Pumps
- Solar
- Small scale biomass
- Small scale hydroelectricity

The council shall endeavour to support the utilisation of these technologies particularly considering the current backdrop of increasing energy prices. The power generated and associated carbon emission reductions per turbine are relatively small, but cumulative benefits could be significant. Proposed micro-renewable energies shall have regard to the guidelines set out in the *Micro-Renewables Consultation Paper 2006* by the DoEHLG.

**12.27.2 Energy Conservation**

Roscommon County Council is committed to encouraging more sustainable development through energy end use efficiency in all new building projects. Energy conservation measures should be incorporated into new development at a pre-design stage so maximum energy savings are yielded. The list below also contains options for existing buildings to improve the efficiency of their energy consumption. With the European Energy Performance of Buildings Directive coming into force, these measures should be implemented where appropriate and feasible. The council shall also be looking to the options as a means of meeting national and international target with regard to reducing greenhouse gas emission. The following objectives are to be pursued:

- Encouraging responsible environmental management in construction;
- Promoting sustainable approaches to housing developments by spatial planning, layout, design and detailed specification;
• Ensuring high standards of energy efficiency in all housing developments under its remit, and encouraging developers, owners, and tenants to improve the environmental performance of the building stock, including the deployment of renewable energy;
• Anticipating the operational implementation of the EU Directive on the Energy Performance of Buildings (EPBD) by encouraging the energy rating and labelling of building energy performance, so as to give visible recognition to such improvements.

Developers will be required to set a target in association with the following design and technology options, which will include renewable energy technologies as an initial step towards achieving greater environmental sustainability,

• Site layout and associated bio-climatic/ passive solar design measures;
• Enhanced levels of insulation in walls, roofs, floors, glazing and doors;
• Reduced uncontrolled air infiltration losses;
• Use of healthy and controllable ventilation systems;
• Heat recovery systems;
• Use of daylight;
• Water conservation measures;
• More sustainable building materials;
• Improved heat generation appliance efficiency, e.g. condensing boilers;
• Intelligent heating system
• Efficient provision of domestic hot water;
• Fuel switching to low or zero CO2 emitting fuels;
• Energy efficient lighting systems;
• Provision of appropriate group or district heating systems.

In the case of non-domestic buildings, additional options include:

• Heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems and controls;
• Electrical energy use including motive power;
• Efficient lighting systems and controls;
• Building Energy Management Systems;
• Occupancy controls;
• Monitoring and Targeting systems;
• Combined Heat and Power (CHP).

12.27.3 Planning Exemptions for Renewable Technology

New Planning Exemptions for Solar Panels and other Micro Renewable Technology were published in 2007 by the DoEHLG. These new proposed Regulations will provide exemptions from planning permission for solar panels, heat pumps, wind turbines and wood pellet burners - subject to certain conditions below as follows:

1. The installation of solar panels up to 12 sq. metres aperture area, or 50% of total roof area, whichever is less, will be exempted development subject to the following conditions:
   • A 15cm maximum distance between the plane of a pitched roof and the solar panel
   • A 50cm maximum distance between the plane of a flat roof and the solar panels, and,
   • That panels should be at least 50cm from the edge of the roof.

2. The exemptions provide for the same 12 sq metre aperture area in respect of free-standing arrays as applies to building mounted panels. Therefore, and as is the case with building mounted panels, arrays of this size and under are exempt from planning permission requirements, subject to some conditions.
These require that:

- Stand-alone panels must be no more than 2m in height,
- Such panels must be located behind the front wall of the house, and
- A minimum space of 25 sq m of useable space must remain for householders own private use.

3. **Wind Turbines** with a mast height of 10 metres and a rotor diameter of 6 meters will be exempt from planning permission requirements subject to the following conditions:

- The rotor diameter should be 6 metres or less
- There should be a 3 metre minimum clearance between the lower tip of the rotor and the ground
- The minimum distance of a wind turbine from its nearest neighbouring boundary would equal the total height of the turbine plus 1 metre
- Noise levels at the nearest neighbouring inhabited dwelling should be <43dB(A), or <5dB(H) above background noise
- Only one turbine is permitted within the curtilage of a house.
- The turbine must be situated behind the front wall of the house.
- All turbine components shall have a matt, non-reflective finish and the blade shall be made of material that does not deflect telecommunication signals.
- No advertising or logos may be placed or appear on turbines.

4. In the main, the conditions attached to the exemption for micro wind turbines are designed to ensure their safe installation and use. Issues such as visual amenity, noise, vibration, possible structural damage, safety and poor installation mitigates against the inclusion of building mounted turbines as exempted development. Nevertheless, it will still be possible to apply for planning permission for such turbines in the normal way.

5. The two types of **ground-source heat pumps** currently available are horizontal and vertical closed loop systems. Each system consists of lengths of pipe buried in the ground, either in horizontal or vertical trenches. The Regulations provide exemptions for both types. The only condition attached to the exemption for ground-source heat pumps is that on installation of the apparatus there should be no more than a 1 metre alteration to ground level.

6. **Air source heat pumps** are also exempt provided that:

- Noise levels at the nearest neighbouring inhabited dwelling are <43dB(A), or <5dB(H) above background noise.
- Air source heat pumps are at least 50 cm from the edge of roof, and
- The pump is located to the rear or behind the front wall of the house.

7. **Biomass**

Wood pellet boilers and stoves are becoming a very attractive option for householders and it is proposed that they be classed as exempted development. Where a flue is required, it should be constructed in line with existing building regulations. The addition of an extension or ancillary building onto premises to accommodate the biomass heating system is now covered by an amendment to existing exempted development classes.

8. Due to the nature of this micro-renewable technology and its potential impact on water sources, **small-scale hydroelectricity** will not be considered exempted development and such developments will continue to require planning permission. It should also be noted that where an individual wishes to install any class of micro-renewable technology that does not fall within the draft exemptions they may apply, as normal, for planning permission from their planning authority.
12.28 HERITAGE PROTECTION *(To be read in conjunction with Chapter 7 and 8)*

**12.28.1 Architectural Conservation – Protected Structures**

The inclusion of a structure in the Record of Protected Structures does not preclude appropriate use or development. However, no works which would affect the character of the structure, or any element of it, which contributes to its special architectural heritage interest may be carried out to a Protected Structure without planning permission. In assessing proposals for development affecting Protected Structures, it is the intention of the Council to require planning permission for:

- Works, both to the exterior and interior, which materially affect the character of a protected structure or any element of the structure which contributes to its special interest. What might be regarded normally as minor alterations to buildings may not necessarily be regarded as such in the case of protected structures.
- Such works can include:
  - Window replacement and fenestration changes.
  - Wholesale plastering/pointing/painting or painting of previously unpainted elements.
  - Modifications of brickwork and stonework.
  - The removal/alteration of architectural detailing including joinery and decorative plasterwork.
  - Inappropriate interior works including the removal of walls, the creation of openings and partitioning of rooms.
  - Works to roofs and railings involving the removal of original materials and replacement with inappropriate materials.

In considering applications for alterations and/or additions to a protected structure, the Council shall have regard to:

- The various elements of the structure which gives the protected structure its special character and how these would be impacted on by the proposed development.
- In the case of a proposal to materially change the use of a protected structure, the suitability of such use, having regard to its potential impact on the structure including works necessary to comply with Fire & Building Regulations that the proposed use change would give rise to:
  - the reversibility of the proposed alterations; and
  - in the case of buildings within the curtilage of a protected structure whether such buildings are of heritage value or not.

Windows made from aluminium, uPVC or similar material will not be acceptable in protected structures. In twentieth century buildings, the original twentieth century metal windows shall be retained.

A detailed conservation report shall accompany planning applications for works to protected structures. This report shall:

- Outline the significance of the building;
- Include a detailed survey of the building, including a photographic survey;
- Detail the proposed works it is intended to carry out; and,
- Contain a full assessment on the materials and method proposed to carry out these works, their impact on the character of the structure; and, the reversibility of the proposed works.

**12.28.2 Development in Architectural Conservation Areas**

In Architectural Conservation Areas the Council will have regard to the following:

- The effect of the proposed development on buildings and the surrounding environment, both natural and man-made.
• The impact of development on the immediate streetscape in terms of compatibility of design, scale, height, plot, width, roof treatment, materials, landscaping, mix and intensity of use proposed.
• New alterations and extensions should complement existing buildings/structures in terms of design, external finishes, colour, texture, windows/doors/roof/chimney/design and other details.
• In dealing with advertisements in Architectural Conservation Areas, the overriding consideration will be the enhancement and protection of the essential visual qualities of the area.

12.28.3 Development in Areas of Archaeological Potential

Items of archaeological value which are finite, non-renewable resources must be protected and maintained and the planning process is an essential mechanism for ensuring this protection. When considering development proposals within Areas of Archaeological Potential and on, or in close proximity to, sites of known archaeological significance, the Council will have regard to the provisions of Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994, or as may be amended from time to time.

It is the policy of the Planning Authority to ensure that all planning applications for new development, refurbishment and restoration works within identified Zones of Archaeological Potential and within close proximity to individual Recorded Monuments or Sites, are submitted to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG). On receipt, the DoEHLG shall provide advice and recommendations regarding treatment of archaeology as an integral part of the development process. The planning decision made by the Planning Authority will have due regard to the recommendations made by the DEHLG.

The Council will also have regard to the nature of sub-surface works that could impact on archaeological remains (e.g. foundation type and design, layout and location of services, road works, landscaping schemes etc.) The Council shall require the developer to submit a report prepared by a suitably qualified archaeologist on the archaeological implications of a proposed development involving works which could impact on archaeological remains. In appropriate circumstances, the Council when granting permission for development may impose conditions requiring
- professional archaeological supervision of excavations.
- funding by the applicant of archaeological assessment, monitoring, testing or excavation of the site and submissions of a report thereon, prior to the commencement of development.
- preservation of all or part of any archaeological remains on site.

12.29 TELECOMMUNICATIONS (To be read in conjunction with Chapter 3)

In order to facilitate the evaluation of development proposals for the erection of antennae and support structure with regard to the Department of the Environment and Local Government’s Planning Guidelines for Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures (1996), and applicant will be required to abide by the following:

• Submit a reasoned justification as to the need for the particular development at the proposed location in the context of the operator’s overall plans to develop a network in County Roscommon.
• A minimum distance of approximately 100 meters shall be provided between mobile communication masts/antennae and residential areas/schools/hospitals. This requirement shall not apply in the case of planning applications relating to sites where planning permission for such development has previously been granted.
• Co-location agreements are desirable for the granting of planning permission. Where new facilities are proposed applicants will be required to satisfy the Council that they have made reasonable effort to share facilities or to locate facilities in clusters.
• Indicate what other sites or locations in the county were considered.
• Telecommunication installations will not be favoured in residential areas, on land on which development may be restricted or prevented for amenity reasons or in parts of the town centre which are architecturally important.
• Telecommunications antennae should be located so as to minimise any negative visual intrusion on the surrounding area, especially on landscapes or streetscapes of a sensitive nature. The preferred location for telecommunication antennae is in industrial estates or areas zoned for industrial use or in areas already developed for utilities.
• Submit evidence of consultation with other operators with regard to the sharing of sites and support structures. Where it is not possible to share a support structure, the applicant should, where possible, share a site or site adjacent, so that the antennae may be clustered.
• Submit proposals to mitigate the visual impact of the proposed development including the construction of access roads, additional poles and structures.
• Furnish a statement of compliance with the International Radiation Protection Association (IRPA) Guidelines or the equivalent European Pre-Standard 50166-2.
• Planning permission for telecommunications antennae and support structures shall be for a temporary period of not more than five years.

If the proposal is contrary to the above, the Planning Authority will need to be satisfied that the installation is of strategic importance if permission is to be granted. The use of tall buildings or other existing structures is always preferable to the construction of an independent antennae support structure. Support structures should be kept to the minimum height consistent with effective operation and should be monopole (or poles) rather than latticed or square structure, unless such structures have a clear and / or simple design or alternatively where it is judged by the Planning Authority to incorporate high sculptural design quality.

12.30 EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY *(To be read in conjunction with Chapter 3)*

In the interests of seeking to maximise economic gain for the operations, the Planning Authority will seek to ensure that at locations where quarries are located full use is made of the economic potential of these sites through development of value added products such as the manufacture of concrete products and cement, subject to environmental considerations.

The Council recognises that the location of such industries is dictated by the availability of the resource and will consider each proposal on its merits. Where appropriate, the Council will require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement or report and permitted developments will be required to comply with strict environmental, rehabilitation and other conditions, including appropriate bonds to ensure compliance.

The Council recognises the importance of extractive industry in the economic life of the County, and importance as a valuable source of employment in parts of the County. It will also ensure that development for aggregate extraction, processing, delivery and concrete production is carried out in a manner which minimises any adverse impacts. In particular, the Council will seek to protect areas of geological or geomorphological interest, groundwater and important aquifers, important archaeological features and Natural Heritage Areas from inappropriate development, and that on completion of operations the site is left in a satisfactory state and can be of beneficial after-use. All extractive sites shall be subject to rehabilitation and landscaping programmes in phase with the extraction:

In line with the Quarries and Ancillary Activities Guidelines for Planning Authorities by the DoEHLG (2004), Environmental Management in the Extractive Industry by the EPA with the DoEHLG (2006) and the sustainable development of the extractive industry, the County Council will:
• The Planning Authority will encourage best practice in the quarrying/extractive industries and encourage the production of value added products derived from the raw materials and aggregates within the County.
• Ensure as a priority the protection of the environment, the landscape, residential and tourist amenity;
• Ensure, where extractive development is proposed in vulnerable and sensitive landscape areas, that protection of landscape character will be a priority, with the onus being placed on the developer to prove that the proposed development can be accommodated in the landscape without detracting from its character;
• Ensure, where extractive development is proposed in areas or near sites of nature conservation value, archaeological or historic importance, that protection of these environmental assets and resources takes precedence over the need to develop the mineral resource;
• Ensure that satisfactory provision is made for the acceptable and beneficial after use of extraction sites and that the landscaping and restoration of sites is carried out in a phased progressive manner to the highest standards in accordance with a scheme approved under the terms of the planning permission;
• Require the lodgement of security for the satisfactory restoration and after care of sites and for the maintenance, upgrading, strengthening and repair of an affected road network;
• Ensure that the full costs of remedial works and road improvements are borne by the developer;
• Ensure that the extractive industry minimises adverse impacts on the road network in the area and that the appropriate costs of road improvements which are necessary to facilitate extractive industries are borne by the industry itself
• Ensure that development sites have safe and efficient access to the public road network;
• Ensure the protection of all watercourses from pollutants associated with developments sites;
• Control and minimise the cumulative impact of development caused by the merging of contiguous development sites;
• Require the submission, in conjunction with the planning application, full details in respect of:
  - the exact boundaries of the proposed site and the scale and nature of extraction methods and activities.
  - dwelling houses within 1 km of the site
  - contours, depths of excavations.
  - access and public road network which it is proposed to use.
  - directions and phasing of workings.
  - watercourses and water table depth.
  - locations of stockpiles.
  - restoration, landscaping, proposed after use care and details of phasing of these works.
  - blasting.
  - fixed and movable plant.
• Facilitate applicants/developers in scoping Environmental Impact Statement.
• The PA shall consider the attachment of a planning condition requiring the developer to lodge a financial bond to ensure satisfactory reinstatement of the site following the completion of extraction, or to pay a contribution towards the cost of upgrading or repairing the local road network
• Ensure that the extractive industry does not adversely affect the environment or adjoining existing land uses
• Ensure that all existing workings shall be rehabilitated to suitable land uses and that all future extraction activities will allow for the rehabilitation of pits and proper land use management. Depending on the terrain, the existing character of the area, and the nature and scale of the aggregate extraction, a variety of after-uses may be possible. Secondary or recycled aggregates shall be the preferred method for land filling where appropriate. Each planning application will be considered on a case by case basis and where relevant will be dealt with under the Waste Management Strategy.
• Restrict extraction in close proximity to existing developments where potential sources of
nuisance are considered to be incompatible
• Ensure that the extraction of minerals or aggregates does not detract from the visual amenity
of the landscape. Where possible, existing landscape features such as hills and trees should be
used to screen new extractive industry development. Native species of trees and shrubs can be
planted to create food reserves for wildlife.
• All proposed extractive development proposals must be accompanied by detailed restoration
and after care plans (although in the case of sites with a long working life, it may be
appropriate to establish the need for such plans at the outset, while leaving the details to be
agreed either on a phased basis or towards the end of the extractive process). Progressive
restoration should be employed where relevant and practicable e.g. for sand and gravel pits
• All buildings, plant, internal roads and paved areas should be removed when extraction is
completed, unless otherwise agreed as part of the restoration plan. The PA shall promote a
variety of after-uses including farming, forestry, recreation/amenity uses, nature conservation
or industry. The acceptability of the proposed after-use shall be discussed with the PA at the
pre-application stage. The aspirations of the Local Community shall be taken into account
during this process
• Ensure that adverse impacts of the extractive industry on the road network are minimised and
that costs of road improvements necessary to facilitate extractive industries are borne by the
industry itself.
• Require the preparation and implementation of Site Restoration Plans, for each extractive
operation in the county. These plans to address issues such as: background to the site, ecology
of the site, restoration objectives, detailed method statement for management actions,
monitoring and long term management of the site. For successful restoration, steps must be
taken at every stage, from design through operation to decommissioning of the facility, to
ensure that restoration is integrated into the process

All proposed developments must comply with Environmental Management Guidelines in the
Extractive Industry, EPA 2006. Under Section 261 of the Planning and Development Act 2000-2004,
registration of all quarries operating in the Country is required. This section commenced with effect
from 28th April 2004 and it is intended to bring all quarries - including those that have claimed
exemption because they were operating before the 1963 Planning Act - within the planning system and
thus deal with concerns regarding unauthorised sand and gravel quarries in the country.

12.31 FORESTRY (To be read in conjunction with Chapter 6)

The Council recognises the economic and recreational potential of forestry. Forestry as a land use and
its ancillary development will be encouraged in suitable areas subject to such development not
interfering with significant views or prospects or being unduly obtrusive in the landscape. The Council
will co-operate with the Forest Service in promoting greater recreational use of state forests in the
County. In cases where forestry development is likely to adversely affect public roads, charges will be
levied on developers to defray the improvement/maintenance of such roads.

The introduction of large-scale forestry areas can have significant negative impacts on an area if they
are not in context with the surrounding environment. Forestry activities must be appropriate in terms
of nature and scale with the surrounding area, so they are not visually intrusive on the landscape or
cause damage to important habitats or the ecology of the area. In order to avoid acidification of our
soils and water course from coniferous plantations and to promote bio-diversity in so far as it is
possible, the Council shall encourage a diversity of species in afforestation proposals. This shall
require a proportion of all new forestry development to consist of native hardwood species in order to
extend the range of potential end uses and to reduce the potential for adverse impact on the landscape
and biodiversity resulting from monoculture.
12.32 INLAND FISHERIES

There shall be an emphasis on precaution for the protection of inland fisheries. Responsibility for the fisheries lies with the regional fishing boards and they shall be consulted for advice and direction during the planning of works in or near inland waters or anything that may affect the aquatic environment which consists of all streams, rivers and lakes. There is a requirement for the applicant to treat all streams, rivers, water courses and lakes shown on a 6” ordnance survey map as important features of the aquatic environment. Once constructed, works that are detrimental to fisheries are often difficult or prohibitively expensive to remedy and the advice of the fisheries shall be taken into account. This applies both to small scale and localized works or projects. It is acknowledged that Local Authorities have statutory powers to carry out work in or near inland water and all reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that fisheries are not damaged.

A good fishery environment requires well oxygenated water with varied flows and depths and clean gravel beds for spawning. Rivers should have well developed riffle (shallow section in the river where the water flows swiftly) and pool patterns and varied bank and stream vegetation which are necessary for successful reproduction, growth and shelter. Canalised rivers with uniform flows and banks devoid of vegetation are the least attractive habitat for fish.

12.32.1 River Drainage

Traditional drainage practices have resulted in the widening, deepening and straightening of rivers or streams and the creation of channels of uniform gradient and sections. This is highly destructive to fisheries and the following shall be taken into account:

- Flood relief can be handled in an environmentally sensitive way by constructing flood berms away from the existing channel or flood bypass channels. These techniques leave the existing channel and bank vegetation intact.
- If it is necessary to drain the existing channel consider a two-stage channel retaining as much bank vegetation as possible and avoiding disturbance of the existing river bed.
- If lowering the existing channel bed cannot be avoided. Maintain the original low flow channel width. Retain existing bankside vegetation on one side if possible. Restore ripples, pools, bed material and bank cover at the new drainage level. Store gravel bed material for reuse if not naturally available in the lower excavated bed.
- Spoil should not be deposited in mounds on the river banks except as a flood berm.

12.32.2 Other Works

Any development of the following works (including ancillary) wherein the aquatic environment may be affected shall have regard to Fishery Guidelines published in 1998 by the Department of Marine and Natural Resources including the following: river diversion/ road-works; bridges; culverts; fords; storage of fuels and chemicals; concrete and cement; and, amenity works.

The council shall also have regard to the prevention or mitigation of any impacts that a development may have on the aquatic environment where amenity is impinged, on especially in urban areas.

12.33 BONDING TO SECURE COMPLETION OF DEVELOPMENT

To ensure that permitted development is satisfactorily completed the County Council will require, as a condition of planning permission, that developers give cash deposits or submit a bond from an insurance company or other financial institution acceptable to the Council for the satisfactory completion of developments and their ancillary services. The bond or surety is to be submitted and in place before development is commenced and will be proportionate to the scale of the ancillary works and service works required as part of the development.
12.34  FUTURE PUBLICATIONS, STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

The Council will continue, during the course of the Plan period, to prepare and make available to the public technical and design guidelines on matters affecting the proper planning and sustainable development of the county.