

# Draft Westmeath County **Development Plan** **2021 - 2027**

## APPENDIX 3 – STRATEGIC POLICY GUIDANCE & LEGISLATION

In preparing the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027, regard has been taken of international, national, regional and local documents outlined below and other documents referred to throughout the Plan.

The Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) requires that a Development Plan shall, so far as is practicable, be consistent with National and Regional Plans, Policies and Strategies which relate to proper planning and development and is also required to have regard to Guidelines by the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government.

The Draft Plan's overall aims and strategic direction, including a settlement strategy of consolidated development, maximising efficient use of land, and integrating land-use and transportation, was conceived from consideration of these documents. This is not intended to read as an exhaustive list of relevant policy documents.

### International Context

#### Strategic Environment Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC)

The EU Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC), otherwise referred to as the SEA Directive, requires all Member States to systematically evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing a plan or programme prior to its adoption. SEA is a valuable tool that influences decision-making at each stage in the development plan process; to improve the environmental sustainability of the plan and to raise awareness of the potential environmental consequences of its implementation so that these consequences may be mitigated or avoided altogether. The preparation of an SEA is mandatory for the County Development Plan. An SEA Environmental Report has been prepared and has informed the preparation of this Draft Plan. The SEA Environmental is contained in Volume 3 of this Plan.

#### Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)

The Council Directive 92/43/EEC provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. Articles 3 to 9 provide the legislative means to protect habitats and species of Community interest through the establishment and conservation of an EU-wide network of sites known as Natura 2000. These are Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the Conservation of Wild Birds Directive (79/409/ECC). Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect Natura 2000 sites. Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment (AA):

“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [Natura 2000] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the

general public.” This requirement is implemented in the Republic of Ireland by the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI 477/2011) and the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2011. The DoEHLG published *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities* in December 2009 (revised in February 2010).

#### **Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)**

The purpose of the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) is to establish a framework for the preservation and, where necessary, the improvement of water quality of inland surface waters, transitional and coastal waters and groundwater. The prime and overriding objective of the Water Framework Directive is for all surface waters, artificial and groundwaters to achieve good water status by 2015. The WFD has been transposed into Irish Law by National Regulation S.I. 722 of 2003. The Directive contains a very large number of tasks in a variety of areas, including scientific/technical, information management, economic and administrative, which must be addressed by each Member State. The Water Framework Directive requires the preparation of a management plan for all waters in an area called a River Basin District. Parts of Westmeath are located in the Shannon River Basin District and the remainder in the Eastern River Basin District. The River Basin Management Plans describe in detail the status of all waters and protected areas. A programme of measures will be put in place to provide the works necessary to bring water bodies to good quality status. These measures have informed the preparation of this Plan.

#### **Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)**

The European Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks, aims to reduce and manage the risks that floods pose to human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity. The Directive applies to inland waters as well as coastal waters across the EU. The Directive requires Member States to carry out a Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment by 2011, in order to identify river basins and coastal areas at risk of flooding. Flood Risk Maps are required to be drawn up for such zones by 2013. Flood Risk Management Plans focused on prevention, protection and preparedness must be established by 2015.

### **National Policies and Strategies**

#### **National Planning Framework – Ireland 2040 (NPF)**

NPF 2040 – The National Planning Framework (NPF) is a national high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of the country up to 2040. It is a region focused strategy for managing growth and is linked to the National Development Plan which is a ten-year investment plan. It is a framework which will guide public and private investment, create and promote opportunities whilst protecting and enhancing the environment.

#### **National Development Plan 2018-2027**

This plan sets out the significant level of investment which will underpin the NPF and drive its implementation over the next ten years. This will guide national, regional and local planning and investment decisions to ensure appropriate regional development that will cater for increased population and ongoing employment development.

**Building on Recovery Infrastructure & Investment 2016-2021**

The Government's capital investment plan which sets out the framework for infrastructure investment in Ireland. Through this plan funding is allocated for specific infrastructural projects which are national priorities such as social housing provision, enterprise supports and smarter travel.

**Our Sustainable Future: A Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland 2012**

A medium to long term framework for advancing sustainable development and the green economy in Ireland. It identifies spatial planning as a key challenge for sustainable development and sets a series of measures to address these challenges.

**National Climate Change Adaptation Framework: Building Resilience to Climate Change 2012**

This framework provides the context for a strategic national adaption response to climate change in Ireland. It requires local authorities to integrate climate change adaption into development planning, to have a clear process to have objectives that protect against climate change and to embrace both mitigation and adaption measures across the major elements of such plans.

**Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015**

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 was a landmark national milestone in the evolution of climate change policy in Ireland. It provides the statutory basis for the national transition objective laid out in the National Policy Position (as per above). Further to this, it made provision for and gave statutory authority to both the National Mitigation Plan (NMP), published in 2017 and the National Adaptation Framework (NAF) published in 2018.

**National Climate Change Adaptation Framework 2018 and National Mitigation Plan 2017**

The National Climate Change Adaptation Framework 2018 and the National Mitigation Plan 2017 (NMP) sets out the national strategy to adapt to and reduce climate vulnerability, to reduce the vulnerability of the country to the negative effects of climate change and to avail of positive impacts. It also requires local authorities to prepare Local Adaptation Strategies.

**Climate Action Plan 2019 To Tackle Climate Breakdown**

Government's Climate Action Plan 2019 - To Tackle Climate Breakdown, reflects the central priority that climate change will have in Ireland's political and administrative systems into the future, setting out governance arrangements including the carbon-proofing of government policies, the establishment of carbon budgets, the strengthening of the Climate Change Advisory Council and providing greater accountability to the Oireachtas.

**Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future: A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020**

This policy recognises the vital importance of continued investment in transport, to ensure an efficient economy and continued social development, but it also sets out the necessary steps to ensure that people choose more sustainable transport modes such as walking, cycling and public transport. The document outlines 49 actions that form the basis of achieving a more sustainable transport future and are categorised as follows:

- Actions to reduce distances travelled by car.
- Actions to ensure alternatives are available.

- Actions to improve the efficiency of motorised transport.
- Actions to ensure institutional arrangements are in place to deliver the policy.

### **National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2009-2020**

This major Government Policy document sets out the Governments plans and actions to achieve its target of 20% energy efficiency savings across the economy by 2020, through energy efficiency measures. A strategy is outlined to reduce the country's dependency on imported fossil fuels, improve energy efficiency across a number of sectors and ensure a sustainable energy future. The Government's energy policy framework Delivering a Sustainable Future for Ireland – The Energy Policy Framework for 2007-2020 is designed to steer Ireland towards a new and sustainable energy future, one that helps increase security of supply, makes energy more affordable, improves national competitiveness and reduces our green house gas emissions. The public sector is to take a leadership role in this regard and achieve an overall energy efficiency improvement of 33%.

### **Government's White Paper 'Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future' 2015-2030**

This is an update of national energy policy and it sets out a framework to guide policy and the actions of Government up to 2030.

### **National Renewable Energy Action Plan (2010)**

This action plan sets out Ireland's targets for the share of energy to come from renewable sources in 2020 in the areas of transport, electricity and heating. The EU Renewables Directive 2009/28/EC promotes the use of energy from renewable sources. It establishes the basis for the achievement of the EU's 20% renewable energy target by 2020. Under the terms of the Directive, each Member State was set an individual binding renewable energy target, which will contribute to the achievement of the overall EU goal. Ireland was set a 16% target. The National Renewable Energy Action Plan sets out the Government's strategic approach and concrete measures to deliver this target which includes:

- 40% of electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2020
- 10% electric vehicles by 2020
- 12% of renewable heat by 2020

The Government is also looking beyond 2020 in terms of the significant opportunities to develop Ireland's abundant offshore renewable energy resources, including offshore wind, wave and tidal energy.

### **Actions for Biodiversity – Ireland's National Biodiversity Plan 2017-2021 (NBAP)**

This action plan sets out the objectives, targets and actions for biodiversity that will be undertaken by a wide range of government, civil society and private sectors to achieve Ireland's Vision for Biodiversity. This NBAP provides a framework to track and assess progress towards Ireland's Vision for Biodiversity to 2021.

### **National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020**

Building on the Smarter Travel Policy, this document sets a target of 10% of journeys to be by bicycle by 2020. The role of local authorities in implementing the necessary interventions to the physical environment to encourage cycling is set out.



### **National Broadband Plan 2012**

It is the aim of this plan to ensure all citizens and businesses have access to high speed broadband.

### **Water Services Strategic Plan; A Plan for the Future of Water Services 2015**

This document provides the first opportunity to consider at a national level the way that water services are delivered in Ireland. It sets out strategic objectives for the delivery of water services up to 2040.

### **River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021**

The RBMPs set out the status of waters in the River Basin Districts; the proposed environmental objectives and the draft programme of measures to achieve those objectives by 2021.

### **Tourism Policy Statement – ‘People, Place and Policy – Tourism to 2025’**

This was published by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in 2015 and sets out clear targets for the development of Irish Tourism. It is framed within the context of the tourism sector welcoming 10 million visitors by 2025 with associated revenues of €5bn and sustaining 250,000 persons in employment.

### **Realising our Rural Potential – Action Plan for Rural Development**

Through a framework of supports at national and local level, the Action Plan takes a coordinated approach across Government to both the economic and social development of rural Ireland. The Plan covers a three-year period and contains a series of time-bound actions which will be monitored and reported on regularly.

### **Regional Policies and Strategies**

#### **Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly: Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy (RSES)**

Sets out the key strategic assets, opportunities and challenges for the Northern & Western Regional Assembly as well as setting out the policy responses to ensure that people’s needs for housing, jobs, ease of travel and overall well-being are met up to 2030 and beyond.

#### **Midland Regional Planning Guidelines (2010-2022)**

Sets out the planning framework for the proper planning and development of the Midland Region.

#### **Waste Management Plan 2015-2021**

This plan sets out policy for future improvement and development of waste management as well as the means to implement and monitor progress.

#### **Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways (July 2018)**

This strategy aims to assist in the strategic development of nationally and regionally significant Greenways in appropriate locations constructed to an appropriate standard in order to deliver a quality experience for all Greenways users. It also aims to increase the number and geographical spread of Greenways of scale and quality around the country over the next 10 years with a consequent significant increase in the number of people using Greenways as a visitor experience and as a recreational amenity.

### County Westmeath Strategies and Plans

- Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024
- Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020
- Westmeath County Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019 (and any subsequent versions)
- County Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2020
- Westmeath Heritage Plan 2018-2023
- Westmeath Age Friendly Strategy 2018-2022
- Draft Westmeath Recreation and Sport Strategy
- Local Economic and Community Plan 2015-2020
- Westmeath County Retail Strategy 2019-2026
- Athlone Joint Retail Strategy 2019-2026

### Ministerial Guidelines

There are also a number of Guidelines for Planning Authorities issued by Government Departments as per Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). Planning Authorities are required to have regard to any guidelines issued and accordingly this Draft Plan has considered the following guidelines:

- Architectural Heritage Protection – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DAHG, 2011)
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities (DEHLG, 2009)
- Childcare Facility Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DHPLG, 2001)
- Core Strategy Guidelines (DEHLG, 2010)
- Development Contribution Scheme Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DECLG, 2013)
- Design Standards for New Apartments - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (March 2018)
- Development Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG, 2007)
- Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG, 2007)
- Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment (August 2018)
- Spatial Planning and National Roads, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DECLG, 2012)
- Landscape and Landscape Assessment-draft (DELG 2000)
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management (DELG, 2009)
- Provision of Schools and the Planning System (DEHLG, 2008)
- Quarries and Ancillary Activities (DEHLG, 2004)
- Retail Planning Guidelines, Guidelines for Planning Authorities and Retail Design Manual (DECLG, 2012)
- Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC): Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment, Guidelines for Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities (DEHLG, 2004)
- Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines (DEHLG, 2005)
- Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas and Urban Design Manual Best Practice Guide (DEHLG, 2009)
- Sustainable Urban Housing – Design Standards for New Apartments (DHPLG 2015)
- Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures Guidelines (DELG, 1996)
- Tree Preservation Guidelines (DHPLG)
- Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG, 2018)
- Urban Design Manual, A Best Practice Guide (DEHLG, 2009)
- Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines (DEHLG, 2019)

### APPENDIX 3

- Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future, A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 – 2020 (Department of Transport).





**WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL**  
Comhairle Chontae na hIarmhí

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