

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



# WESTMEATH HOUSING STRATEGY

## 2021-2027

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*Submitted to:*



**WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL**  
Comhairle Chontae na hIarmhí

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Overview

This Housing Strategy has been prepared by Future Analytics Consulting on the behalf of Westmeath County Council to meet the statutory requirements set out under Section 94 of Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended). Under Part V of the Act, each planning authority must prepare a Housing Strategy which will cover the period of its development plan (i.e. 2021 – 2027). Each strategy must have regard to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and must address the overall supply of housing within the administrative boundary of the Local Authority.

The key objectives of the Housing Strategy are:

- To identify the existing need and likely future demand for housing in the area of the County Westmeath Development Plan.
- To ensure Westmeath County Council provides for the development of sufficient housing to meet projected future demand over the lifetime of the County Development Plan.
- To ensure that sufficient zoned lands are provided to meet the needs of different households of all types and tenures.

The Housing Strategy is a critical component of the County Development Plan and plays a key role in translating national housing policies and housing supply responses to the local level. The Housing Strategy informs the policies and objectives of the Development Plan and provides details in relation to housing provision and its location and requirements for different house types, sizes and tenures and the requirements for residential zoned land. In order to ensure that the plan-making system is supported by a robust methodology to inform policies and funding initiatives around housing and associated land requirements, the NPF has introduced a new requirement for each Local Authority to develop a Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA).

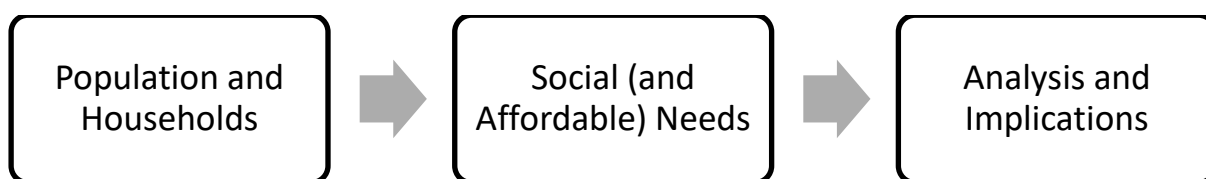
## 1.2 Methodology

Chapter 3 of this Development Plan identifies and reviews the key legislative and policy instruments relevant to the delivery of Westmeath's Housing Strategy 2021-2027. Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), hereafter referred to as 'The Act', requires that all Planning Authorities prepare Housing Strategies and incorporate them into their Development Plans. Section 10(1A) of The Act requires that Development Plans include a Core Strategy which shows that the Plan is consistent with both national and regional policy objectives. This is elaborated in Chapter 2 of this Development Plan.

Since the previous Housing Strategy was prepared there have been significant changes in planning legislation and policy. In particular, this Housing Strategy must be consistent with the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland region (EMRA).

In line with this, the NPF requires each Local Authority to undertake a Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA) which must underpin and support the preparation of housing strategies and all related housing policy outputs. The following sets out the sequential steps involved in the development and application of this HNDA model as summarised in Figure 1.

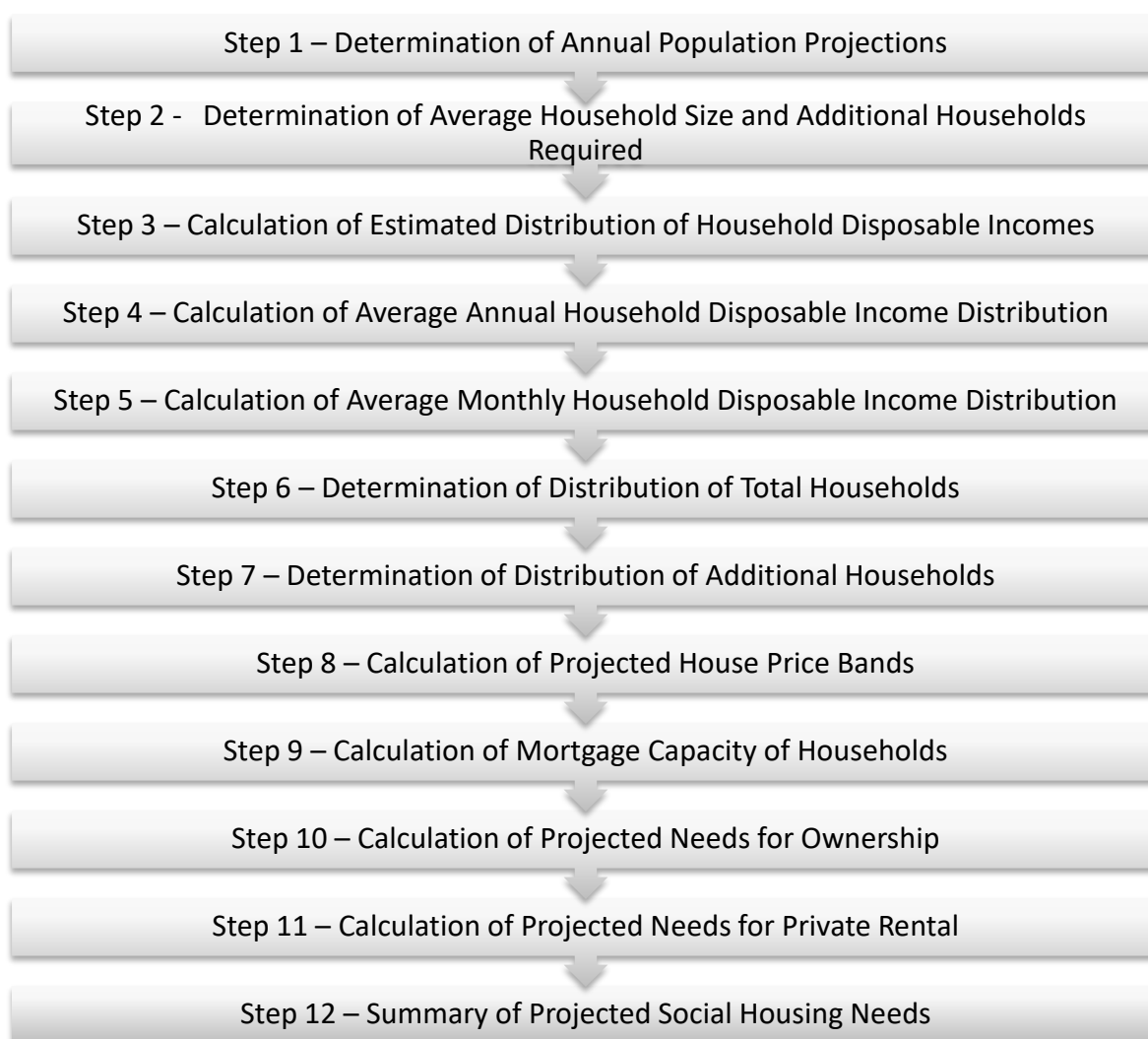




**Figure 1: Overview of the HNDA Model**

A number of population scenarios for the county have been investigated to 2031 (As outlined in Section 2.8.1 of the Core Strategy). The proportional intervention (Pi) scenario, referred to as 'Proportional Intervention Scenario C' was selected and applied to establish the population projections over the plan period.

Following this, an assessment of housing affordability has been undertaken, to support the identification of social housing needs for Westmeath County during the plan period as illustrated in Figure 2.



**Figure 2: Approach to Assessing Affordability, Supply and Social (and Affordable) Requirements**

Following this, analysis of progress towards key targets for social housing under Rebuilding Ireland has been set out in addition to specific examination of single rural dwellings within County Westmeath.

## 2 Current Context

### 2.1 Population

Census 2016 results show that Ireland's population stood at 4,761,865 in April 2016, an increase of 173,613 (3.8%) since April 2011. There were 200 urban settlements across the country, which together accommodated 63% of Ireland's population. County Westmeath is located within the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly area, the most populous region in the state with over 2.3 million people. Recent trends show that population growth is set to continue having regard to the Region's young demographic profile and a return to net inward migration as the Country returns to economic growth after a severe economic crash in 2008.

Within Westmeath, the county saw a population increase of 3% (+2,606 persons) between 2011-2016, as the population grew to 88,770 from 86,164. Athlone and Mullingar continued to experience steady growth between 2011 and 2016, with their populations increasing by 4.5% and 4.1% respectively. Both settlements now exceed populations of 20,000 with their combined population representing a total of 47.6% of the county's population. In 2011 this figure stood at 41.6%. Population change across the various tiers of the settlement hierarchy is set out in Table 1.

**Table 1: Population Growth in Westmeath 2011-2016**

Settlements	Population 2011	Population 2016	Growth Rate (2011-2016)
Athlone	20,153	21,349	4.5%
Mullingar	20,103	20,928	4.1%
Castlepollard;	1,042	1,163	11.6%
Moate;	2,731	2,763	1.17%
Kinnegad;	2,662	2,745	3.1%
Kilbeggan;	1,199	1,288	7.4%
Rochfortbridge;	1,494	1,473	-1.4%
Kilucan /Rathwire	1,226	1,370	11.7%
Clonmellon;	634	664	4.7%
Tyrrellspass;	506	483	- 4.5%
Delvin	697	740	6.1%
Multyfarnham,	376	420	11.7%
Ballymore,	433	483	11.5%
Ballynacarrigy,	287	277	-3.4%
Milltownpass*	-	299	-
Collinstown,	336	356	5.9%
Glasson,	198	207	4.5%
Ballinalack*	-	137	-
Castletown-Geoghegan.	150	141	-6%

In line with a prevailing state-wide trend of urbanisation, the county saw an increase in the share of population residing in urban areas. According to the CSO's parameters, a total of 47,785 people (53.8%) were living in urban settlements in Westmeath in 2016. 40,985 (46.1%) were living in smaller towns and villages, as well as in the rural remainder of the county. In 2011, census results showed a distribution between the urban and rural population as 48.54% and 51.46% respectively. Thus, Westmeath is becoming more urban in nature as a whole. The population growth in Westmeath for rural and urban areas from 2006 to 2011 was 6.2% and 11.2% respectively. Between 2011 and 2016, rural areas grew by 8.1%, while urban areas (i.e. Athlone, Mullingar, Kinnegad and Moate) grew by 14.2%.



In 2016 the age profile of the EMRA region is young with nearly half a million children or 1 in 5 people (22%) in the Region that are aged under 14 years of age. In Westmeath this figure is broadly similar, standing at 21%. However, as with the state, both the EMRA region and county of Westmeath are ageing. As the RSES notes, by 2031 there will be a significant increase in the regional population aged over 65 and as such, there is a need to plan for adequate healthcare, accommodation and services to enable independent living for as long as possible, encourage active lifestyles and address isolation for older residents.

**Table 2: Age Dependency Ratios (2016)**

	0-14 years	15-64 years	Over 65 years	Young Age Ratio (%)	Old Age Ratio (%)	Total Dependency Ratio (%)
	19,775	57,625	11,370	22.2	12.8	35

## 2.2 Existing Housing

### 2.2.1 Housing Stock and Supply

#### *Stock and Composition*

Census 2016 results record a total housing stock of 36,890 in Westmeath, an increase of just 231 on 2011 levels. In that time, the rate of vacant housing has fallen from 13.4% to 10.9%. This indicates the existing vacant stock is absorbing much of the growing need for housing in the county. Census 2016 data shows that there were 3,728 vacant units (this figure excludes vacant holiday homes) in the county in 2016. Vacancy rates in existing residential properties across the county are set out in Table 3. This distinguishes between vacant residential properties and holiday homes. The percentage vacancy rate provided is based on the 'Other Vacancy' category as a percentage of total housing stock and excludes vacant holiday homes. A summary of the information on the existing housing stock is provided in Table 3.

**Table 3: Existing Housing Stock (2016)**

County	Housing stock	Holiday homes	Other vacant	Temporarily Absent	Total vacancy	% Vacancy <sup>1</sup>
Westmeath	36,890	281	3728	1,023	3728	10.9%

Household size cohort represents the number of people per households. More than half of households in Westmeath in 2016 had just one or two persons living in that household as illustrated Table 4, however this generally compares to the national figures on household size cohorts.

**Table 4: Existing Household Size Cohorts (2016)**

No. People per Household	Households	Persons	Households %	Persons %
1-person household	7,482	7,482	23.5%	8.5%
2-person household	8,904	17,808	28.0%	20.3%
3-person household	5,703	17,109	17.9%	19.5%
4-person household	5,291	21,164	16.6%	24.1%

<sup>1</sup> The percentage vacancy rate provided is based on 'Other Vacancy' category as a percentage of total housing stock and excludes vacant holiday homes and those temporarily absent.

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5+ person household	4,433	24,324	13.9%	27.7%
Total	31,813	87,887	100.0%	100.0%

Compositionally, there were 31,813 households and an average household size of 2.76, which is marginally higher than the national rate of 2.75. 89.9% of households comprised of a house or bungalow while 8.5% were apartments in 2016. At a national level, 12% of all occupied households in Ireland were apartments. The NPF notes that while the overall proportion of households living in apartments is growing, we remain considerably behind European averages in terms of the numbers and proportion of households living in apartments, especially in our cities and larger towns. As such, the NPF states that apartments will need to become a more prevalent form of housing, particularly in Ireland's cities in order to more effectively address the challenge of meeting the housing needs of a growing population in our key urban areas.

### *Housing Tenure*

Home ownership remains the dominant tenure in Westmeath with 69.2% of households within this category in 2016. 47% of households pay a mortgage. 18.7% of households were in the private rental market; an increase of 151%, or 3,565 households since 2006. 8.0% (2,545) of households in the county were social housing.

**Table 5: Housing Tenure (2016)**

	Households	Persons	Households %	Persons %
Social Housing	2,545	7,231	8.0%	8.3%
Rented (Privately)	5,928	15,625	18.7%	17.8%
Owner Occupied (All)	21,915	61,727	69.2%	70.5%

**Table 6: Household Occupancy in County Westmeath (2016)**

County Westmeath	Owner occupied with mortgage	Owner occupied no mortgage	Rented from private landlord	Rented from Local Authority	Rented from voluntary body	Occupied free of rent	Not stated	Total
(No. households)	10,325	11,590	5,928	2,404	141	498	799	31,685

## 2.2.2 Unfinished Housing Developments

The 2017 National Housing Development Survey which tracks progress on unfinished housing developments since 2010 indicated that there are no unfinished developments in Westmeath. The report notes that in 2017 Westmeath resolved all 'unfinished' issues on estates.

## 2.2.3 Housing Permissions

Table 7 illustrates the number of granted planning applications in County Westmeath between 2006 and Q2 2019. 85% of these relate to houses and apartments while 15% relate to single one-off dwellings.



#### 2.2.4 Social Housing Stock

In accordance with Section 9 of the Housing Act 1988, housing authorities are required to undertake an assessment of housing need in their administrative area. The social housing stock of Westmeath County Council as of December 2019 is as follows:

- 2,100 directly owned,
- 873 on RAS or Leasing program,
- 907 active HAP tenancies,
- AHBs own 79 properties which have a total of 141 separate units of accommodation.

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**Table 7: Granted Planning Applications in County Westmeath during 2006 and Quarter 2 2019**

Granted Applications	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Q2 2019
Houses and Apartments	3110	2001	3022	578	175	308	363	97	65	354	293	322	350	138
One Off Houses	424	437	311	161	87	95	79	56	61	53	50	61	66	78
Houses and Apartments % of Total	88%	82%	91%	78%	67%	76%	82%	63%	52%	87%	85%	84%	84%	64%
One Off Houses % of Total	12%	18%	9%	22%	33%	24%	18%	37%	48%	13%	15%	16%	16%	36%
Total Number	3534	2438	3333	739	262	403	442	153	126	407	343	383	416	216



### 3 Housing Needs in Westmeath

#### 3.1 Determination of Annual Population Projections

**Purpose:** This is the determination of annual population projection scenario over the plan period.

A number of population scenarios for the county have been investigated to 2031 (As outlined in Section 2.8.1 of the Core Strategy). The proportional intervention (Pi) scenario, referred to as 'Proportional Intervention Scenario C' was selected and applied to establish the population projections over the plan period<sup>2</sup>.

The projected population growth over the plan period is outlined in Table 8.

**Table 8: Projected Population Growth**

Year	Population - Total	Percentage Increase	Annual Population Increase During Year	Total Population Increase 2021-2027	Total Population Increase 2016-2027
2006	79,346	-	-	-	-
2011	86,164	8.6%	-	-	-
2016	88,770	3.0%	-	-	-
2017	90,735	2.2%	1,965	-	-
2018	92,232	1.6%	1,497	-	-
2019	93,730	1.6%	1,498	-	-
2020	95,227	1.6%	1,497	-	-
2021	96,725	1.6%	1,498	-	-
2022	98,223	1.5%	1,498	-	-
2023	99,720	1.5%	1,497	-	-
2024	101,218	1.5%	1,498	-	-
2025	102,715	1.5%	1,497	-	-
2026	104,213	1.5%	1,498	-	-
2027	105,710	1.4%	1,497	10,483	16,940
2028	107,208	1.4%	1,498		
2029	108,705	1.4%	1,497		
2030	110,203	1.4%	1,498		
2031	111,044	0.8%	841	-	-

<sup>2</sup> A series of population scenarios were explored ranging from a purely demographic outlook ('Non Intervention') to various intervention scenarios, more closely aligned with NPF policy-based targets. For comparison, under the 'Non-Intervention' scenario, the population is projected to increase by a slightly higher amount; 10,717 during the plan period.

### 3.2 Determination of Average Household Size and Additional Households Required

**Purpose:** This is the determination of annual household increase based on the application of an average household size for the projected population.

The Census 2016 results indicate that Westmeath has a population to household ratio of 2.76, marginally higher than the state average of 2.75. However, the NPF states that this is expected to decline to around 2.5 by 2040, while also acknowledging that household sizes in urban areas tend to be smaller than in the suburbs or rural parts of the country. In line with this projected trend, a graduated average household size is utilised within this plan to 2040. As shown in Table 9, the average household size is thus projected to be 2.64 at the end of the plan period.

By applying the relevant household size to projected population increases, it is possible to forecast required household numbers to the end of the plan period (i.e. 2027). As summarised in Table 9, the number of households in County Westmeath is expected to increase from 31,813 in 2016. This will increase by 4,983 houses during the plan period, equating to a total of 40,008 in 2027, or the equivalent of a per annum average of 712 units.

**Table 9: Projected Housing Requirements**

Year	Population - Total	Number of Households (Private)	Average Household Size	No. Anticipated Houses Per Annum	Total Anticipated Houses between 2021-2027	Average Anticipated Houses Per Annum between 2021-2027
2006	79,346	-	-	-	-	-
2011	86,164	-	-	-	-	-
2016	88,770	31,813	2.76	-	-	-
2017	90,735	32,975	2.751671	1,162	-	-
2018	92,232	33,652	2.74	678	-	-
2019	93,730	34,336	2.73	684	-	-
2020	95,227	35,025	2.72	689	-	-
2021	96,725	35,720	2.71	695	-	-
2022	98,223	36,420	2.70	700	-	-
2023	99,720	37,126	2.69	706	-	-
2024	101,218	37,837	2.68	712	-	-
2025	102,715	38,555	2.66	717	-	-
2026	104,213	39,278	2.65	724	-	-
2027	105,710	40,008	2.64	729	4,983	712
2028	107,208	40,743	2.63	736	-	-
2029	108,705	41,485	2.62	741	-	-
2030	110,203	42,233	2.61	748	-	-
2031	111,044	42,734	2.60	501	-	-

### 3.3 Calculation of Estimated Distribution of Household Disposable Incomes

**Purpose:** This is the calculation of estimated distribution of household disposable incomes for each of the 10 household deciles in 2016.

Disposable income is the amount of income, after tax is deducted, that is available for spending and saving. It functions as an important measure of housing affordability<sup>3</sup> in an area i.e. the ability of a household to purchase their own home. This calculation has been based on the weekly and annualised disposable incomes at national level from the CSO's Household Budget Survey (from 2015-2016) and the adjusted to county level based on application of "inflater/deflator" rate. A deflator<sup>4</sup> of 0.893 has been therefore been applied to County Westmeath based on CSO report on County Incomes and Regional GDP from 2016 (i.e. the time of the survey).

Table 10 illustrates the outputs of this exercise, with findings disaggregated into ten income segments or 'deciles' and applied to the proportion of households in Westmeath within each decile. It indicates that in 2017 after taxes, about one third<sup>5</sup> of the households in Westmeath have an average annual disposable income of €21,980, or the equivalent of €422.70 per week.

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<sup>3</sup> Section 93 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, defines 'affordability' as "a person who is in need of accommodation and whose income would not be adequate to meet the payments of a mortgage for the purchase of a house to meet his or her accommodation needs because the payments calculated over the course of a year would exceed 35% of that person's annual income net of income tax and pay related social insurance..."

<sup>4</sup> The measure of price inflation/deflation in an area, relative to the national measure at that time.

<sup>5</sup> 1st, 2nd and 3rd Deciles

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Table 10: Calculation of Distribution of Weekly and Annual Household Disposable Incomes

Income Range	Average Weekly Disposable Income (State) (€) (2009-2010)	Average Weekly Disposable Income (State) (€) (2015-2016)	Percentage Change from 2009-2010 to 2015-2016	Assumed Annual Percentage Income Increase from 2010 to 2016	Adjusted Average Weekly Disposable Income (State) (€) (2017)	Percentage of Households in Each Category (State)	Average Annual Disposable Income (State) (€) (2017)	Westmeath County Deflator	Westmeath Average Annual Disposable Income (€) (2017)	Number of Households in Westmeath (2016)
1st Decile	188.91	197.40	4.5%	0.90%	199.17	9.83%	10,357.06	0.893	9,248.99	3,126
2nd Decile	300.98	324.40	7.8%	1.56%	329.45	10.57%	17,131.32	0.893	15,298.49	3,363
3rd Decile	431.28	465.86	8.0%	1.60%	473.33	10.47%	24,613.19	0.893	21,979.89	3,331
4th Decile	549.20	593.56	8.1%	1.62%	603.15	10.44%	31,363.73	0.893	28,008.21	3,321
5th Decile	669.46	725.85	8.4%	1.68%	738.08	10.25%	38,380.05	0.893	34,273.88	3,261
6th Decile	802.56	865.88	7.9%	1.58%	879.54	9.94%	45,736.24	0.893	40,843.06	3,163
7th Decile	972.03	1,026.46	5.6%	1.12%	1,037.96	9.62%	53,973.69	0.893	48,199.20	3,061
8th Decile	1,183.82	1,215.55	2.7%	0.54%	1,222.07	9.65%	63,547.44	0.893	56,748.68	3,070
9th Decile	1,472.66	1,473.25	0.0%	0.01%	1,473.37	9.61%	76,615.14	0.893	68,418.31	3,056
10th Decile	2,289.38	2,229.05	-2.6%	-0.53%	2,217.30	9.62%	115,299.70	0.893	102,964.12	3,061
<b>Total</b>			<b>5.0%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>		<b>100.00%</b>				<b>31,813</b>

### 3.4 Calculation of Average Annual Household Disposable Income Distribution

**Purpose:** This is the calculation of estimated distribution of annual household disposable incomes for each of the 10 household deciles throughout the plan period.

To inform the forward projection of future affordability in Westmeath, the baseline figures are then inflated annually using forecasted growth rates in relation to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This has been based on the estimated distribution of household disposable incomes for 2016 from the CSO's Household Budget Survey and historic and forecasted GDP growth rates during the plan period (from the Central Bank<sup>6</sup>, ESRI<sup>7</sup> and European Union<sup>8</sup>).

Based on the current economic outlook, GDP growth of 8.1%, 8.2% and 4.1% was considered during 2017, 2018 and 2019 respectively whilst 3.1% is expected during 2020 and 2021. As there are no forecasts on GDP growth available during the plan period, 2.9% GDP growth has been conservatively applied thereafter. The key outputs of this are shown in Table 11 which highlights a notable difference in average disposable incomes across the County for the 10 decile income ranges for each of the years during the plan period.

**Table 11: Calculation of Average Annual Household Disposable Income Distribution (€)**

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
% Growth	3.1%	2.9%	2.9%	2.9%	2.9%	2.9%	2.9%
1st Decile	11,074	11,395	11,725	12,065	12,415	12,775	13,146
2nd Decile	18,317	18,848	19,394	19,957	20,536	21,131	21,744
3rd Decile	26,316	27,079	27,865	28,673	29,504	30,360	31,240
4th Decile	33,534	34,506	35,507	36,536	37,596	38,686	39,808
5th Decile	41,035	42,225	43,450	44,710	46,007	47,341	48,714
6th Decile	48,901	50,319	51,778	53,279	54,825	56,414	58,050
7th Decile	57,708	59,381	61,103	62,875	64,699	66,575	68,506
8th Decile	67,944	69,914	71,942	74,028	76,175	78,384	80,657
9th Decile	81,916	84,291	86,736	89,251	91,839	94,503	97,243
10th Decile	123,277	126,852	130,530	134,316	138,211	142,219	146,344

<sup>6</sup> Central Bank of Ireland (2019) Quarterly Bulletin: QB4 – October 2019

<sup>7</sup> Economic & Social Research Institute (2019) Quarterly Economic Commentary: Autumn 2019

<sup>8</sup> European Commission (2019) Winter 2019 Economic Forecast: Ireland's GDP forecast to grow by 4.1% in 2019. Available from: [https://ec.europa.eu/ireland/news/winter-2019-economic-forecast-ireland-s-gdp-forecast-to-grow-by-4.1-per-cent-in-2019\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/ireland/news/winter-2019-economic-forecast-ireland-s-gdp-forecast-to-grow-by-4.1-per-cent-in-2019_en)

### 3.5 Calculation of Average Monthly Household Disposable Income Distribution

**Purpose:** This is the calculation of estimated distribution of household units for each of the 10 household deciles throughout the plan period.

This has been based on the same information Step 4 (Calculation of Average Annual Household Disposable Income Distribution) and scaled to provide the monthly (rather than annual) estimates of disposable income per household in each decile as described in Table 12.

**Table 12: Calculation of Average Monthly Household Disposable Income Distribution (€)**

Range	% Households	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
1st Decile	9.83%	923	950	977	1,005	1,035	1,065	1,095
2nd Decile	10.57%	1,526	1,571	1,616	1,663	1,711	1,761	1,812
3rd Decile	10.47%	2,193	2,257	2,322	2,389	2,459	2,530	2,603
4th Decile	10.44%	2,794	2,876	2,959	3,045	3,133	3,224	3,317
5th Decile	10.25%	3,420	3,519	3,621	3,726	3,834	3,945	4,059
6th Decile	9.94%	4,075	4,193	4,315	4,440	4,569	4,701	4,838
7th Decile	9.62%	4,809	4,948	5,092	5,240	5,392	5,548	5,709
8th Decile	9.65%	5,662	5,826	5,995	6,169	6,348	6,532	6,721
9th Decile	9.61%	6,826	7,024	7,228	7,438	7,653	7,875	8,104
10th Decile	9.62%	10,273	10,571	10,878	11,193	11,518	11,852	12,195

### 3.6 Determination of Distribution of Total Households

**Purpose:** This is the calculation of estimated distribution of total household units for each of the 10 household deciles throughout the plan period.

This has been based on the outputs of Step 2 (Determination of Average Household Size and Additional Households Required) in relation to number of private households per year during the plan period as well as the distribution of housing units in the State from the Household Budget Survey<sup>9</sup>. Table 13 identifies the distribution of total households across each of the ten deciles during the plan period.

**Table 13: Determination of Distribution of Total Households per decile**

Range	% Households	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
1st Decile	9.83%	3,510	3,579	3,648	3,718	3,788	3,859	3,931
2nd Decile	10.57%	3,776	3,850	3,925	4,000	4,076	4,152	4,229
3rd Decile	10.47%	3,740	3,813	3,887	3,961	4,036	4,112	4,189
4th Decile	10.44%	3,729	3,802	3,876	3,950	4,025	4,101	4,177
5th Decile	10.25%	3,661	3,733	3,805	3,878	3,952	4,026	4,101
6th Decile	9.94%	3,552	3,621	3,691	3,762	3,833	3,905	3,978
7th Decile	9.62%	3,437	3,504	3,572	3,640	3,709	3,779	3,849
8th Decile	9.65%	3,447	3,515	3,583	3,652	3,721	3,791	3,861
9th Decile	9.61%	3,431	3,499	3,567	3,635	3,704	3,773	3,843
10th Decile	9.62%	3,437	3,504	3,572	3,640	3,709	3,779	3,849
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>35,720</b>	<b>36,420</b>	<b>37,126</b>	<b>37,837</b>	<b>38,555</b>	<b>39,278</b>	<b>40,008</b>

<sup>9</sup> CSO (2017) Household Budget Survey 2015-2016 - Table HS029: Households in sample by deciles and year.



### 3.7 Determination of Distribution of Additional Households

**Purpose:** This is the calculation of estimated distribution of additional anticipated household units for each of the 10 household deciles throughout the plan period.

This has been based on the outputs of Step 2 (Determination of Average Household Size and Additional Households Required) in relation to number of anticipated households per year during the plan period as well as the distribution of housing units in the State from the Household Budget Survey<sup>9</sup>. Table 14 identifies the distribution of additional households across each of the ten deciles that are anticipated during the plan period.

**Table 14: Determination of Distribution of Additional Households per decile**

Range	% Households	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
1st Decile	9.83%	68	69	69	70	70	71	72
2nd Decile	10.57%	73	74	75	75	76	76	77
3rd Decile	10.47%	73	73	74	75	75	76	76
4th Decile	10.44%	73	73	74	74	75	76	76
5th Decile	10.25%	71	72	72	73	74	74	75
6th Decile	9.94%	69	70	70	71	71	72	73
7th Decile	9.62%	67	67	68	68	69	70	70
8th Decile	9.65%	67	68	68	69	69	70	70
9th Decile	9.61%	67	67	68	68	69	70	70
10th Decile	9.62%	67	67	68	68	69	70	70
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>695</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>706</b>	<b>712</b>	<b>717</b>	<b>724</b>	<b>729</b>

### 3.8 Calculation of Projected House Price Bands

**Purpose:** This is the calculation of projected house price bands based on the percentage split of the 8 price bands.

This section sets out background information on house price trends in the current market. To ensure the most up to date market context, 2019 has been selected as the baseline year and property transactions during the year have been considered representative to understand house prices and the distribution of housing units per price band. As demonstrated in Table 15, 871 transactions occurred in County Westmeath across the eight price bands during 2019.

**Table 15: House sales during 2019<sup>10</sup>**

Value Distribution (2019)	Number of Transactions	% of total
0-100,000	104	11.9%
100,000-150,000	283	32.5%
150,000-200,000	224	25.7%
200,000-250,000	138	15.8%
250,000-300,000	64	7.3%
300,000-350,000	21	2.4%
350,000-400,000	17	2.0%
400000+	20	2.3%

<sup>10</sup> Residential Property Price Register (2019) Transactional data for 2019 (to 2 December 2019).

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As part of the price assessment and projection for Westmeath, it is important to determine, generally, current house price sales and how they may fluctuate over the plan period. For this reason, historic house prices have been investigated through analysis of the Residential Property Price Register<sup>11</sup>, CSO<sup>12</sup> and Daft data<sup>13</sup> in order to contextualise general trends and how they can influence the market. As illustrated in Table 16, the recession and subsequent period of economic growth has resulted in large variances in house prices and in year-on-year growth metrics.

**Table 16: Historic year-on-year change in house price metrics in County Westmeath**

Year	Annual change in average house sales price 11	Annual change in average house sales price12	Annual change in median house sales price12	Annual change in average house sales price13
2011	-15.6%	-15.5%	-27.91%	-15.5%
2012	-17.3%	-17.4%	-21.04%	-6.2%
2013	-3.9%	12.3%	2.26%	-6.6%
2014	0.3%	6.5%	9.78%	6.5%
2015	22.2%	4.6%	4.11%	6.0%
2016	0.3%	15.5%	12.68%	11.3%
2017	22.0%	12.9%	15.00%	12.9%
2018	9.9%	15.1%	31.74%	9.4%

Given the context of improving economic conditions and its associated influence on house prices, it is anticipated that the distribution per price band will continue to change during the plan period as demonstrated in Table 17. The distribution of the price of units in the housing market during 2013 – 2018 in County Westmeath has been reviewed. It is assumed that a gradual shift towards the composition more commonly seen during 2006-2008 will arise (i.e. incremental year on year change from the lower price bands towards the higher price bands).

**Table 17: Projected distribution of houses by house price bands**

Projected Distribution by Price Bands														
Price Band	Annual % Change	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
0 -100,000	-0.80%	11.9%	11.1%	10.3%	9.6%	8.8%	8.0%	7.2%	6.4%	5.6%	4.8%	4.0%	3.2%	2.4%
100,000-150,000	-2.17%	32.5%	30.3%	28.2%	26.0%	23.8%	21.7%	19.5%	17.3%	15.2%	13.0%	10.8%	8.7%	6.5%
150,000-200,000	0.86%	25.7%	26.6%	27.4%	28.3%	29.1%	30.0%	30.9%	31.7%	32.6%	33.4%	34.3%	35.1%	36.0%
200,000-250,000	0.53%	15.8%	16.4%	16.9%	17.4%	18.0%	18.5%	19.0%	19.5%	20.1%	20.6%	21.1%	21.7%	22.2%
250,000-300,000	0.24%	7.3%	7.6%	7.8%	8.1%	8.3%	8.6%	8.8%	9.1%	9.3%	9.6%	9.8%	10.0%	10.3%
300,000-350,000	0.44%	2.4%	2.9%	3.3%	3.7%	4.2%	4.6%	5.1%	5.5%	6.0%	6.4%	6.9%	7.3%	7.7%
350,000-400,000	0.44%	2.0%	2.4%	2.8%	3.3%	3.7%	4.2%	4.6%	5.1%	5.5%	5.9%	6.4%	6.8%	7.3%
400,000+	0.44%	2.3%	2.7%	3.2%	3.6%	4.1%	4.5%	5.0%	5.4%	5.8%	6.3%	6.7%	7.2%	7.6%

This information has supported the calculation of projected house price bands based on the percentage split of the 8 price bands as outlined in Table 18. This reflects market changes to the end of the plan period including:

- Changing distribution of housing units per price band (as outlined in Table 17); and
- Annual increase in average house prices of between 7% (in 2020) to 5% (from 2022 onwards). This forecast assumes a slight reduction on existing levels of house price inflation (2014-Q3 2019).

<sup>11</sup> Residential Property Price Register (2019) Data for the period 2010 – 2019 was downloaded on 2 December 2019.

<sup>12</sup> CSO (2019) Residential Property Transactions Data – Table HPM02 and HPA02 data for the period 2010 – 2018 was reviewed.

<sup>13</sup> Daft Quarterly Reports were downloaded for Q4 during the period 2011 – 2018 whilst Q3 report for 2019 was reviewed

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Table 18: Calculation of Projected House Price Bands

Year	Average Price Increase	1st Band (Below X1)	2nd Band (X1 – X2)		3rd Band (X2 – X3)		4th Band (X3 – X4)		5th Band (X4 – X5)		6th Band (X5 – X6)		7th Band (X6 – X7)		8th Band (Above X7)
2019	8.0%	100,000	100,001	150,000	150,001	200,000	200,001	250,000	250,001	300,000	300,001	350,000	350,001	400,000	400,001
2020	7.0%	107,000	107,001	160,500	160,501	214,000	214,001	267,500	267,501	321,000	321,001	374,500	374,501	428,000	428,001
<b>2021</b>	6.0%	113,420	113,421	170,130	170,131	226,840	226,841	283,550	283,551	340,260	340,261	396,970	396,971	453,680	453,681
<b>2022</b>	5.0%	119,091	119,092	178,637	178,638	238,182	238,183	297,728	297,729	357,273	357,274	416,819	416,820	476,364	476,365
<b>2023</b>	5.0%	125,046	125,047	187,568	187,570	250,091	250,092	312,614	312,615	375,137	375,138	437,659	437,661	500,182	500,183
<b>2024</b>	5.0%	131,298	131,299	196,947	196,948	262,596	262,597	328,245	328,246	393,893	393,895	459,542	459,544	525,191	525,193
<b>2025</b>	5.0%	137,863	137,864	206,794	206,795	275,725	275,727	344,657	344,658	413,588	413,590	482,520	482,521	551,451	551,452
<b>2026</b>	5.0%	144,756	144,757	217,134	217,135	289,512	289,513	361,890	361,891	434,268	434,269	506,645	506,647	579,023	579,025
<b>2027</b>	5.0%	151,994	151,995	227,990	227,992	303,987	303,989	379,984	379,986	455,981	455,982	531,978	531,979	607,975	607,976

### 3.9 Calculation of Mortgage Capacity of Households

**Purpose:** This is the determination as to whether households in each decile can qualify for a mortgage (under the current Central Bank rules) that enables them to purchase a house in the lowest price band.

The Central Bank have measures in place that set limits on size of mortgages that consumers can borrow through the use of loan-to-value (LTV)<sup>14</sup> and loan-to-income (LTI)<sup>15</sup> limits. This approach therefore establishes whether households could qualify for a mortgage that would enable them to purchase a house in the lowest price band under these rules.

The key variables used to determine whether households in a decile can qualify for a mortgage are therefore a LTV ratio of 0.90, a maximum LTI ratio of 3.5 and the upper value of the first house price band for that year. As outlined in Table 19, it has determined that during the plan period, the first three deciles do not have sufficient income to meet the Central Bank rules to as 3.5 times their gross income is less than 90% of the value of purchase a house in the lowest projected price band and hence they do not qualify for a mortgage and progress to private rental (See Step 11). Those households that can qualify for a mortgage progress to the needs assessment for ownership (See Step 10).

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<sup>14</sup> The LTV limit requires you to have a minimum deposit before you can get a mortgage. First-time buyers are allowed up to 90% LTV, meaning they're required to provide a minimum deposit of 10% upfront for any property.

<sup>15</sup> The LTI limit restricts the amount of money you can borrow to a maximum of 3.5 times your gross income.

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Table 19: Determination of Mortgage Qualification for Households

Year	Range	Additional Anticipated Households	Upper Value of Cheapest House Price Band	Minimum LTV (90% of Cheapest House Price)	Maximum LTI (3.5 LTI)	Mortgage Qualification	Additional Anticipated Households That Qualify for a Mortgage	Additional Anticipated Households That Do Not Qualify for a Mortgage
2021	1st Decile	68	113,420	102,078	37,441	FAIL	0	68
	2nd Decile	73			62,635	FAIL	0	73
	3rd Decile	73			90,861	FAIL	0	73
	4th Decile	73			118,898	PASS	73	0
	5th Decile	71			151,128	PASS	71	0
	6th Decile	69			186,849	PASS	69	0
	7th Decile	67			228,257	PASS	67	0
	8th Decile	67			278,344	PASS	67	0
	9th Decile	67			355,007	PASS	67	0
	10th Decile	67			581,715	PASS	67	0
		695					480	214
2022	1st Decile	69	119,091	107,182	38,526	FAIL	0	69
	2nd Decile	74			64,451	FAIL	0	74
	3rd Decile	73			93,496	FAIL	0	73
	4th Decile	73			122,346	PASS	73	0
	5th Decile	72			155,511	PASS	72	0
	6th Decile	70			192,268	PASS	70	0
	7th Decile	67			234,877	PASS	67	0
	8th Decile	68			286,416	PASS	68	0
	9th Decile	67			365,303	PASS	67	0

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	10th Decile	67			598,585	PASS	67	0
		700					<b>484</b>	<b>216</b>
<b>2023</b>	1st Decile	69	125,046	112,541	39,644	FAIL	0	69
	2nd Decile	75			66,320	FAIL	0	75
	3rd Decile	74			96,207	FAIL	0	74
	4th Decile	74			125,895	PASS	74	0
	5th Decile	72			160,020	PASS	72	0
	6th Decile	70			197,844	PASS	70	0
	7th Decile	68			241,688	PASS	68	0
	8th Decile	68			294,722	PASS	68	0
	9th Decile	68			375,896	PASS	68	0
	10th Decile	68			615,944	PASS	68	0
		<b>706</b>					<b>488</b>	<b>218</b>
<b>2024</b>	1st Decile	70	131,298	118,168	40,793	FAIL	0	70
	2nd Decile	75			68,244	FAIL	0	75
	3rd Decile	75			98,997	FAIL	0	75
	4th Decile	74			129,545	PASS	74	0
	5th Decile	73			164,661	PASS	73	0
	6th Decile	71			203,581	PASS	71	0
	7th Decile	68			248,697	PASS	68	0
	8th Decile	69			303,269	PASS	69	0
	9th Decile	68			386,797	PASS	68	0
	10th Decile	68			633,806	PASS	68	0
		<b>712</b>					<b>492</b>	<b>220</b>
<b>2025</b>	1st Decile	70	137,863	124,076	41,976	FAIL	0	70
	2nd Decile	76			70,223	FAIL	0	76



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	3rd Decile	75			101,868	FAIL	0	75
	4th Decile	75			133,302	PASS	75	0
	5th Decile	74			169,436	PASS	74	0
	6th Decile	71			209,485	PASS	71	0
	7th Decile	69			255,910	PASS	69	0
	8th Decile	69			312,064	PASS	69	0
	9th Decile	69			398,014	PASS	69	0
	10th Decile	69			652,187	PASS	69	0
		<b>717</b>					<b>496</b>	<b>221</b>
<b>2026</b>	1st Decile	71	144,756	130,280	43,194	FAIL	0	71
	2nd Decile	76			72,259	FAIL	0	76
	3rd Decile	76			104,822	FAIL	0	76
	4th Decile	76			137,168	PASS	76	0
	5th Decile	74			174,350	PASS	74	0
	6th Decile	72			215,560	PASS	72	0
	7th Decile	70			263,331	PASS	70	0
	8th Decile	70			321,114	PASS	70	0
	9th Decile	70			409,557	PASS	70	0
	10th Decile	70			671,100	PASS	70	0
		<b>724</b>					<b>500</b>	<b>223</b>
<b>2027</b>	1st Decile	72	151,994	136,794	44,446	FAIL	0	72
	2nd Decile	77			74,355	FAIL	0	77
	3rd Decile	76			107,862	FAIL	0	76
	4th Decile	76			141,146	PASS	76	0
	5th Decile	75			179,406	PASS	75	0
	6th Decile	73			221,811	PASS	73	0

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	7th Decile	70			270,968	PASS	70	0
	8th Decile	70			330,426	PASS	70	0
	9th Decile	70			421,434	PASS	70	0
	10th Decile	70			690,562	PASS	70	0
		<b>729</b>					<b>504</b>	<b>225</b>

### 3.10 Calculation of Projected Needs for Ownership

#### 3.10.1 Application and Variables of the Annuity Formula

**Purpose:** This is the calculation of the approximate affordable house price for each of the ten deciles per year during the plan period based on the application of the annuity formula.

The projections for household income during the plan period are applied to the DoECLG Model Housing Strategy annuity formula. This formula determines the maximum affordable house price for each of the ten income deciles based on a number of evidence-based variables that have been established through analysis of historic mortgage data from the Central Bank<sup>16</sup>. The key variables used in the annuity formula include an affordability threshold of a maximum of 35% expenditure of household income on mortgage costs, a loan to value ratio of 0.90, an annual interest rate (APR) of 3%, and a loan term of 29 years.

It should be noted, that whilst some of the lower deciles have a maximum affordable house price that is higher than the lowest price band for that year, as outlined in the preceding step, these households would not qualify for a mortgage due to the current Central Bank rules.

**Table 20: Calculation of Housing Affordability**

Range	% Households	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
1st Decile	9.83%	83,342	85,759	88,246	90,806	93,439	96,149	98,937
2nd Decile	10.57%	137,854	141,852	145,966	150,199	154,555	159,037	163,649
3rd Decile	10.47%	198,060	203,804	209,714	215,796	222,054	228,494	235,120
4th Decile	10.44%	252,381	259,700	267,232	274,981	282,956	291,161	299,605
5th Decile	10.25%	308,841	317,797	327,014	336,497	346,255	356,297	366,629
6th Decile	9.94%	368,036	378,709	389,691	400,992	412,621	424,587	436,900
7th Decile	9.62%	434,322	446,917	459,878	473,214	486,937	501,058	515,589
8th Decile	9.65%	511,361	526,190	541,450	557,152	573,309	589,935	607,043
9th Decile	9.61%	616,515	634,394	652,792	671,723	691,203	711,248	731,874
10th Decile	9.62%	927,807	954,713	982,400	1,010,890	1,040,205	1,070,371	1,101,412

#### 3.10.2 Calculation of Projected Needs for Home Ownership

**Purpose:** This is the calculation of the households surplus and/or deficit per price band with respect to the number of households that can qualify for a mortgage.

Based on the determination of additional households required (i.e. outputs from Step 7 – Refer to Table 9 and Table 17), the projected house price bands (i.e. outputs from Step 8 – Refer to Table 18), the determination of households that can qualify for a mortgage (Refer to Table 19) and the calculation of housing affordability (i.e. outputs from Step 9 – Refer to Table 20), the housing surplus/deficit per price band has been determined as set out in Table 21.

A surplus in a given price band has been identified where the number of housing units anticipated is greater than the number of households that qualify for a mortgage and have the ability to purchase a home at the upper value of that house price band. A deficit has been identified in a given price band where there is a fewer

households anticipated compared to the number of households that qualify for a mortgage and have the ability to purchase a home at the upper value of that house price band.

Throughout the plan period, there is generally a housing surplus in the lower price bands and housing deficit in the higher price bands as identified in Table 21. However, a sufficient number of houses is anticipated overall as households in the upper price bands can purchase a house in a lower price band. Additionally, the bottom three deciles will not qualify for a mortgage, therefore there will be sufficient number of houses to those households that qualify for a mortgage and have the ability to purchase a home at the upper value of that house price band.

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Table 21: Calculation of Surplus/Deficit in Housing Available to Additional Households That Qualify For a Mortgage

Year	Range	Additional Anticipated Households That Qualify for a Mortgage	Running Total	Affordability Threshold	Household Price Band(s)	Upper Value of Price Band	Households That Qualify for a Mortgage Able to Purchase at Upper Value	% of Housing Units Anticipated per Price Band	Housing Units Anticipated per Price Band	Housing Surplus (+) or Deficit (-) per Price Band
2021	1st Decile	0	0	83,342	1st Band	113,420	0	10.3%	50	50
	2nd Decile	0	0	137,854	2nd Band	170,130	0	28.2%	135	135
	3rd Decile	0	0	198,060	3rd Band	226,840	65	27.4%	132	67
	4th Decile	73	73	252,381	4th Band	283,550	67	16.9%	81	14
	5th Decile	71	144	308,841	5th Band	340,260	65	7.8%	38	-27
	6th Decile	69	213	368,036	6th Band	396,970	59	3.3%	16	-43
	7th Decile	67	280	434,322	7th Band	453,680	52	2.8%	14	-38
	8th Decile	67	347	511,361	8th Band	None	-	3.2%	15	-
	9th Decile	67	413	616,515						
	10th Decile	67	480	927,807						
		<b>480</b>					<b>308</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>157</b>
2022	1st Decile	0	0	85,759	1st Band	119,091	0	9.6%	46	46
	2nd Decile	0	0	141,852	2nd Band	178,637	0	26.0%	126	126
	3rd Decile	0	0	203,804	3rd Band	238,182	67	28.3%	137	70
	4th Decile	73	73	259,700	4th Band	297,728	69	17.4%	84	16
	5th Decile	72	145	317,797	5th Band	357,273	67	8.1%	39	-28
	6th Decile	70	215	378,709	6th Band	416,819	61	3.7%	18	-42
	7th Decile	67	282	446,917	7th Band	476,364	53	3.3%	16	-38
	8th Decile	68	350	526,190	8th Band	None	-	3.6%	18	-
	9th Decile	67	417	634,394						

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	10th Decile	67	484	954,713						
		<b>484</b>					<b>316</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>484</b>	<b>150</b>
2023	1st Decile	0	0	88,246	1st Band	125,046	0	8.8%	43	43
	2nd Decile	0	0	145,966	2nd Band	187,568	0	23.8%	116	116
	3rd Decile	0	0	209,714	3rd Band	250,091	69	29.1%	142	73
	4th Decile	74	74	267,232	4th Band	312,614	71	18.0%	88	17
	5th Decile	72	146	327,014	5th Band	375,137	69	8.3%	41	-28
	6th Decile	70	216	389,691	6th Band	437,659	62	4.2%	20	-42
	7th Decile	68	284	459,878	7th Band	500,182	55	3.7%	18	-37
	8th Decile	68	352	541,450	8th Band	None	-	4.1%	20	-
	9th Decile	68	420	652,792						
	10th Decile	68	488	982,400						
		<b>488</b>					<b>325</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>488</b>	<b>143</b>
2024	1st Decile	0	0	90,806	1st Band	131,298	0	8.0%	39	39
	2nd Decile	0	0	150,199	2nd Band	196,947	0	21.7%	107	107
	3rd Decile	0	0	215,796	3rd Band	262,596	71	30.0%	148	77
	4th Decile	74	74	274,981	4th Band	328,245	73	18.5%	91	18
	5th Decile	73	147	336,497	5th Band	393,893	71	8.6%	42	-28
	6th Decile	71	218	400,992	6th Band	459,542	64	4.6%	23	-41
	7th Decile	68	287	473,214	7th Band	525,191	57	4.2%	21	-36
	8th Decile	69	355	557,152	8th Band	None	-	4.5%	22	-
	9th Decile	68	424	671,723						
	10th Decile	68	492	1,010,890						
		<b>492</b>					<b>335</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>135</b>



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2025	1st Decile	0	0	93,439	1st Band	137,863	0	7.2%	36	36
	2nd Decile	0	0	154,555	2nd Band	206,794	0	19.5%	97	97
	3rd Decile	0	0	222,054	3rd Band	275,725	73	30.9%	153	80
	4th Decile	75	75	282,956	4th Band	344,657	75	19.0%	94	20
	5th Decile	74	148	346,255	5th Band	413,588	98	8.8%	44	-54
	6th Decile	71	220	412,621						
	7th Decile	69	289	486,937	6th & 7th Band	551,451	99	9.7%	48	-51
	8th Decile	69	358	573,309	8th Band	None	-	5.0%	25	-
	9th Decile	69	427	691,203						
	10th Decile	69	496	1,040,205						
		496					344	100.00%	496	127
2026	1st Decile	0	0	96,149	1st Band	144,756	0	6.4%	32	32
	2nd Decile	0	0	159,037	2nd Band	217,134	0	17.3%	87	87
	3rd Decile	0	0	228,494	3rd Band	289,512	75	31.7%	159	84
	4th Decile	76	76	291,161	4th Band	361,890	114	19.5%	98	-16
	5th Decile	74	150	356,297						
	6th Decile	72	222	424,587	5th Band	434,268	64	9.1%	45	-18
	7th Decile	70	291	501,058	6th Band	506,645	58	5.5%	28	-30
	8th Decile	70	361	589,935	7th Band	579,023	40	5.1%	25	-15
	9th Decile	70	431	711,248	8th Band	None	-	5.4%	27	-
	10th Decile	70	500	1,070,371						
		500					351	100.00%	500	123
2027	1st Decile	0	0	98,937	1st Band	151,994	0	5.6%	28	28
	2nd Decile	0	0	163,649	2nd Band	227,990	0	15.2%	76	76

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	3rd Decile	0	0	235,120	3rd Band	303,987	125	32.6%	164	39
	4th Decile	76	76	299,605						
	5th Decile	75	151	366,629	4th Band	379,984	69	20.1%	101	32
	6th Decile	73	223	436,900	5th Band	455,981	65	9.3%	47	-18
	7th Decile	70	294	515,589	6th Band	531,978	59	6.0%	30	-29
	8th Decile	70	364	607,043	7th Band	607,975	42	5.5%	28	-14
	9th Decile	70	434	731,874	8th Band	None	-	5.8%	29	-
	10th Decile	70	504	1,101,412						
		<b>504</b>					<b>361</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>504</b>	<b>114</b>

### 3.11 Calculation of Projected Needs for Private Rental

Purpose: This is the calculation of the households not meeting the affordability criteria to privately rent a home with respect to the number of households that cannot qualify for a mortgage.

To ensure a robust approach to understand the rental market, data from the Rental Tenancies Board for County Westmeath<sup>17</sup> has been analysed to understand the average rent prices for specific units (Refer to Table 22).

**Table 22: Historic rental prices by unit type**

	One bed	Two bed	Three bed	Four plus bed	All bedrooms
2018	568.52	718.4	731.65	850.56	731.31
2017	506.64	653.1	695.39	791.52	678.07
2016	475.14	614.79	643.62	726.58	630.44
2015	448.97	658.87	600.21	679.06	620.08
<b>Average</b>	<b>499.8175</b>	<b>661.29</b>	<b>667.7175</b>	<b>761.93</b>	<b>664.975</b>

To ensure the most up to date market context, the demand per unit type has been established from the Rental Tenancies Board<sup>17</sup> and a 6% annual growth rate in average rent price has been applied to understand the projected price of rent per unit type in County Westmeath (Refer to Table 23).

**Table 23: Projected rental prices by unit type**

Year	Specific Area	County	One bed	Two bed	Three bed	Four bed
2021	Westmeath	Westmeath	677	856	871	1013
2022	Westmeath	Westmeath	718	907	924	1074
2023	Westmeath	Westmeath	761	961	979	1138
2024	Westmeath	Westmeath	806	1019	1038	1207
2025	Westmeath	Westmeath	855	1080	1100	1279
2026	Westmeath	Westmeath	906	1145	1166	1356
2027	Westmeath	Westmeath	961	1214	1236	1437

It is generally accepted that if housing costs exceed 35 per cent of a household's disposable income, the housing is unaffordable and housing costs consume a disproportionately high amount of household income. Based on this information, we have calculated the number of households not meeting the "Affordability Criteria" for private rental during the plan period as outlined in Table 24.

**Table 24: Number of Additional Anticipated Households That Do Not Qualify for a Mortgage and Cannot Afford Private Rental**

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
1 Bed	17	17	17	26	26	26	27

<sup>17</sup> Rental Tenancies Board (2019) Table RIA02 - Average Monthly Rent Report by Year, Location, Property Type and Number of Bedrooms. Available from:

[https://statbank.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Database/eirestat/Residential%20Tenancies%20Board%20\(RTB\)/Residential%20Tenancies%20Board%20\(RTB\)\\_statbank.asp?SP=Residential%20Tenancies%20Board%20\(RTB\)&Planguage=0&ProductID=DB\\_RI](https://statbank.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Database/eirestat/Residential%20Tenancies%20Board%20(RTB)/Residential%20Tenancies%20Board%20(RTB)_statbank.asp?SP=Residential%20Tenancies%20Board%20(RTB)&Planguage=0&ProductID=DB_RI)

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2 Bed	78	79	79	80	81	81	82
3 Bed	71	72	72	73	73	74	74
4+ Bed	40	40	41	41	41	42	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>225</b>

Those that cannot afford private rental are therefore considered to require social (and affordable) housing. It should be noted that during 2021 – 2023, nine households can therefore afford private rental for a one-bedroom unit, despite not qualifying for a mortgage, however all other unit types are determined to be too expensive every year when compared to the affordability criteria. Further, one bedroom units are not considered to be affordable during 2024 – 2027 and therefore every household that cannot qualify for a mortgage will require social (and affordable) housing.

### 3.12 Summary of Projected Social Housing Needs

**Purpose:** This is the calculation of the households who can be classified as having an affordability problem during the period 2021-2027 so as to adequately inform the necessary provision units in County Westmeath.

This section therefore summarises the anticipated social housing need for Westmeath County Council as set out in the preceding steps and reflects assessments for both mortgage qualification and private rental affordability.

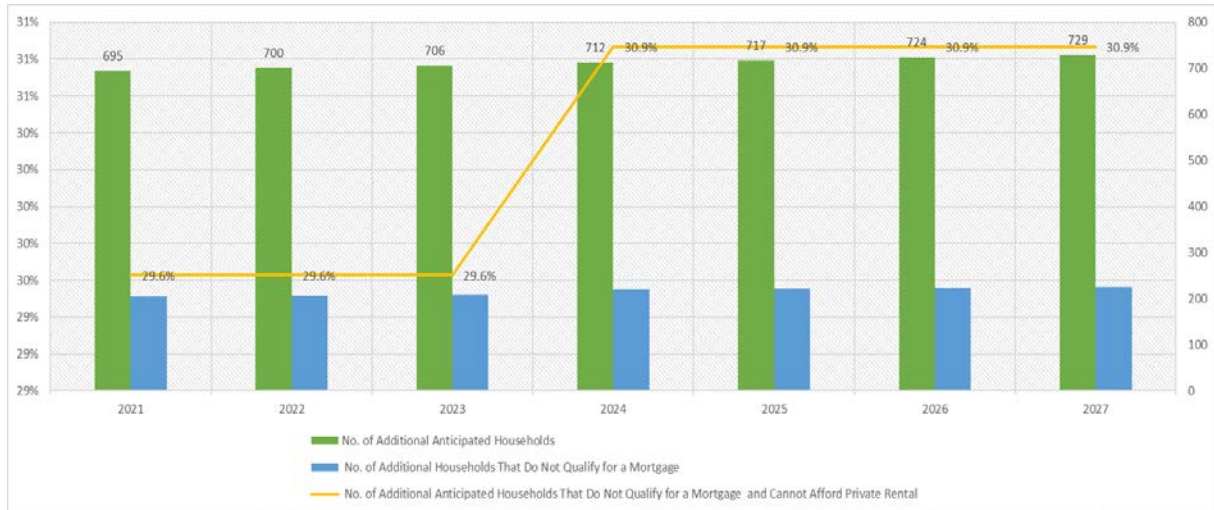
The number of additional households anticipated over the plan period, the number of those households that do not qualify for a mortgage and number of those households that do not qualify for a mortgage and cannot afford private rental have been set out in Table 25 and illustrated in Figure 3.

**Table 25: Identified Housing Shortfall Over Plan Period**

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
No. of Additional Anticipated Households	695	700	706	712	717	724	729
No. of Additional Households That Do Not Qualify for a Mortgage	214	216	218	220	221	223	225
No. of Additional Anticipated Households That Do Not Qualify for a Mortgage and Cannot Afford Private Rental	206	208	209	220	221	223	225
Social Requirement as a % of Total Additional Anticipated Households	29.6%	29.6%	29.6%	30.9%	30.9%	30.9%	30.9%

It has been determined that 1,538 of the 4,983 additional anticipated households will not qualify for a mortgage during the plan period and that 1,512 of these households do not meet the affordability criteria for private rental. With regards to private rental affordability, households which are identified as not being able to meet the 'Affordability Criteria' over the plan period are therefore considered to require social (and affordable) housing which equates to between 29.6% and 30.9% of the additional anticipated households.

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**Figure 3: Identified Social Requirement Over Plan Period**

## 4 Analysis of Housing Requirements in Westmeath

### 4.1 Overview

This section succinctly summarises the overall housing requirements for the county having regard to the supply and demand analysis outputs discussed in previous sections.

Between 2021 and 2027, this Strategy forecasts a population increase of 10,483 in County Westmeath. This in turn indicates a total population of 105,710 in 2027. The population targets for this Plan period (2021-2027), as set out in the Core Strategy, establishes a total housing target for Westmeath of 4,983 units over the plan period 2021-2027, the equivalent of 712 units per annum.

It has been determined that 1,538 of the 4,983 additional anticipated households will not qualify for a mortgage during the plan period and that 1,512 of these households do not meet the affordability criteria for private rental. With regards to private rental affordability, households which are identified as not being able to meet the 'Affordability Criteria' over the plan period are therefore considered to require social (and affordable) housing which equates to between 29.6% and 30.9% of the additional anticipated households.

Section 93 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, defines 'affordability' as "a person who is in need of accommodation and whose income would not be adequate to meet the payments of a mortgage for the purchase of a house to meet his or her accommodation needs because the payments calculated over the course of a year would exceed 35% of that person's annual income net of income tax and pay related social insurance..." This has been applied within this analysis and informs the determination of the social requirement for the plan period.

It should be noted that while some of these households could afford to sustainably repay a loan of a certain size, their inability to qualify for a mortgage precludes them and effectively results in them being considered as having either a social or affordable need (after their assessment under private rental conditions). Most of the households who do not qualify for a loan also face difficulties affording private rental, keeping the effective social and affordable needs requirement in the 30% range across the period.

Based on this analysis, the identified social requirement for the 6-year plan period is 1,512 units, approximately 30% of total additional households.

The following sections set out specific analysis around three core components. This analysis serves to further understanding around specific dynamics of future housing demand in Westmeath over the plan period. These are as following:

- Demand for single rural dwellings during the plan period
- Household Size Cohort
- Household Tenure

Following this, section 4.5 provides an overview of how social housing support is administered by Westmeath County Council, with existing delivery methods and targets set out in section 4.5.2.



## 4.2 Single Rural Dwellings

As set out in Chapter 3, the NPF requires that Development Plans quantify the demand for single rural dwellings. The total population increase for the rural remainder<sup>18</sup> during the plan period is anticipated to be 4,476 additional persons or 2,103 additional households as outlined in Table 26 and Table 27 respectively.

**Table 26: Projected population growth for the rural remainder**

Year	Population - Total	Percentage Increase	Annual Population Increase During Year	Total Population Increase 2021-2027	Total Population Increase 2016-2027
2016	36,221		-	-	-
2017	36,560	0.9%	339	-	-
2018	37,128	1.6%	568	-	-
2019	37,722	1.6%	593	-	-
2020	38,319	1.6%	597	-	-
2021	38,915	1.6%	597	-	-
2022	39,526	1.6%	611	-	-
2023	40,151	1.6%	625	-	-
2024	40,788	1.6%	637	-	-
2025	41,441	1.6%	654	-	-
2026	42,108	1.6%	667	-	-
2027	42,795	1.6%	687	4,476	6,574

**Table 27: Projected Housing Requirements for the rural remainder**

Year	Population - Total	Number of Households (Private)	Average Household Size	No. of Anticipated Houses Per Annum	Total Anticipated Houses - 2021-2027	Average Anticipated Houses Per Annum between 2021-2027
2016	36,221	-	-	-	-	-
2017	36,560	13,287	2.75	-	-	-
2018	37,128	13,547	2.74	260	-	-
2019	37,722	13,819	2.73	272	-	-
2020	38,319	14,094	2.72	275	-	-
2021	38,915	14,371	2.71	277	-	-
2022	39,526	14,656	2.70	285	-	-
2023	40,151	14,948	2.69	292	-	-
2024	40,788	15,247	2.68	299	-	-
2025	41,441	15,555	2.66	308	-	-
2026	42,108	15,871	2.65	316	-	-
2027	42,795	16,196	2.64	326	2,103	300
2028	43,507	16,534	2.63	338	-	-
2029	44,236	16,881	2.62	347	-	-
2030	44,983	17,239	2.61	357	-	-
2031	45,741	17,603	2.60	365	-	-

<sup>18</sup> As informed by the selected population projection scenario; 'Proportional Intervention Scenario C'.

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The additional households identified for the rural remainder have been distributed according to their income decile in Table 28.

**Table 28: Additional Anticipated Households per decile for the rural remainder**

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
1st Decile	27	28	29	29	30	31	32
2nd Decile	29	30	31	32	33	33	34
3rd Decile	29	30	31	31	32	33	34
4th Decile	29	30	31	31	32	33	34
5th Decile	28	29	30	31	32	32	33
6th Decile	28	28	29	30	31	31	32
7th Decile	27	27	28	29	30	30	31
8th Decile	27	27	28	29	30	30	31
9th Decile	27	27	28	29	30	30	31
10th Decile	27	27	28	29	30	30	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>326</b>

The annuity formula has been used to determine the maximum affordable house price for a single rural dwelling for each of the ten income deciles as outlined in Table 29.

**Table 29: Calculation of Approximate Affordable Price for a Single Rural Dwelling**

Range	% Households	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
1st Decile	9.83%	83,342	85,759	88,246	90,806	93,439	96,149	98,937
2nd Decile	10.57%	137,854	141,852	145,966	150,199	154,555	159,037	163,649
3rd Decile	10.47%	198,060	203,804	209,714	215,796	222,054	228,494	235,120
4th Decile	10.44%	252,381	259,700	267,232	274,981	282,956	291,161	299,605
5th Decile	10.25%	308,841	317,797	327,014	336,497	346,255	356,297	366,629
6th Decile	9.94%	368,036	378,709	389,691	400,992	412,621	424,587	436,900
7th Decile	9.62%	434,322	446,917	459,878	473,214	486,937	501,058	515,589
8th Decile	9.65%	511,361	526,190	541,450	557,152	573,309	589,935	607,043
9th Decile	9.61%	616,515	634,394	652,792	671,723	691,203	711,248	731,874
10th Decile	9.62%	927,807	954,713	982,400	1,010,890	1,040,205	1,070,371	1,101,412

The cost of constructing a single rural dwelling in 2019 has been estimated for a larger and smaller single rural dwelling based on floor space estimates from the CSO and SCSi respectively. A cost range of between €1,550/m<sup>2</sup> - €1,750/m<sup>2</sup> in 2019 has been used<sup>19</sup> and the estimated cost over time has considered the projected GDP growth rates as described in Section 3.4.

The cost for the larger unit has assumed a floor area of 254m<sup>2</sup> which is the average floor area for a 'one off' house<sup>20</sup> between 2006 and the second quarter (Q2) of 2019 as defined by the CSO. This equates to a cost of between €393,700 and €444,500 in 2019 as outlined in Table 30.

<sup>19</sup> Data directly received from O' Reilly Hyland Tierney & Associates on 13 December 2019. It should be noted that this includes footpath and services for the dwelling, as well as VAT.

<sup>20</sup> Please note that the CSO uses the term 'one off house' and this has been applied for the purpose of this estimation and thus used interchangeably herein.

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**Table 30: Estimated Cost to Construct a Larger Single Rural Dwelling**

Year	Forecast GDP Growth Applying to Labour / Materials	Average Cost (€) per m <sup>2</sup> Min	Average Cost (€) per m <sup>2</sup> Max	Average Floor Size of One Off Unit	Average Cost (€) Min	Average Cost (€) Max
2019	-	1550.00	1750.00	254	393,700	444,500
2020	3.1%	1598.05	1804.25	254	405,905	458,280
2021	3.1%	1647.59	1860.18	254	418,488	472,486
2022	2.9%	1695.37	1914.13	254	430,624	486,188
2023	2.9%	1744.54	1969.64	254	443,112	500,288
2024	2.9%	1795.13	2026.76	254	455,962	514,796
2025	2.9%	1847.19	2085.53	254	469,185	529,725
2026	2.9%	1900.75	2146.01	254	482,792	545,087
2027	2.9%	1955.88	2208.25	254	496,792	560,895
2028	2.9%	2012.60	2272.29	254	511,199	577,161
2029	2.9%	2070.96	2338.18	254	526,024	593,898
2030	2.9%	2131.02	2405.99	254	541,279	611,121
2031	2.9%	2192.82	2475.76	254	556,976	628,844

The cost for the smaller unit has assumed a floor area of 146m<sup>2</sup> which is the average floor area for a detached bungalow in their housing rebuilding calculator as defined by the SCSi. This equates to a cost of between €226,300 and €255,500 in 2019 as outlined in Table 31.

**Table 31: Estimated Cost to Construct a Smaller Single Rural Dwelling**

Year	Forecast GDP Growth Applying to Labour / Materials	Average Cost (€) per m <sup>2</sup> Min	Average Cost (€) per m <sup>2</sup> Max	Average Floor Size of One Off Unit	Average Cost (€) Min	Average Cost (€) Max
2019	-	1550.00	1750.00	146	226,300	255,500
2020	3.1%	1598.05	1804.25	146	233,315	263,421
2021	3.1%	1647.59	1860.18	146	240,548	271,587
2022	2.9%	1695.37	1914.13	146	247,524	279,463
2023	2.9%	1744.54	1969.64	146	254,702	287,567
2024	2.9%	1795.13	2026.76	146	262,089	295,906
2025	2.9%	1847.19	2085.53	146	269,689	304,488
2026	2.9%	1900.75	2146.01	146	277,510	313,318
2027	2.9%	1955.88	2208.25	146	285,558	322,404
2028	2.9%	2012.60	2272.29	146	293,839	331,754
2029	2.9%	2070.96	2338.18	146	302,360	341,375
2030	2.9%	2131.02	2405.99	146	311,129	351,274
2031	2.9%	2192.82	2475.76	146	320,152	361,461

This average cost for smaller and larger units has then been assessed against a household's projected affordability threshold. The anticipated number of households who would meet this criteria in each projected year have then been identified from the total number of anticipated households projected to join the rural remainder tier of the settlement hierarchy (as set out in the Core Strategy), and can be seen in Table 32.

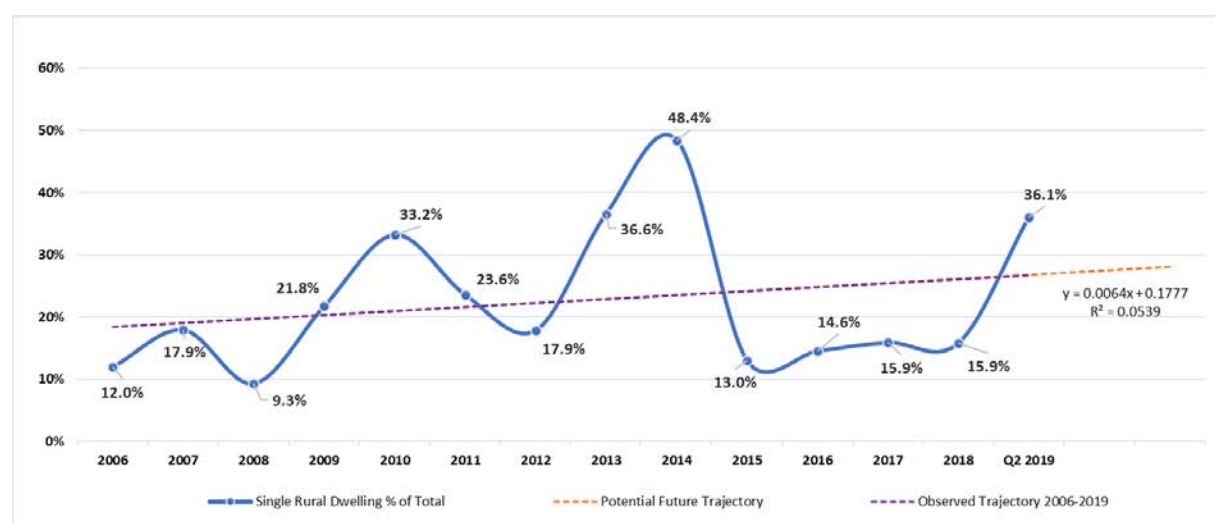
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Only those households in the seventh to tenth deciles can afford to construct a larger single rural dwelling throughout the plan period. In comparison, given the lower estimated construction cost households in the fourth to tenth deciles can afford to construct a smaller single rural dwelling throughout the plan period.

**Table 32: Number of Additional Households who can Afford to Construct a Single Rural Dwelling**

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Households that can afford to construct a larger Single Rural Dwelling	107	110	113	115	119	122	125
Households that can afford to construct a smaller Single Rural Dwelling	192	197	202	207	213	218	192

A linear extrapolation of the number of granted planning applications for single rural dwellings between 2006 - Q2 2019 has been undertaken (Refer to Figure 4 and Table 7). This identifies that approximately 22.1% of all granted residential applications within any given year have been for single rural dwellings.



**Figure 4: Percentage of Granted Applications for Single Rural Dwellings of Total Granted Applications for Residential during 2006 – Q2 2019**

Specific analysis of the most recent full-year data (2011-2018) indicates that 23.2% of residential planning applications have been granted for single rural dwellings, and that this equates to approximately 65 units per annum during that period.

Applying a rate of 22.1% (i.e. the 2006-Q2 2019 average) for single rural dwelling types provides the indicative number of potential applications for the plan period, assuming that current trends continue. This is disaggregated further by the size of the rural dwelling to be constructed (which impacts the affordability thresholds) and is illustrated in table 33.

**Table 33: Indicative Number of Potential Applications for Single Rural Dwelling**

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Indicative number of	24	24	25	25	26	27	28

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potential applications for larger home							
Indicative number of potential applications for smaller home	42	44	45	46	47	48	50

### 4.3 Household Size Cohort

As set out in Section 6.6 of the NPF, information on household composition and projections are informative evidence inputs that can assist with understanding stock profile pressures. Analysis of the historic household sizes (specifically the household size cohort per household) has therefore been undertaken to help discern and forecast how the composition of households may change during the plan period.

Analysis of the average intercensal change from 2002 – 2016 has been considered and annualised to assist with forecasting future change in the number of people per household. This is generally progressing towards fewer people per household during the plan period as illustrated in Figure 5 and described below:

- 0.170% annual growth forecasted for the proportion of households with one person
- 0.160% annual growth forecasted for the proportion of households with two people
- 0.001% annual growth forecasted for the proportion of households with three people
- 0.053% annual decline forecasted for the proportion of households with four people
- 0.0278% annual decline forecasted for the proportion of households with five or more people

In turn, this analysis shows that 1 and 2 person households will form the largest overall cohort over the plan period, amounting to a combined total of 55.1% of all households by 2027. The number of households comprising of 4 people or more will continue to decline between 2021-2027. Households with four or more people will amount to approximately 27% of total households by 2027.

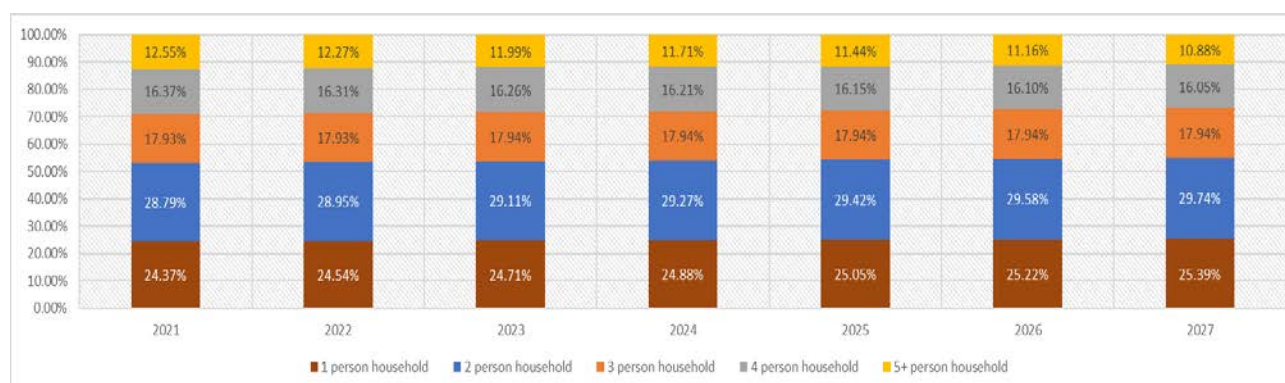


Figure 5: Forecasted household size cohorts during the plan period

## 4.4 Household Tenure

Tenure is an important consideration for the delivery of housing and Section 6.6 of the NPF identifies the need to estimate the demand for different tenure types. Analysis of the historic tenure split has therefore been undertaken to help discern and forecast how the household tenure may change during the plan period.

Analysis of the average intercensal change from 2002 – 2016 has been considered and annualised to assist with forecasting future change in the proportion of owner occupiers, private rental and other rental (which includes rental from local authorities, housing bodies and those in occupation free of rent). The historic data suggests that year on year private rental and other rental is growing (0.54% and 0.23% respectively) whilst owner occupation is declining (by 0.76%) as illustrated in Figure 6.

By 2027, almost 63% of all households will live in owner occupied dwellings in Westmeath. This is a considerable overall decrease from the 2016 figure of 69.2%. The plan period will also see considerable growth in the rental sector, with approximately 25% of households in private rental and 12% in 'other rental' by 2027.



Figure 6: Forecasted tenure composition during the plan period

## 4.5 Social Housing Supply and Demand

### 4.5.1 Meeting Social Housing Demand

Social Housing support in Westmeath is administered by the Housing Department of Westmeath County Council in the following ways:

1. **A social rented tenancy in property owned and managed by the local authority and a tenancy in a property the local authority is managing or has leased from a private property owner.** These can include:
  - Westmeath County Council Construction Projects.
  - Provision of Social Housing under Part V of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2015: While the provision of social housing via traditional Part V mechanism will continue to play a role in the delivery of social housing in Co. Westmeath, other delivery channels for social housing are likely to be more significant in terms of their potential to contribute to the social housing targets set out. The statutory context for the provision of social and affordable housing has changed under the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015. The amendments include that there will be a requirement for up to 10% social housing in developments in excess of 9 units. The use of cash payments in lieu of social housing provision is no longer allowed. Provision is made for the transfer of completed units on other land not subject to the planning permission to be provided. Provision is also made for the Part V obligation to be fulfilled by developers through long term leasing of properties and rental accommodation availability agreements.

- Portfolio Acquisitions: Suitable portfolios of vacant properties can be acquired from financial institutions and investors.
  - Acquisitions: This is the purchase by Westmeath County Council of a second-hand house on the open market.
  - Buy and Renew: Under this scheme Westmeath County Council can buy sub-standard properties, which have been vacant for over a year, refurbish them and bring them back into use through the Council's housing stock. The purchase cost plus the cost of refurbishment can't exceed what a comparable property would attain on the private market. This initiative, which complements the Repair & Leasing Scheme, is designed to assist local authorities and AHBs (Approved Housing Bodies) to harness the accommodation potential that exists in certain vacant properties for social housing use.
  - Turnkeys: Westmeath County Council buy a new house/houses from a developer, ready for a tenant to move into.
  - Tenant Purchase Scheme: In January 2016, a new scheme for the purchase of existing local authority houses came into effect – The Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme 2016.
2. **A social rented tenancy in property owned and managed by an approved housing body (AHB).** AHB's provide social housing and are formed for the purpose of relieving housing need and the provision and management of housing. They are established by a voluntary management board to benefit the community in which they are based and are approved and funded by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. Housing cooperatives can provide both social rented housing and housing to purchase. Housing cooperatives are self-help and jointly owned member/user housing associations or societies. Projects undertaken may be in response to the needs of the elderly, people with disabilities, homeless persons or families and single people on low incomes. Some housing associations may be formed to specialise in meeting a particular housing need, others develop with broader aims. The specific housing services offered will depend on the aims or concerns of the members, the needs of tenants as well as the financial and other resources available for both capital costs and ongoing management running costs. As of December 2019, AHB's in Westmeath provide 79 properties which have a total of 141 separate units of accommodation. By 2021 Tuath Housing intend to provide an additional 120 units in the county.
3. **Westmeath County Council also provides accommodation specifically for Travellers and for people with specific housing needs such as people with disabilities and the homeless.** Delivery programmes responding to specific needs include the following:
- Refugee Resettlement Programme: Under the Refugee Resettlement Programme, 120 people have been allocated social housing in Westmeath. The families are part of approximately 4,000 people which the government has committed to receiving through the Irish Refugee Protection Programme. County Council will continue to work with Central Government and relevant State Agencies Office in responding to its requirements to support refugees as they undergo their resettlement process in Co. Westmeath.
  - Traveller Accommodation Plan: Under the provisions of the Housing Traveller Accommodation Act 1998, Local Authorities are required to prepare, adopt and implement a Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP) to meet the accommodation needs of the county's indigenous Traveller community. The current Traveller Accommodation Programme sets out the strategy for provision of Traveller accommodation and support services over a five-year period from 2019-2024. A housing needs assessment was carried out of identified Traveller families in November 2018. A total of 429 families were identified as living in County Westmeath. The current traveller specific accommodation in Westmeath is as described in table 34.



## APPENDIX 1

**Table 34: Current Traveller Accommodation Provision**

Type of Accommodation	Number of families
Permanent Halting Site Bay	26 (of 30 Bays available)
Group Housing	5 (of 6 houses available)
Transient	16
Standard Local Authority Housing	150
Private Rented	93
House Acquired by Travellers without Local Authority assistance	95
Tenant Purchase	28
Side of Road	0
HAP	2
Shared in standard Local Authority lettings	8
Shared private accommodation	2
Shared private rented accommodation	2
Caravans in rear gardens 2	2

- The Plan also includes annual targets for Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 by accommodation type as outlined in Table 35.

**Table 35: Targets for Traveller Accommodation by Accommodation Type**

Type	Year					Total by Type
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	
Standard Local Authority Housing	6	6	9	9	9	39
Traveller Group Housing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Halting Site Bays	1	1	1	1	1	5
Transient Bays	0	0	0	0	0	0
Halting Site Refurbishments	0	0	0	0	0	0
Group Housing Refurbishments	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rental Accommodation Scheme	2	2	1	1	1	7
Part V	2	2	2	2	2	10
HAP	7	7	7	7	6	34
Total by Year	18	18	20	20	19	95

**4. A tenancy where the local authority arranges short or long-term leases with private landlords for particular properties. (People in receipt of rent supplement for 18 months or longer are eligible to apply for this type of accommodation).**

- The HAP Scheme: The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is a scheme under the Housing Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2014 for people who have a long-term housing need and who qualify for social housing support. It is administered by housing authorities and will eventually replace long-term rent supplement. The HAP scheme aims to allow all social housing supports to be accessed through the local authorities and to enable people to take up full-time employment and keep their housing support. Under the scheme the housing applicant finds appropriate private rented accommodation (within specific caps). The Local Authority then pays the landlord directly and the tenant pays a rent to the local authority based on the differential rent scheme.



- RAS (Rental Accommodation Scheme): The RAS is an initiative to cater for the accommodation needs of certain persons in receipt of rent supplement, normally for more than 18 months and who are assessed as having a long-term housing need. Westmeath County Council pays rent directly to the accommodation providers on behalf of the tenant (which is a maximum of 92% of the market rent). The County Council makes use of the private and voluntary sector and engage in a contractual arrangement to secure medium-long term rented accommodation.
- Repair and Lease: The Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness introduced a new scheme, the Vacant Housing Repair and Leasing Initiative. This scheme specifically targets the delivery of social housing and seeks to ensure that existing housing stock is used to the maximum degree possible. The basis of the scheme is that repair and improvement works to suitable vacant properties are funded to bring them up to the standard for rented accommodation and the cost of the works is then deducted from lease payments over an agreed lease term

#### 4.5.2 Delivery Methods and Targets

It is anticipated that Westmeath County Council will continue to meet their identified social housing provision via a combination of these existing delivery schemes (as set out in Section 4.4.1) and through the introduction or greater emphasis of other either existing or recently established schemes and mechanisms. This section assesses different Social Housing delivery channels available in County Westmeath and their progress to date in achieving the targets set out in the Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness which was published in July 2016.

The Action Plan recognises issues around supply and affordability in Ireland's housing sector and provides a multi-stranded approach to achieve key housing objectives up to 2021. The Action Plan sets a commitment to deliver 138,000 additional social housing units nationally over the period 2016-2021. This will include 83,760 HAP homes, 3,800 RAS homes and over 50,000 new homes, broken down as follows: Build: 33,617; Acquisition: 6,830; Leasing: 10,036.

The target for 2019 is over 6,200 homes nationally. In Westmeath, the county target for 2019 is 626 additional units across all social housing delivery streams.

**Table 36: Westmeath Social Housing Targets under Rebuilding Ireland**

Targets 2018-2021		Targets 2019					
Build, Acquisition and Leasing		Building, Acquisition, Leasing	Build	Acquisition	Leasing	HAP & RAS	All SH delivery streams
Westmeath	801	211	130	21	60	415	626

Progress on the delivery of social housing units is documented as part of quarterly updates by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government<sup>21</sup>. The most recently available progress update relates to Q3 2019. This shows that the total output up to Q3 was 429 units. This means that 69% of the overall 2019 target had been achieved to that point which is an encouraging indicator for future progress.

801 units in total are targeted for the county within the 'building, acquisition and leasing' category specifically between 2018-2021. This is described in 36. To date (Q3 2019), 315 units have been delivered through these

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision>

mechanisms (between 2018-2019). Thus, over the course of 2020-2021 (and also Q4 2019), approximately 486 additional units are to be delivered.

As of December 2019, 1255 households are on the social housing waiting list in Westmeath. Between 2018 and 2019, the social housing waiting list in Westmeath reduced by approximately 20%<sup>22</sup>.

**Table 37: Progress on Rebuilding Ireland Social Housing Targets 2019**

Build (To Third Quarter in 2019)						
Westmeath County Council	LA New Build <sup>[1]</sup>	AHB New Build <sup>[2]</sup>	Part V -New Build <sup>[3]</sup>	Total New Build	LA Voids <sup>[8]</sup>	All Build Total
	19	0	3	22	4	26
Acquisition (To Second Quarter in 2019)						
	LA Acquisition		AHB Acquisition		Acquisition Total	
	29		7		36	
Other (To Second Quarter in 2019)						
	Leasing <sup>[4]</sup>		RAS <sup>[5]</sup>		HAP <sup>[6]</sup>	
	42		33		292	

1. LA New Build includes units delivered through Rapid, Traditional, Turnkey and Regeneration (detail available on the Construction Status Report <sup>[7]</sup>)

2. AHB New Build includes CAS and CALF New Build (detail available on the Construction Status Report <sup>[7]</sup>)

3. Part V New Build includes Part V's delivered under LA Build and AHB Build

4. New leasing units operational are defined as the number of new leasing units delivered under this scheme in the given period. This program was previously known as long term leasing until 2014.

5. RAS - New transfers is defined as the number of households which have moved from Rent Supplement to RAS in that specific year. It includes households who remained in their existing accommodation and those for whom the LA had to source new properties.

6. HAP - New Households Supported refers to the number of qualified households with an established housing need who are being accommodated under the HAP scheme for that year.

7. The most recently published Construction Status Report is available on [www.rebuildingireland.ie](http://www.rebuildingireland.ie)

8. LA Voids includes 132 voids beyond the void target set under Rebuilding Ireland for Q3 2019

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.housingagency.ie/sites/default/files/SHA-Summary-2019-DEC-2019-WEB.pdf>



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

## APPENDIX 2 DEVELOPMENT PLAN MANDATORY OBJECTIVES

Under section 10 (2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) each Development Plan must include objectives for:

- The zoning of land for the use solely or primarily of particular areas for particular purposes (whether residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational, as open space or otherwise, or a mixture of those uses), where and to such extent as the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, requires the uses to be indicated.
- The provision or facilitation of the provision of infrastructure including:
  - (i) Transport, energy and communication facilities.
  - (ii) Water supplies, and waste water services (regard having been had to the water services strategic plan for the area made in accordance with the Water Services Act 2007).
  - (iii) Waste recovery and disposal facilities (regard having been had to the waste management plan for the area made in accordance with the Waste Management Act 1996).
  - (iv) Any ancillary facilities or services.
- The conservation and protection of the environment including, in particular, the archaeological and natural heritage and the conservation and protection of European sites and any other sites which may be prescribed for the purposes of this paragraph.
- The encouragement, pursuant to Article 10 of the Habitats Directive, of the management of features of the landscape, such as traditional field boundaries, important for the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species.
- The promotion of compliance with environmental standards and objectives established—
  - (i) For bodies of surface water, by the European Communities (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009.
  - (ii) For groundwater, by the European Communities (Groundwater) Regulations 2010; which standards and objectives are included in river basin management plans (within the meaning of Regulation 13 of the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003).
- The integration of the planning and sustainable development of the area with the social, community and cultural requirements of the area and its population.

## APPENDIX 2

- The preservation of the character of the landscape where, and to the extent that, in the opinion of the planning authority, the proper planning and sustainable development of the area requires it, including the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest.
- The 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 identified having regard to the core strategy, that are in need of regeneration, in order to prevent:
  - (i) adverse effects on existing amenities in such areas, in particular as a result of the ruinous or neglected condition of any land,
  - (ii) urban blight and decay,
  - (iii) anti-social behaviour, or
  - (iv) a shortage of habitable houses or of land suitable for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses;
- 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, having regard to the provisions of the Major Accidents Directive and any regulations, under any enactment, giving effect to that Directive, of:
  - (i) siting of new establishments,
  - (ii) modification of existing establishments, and
  - (iii) development in the vicinity of such establishments,

for the purposes of reducing the risk, or limiting the consequences, of a major accident.
- The provision, or facilitation of the provision, of services for the community including, in particular, schools, crèches and other education and childcare facilities.
- The protection of the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht including the promotion of Irish as the community language, where there is a Gaeltacht area in the area of the Development Plan.
- The promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas including the promotion of measures to:
  - (i) Reduce energy demand in response to the likelihood of increases in energy and other costs due to long-term decline in non-renewable resources.

- (ii) Reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions.
- (iii) Address the necessity of adaptation to climate change; in particular, having regard to location, layout and design of new development.
- The preservation of public rights of way which give access to seashore, mountain, lakeshore, riverbank or other place of natural beauty or recreational utility, which public rights of way shall be identified both by marking them on at least one of the maps forming part of the development plan and by indicating their location on a list appended to the development plan.
- Landscape, in accordance with relevant policies or objectives for the time being of the Government or any Minister of the Government relating to providing a framework for identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes and developed having regard to the European Landscape Convention done at Florence on 20 October 2000.



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

# Westmeath County Retail Strategy

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Prepared for Westmeath County Council

Adopted April 2019



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**Statement:**

*This report has been prepared by MacCabe Durney Barnes using due skill, care and diligence and is sufficient as a means of estimating future retail requirements of Westmeath County Council. The data and conclusions reached should not be used for other purposes.*

## 7 The County Retail Strategy

Every retail planning strategy must be clear as to its purpose and what it is intended to achieve. In respect of the Strategy, its foundations and purpose are set within the aim for retail planning and development in the County Development Plan 2014. This aim is:

*To continue to sustain and improve the retail profile and competitiveness of County Westmeath, through the consolidation and environmental enhancement of town centres and settlements and by improving the quality and choice of retail developments on offer.*

To achieve the overall aim over the 2016 – 2026 period of the Strategy, a logical step-by-step framework has been adopted which is summarised in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1 County Retail Strategy Framework



### 7.1 Objectives

The objectives underpinning the Strategy have been informed by the requirements of the GRP 2012; reviews of the MRPG 2010, County Development Plan 2014, other adopted Town and Local Area Plans and the 2007 Strategy; the current baseline and retail market trends; and, responding to the retail issues and opportunities that prevail in the County's main centres and Westmeath as a whole. Founded on this, the retail planning objectives of the Strategy are:

- Objective 1:** To sustain and improve the retail profile and competitiveness of the County and its main centres within the retail economy of the Region and beyond.
- Objective 2:** To confirm a County Retail Hierarchy which assists in achieving the County and Regional Settlement Strategies and their objectives and provides clear guidance on where major new retail floorspace would be acceptable.
- Objective 3:** To provide the retail land use and planning policy framework that harnesses the potential of Mullingar and Athlone's role within the national and regional economies and to ensure that the County and these two key settlements fully play their role in achieving the objectives and targets of the National Planning Framework and associated RSES'.
- Objective 4:** To sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of the four Key Service and Service Towns within the County Retail Hierarchy and facilitate the means by which this can be achieved.

## APPENDIX 4

- Objective 5:** To encourage and facilitate the preservation and enhancement of the retail and services role of Local Service Towns and Rural Centres around the County.
- Objective 6:** To reinforce the hearts of town and village centres as the priority location for new retail development, with quality of design and integration/linkage being key underpinning principles.
- Objective 7:** To ensure that the retail needs of the County's residents are met as fully as possible within Westmeath to enable a reduction in the requirement to travel to meet these needs and in the interests of achieving greater social inclusion and accessibility to shopping and services across all sectors of the community.
- Objective 8:** To address leakage of retail expenditure from the County by providing the means to strengthen the range and quality of its retail offer.
- Objective 9:** To align, as far as practicable, new retail development with existing and proposed public transport infrastructure and services and encourage access by foot and bicycle to reduce the dominance of access by private car.
- Objective 10:** To encourage and facilitate the re-use and regeneration of derelict land and buildings for retail and other town centre uses, with due cognisance to the Sequential Approach.
- Objective 11:** To promote and sustain the importance of retailing in the County's tourism economy.
- Objective 12:** To encourage and facilitate innovation and diversification in the County's retail profile and offer.
- Objective 13:** To prepare and implement a Joint Retail Strategy for the counties of Westmeath, Roscommon and Offaly, in conjunction with Offaly and Roscommon County Councils following the adoption of the County Retail Strategy, as required in the GRP 2012.
- Objective 14:** To prepare and implement with Roscommon County Council a Joint Retail Strategy for the Athlone – Monksland/Bellanamullia area (the Athlone Western Environs) in accordance with the recommendations of the Athlone Boundary Review Committee.
- Objective 15:** To provide the criteria for the assessment of retail development proposals.

## 7.2 Strategic Policy Framework

The achievement of the Strategy's objectives requires due cognisance to be taken of the strategic policy framework that underpins specific policies and proposals. This framework is set by the:

- i) County Retail Hierarchy;
- ii) Core Retail Areas;
- iii) Sequential Approach;
- iv) Spatial Distribution of New Retail Development; and
- v) Consideration of Need.

### 7.2.1 County Retail Hierarchy

#### Policy SRP1: County Retail Hierarchy

*It is the policy of the Council to guide major retail development in accordance with the framework provided by the County Retail Hierarchy set out in Table 7.1 to enable an efficient, equitable and sustainable distribution of floorspace throughout the County.*

The County Settlement Hierarchy adopted in both the MRPG 2010 and County Development Plan 2014 generally well represents the County Retail Hierarchy which prevails. However, it has been slightly modified to incorporate specific types of retailing which characterise lower tiers of the County Retail Hierarchy, namely Neighbourhood Centres and Local Shops. These categories of retailing in the County Retail Hierarchy are referenced but no specific locations identified. Reflecting this, the County Retail Hierarchy is set out in Table 7.1. It is illustrated in Map 1 of Appendix I.

**Table 7.1: County Retail Hierarchy**

Position in the Hierarchy	Description	Settlement/Centre
<b>Tier 1</b>	Linked Gateway Town**	Athlone, Mullingar.
<b>Tier 2</b>	Key Service Town	Castlepollard.
<b>Tier 3</b>	Service Town	Moate, Kinnegad, Kilbeggan
<b>Tier 4</b>	Local Service Town and Neighbourhood Centres*	Rochfortbridge, Killucan/Rathwire, Clonmellon, Tyrrellspass.
<b>Tier 5</b>	Rural Centres and Local Shops	Including: Delvin, Coole, Multyfarnham, Ballymore, Ballynacarrigy, Raharney, Milltownpass, Collinstown, Glasson, Ballinalack, Rathowen, Finnea, Ballinagore, Ballykeeran, Castletown-Geoghegan.

Source: Westmeath County Development Plan 2014 and MacCabe Durney Barnes

*Note 1:* \* Varies in the suburbs of Mullingar and Athlone

*Note 2:* \*\* Classification of 'Linked Gateway Town' was abolished under the NPF (2018). For the purposes of this Retail Strategy, it is replaced by Athlone Regional Centre and Mullingar County Town, with both of these Tier 1 settlements within the county's retail hierarchy.

### 7.2.2 Core Retail Areas

#### Policy SRP2: Core Retail Areas

*It is the policy of the Council to define the Core Retail Areas of Mullingar and Athlone to provide guidance on the Sequential Approach.*

Definition of the Core Retail Areas relates only to Mullingar and Athlone as it was determined that the other main centres in the County – Castlepollard, Moate, Kinnegad and Kilbeggan – did not exhibit a clustering of central retail activity but rather this was spread along their respective Main Streets or areas adjacent. The defined Core Retail Areas for Mullingar and Athlone, along with the development opportunity sites and retail hubs identified in the Sequential Approach within the 400-metre distance of the Core Retail Areas in each of the towns, are illustrated in Maps 2 and 3 in Appendix I. The Core Retail Areas of the two principle settlements comprise the following:

- **Athlone:** Custume Place, Church Street, Dublin Gate Street, the Athlone Town Centre and John Broderick Street.
- **Mullingar:** Dominic Street, Oliver Plunkett Street, Mount Street, Castle Street and Pearse Street

The Core Retail Areas have been modified from those defined in the MLAP 2014 and the ATDP 2014 and are generally smaller. The reduction in size reflects the issue that the larger the Core Retail Area is, then so too is the extent of the parameters for what would be defined as edge-of-centre sites, with consequential implications for impact on the vitality and viability of the heart of both Athlone and Mullingar.

In the absence of defining Core Retail Areas for the other main centres in the County, the Sequential Approach is founded on the recognised central point of each of these centres. The application of this approach is illustrated in Maps 4 to 7 in Appendix I for Castlepollard, Moate, Kinnegad and Kilbeggan, which identify the development opportunity sites within 300 metres of each of the centres. The reason why only the 300 metres distance and not that of 300 – 400 metres has been applied to these towns is addressed below under the Sequential Approach.

### 7.2.3 Sequential Approach

#### Policy SRP3: Sequential Approach

*It is the policy of the Council to provide guidance on the application of Sequential Approach in the County's main centres.*

The importance of the Sequential Approach in respect of sustaining and protecting the vitality and viability of centres is a fundamental principle in the Strategy. It is, thus, reinforced in the strategic policy framework for guiding new retail development. Proposals for retail developments in the County's centres at whatever level in the County Retail Hierarchy must take full cognisance of this as follows:



- i) In the first instance, the priority should be locating retail development in town centres or village centres;
- ii) If town centre locations are not readily available within a reasonable and realistic timescale then edge-of-centre sites should be looked to. In successive GRP, these are defined as sites which are within 300 – 400 metres of the Core Retail Area, and less in smaller centres; and
- iii) Only after all the options for town centre (or village centre) and edge-of-centre sites are exhausted should out-of-centre locations and sites be considered.

The suite of GRP qualify that the precise distance to apply to prescribing what is an edge-of centre site cannot be defined precisely as different centres vary in their size. Reflecting this, the approach adopted in the Strategy has been to distinguish between what is apposite for the two principle settlements and the other main towns within the County as follows:

- **Mullingar and Athlone:** a distance of 400 metres has been adopted in the identification of development opportunity sites
- **Other Main Towns:** reflecting their smaller scale and size only the 300-metre distance has been applied and this has been derived from the identification of a central point in each of the towns.

#### *7.2.4 Spatial Distribution of New Retail Development*

The Strategy, in accordance with the GRP 2012, provides the strategic policy framework for the spatial distribution of new retail development. The emphasis is on strategic guidance on the location and scale of major retail development. The Strategy does not seek to inhibit small scale retail development in centres around the County, particularly smaller centres, but the scale should be appropriate to local needs. It should be taken to be implicit in the aims of the Strategy that such developments should be encouraged and facilitated to enhance the sustainability, vitality and viability of smaller centres in the County Retail Hierarchy. The hierarchy sets the framework for the spatial distribution of the nature and quantum of convenience and comparison floorspace. The following provides guidance on how the Strategy defines the distribution of strategic and non-strategic retail floorspace that is appropriate in Westmeath within the County Retail Hierarchy:

- i) **Tier 1 – Regional Centre and County Town:** major convenience and comparison, including bulky goods floorspace;
- ii) **Tier 2 – Key Service Town:** large convenience and middle order comparison, specifically tourism related/niche comparison, and small-scale bulky goods floorspace;
- iii) **Tier 3 – Service Town:** large convenience and middle order comparison, specifically tourism related/niche comparison, and small-scale bulky goods floorspace;
- iv) **Tier 4 – Local Service Town and Neighbourhood Centres:** local level convenience and comparison, but not excluding tourism related/niche comparison in the former; and
- v) **Tier 5 – Rural Centres and Local/Corner Shops:** predominantly additional local level convenience, but not excluding tourism related/niche comparison in the former.

Additionally, the Strategy recognises the need to ensure that local needs, primarily convenience shopping and local services are met in an *‘equitable, efficient and sustainable way’* in large



existing or new residential areas in and around the main centres through the designation of locations for Neighbourhood Centres in the County Development Plan and Local Area Plans. Comparison floorspace will be limited in such centres to lower order to ensure the primacy for higher and middle order comparison shopping remains in the retail core area/town centre. For the foreseeable future, new Neighbourhood Centres will only be appropriate in the existing, growing and new residential areas of Mullingar and Athlone.

#### 7.2.5 Consideration of Need

In the proper and sustainable retail planning of the County over the period of the Strategy, both qualitative and quantitative needs have to be considered. In respect of the consideration of qualitative need, this is set down in the objectives of the Strategy.

The quantitative consideration of need is determined by the broad assessment of the requirement for additional retail floorspace in the County under a scenario which is the median of two scenarios: one based on the 2016 Census; and, the other based on the extrapolation of the MRPG 2010 population targets. The assessment is provided in Table 7.2 below.

**Table 7.2: Strategy Scenario – Indicative Net Floorspace Potential (m<sup>2</sup>)**

Period	Convenience		Comparison	
	Low	High	Low	High
Adjustment	605	605	397	397
2016 – 2020	4,553	6,043	5,809	7,862
2020 - 2026	10,293	13,065	12,238	16,089
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,450</b>	<b>19,712</b>	<b>18,443</b>	<b>24,348</b>

Source: MacCabe Durney Barnes

### 7.3 Specific Policies & Proposals

The specific policies and proposals of the Strategy are designed to facilitate the achievement of the aims of the Strategy. As such, they are formulated to ensure that:

- Existing or emerging issues in the County's retail profile and that of its centres have the policy framework to be addressed
- The expenditure capacity for additional floorspace is harnessed over the timescale of the Strategy.

#### 7.3.1 County Town – Mullingar

##### **Policy RP1: County Town – Mullingar**

*It is the policy of the Council to promote and encourage major enhancement and expansion of retail floorspace and town centre functions in Mullingar to reflect its role as a major town centre and further develop its competitiveness and importance as a key centre in the County and Eastern and Midland Region.*

### 7.3.1.1 Strategic

Mullingar is recognised to be the premier location in the County and wider Region for quality bulky goods shopping. However, if it is to not only sustain but enhance its role as a key retail location in the shopping patterns of the County and Region, and reduce expenditure leakage to centres in the GDA, then the County Town's middle and higher order comparison and convenience offer requires to be considerably improved. The priority for achieving this are within the Core Retail Area and through the strengthening of the town centre. However, the health check and MLAP 2014 identify that the scope and potential for this to be achieved at the scale required is limited in the context of the nature and character of the town centre and the fine historic grain of its streetscape. There is considerable potential for this to be delivered on a range of defined development opportunity sites, all of which are located in edge-of centre locations. These lands are identified in Map 2 of Appendix I and are:

- Blackhall
- Grove Street
- SuperValu car park
- Canal Avenue
- Cusack car park
- Heatons<sup>1</sup>
- Harbour Place Shopping Centre car park.

In addition, the former Columb Military Barracks, which closed in 2012, is designated in the MLAP 2014 as a Major Regeneration Opportunity Site. This major and important site is partially located within both the 300 – 400 metres edge-of-centre Sequential Approach distance. It is recognised to have the potential to accommodate a range of uses, with retail being one of the mix but is unlikely to be a major component in view of: the need to respect the architectural heritage of the complex; and, ensure it does not become an alternative retail location to the town centre or undermine the prospect for more centrally located wholly edge-of-centre development opportunity sites coming forward in the interests of consolidating the critical mass of the town centre.

While the development opportunity sites provide the key strategic locations in the town centre for large scale retail development, there requires to be parallel priority in ensuring that the potential and attraction of the side streets within/adjacent to the Core Retail Area is creatively harnessed to enable expansion of the retail, commercial leisure and cultural heart of Mullingar's Town Centre. By this means, the characteristics which distinguish Mullingar from many other large towns as a thriving centre for meeting, eating, greeting and staying in can be maximised.

Beyond the town centre, the needs of existing, growing and new residential areas require to have their daily shopping and services requirements met sustainably, and in this regard, locally, to reduce the need for people having to travel to meet these needs. The suburbs of the town have a mix of Neighbourhood Centres and areas which are the subject of Framework Plans. The latter are: Robinstown to the north; Ardmore/Marlinstown to the south east; and, Mullingar

<sup>1</sup>

*Heatons Mullingar ceased operations in the town in Spring 2019 and is now occupied by Sports Direct.*

South to the south. The locations of existing and proposed Neighbourhood Centres are identified in Map 1 of Appendix I. Although consistent with guidance in the suite of GRP, each of the proposed Neighbourhood Centres was previously considered as having the potential for new District Centres. However, to ensure that Mullingar Town Centre sustains its position as the predominant retail location in the town, the needs of these areas will be met by way of a network of Neighbourhood Centres with District Centres not appropriate in the retail hierarchy of Mullingar.

While the priority is enhancing the convenience and mainstream comparison offer of Mullingar Town Centre, there is a need to ensure the town sustains its role and importance in bulky goods shopping patterns in the County and Region. However, in view of the current saturation of this retail sector, when there is market recovery, the priority should be on the consolidation of Lakepoint Business and Retail Park and the upgrading/refurbishment of provision on Lynn and Mullingar Business Parks. It is a position which requires to be monitored over the period of the Strategy.

#### *7.3.1.2 Integration & the Public Realm*

Parking remains a significant issue in the town centre and there is a need to integrate parking provision, management, pricing and traffic management arrangements in the interests of sustaining the attraction and potential of Mullingar Town Centre. The development of sites in and around the town centre present opportunities to address this. Management of parking provision also presents opportunities to improve access and the public realm, particularly on Dominic Street.

It will be important to fully integrate edge-of-centre opportunities into the retail/town centre functions of the Core Retail Area and town centre as a whole. This is consistent with the policies and objectives of the MLAP 2014.

A scheme of ongoing public realm improvements would assist in the overall vitality and health of Mullingar Town Centre. Very important in the equation is that they preserve the ambience of the historic core of the town, but also set the agenda and vision for the future. Inherent in this is the important role that local people and bodies play in shaping the future of their town. This is consistent with objective O-DU4 of the MLAP 2014-2020 which commits to the preparation and implementation of a Public Realm Strategy for the town centre area, incorporating the creation of a network of interconnected civic spaces. This remains a commitment of the Council in the proposals for the Public Realm Enhancement Strategy.

The development of edge-of-centre sites also provides the opportunity to provide additional cultural and leisure uses close to the heart of Mullingar Town Centre, although the priority location for these will be in and abutting the Core Retail Area.

To deliver the strategic, integration and public realm initiatives and potential identified, it is the policy of the Council:

- RP2:** To support and implement appropriate development of lands for the future major retail expansion of Mullingar Town Centre within the town centre, with the priority being the designated development opportunity sites and the linked integration of these lands with the Core Retail Area.

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| <b>RP3</b> | To support the incremental expansion of the Core Retail Area through the increased profile and ambience of town centre side streets by enhancing the public realm and encouraging intensification of retail, commercial leisure, tourism and cultural uses.     |
| <b>RP4</b> | To prepare and implement a Public Realm Strategy for Mullingar Town Centre to secure the enhancement and renewal of the area and which includes an Interpretation and Signage Strategy to maximise the understanding of the heritage of the town.               |
| <b>RP5</b> | To prepare and implement a Traffic Management Plan for Mullingar Town Centre which examines opportunities for pedestrianisation, improves movement and integration for pedestrians, cyclists and the private car and addresses parking deficiencies and issues. |
| <b>RP6</b> | To encourage and facilitate the development of appropriately located Neighbourhood and Local Centres to meet the needs of existing, growing and new residential areas of the town.  |
| <b>RP7</b> | To sustain Mullingar's role and importance as a key bulky goods shopping destination in the County and Region.  |
| <b>RP8</b> | To work in partnership with local organisations, businesses and local people in the delivery of the policies and objectives for Mullingar Town Centre and the town as a whole.  |

### *7.3.1.3 Regional Centre – Athlone*

#### **Policy RP9: Regional Centre – Athlone**

*It is the policy of the Council to promote and encourage major enhancement and expansion of retail floorspace and regional centre functions in the core of Athlone to reflect its role as a major centre and to further develop its competitiveness and importance as a 'Regional Centre' as designated within the National Planning Framework.*

### *7.3.1.4 Strategic*

The priority is continuing to grow and enhance convenience and mainstream comparison shopping in Athlone's core area. The Athlone Town Centre shopping centre has reinforced the strategic retail function of Athlone. This has been secured and sustained throughout the period of economic recession the country has faced. This performance and potential requires to be built on recognising that, due to the fine grain morphology of the Core Retail Area of the town, then this would be difficult to achieve in the Core Retail Area of Athlone. However, through a suite of development opportunity sites, this can be redressed and underpin further growing of Athlone's retail role, potential and profile within edge-of-centre sites in the Eastern Bank area. These sites are identified in Map 3 of Appendix I and are:

- Adjacent to Southern Station Road
- At Loughanaskin
- Former shopping centre off St Mary's Square

- Between Sean Costello Street and John Broderick Street
- The Dunnes site and car park
- On Lloyds Lane and The Strand
- Golden Island.

In addition, the Strategy has identified the designation of lands on the Western Bank as a **Cultural and Tourism Quarter**. This designation is wholly in accordance with the ATDP 2014-2020 but reinforces the assessment that the area will not become a prime retail location within the context of Athlone. Rather, its potential lies in its established recognition and development as being the as yet, untapped Cultural and Tourism Quarter within the heart of Athlone. Retailing will play an important part of this but is envisaged to be craft/speciality/niche rather than mainstream convenience or comparison floorspace. However, in parallel, there is recognition that the convenience shopping needs of local people require to be better met in the area and ensuring this is achieved is a fundamental principle of the Strategy. The potential of this area will be further assessed and responded to in the Athlone Joint Retail Strategy.

As with Mullingar, there is the need to ensure that the shopping needs of existing and growing residential areas in the suburbs of Athlone are sustainably and properly met. These should not have the scope or potential to undermine the principle *‘town centre first’*. Thus, the strategic response is sustaining and encouraging a network of Neighbourhood Centres as the sustainable approach to the retail strategy for Athlone. The locations of these are identified in Map 1 of Appendix I. As with the approach to the Cultural and Tourism Quarter, this will be further assessed and responded to in the Athlone Joint Retail Strategy.

However, when market conditions improve, the objective must also be for Athlone to raise its profile and attraction in the County and Region for bulky goods shopping. This is not anticipated to emerge in the foreseeable future but when it does the priority must be consolidating and upgrading existing retail warehousing locations. It is a position which requires to be monitored over the period of the Strategy.

#### *7.3.1.5 Integration & the Public Realm*

There has been a long-term commitment in successive ATDPs to address/remodel/significantly enhance the public realm of the core area of Athlone. Street furniture is limited, footpaths are poorly maintained and there is no coherent approach to public signage. Shops fronts and facias on Church Street and Dublin Gate Street need care and attention. These issues require to be redressed if the significant progress, profile and competitiveness of Athlone is to be sustained and developed. This should be through an ongoing programme of investment in the public realm, with appropriate street furniture, signage, tree planting and footpath improvements. The framework for this is provided in the Council’s Public Realm Enhancement Strategy for Athlone and construction works in implementing this enhancement plan along Church Street were undertaken in 2018.

Although Athlone Town Centre and Golden Island Shopping Centre are the key retail locations in Athlone, there is little connectivity between them. As such, they serve as destination centres in their own right. A key strand in looking forward must be to overcome this to help strengthen the retail and commercial function and coherence of the-core area of Athlone.

In addition, as part of the above equation, Golden Island Shopping Centre is a dated centre surrounded by extensive surface car parking and adjacent to a mix of poor condition retail, commercial and industrial buildings set in a generally degraded environment. Given the area's proximity to the Core Retail Area and its profile on the major amenity and tourism asset of the Shannon, it is a priority that there is strategic environmental enhancement and upgrading of the area.

There is a clear traffic challenge within Athlone Town Centre. The Loughandonning Link Road is a key local road link that will provide strategic access into the centre of Athlone from the Creggan LAP lands to the east of Athlone. The Link Road will provide relief in terms of traffic volumes to the Dublin Road (R446) and in particular should relieve the Dublin Road of all Heavy Goods Vehicle traffic that is servicing retailers and other businesses in and around the town centre. Traffic calming measures, enhanced pedestrian priority and improved pedestrian facilities would also serve to redress the traffic challenges. Additionally, pedestrianisation of certain streets requires to be considered. Related to this is the need to manage and increase parking in the town in terms of future provision, pricing structure and car park access points. The creative development of edge-of-centre opportunity sites around the Core Retail Area provides the potential to assist in this.

For Athlone to continue to sustain and enhance its role and attraction as a key retail and tourism destination in the County, Region and beyond as well as better meeting the needs of local people, it is the policy of the Council:

- RP10** To support and implement appropriate development of lands for the future major retail expansion of Athlone within its core area, with the priority being the designated Development Opportunity Sites and the linked integration of these lands with the Core Retail Area.
- RP11** To develop a vision and strategy to progress the realisation of the Western Bank of Athlone's core area as a Cultural and Tourism Quarter.
- RP12** To support the incremental expansion of Athlone's Core Retail Area through the increased profile and ambience of town centre main streets by enhancing the public realm and encouraging intensification of retail, commercial, leisure, tourism and cultural uses.
- RP13** To prepare and implement a Public Realm Strategy for Athlone's Regional Centre to secure the enhancement and renewal of the area and which includes an Interpretation and Signage Strategy to maximise the understanding of the heritage of the town.
- RP14** To promote the preparation of a strategic environmental masterplan for the Golden Island Shopping Centre and its immediate environs.
- RP15** To prepare and implement a Traffic Management Plan for Athlone Regional Centre which addresses the strategic relief of congestion, examines opportunities for pedestrianisation, improves movement and integration for pedestrians, cyclists and the private car and addresses parking deficiencies and issues.

- RP16** To encourage and facilitate the development of appropriately located Neighbourhood and Local Centres to meet the needs of existing, growing and new residential areas of Athlone and its environs as informed by the Joint Retail Strategy for Athlone.
- RP17** To develop and enhance Athlone's role as an important bulky goods shopping destination in the County and Region.
- RP18** To work in partnership with local organisations, businesses and local people in the delivery of the policies and objectives for Athlone as a whole.

### 7.3.2 Key Service Town – Castlepollard

#### **Policy RP19: Key Service Town – Castlepollard**

*It is the policy of the Council to sustain and enhance the retail and services offer of Castlepollard Town Centre and harness the potential of its heritage asset and tourism profile.*

As a Key Service Town, Castlepollard is an important economic driver for the surrounding rural area which is relatively remote from the main population centres in the County and the wider Region. As such, it is a key service centre for its rural hinterland. However, given its population size, it is unlikely to attract any substantial new retail floorspace although there could be potential for tourism-related retailing. The priority should be to consolidate the strength and profile of retail and commercial uses around the Square and on surrounding side streets. In the interests of looking forward, the lands between Pakenhamhall Road and Mullingar Road are identified as those which would best serve the objective of the consolidation and retail enhancement of the town centre. These lands are identified in Map 4 of Appendix I.

Additionally, as set out in the County Development Plan 2014, and in accordance with the MRPG 2010, the aim should be to develop the town closely linked with that of the County Town of Mullingar.

The town centre, the Square and the Green provide an attractive and well-maintained environment. There should continue to be investment in this, with it being enhanced by an Interpretation Strategy to encourage the tourism potential and heritage asset of the town to be further developed and maximised. The commitment to delivering this is evidenced through Castlepollard successfully securing funding from the DAHRRGA's Town and Village Renewal Scheme. Additionally, the scope and potential for a Farmers' Market in the town centre requires to be examined as part of the Markets Strategy for the County.

To harness and enhance the retail and tourism potential of the Castlepollard, it is the policy of the Council:

- RP20** To secure and promote the consolidation of Castlepollard Town Centre through encouraging the re-use and regeneration of buildings around the Square and surrounding streets.
- RP21** To support and implement appropriate development of lands for the future retail expansion of Castlepollard Town Centre, with the priority being the designated

development opportunity site and the linked integration of these lands with the Square.

- RP22** To strategically review, in association with the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, the mechanisms required to develop the linkage of Castlepollard with the County Town of Mullingar to provide the catalyst for the sustainable economic development of the town.
- RP23** To support and prepare, in association with local organisations, businesses and people, an Interpretation Strategy for Castlepollard which responds to the town's tourism potential and heritage asset.

### *7.3.3 Service Town – Moate*

#### **Policy RP24: Service Town – Moate**

*It is the policy of the Council to sustain and enhance the retail and services offer of Moate Town Centre and harness the potential of its heritage asset and tourism profile.*

Reflecting the strong population growth Moate has experienced since at least 2002, there would be potential for the town to improve its convenience offer, particularly given its role and importance to its rural hinterland. Given its proximity to Athlone, it is not envisaged that Moate would attract national/international comparison multiples but rather the town centre would grow its independent comparison retail offer, with some of this having the scope to be tourism related. However, the delivery of any substantial growth in the town's convenience floorspace is constrained by the limited number and size of available development opportunity sites. With the exception of a large site on and extending on lands to the north of Main Street, there is only one other site identified. This is located on lands to the rear of St Patrick's Church and extending westwards from Moate Hill Road. Both sites are identified in Map 5 in Appendix I.

While steps have been taken to enhance the town's public realm, this has not been as ambitious as the potential for the heritage streetscape could deliver. This is recognised in the County Development Plan 2014. A key step would be to better give back Main Street/Church Street to pedestrians through strategically located road narrowing and pedestrian crossings, with priority locations being at the Tuar Ard Art Centre and Moate Community School. The scope and potential to redress these issues is provided by the DAHRRGA's Town and Village Renewal Scheme funding which Moate has been awarded.

There are additional smaller initiatives which could help develop the ambience and attraction of the town centre. These could include: the continued use of vacant shop/commercial premises windows as exhibition space for Schools/Community Art Projects – an initiative which could be rolled out in other main towns in the County; and, the provision of further cycle parking facilities.

To harness and enhance the retail and tourism potential of the Moate, it is the policy of the Council:

- RP25** To secure and promote the consolidation of Moate Town Centre through encouraging the re-use and regeneration of lands and buildings along Main Street and Church Street, with the key priority being the development of opportunity sites and expanding the scope of the Schools/Community Art Project Initiative.



**RP26** To prepare and implement, in association with local organisations, businesses and people, an enhanced Public Realm Strategy for Moate which addresses enhanced pedestrian movement across Main Street.

**RP27** To support and prepare, in association with the Moate Museum and local organisations, businesses and people, an Interpretation Strategy for Moate which responds to the town's tourism potential and heritage asset.

### *7.3.4 Service Town – Kinnegad*

#### **Policy RP28: Service Town – Kinnegad**

*It is the policy of the Council to sustain and enhance the retail and services offer of Kinnegad Town Centre.*

Kinnegad was the fastest growing of the main centres in the County over the period 2002 – 2011. This reflects its strategic location on the border of the GDA and at the nationally important interchange of the M4/N4 (Dublin – Sligo) and M6 (Dublin – Galway) motorways. The combination of population growth and location has attracted retail and commercial investment into the town. To date, this is wholly to locations outside the Main Street focus of Kinnegad Town Centre. This reflects the limited potential for any significant new retail floorspace in the heart of the town centre. There are, however, two significant backland development opportunity sites which, with the provision of direct physical links to Main Street, provide the potential for consolidation of the retail offer of the town centre. Both are located to the south east of the Athlone Road and north of the R446 and are identified in Map 6 of Appendix I.

There is a need to encourage investment in new retail and commercial space within the heart of the town centre. Underpinning this is the necessity to consolidate activities within the town centre as currently these are dispersed in the St Etchen's and Eastwae schemes and the Tesco store. As part of this, the scope and potential for Kinnegad to host a Farmers' Market requires to be examined as part of a wider Markets Strategy for the County.

Of key importance is the need to strategically enhance the environment and ambience of Main Street and create a better sense of place. This should be through a range of measures including; street narrowing; environmental enhancement; shop frontage improvements; and, an increased number of pedestrian crossings. An important contribution to delivering this will be through the DAHRRGA's Town and Village Renewal Scheme funding that Kinnegad has secured.

To address the issues and harness the opportunities which prevail in Kinnegad Town Centre, it is the policy of the Council:

**RP29** To secure and promote the consolidation of Kinnegad Town Centre through encouraging the re-use and regeneration of lands and buildings along Main Street, with the key priority being the development of opportunity sites and ensuring their connectivity to the Main Street.

**RP30** To prepare and implement, in association with local organisations, businesses and people, an enhanced Public Realm Strategy for Kinnegad which addresses street narrowing, environmental enhancement, shop frontage improvements and enhanced pedestrian movement across Main Street.

### 7.3.5 Service Town – Kilbeggan

#### **Policy RP31: Service Town – Kilbeggan**

*It is the policy of the Council to sustain and enhance the retail and services offer of Kilbeggan Town Centre and harness the potential of its heritage asset and tourism profile.*

Kilbeggan requires to see an enhancement of its retail offer, particularly but not exclusively its convenience one, if the needs of those in the town and its rural hinterland are to be better met locally. However, there is very limited development potential within the town centre on Main Street. Re-use of vacant buildings for retail purposes will be a priority, but this will not serve to meet shopping needs, particularly in respect of food shopping. The scope for this being redressed is limited close to the heart of the Main Street. The only site which has been determined to have the potential to achieve this is located on backlands to the north-east of the junction of Main Street/Dublin Road and Tullamore Road, with key to this being linkage to Main Street. This site is identified in Map 7 of Appendix I.

In parallel, there is the real opportunity for Kilbeggan to build on the profile and importance of the tourism attractions of the Kilbeggan Distillery and Racecourse. This is recognised in the County Development Plan 2014-2020 through the commitment to developing a Tourism Strategy, within which an important strand will be to enhance the linkage and synergies of Kilbeggan Racecourse to enable the town and its businesses to better benefit from its attraction and economic impact. Additionally, the town has a successful Christmas and Craft Fair held in St. James' Hall. The scope and potential for developing on this through the introduction of a Farmers' Market requires to be examined as part of the Markets Strategy for the County.

The heritage streetscape of Kilbeggan is an important asset but one which is not having its potential maximised. There is a need to build on this through a strategic programme of public realm improvements and interventions. This is recognised and it is the policy of the County Development Plan 2014-2020 to pursue this through a variety of funding mechanisms in collaboration with voluntary organisations and community groups in the town. In progressing this, a balance requires to be struck through ensuring parking needs are met but not to the detriment of wider environmental objectives for the town centre. The scope and potential for these issues to be redressed will be greatly assisted by the DAHRRGA's Town and Village Renewal Scheme funding which Kilbeggan has successfully secured.

There is a number of buildings of heritage/architectural merit within Kilbeggan Town Centre which are vacant, with some at risk. A key one is the bank building on Market Square. The vacancies are recognised to detract from the amenity and ambience of Kilbeggan Town Centre. Resolution of redressing buildings at risk and bringing them back into viable economic use cannot be achieved by the Council alone and this is well understood, thus a collaborative approach with owners, business and other local people is the required road map.

To harness and enhance the retail and tourism potential of Kilbeggan, it is the policy of the Council:

- RP32** To secure and promote the consolidation of Kilbeggan Town Centre through encouraging the re-use and regeneration of lands and buildings along Main Street, with the key priority being the development of the identified opportunity site.

- RP33** To work with owners and local businesses and people in a collaborative approach to bringing vacant and at-risk buildings of heritage and architectural merit back into viable economic use.
- RP34** To prepare and implement, in association with the Kilbeggan Distillery and Kilbeggan Racecourse, a Tourism and Interpretation Strategy for Kilbeggan.
- RP35** To prepare and implement, in association with local organisations, businesses and people, an enhanced Public Realm Strategy for Kilbeggan which develops a programme of improvements and interventions.

## 7.4 General Retail Policies

In addition to specific policies relating to the main centres of Westmeath, a number of general policies are defined to shape retailing over the period of the County Retail Strategy and beyond. These are set out in the paragraphs which follow.

### 7.4.1 Local Service Towns

The Tier 4 Local Service Towns in the County Retail Hierarchy are Rochfortbridge, Killucan/Rathwire, Clonmellon and Tyrrellspass. Each of these towns have: a range of retail and other local services; heritage townscapes; and, important tourism assets and infrastructure. They are important centres in their rural hinterlands. A number of these centres within the County successfully secured DAHRRGA Town and Village Renewal Scheme funding in recent years.

The key priority is for the consolidation and enhancement of the central areas of these Local Service Towns and ensuring that they continue to grow and meet the needs of local people within the town and their wider rural catchment areas. To progress and achieve this, it is the policy of the Council:

- GR1** To sustain, enhance and consolidate the retail and services offer of Local Service Centres within their central areas and harness and develop the potential of their heritage and tourism assets.

### 7.4.2 Neighbourhood Centres

Neighbourhood Centres are designated Tier 4 centres in the County Retail Hierarchy and form part of the retail hierarchy of Tier 1 Retail Settlements (ie. Mullingar and Athlone). They are located in the suburbs of both Mullingar and Athlone in existing, growing or new residential areas and serve to meet daily shopping and services needs in a sustainable way to reduce the propensity for local people having to travel to meet these needs. These existing and proposed centres are identified in Map 1 of Appendix I. Neighbourhood Centres are limited in size and function, although the GRP 2012 do not set down an indicative threshold in respect of the former. The GRP define a Neighbourhood Centre as consisting of a small group of shops, typically comprising a newsagent and anchored by a small supermarket – be that a mainstream, symbol group or discount operator – and have the potential to provide a small range of local non-retail services, civic, community and commercial leisure floorspace serving a small localised catchment population.

Consistent with the role, function and scale prescribed, it is the policy of the Council:

- GR2** To encourage and facilitate the development of appropriately located Neighbourhood Centres to meet the needs of existing, growing and new residential areas of Mullingar and Athlone.

### *7.4.3 Rural Centres & Local/Corner Shops*

Rural Centres and Local/Corner Shops are designated as Tier 5 settlements and centres in the County Retail Hierarchy. In respect of the former, they are identified in the County Retail Hierarchy as Delvin, Coole, Multyfarnham, Ballymore, Ballynacarrigy, Raharney, Milltownpass, Collinstown, Glassan, Ballinalack, Rathowen, Finnea, Ballinagore, Ballykeeran and Castletown-Geoghegan. Although there has been a continuing decline in the number of Rural Centres and Local/Corner Shops around the more rural parts of the County and country in recent years, their role and function in the life of the community is recognised as very important. They predominantly serve local level convenience shopping needs, but some will provide a limited range of non-retail services and have tourism function. A number of these centres in Westmeath were successful in the Council's bid for DAHRRGA Town and Village Renewal Scheme funding in recent years.

Reflecting their role and importance, it is the policy of the Council:

- GR3** To retain, encourage and facilitate the retail and limited non-retail services role of Rural Centres and Local/Corner Shops around the County.

### *7.4.4 Convenience*

The enhancement of the convenience/food shopping offer across all centres in the County Retail Hierarchy is a sustainable objective. Underpinning this is the need to ensure the sustained vitality, viability and attraction of centres at all levels of the County Retail Hierarchy and, as such, new foodstores should be located in the centre of towns, villages and neighbourhood centres with all other applications demonstrating they fully meet the tests of the Sequential Approach. The GRP 2012 no longer distinguish between discount stores and other convenience goods stores and the Strategy reinforces this. There is concern with the exclusion of any comparison threshold within the net floorspace cap of 3,000m<sup>2</sup> for large convenience stores in the County, as set out in the GRP 2012. This is specifically as a number of the main national and international convenience operators are potentially opening the door to in-store High Street mainstream fashion brand concessions. This has very real potential implications for the vitality, viability and attraction of main centres in the County Retail Hierarchy. Over the period of the Strategy, it is an issue which will be fully addressed in the assessment of applications for large scale convenience stores.

To ensure that these issues are addressed, it is the policy of the Council:

- GR4** To request that the nature of the comparison component of proposed large convenience stores is provided in detail and a transparent and evidence-based RIA/RIS provided in support of the application.
- GR5** To prohibit the development of edge of and out of centre large convenience stores which include a large component of high street fashion brands in the comparison

mix proposed in the interests of sustaining and further enhancing the vitality, viability and attraction of the Core Retail Areas and central areas of the main centres in the County Retail Hierarchy.

#### 7.4.5 District Centres

The GRP 2012 in Annex 1 – *Glossary of Terms* under A.1.5 *Types of Centre* sets out the following description of what a District Centre comprises:

*‘Provides a range of retail and non-retail service functions (e.g. banks, post office, local offices, restaurants, public houses, community and cultural facilities) for the community at a level consistent with the function of that centre in the core strategy. They can be purpose built as in new or expanding suburbs or traditional district centres in large cities or town.’*

The previous GRP set out thresholds of what the thresholds for District Centres were likely to comprise and, outside of the Dublin Area, in or adjacent to main towns this was 10,000m<sup>2</sup>. This has not been the guidance provided in the GRP 2012 where no threshold is provided. In the context of the County and its Tier 1 Retail Settlements and the priority of the ‘core area/centre first’ principle, the nature and scale of District Centres, as prescribed in the GRP 2012, are deemed not to be an appropriate centre or retail format in the County Retail Hierarchy. As such, it is the policy of the Council:

**GR6** To prohibit applications for District Centres in the Tier 1 settlements to ensure and protect the vitality, viability and attraction of the Core Retail Areas of Mullingar and Athlone.

#### 7.4.6 Retail Warehouse Parks

In view of the saturation of the retail warehouse market over the last decade, there are both many unimplemented permissions for new retail parks and vacancies in existing retail parks. Consequently, there has been increasing pressure on the Council for alternative forms of retailing to bulky goods shopping to be permissible on retail parks. To protect the vitality and viability of the County’s core areas within its Tier 1 retail settlement areas (Mullingar and Athlone) and avoid retail parks emerging as out-of-town shopping centres, this pressure has been resisted by the Council. This responds to advice in the GRP 2012 which states under paragraph 4.11.2 – *Retail Parks and Retail Warehouses* that:

*‘To minimise potential adverse impacts on central areas, it is important that the range of goods sold in both existing and any future retail parks is tightly controlled and limited to truly bulky household goods or goods which are not portable by customers travelling by foot, cycle or bus.’*

Reflecting this advice, it is the policy of the Council:

**GR7** To prohibit mainstream and discount convenience retail developments in retail parks.

**GR8** To prohibit mainstream comparison retail development or retailers in retail parks.

#### 7.4.7 Retail Development in Business Parks & Employment Areas

Increasingly, single use large employment areas, be they business parks or industrial parks and estates, have generally been superseded by more mixed-use sustainable development models that combine working, living, leisure, shopping and local services provision. In addition to being a more sustainable development strategy for major strategic greenfield and brownfield locations, the introduction of local shopping and services provision is an important ingredient in the attraction and competitiveness of such areas. In respect of older employment areas, retail provision will be limited unless it directly interfaces with existing and expanding residential areas and forms part of a strategic approach to provision in the suburbs of the County's Tier 1 retail areas (Mullingar and Athlone). Any further retail floorspace in such employment areas will be restricted to meeting the convenience and non-retail services needs of employees rather than facilitating the creation of new Neighbourhood Centres or enabling retail warehousing to be introduced.

Underpinning this strategic approach, it is the policy of the Council:

- GR9** To ensure that the level of retail and local services provision in existing and new major employment areas sustains and enhances their attraction as locations for investment and working in.
- GR10** To provide the land-use and retail planning framework to ensure that the mixed-use strategies for new employment areas respond to the wider context of need and demand in related expanding residential areas and individual main centres, in the interests of ensuring that these locations are attractive to new residents, workers and employers.
- GR11** To limit the level of shopping and local services provision in existing industrial estates or business parks. Stand-alone mainstream and discount convenience or comparison floorspace will not be permitted, however the introduction of wholesale retail floorspace will be open for consideration.

#### 7.4.8 Enhancement of Towns & Villages

The enhancement of the main centres has been established as a key strand in the required approach in the specific policies for each. This general policy outlines the mechanisms needed to progress and implement these specific policies.

It is, therefore, the policy of the Council:

- GR12** To encourage and facilitate the enhancement and environmental improvement of the County's towns and villages.
- GR13** To pursue all avenues of funding to secure resources for the enhancement, renewal and regeneration of the public realm of the County's towns and villages.
- GR14** To ensure the best quality of design is achieved for all new retail development and that design respects and enhances the specific characteristics of the different towns and villages in the County.

#### *7.4.9 Re-Use & Regeneration of Derelict & Underutilised Land & Buildings*

Re-use and regeneration of derelict/obsolete/underutilised land and buildings in town and village centres is a sustainable and desirable objective. In the context of the County, regeneration and renewal are particularly important in town and village centres as they will help achieve preservation and restoration of the character and quality of the centres, particularly in terms of vernacular/historical architecture, scale, height, density and massing. The potential for the re-use and regeneration of derelict buildings and brownfield or underutilised sites in town/village/smaller centre locations should be promoted in the formulation of retail and mixed-use development proposals. Only where suitable, available and viable land and buildings cannot be found should alternative options be considered by applicants.

To deliver the achievement of these principles, it is the policy of the Council:

- GR15** To identify obsolete and potential renewal areas and to encourage and facilitate the re-use and regeneration of derelict land and buildings in the County's main towns, villages and smaller centres. The Council will use its statutory powers, where appropriate, to facilitate this and consider such buildings and lands for inclusion in the Register of Derelict Sites.
- GR16** To work with landowners and development interests to pursue the potential of suitable, available and viable land and buildings for retail and other town centre uses across all centres in the County Retail Hierarchy.

#### *7.4.10 Retailing & Tourism & Leisure*

The specific policies for the main centres in the County serve to highlight the importance of tourism in the economies of these towns and this extends across Westmeath as a whole. To date, the full retail dimension of the County's tourism economy has not been harnessed. As this is of considerable importance to the wider Westmeath economy, retail-related tourism requires to develop a greater critical mass and profile, in the interests of the attraction and competitiveness of the County.

To develop and better harness this potential, it is the policy of the Council:

- GR17** To encourage and facilitate the development of retailing in the tourism and leisure sectors, subject to protecting these assets and amenities from insensitive and inappropriate development.
- GR18** To encourage and facilitate the delivery of tourism related retail developments and initiatives, subject to compliance with the Strategy's objectives and assessment criteria.

#### *7.4.11 Non-Retail Uses in Core Retail Areas*

The Terms of Reference for the review of the 2007 Strategy and the preparation of this Strategy indicated concern in regard of the overprovision of lower order services within the town centre areas of the main centres of the County and that this was impacting on the characteristics and ambience of these centres. These lower order services were identified as take-aways and betting offices. However, there is a wider range of retail and non- retail uses which also contribute to



the potential undermining of the retail heart of these centres. These include amusement/gaming arcades, budget shops, charity shops, telephone/mobile shops and business and financial services. It is recognised that in the majority of the County's main central areas the retail footprints do not meet the requirements of national and international operators and the space provides the opportunity for the introduction of alternative occupiers, often without a planning application for a change of use being required. To maintain the integrity, critical mass of quality retail activity, viability and vitality of Core Retail Areas and other main streets, the Council will seek to discourage an overconcentration of the aforementioned uses in prime retail areas.

To achieve this objective, it is the policy of the Council:

- GR19** To prohibit the development of amusement/gaming arcades as they are considered to be an undesirable use and potentially detrimental to the business and commercial environment of centres in the County.
- GR20** To discourage where possible within its statutory powers the introduction of non-retail and lower grade retail uses in the Core Retail Areas and central areas of the main centres in Westmeath in the interests of maintaining and sustaining the retail attraction of the County's centres.

### *7.4.12 Markets*

The 2007 Strategy recognised that markets are a popular form of traditional retailing which meet local shopping needs, often with a range of other specialist and tourism-related shopping. It advised that it would be appropriate for the Council to develop and initiate a Market's Strategy for Mullingar and Athlone. This initiative has not been progressed at a strategic level but Farmers Markets (Mullingar, Moate and Clonmellon), a Food and Village Market (Athlone) and Christmas Markets (all the main centres with the exception of Kinnegad) operate within the County. Quality markets are key attractors to centres and greatly add to their vibrancy and ambience. The scope and potential for the County to have a sustainable and quality network of markets, not solely restricted to Mullingar and Athlone, requires to be examined and developed building on the market town heritage of Westmeath. This potential is specifically highlighted in the County Development Plan 2014 in respect of Moate and Kinnegad.

To harness this potential, it is the policy of the Council:

- GR21** To support and develop, in association with leading organisations in the County's main towns and other centres, an integrated Markets Strategy for the County.
- GR22** To encourage and facilitate the development and attraction of quality town markets selling indigenous products in towns and villages at all levels of the County Retail Hierarchy, in recognition of their potential to sustain and increase the attractiveness of these centres.

### *7.4.13 Casual Trading*

In contrast to Farmers' Markets, those which would come under the banner of Casual Trading are not considered to be the image and attraction sought for the town and village centres of the County. In addition to not having the ambience of Farmers' Markets, they are viewed as creating



adverse environmental effects such as noise, litter and traffic congestion. To seek to redress this, the Council will carry out its statutory functions under the Casual Trading Act 1995, including the issuing of permits and the designation of Casual Trading Areas where the Council considers these to be necessary.

In recognition of the prevailing issues, it is the policy of the Council:

- GR23** To prosecute in situations where the Casual Trading Act 1995 is being contravened.
- GR24** To take cognisance of the proper and sustainable development of the County's towns and villages, including the preservation and improvement of amenities, the safety and convenience of pedestrians, the traffic likely to be generated by Casual Trading and the promotion of tourism.

### *7.4.14 Innovation in the County's Retail Offer*

After the boom years in retail development, following the impact of the recession, there remains caution in CSO and ESRI forecasts on whether the retail sector achieves the level and profile of its expansion years in the last decade. This noted, to ensure that the County sustains and enhances its attraction and competitiveness as a retail destination, it must be proactive and responsive in respect of innovation in retailing and new retail market trends. The Council has demonstrated its commitment to looking at innovative concepts and formats through its granting of planning permission for Phase 1 of the major Europe China Trading Hub to be located just outside Athlone. Although progress on the proposal has not emerged to date, the approach adopted by the Council is the way in which the County can maximise its competitiveness and capitalise on its strategic location at the centre of the country. Therefore, encouraging and facilitating innovation, be that in trading format, location or product, will assist the County to build on the success that has been established to date and, consequently, its retail profile and attraction.

To ensure this remains a strategic component in the development of Westmeath's retail and tourism profile and competitiveness, it is the policy of the Council:

- GR25** To encourage and facilitate innovation in the County's retail offer and attraction.
- GR26** To review and monitor retail trends that could have an influence on the performance of the sector within Westmeath and pursue harnessing new concepts and formats in the County's retail structure.

### *7.4.15 Garden Centres & Agri-Business Diversification*

The profile and mixed-use diversification of existing and new garden centres and agri-businesses has been an increasing trend over the last decade in the County and across the country as a whole. The Council in principle supports this, as both contribute to the economies of Westmeath's rural areas. However, through their expansion and diversification, such developments should not become alternatives to small town and village centres, as this could impact on the viable sustainability of existing retail and non-retail services, businesses and the expansion of these offers in the County's smaller rural centres. Sustaining, protecting and enhancing the vitality, viability and attraction of small towns and villages in the County is a priority of the Council and proposals that could undermine this will be resisted.

To assure such proposals do not have the potential to adversely affect small rural centres, it is the policy of the Council:

- GR27** To seek comprehensive details, such as RIA/RIS and other appropriate information, for all proposals for new garden centres or agri-businesses or extensions to either (which include retail and restaurant/café floorspace) to enable assessment of their potential impact on nearby small towns and villages.

### 7.4.16 Petrol Filling Stations

The GRP 2012 reinforced that the size of retail units associated with petrol filling stations should not exceed 100m<sup>2</sup> net. Where permission is sought for floorspace in excess of 100m<sup>2</sup> in retail units associated with petrol filling stations, the Sequential Approach to retail development shall apply i.e. the retail element of the proposal shall be assessed by the Planning Authority in the same way as would an application for retail development (without petrol/diesel filling facilities) in the same location. In addition, there has been development pressure for non-retail food takeaways and cafes at filling stations which have the potential to adversely affect smaller town and rural centres through trade diversion. In respect of the latter, this is highlighted as a concern of the Council.

To be consistent with the guidance in the GRP 2012 and limit the range and function of petrol filling stations, it is the policy of the Council:

- GR28** To restrict the size of any retail units associated with petrol filling stations to 100m<sup>2</sup> of net retail floor area and ensure that any proposals above this threshold will be subject to the Sequential Approach.
- GR29** To prohibit food takeaway outlets and cafes in petrol filling stations if not located in a designated centre.

## 7.5 Criteria for Assessment of Retail Proposals

The development management process is fundamental to the delivery of an effective County Retail Strategy. In accordance with the requirements of the GRP 2012, the Strategy identifies the development management criteria for the assessment of retail developments. These criteria apply to the assessment of what is considered significant retail development in the context of the County's towns and villages. Development thresholds for rural counties, such as Westmeath, generally distinguish between what should be applied to major centres and what is appropriate at lower levels in the County Retail Hierarchy. This is the approach adopted with regards threshold levels, which is as follows:

- **Athlone and Mullingar:** developments of 1,000m<sup>2</sup> gross convenience and 2,000m<sup>2</sup> gross comparison will be tested by the assessment criteria
- **All Other Centres:** proposals for 500m<sup>2</sup> gross convenience and comparison developments will be assessed against the criteria.

Applications for significant retail development will be assessed in accordance with the following criteria and whether or not the proposal will:

- i) Support the long-term strategy for town and village centres in the County Retail

Hierarchy, as established in the Strategy, and not materially diminish the prospect of attracting the private sector into one or more such centres;

- ii) Have the potential to increase employment opportunities and promote site and centre sustainable economic regeneration in both urban and rural centres across all levels of the County Retail Hierarchy;
- iii) Have the potential to increase the competitiveness of the County regionally, nationally and internationally, as appropriate, and thereby attract further consumers/shoppers to the County and its towns and villages;
- iv) Respond to consumer demand for its retail offering and not diminish the range of activities that all centres across the County Retail Hierarchy can support and sustain;
- v) Cause an adverse impact on one or more centres in the County Retail Hierarchy, either singly or cumulatively with recent developments, outstanding permissions (which have a realistic prospect of implementation) or those which are at an advanced stage in the planning process, sufficient to undermine the quality of the centre or its wider function in the promotion and encouragement of the arts, culture, leisure and public realm, all of which are critical to the economic and social life of communities in the County;
- vi) Cause an increase in the number of vacant properties within the designated Core Retail Area or central area of settlements at the higher levels of the County Retail Hierarchy but also generally in respect of the smaller, more rural, centres in the County;
- vii) Ensure a high standard of access by public transport, foot, bicycle and private car so that the proposal is easily accessible by all sections of society. Specifically, details of proposed Mobility Management Measures should be provided which outline how the proposed development could both improve accessibility of retail areas while aiming to contribute to the development of pedestrian and cyclist friendly centre environments and a vibrant street/village life. These criteria are on the whole directed at applications in the County's main retail centres in recognition that communities in centres and areas in the more rural parts of Westmeath are highly reliant on the private car given both the lack of public transport and the distances involved; and
- viii) Link effectively with the town/village centre in which the development is proposed so that there is likely to be commercial synergy.

In addition, the Council will seek that applications for new retail developments address and provide evidence in respect of the following:

- The relationship of the application to any Development Plan/Local Area Plan allocations.
- Assessment of the proposal against the tests of the Sequential Approach with all other options being considered. Under the Sequential Approach, the following criteria require to be addressed:
  - If a brownfield town or village centre site is not being promoted in the application, it should be demonstrated that all town or village centre options have been fully evaluated and that flexibility has been adopted with regard to the retail format
  - In all cases, the site should offer the optimum accessibility by all transport modes, including walking and cycling, and this is generally best achieved within town or village centres.

- There is demonstrable qualitative and quantitative need for the proposal, and it is in accordance with the centre's role and level in the County Retail Hierarchy. In respect of quantitative need, this should be derived from the expenditure capacity within the relevant catchment area which should be appropriate to the nature and quantum of the retail floorspace proposed. All applications should provide details of the methodology applied and the source inputs to the capacity assessment.
- The baseline information and capacity/impact assessment is fit for purpose and transparent.
- Its contribution to town/village centre improvement through quality of design, public realm interventions and integration.
- Its contribution to site and/or area regeneration.
- Its role in sustaining rural communities.
- The extent to which it is relevant to consider the imposition of restrictions on the nature and range of goods permitted for sale.

The Council will consider hours of operation in assessing planning applications for retail development and may attach conditions restricting same.

In making applications for retail development above the Strategy defined thresholds, applicants should ensure that the proposal addresses and demonstrates compliance with above assessment criteria. This is a requirement set down in the GRP 2012.

If the retail proposal, whether significant or not, is in compliance with County Development Plan and Local Area Plan policies and proposals in all material respects, it should expect to be met with approval. In accordance with the GRP 2012, in such instances, it should not be necessary for the applicant to provide additional supporting background studies. However, the onus is on the applicant to demonstrate convincingly that the proposal does comply with these plans as appropriate. Where there is doubt on any aspect of a planning application, the Council will require a detailed justification related to the matter that is questionable. The Council will, however, seek to ensure that all potential issues in respect of the proposal are identified and understood at the pre-application stage through pre-application consultations with applicants.

**GR30:** All applications for large retail development will be assessed in accordance with the County Retail Strategy assessment criteria.

## 7.6 Monitoring & Review

This Strategy shall be reviewed in parallel with that of the overall review of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020, to be undertaken following the adoption of the Eastern and Midland RSES. This will enable monitoring of the progress made in the delivery of the Strategy, permissions granted and implemented and on envisaged changes to the population and economic assumptions applied to be made. This review of the Strategy will therefore form part of the review of the County Development Plan 2014 which will underpin the preparation of the County Development Plan 2020 – 2026. As future County Retail Strategies will be aligned to the timeframe of the County Development Plan, the interim update and review monitoring reports will be produced at regular intervals of no less than every second year. If the findings of

## APPENDIX 4

these reports indicate any significant changes in baseline information or trends, as deemed appropriate, the Council will review the Strategy or parts thereof.

## Appendix

**Map 1:** County Westmeath Retail Hierarchy

**Map 2:** Mullingar (County Town) Retail Core; Existing Retail Hubs and Opportunity Sites

**Map 3:** Athlone (Regional Centre) Retail Core; Existing Retail Hubs; Opportunity Sites and Culture & Tourism Quarter

**Map 4:** Castlepollard Retail - Opportunity Site

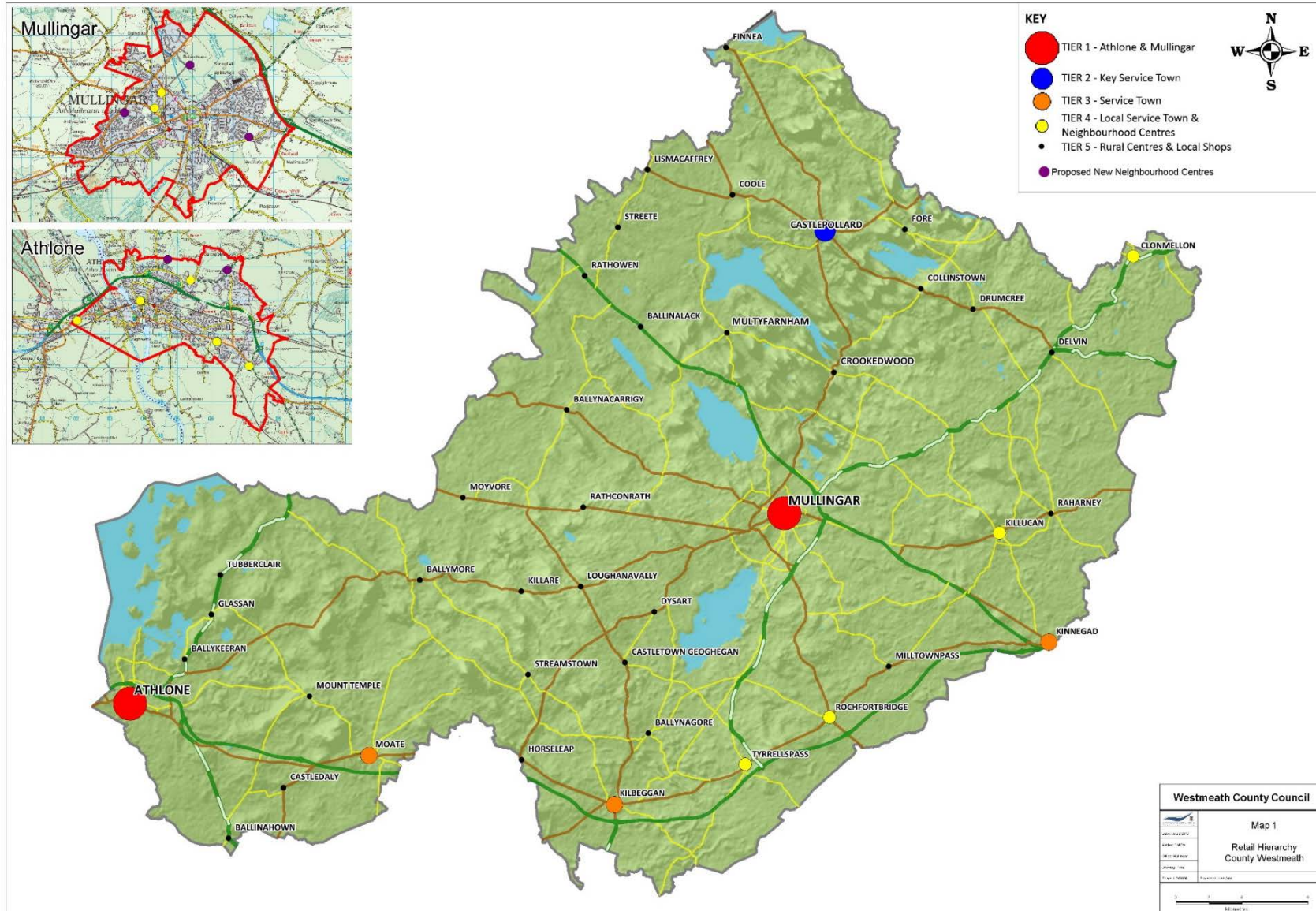
**Map 5:** Moate Retail - Opportunity Sites

**Map 6:** Kinnegad Retail - Opportunity Sites

**Map 7:** Kilbeggan Retail - Opportunity Site and Civic Space



## APPENDIX 4





## APPENDIX 4





## APPENDIX 4



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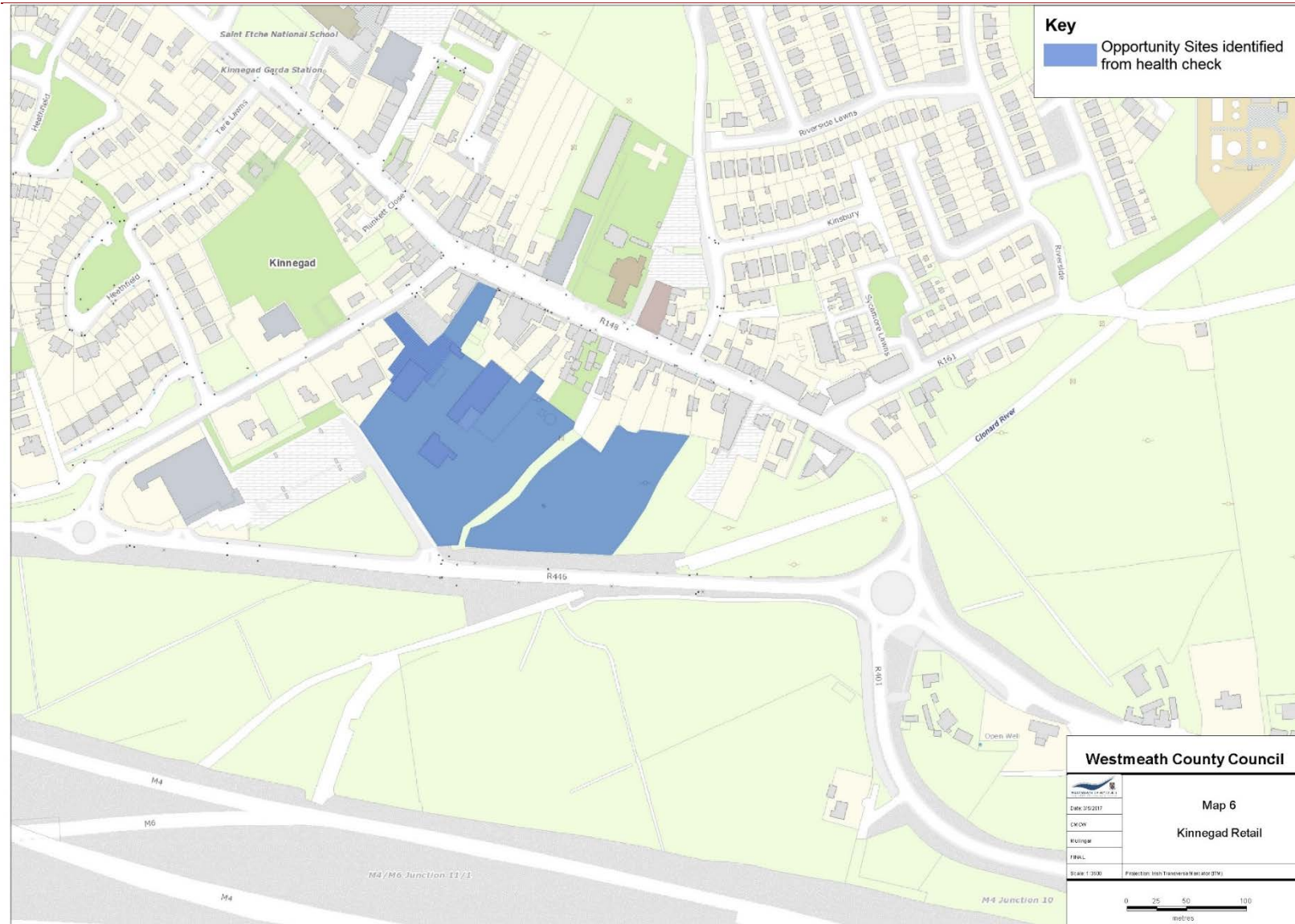




## APPENDIX 4



## APPENDIX 4





## APPENDIX 4





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## APPENDIX 5

### APPENDIX 5 - LIST OF PROTECTED VIEWS AND AMENITY AREAS


Viewpoint Number	Picture of View	Viewpoint Name	Location and Description of View	Significance
1		View over Lough Ree from parking/picnic area on the N 55 Road between Ballykeeran and Glasson.	This is a panoramic view of Lough Ree and the surrounding landscape from the car parking areas on the N55 Road between Ballykeeran and Glasson.	Regional
2		Views of Lough Ree from Coosan waterfront from pier, slipway and forest walk trail.	The focus of this view is Lough Ree to the north. Hare Island is an important feature of this view.	Local






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3		Views of Lough Ree from Carnakill pier and Portlick Forest Walk from pier and forest walking trail.	The focus of this view is Lough Ree to the southwest. The lough's islands and wooded shores from the background and are an important feature of the view.	Local
4		View of Lough Ree from Portlick Scout Campsite from short stretch of road along lake shore.	The focus of this view is Lough Ree to the west. The lough's islands and wooded shores form the background and are an important feature of the view.	Local
5		View of Lough Ree from small pier at lake shore.	The focus of this view is Lough Ree to the west. The south end of Inchmore and the north spit of Whinning are important features of the view.	Local

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6		View of Lough Ree and reed beds from road and pier from local road and pier. This view should be considered to begin from the local road after it turns off to Lough Ree House (607024,753549) and ends at the water edge	The focus of this view is Lough Ree to the north and the shallow, reed filled water immediately adjacent. The far hilly bank and Inchbofin are important features of the view.	Local
7		View of Lough Ree from Lough Ree House marina from picnic area and marina.	The focus of this view is Lough Ree to the north. The Saint's Island to the north and the round tower and church in the fields behind are also important features of the view.	Local
8		Panoramic views over countryside to the north off Ballymore-Mullingar Road from Local road L-5342.	<p>This is a panoramic view of the landscape around Ballymore to the West and North and captures small glimpses of Lough Sewdy.</p> <p>From the local road L-5342. This view should be considered to begin from the point where the road begins to descend (622956,749272), ending when it enters Ballymore</p>	Local

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9		Panoramic views from Knockastia Hill, Coolatoor from the local road that rings the Knockastia Hill.	This is a series of views from the roads which circle Knockastia Hill. The roads are at a higher elevation than the surrounding landscape. There are many points where there are low hedges that provide panoramic views of the surrounding landscape from the road.	Local
10		View of the south-east face of Kilbeggan Distillery from bridge over the River Brosna on Regional road R-446.	The focus of this view is the east face of Kilbeggan Distillery and the river below it.	County
11		View of Old Mill outside Kilbeggan from the intersection of the Local road L-524 with the Regional road R-389.	The focus of this view is the north face of the Old Mill beside the river.	Local



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12		View of Long Hill Esker from south of the R-446 Regional Road.	The focus of this view is the wooded hill of Long Hill Esker to the NE. This view should be considered to being at junction of local road and R446 at Derrylusk (636839,636839) and end at the base of Long Hill Esker (636839,736084)	County
13		Panoramic views from Garrane Hill on the Regional road R-446.	This is a panoramic view of the surrounding landscape from the highest point on the R-446 road when looking down the roads to the NE and SW.	County
14		Views of Sculpture along the M6.	<p>The foreground focus of this view is the roadside sculpture by the motorway. Another important feature is the flatness of the open landscape off to the southwest (mostly bog) which allows for a distant horizon view that draw attention to dramatic skies. Croghan Hill can be seen in the distance on a clear day and is an important feature of the view.</p> <p>This view should be considered to begin at 653385,744319 where the roadside trees stop, and end at 648377,740294 where a patch of forestry cuts off the view along the M6.</p>	County

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15		View of Lough Ennell from Lilliput Pitch and Putt from pier at lake shore.	The focus of this view is Lough Ennell to the northeast. The lough's wooded shores form the background and are an important feature of the view.	Local
16		Views of Lough Ennell along coast beside Lough Ennell Caravan Park From picnic walkway by lake shore.	The focus of this view is Lough Ennell to the west. The lough's wooded shores form the background and are an important feature of the view.	Local
17		View of Lough Ennell from Belvedere House gardens from picnic walkway by lake shore.	The focus of this view is Lough Ennell to the north. The lough's wooded shores form the background and are an important feature of the view.	County

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18		View of Lough Ennell from carpark from the parking area by lake shore.	The focus of this view is Lough Ennell to the south. The lough's islands and wooded shores form the background and are an important feature of the view.	County
19		Scenic route through forest and woodlands from Butler's Bridge/Kilpatrick Bridge, Local road L-1137. View from the bridge on the local road L-1137 and end at the shore of Lough Ennell.	This is a scenic route through a forest trail. The trail is edged by mature trees and follows a stream which enters Lough Ennell. At the end of the trail (though not surfaced) is a wide clear view of Lough Ennell from the shore. From a scenic trail. This view should be considered to begin at the bridge on the local road L-1137 and end at the shore of Lough Ennell.	Local
20		Panoramic view from Hill of Laragh from the local road L-5905 as it curves around the highpoint at Laragy Hill.	This is a panoramic view of the surrounding landscape. Low stone walls, hedges and sparse trees provide clear views.	Local



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21		View of Lough Owel by Pitch and Putt from picnic walkway by lake shore.	The focus of this view is Lough Owel to the north. The lough's wooded shores form the background and are an important feature of the view.	Local
22		View of Lough Owel from Mullingar Sailing Club from lake shore and parking area.	The focus of this view is Lough Owel to the northwest. The lough's wooded shores form the background and are an important feature of the view.	Local
23		View of Lough Owel from Local road L-5818.	The focus of this view are glimpses of Lough Owel set among low hills.	Local

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24		Panoramic view of countryside from Local road L-5821.	This is a panoramic view at the turn on the road. It looks out NW over extensive areas of bogland with distant views of Lough Derravaragh.	Local
25		View from Lough Derravaragh Caravan Park from piers and park along lake shore.	The focus of this view is Lough Derravaragh to the north and northwest. The lough's wooded shores form the background and are an important feature of the view.	Local
26		View from pier along south Lough Derravaragh from parking area and pier.	The focus of this view is Lough Derravaragh to the northeast. The lough's wooded hilly shores form the background and are an important feature of the view.	Local





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27		Panoramic view of countryside from Regional road R-395 at Coole from point on regional road R-395.	This is a panoramic view of the landscape to the west of Coole, much of which is bogland.	Local
28		Scenic drive through State Forest on Kinturk Avenue from where the local road comes off the R-394 (645782,769467) to where the forestry ends (643745,769487).	<p>This is a scenic route through forestry. Large areas of woodland hug the road, periodically giving way to large open fields.</p> <p>This view should be considered to begin from where the local road comes off the R-394 (645782,769467) to where the forestry ends (643745,769487).</p>	Local
29		View of Lough Glore and surrounding landscape from Regional road R-195 near Mooretown Crossroads at the L-1633.	<p>The focus of this view is Lough Glore and its surrounding landscape. From the highest point on the road, the view stretches far with the Hill of Mael, which is clearly visible on a clear day.</p> <p>This view should be considered to begin at the L-1633 crossroad (649383,771029) and end at the point 650332,771931 from the regional road R-195.</p>	Local

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30		View from Lough Lene Parking and Picnic area from the parking area, boat slip and park area.	The focus of this view is Lough Lene. To the northwest, much of the lough's wooded hilly shores form the background and are an important feature of the view.	County
31		View of Lough Bane from local road L-1633.	<p>The focus of this view is Lough Bane to the northwest. Unobstructed views across the field gently sloping into the lough is an important feature of the view.</p> <p>From the local road L-1633. This view should be considered to begin after the hill at 655446,770593 and end at the county boundary.</p>	Local
32		View of the Hill of Mael and Mullaghmeen from the R-394 Regional Road.	<p>The focus of this view is the Hill of Mael and Mullaghmeen to the northeast. It should be noted that there are stretches of the road which have no clear line of sight due to the tall vegetation at the side of bogs.</p> <p>From the regional road R-394. This view should be considered to begin at the point 645915,773036 and end at just outside Finnea (640808,781097).</p>	Local

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33		<p>Views of the Hill of Mael and Mullaghmeen from Local road L-1759 which runs through the intervening valley.</p>	<p>The focus of this view is the Hill of Mael and Mullaghmeen on either side of the road. It should be noted that there are stretches of the road which have no clear line of sight due to tall road-side vegetation.</p> <p>From the local road L-1759. This view should be considered to begin after the L-1759 leaves the L-1771 (644612,780070) and end at the Ballymanus crossroads (647462,776023).</p>	Local
34		<p>Views of Lough Sheelin from local road L-1771 at Ballynascarry.</p>	<p>The focus of this view is Lough Sheelin in the distance. At the top of the road there has distant views of Lough Sheelin and its surrounding landscape.</p> <p>From the local road L-1771. This view should be considered to begin at point 644714,779956 where the road begins to fall and end at point 644400,780176 as the road turns down west.</p>	Local

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35		Views of Lough Sheelin from Local road L-1771 near Mullaghmeen.	<p>The focus of this view is Lough Sheelin in the distance. The road is at a high elevation and provides panoramic views over Lough Sheelin and much of the surrounding landscape.</p> <p>From the local road L-1771. This view should be considered to begin at point 645585,779884 and end at point the county boundary (647201,780251)</p>	Local
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## APPENDIX 6

### APPENDIX 6 LIST OF PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY IN THE COUNTY

Ref. No.	Public Right of Way
1.	Royal Canal
2.	Mullaghameen Forest
3.	Wooddown to Macetown
4.	Captain's Hill, Lough Owel, Mullingar
5.	Killucan Mass Path near Glebe/ Rathwire
6.	Path leading to Huguenot graveyard Moate
7.	Old coach road off L-5901 past Fox Covert towards canal
8.	Access to Scragh Bog
9.	Access to Slevin's Lough and Lough Drin
10.	Rathowen Bog Walk
11.	Cloncrow Bog
12.	Fore Trail
13.	Mullingar Town: (a) Piper's Boreen (b) Hillside Drive to Ballinderry (c) Millmount to Ballinderry (d) Lynn Avenue to Ballinderry (e) Lynn Road to Newlands (f) Auburn Avenue
14.	Coolnagun Right of Way where locals and fishermen access the River Inny.

This list is not exhaustive.



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**APPENDIX 7 TREES & WOODLANDS SUBJECT TO TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS**

REF	ITEM
1.	Trees and tree groups to south of National Secondary Route N52 at Bellview, Mullingar.
2.	Tree groups on north shore of Lough Derravaragh at Coolure.
3.	Trees to south of National Secondary Route N55 at Curragh, Athlone.
4.	Trees and groups of trees on west shore of Lough Ennell at Lilliput, Dysart.
5.	Trees to west of National Secondary Route N52 at Bloomfield, Mullingar.
6.	Trees at Dysart Island, Lough Ennell, Mullingar.
7.	Tree group on west shore of Lough Derravaragh at Monintown.
8.	Trees to north of National Primary Route N6 at Glynn, Fardrum, Athlone.
9.	Trees in the grounds of St. Etchens Church, Killucan.
10.	Trees in the grounds of Glebe House, Killucan.
11.	Trees in the grounds of Cathedral of Christ the King, Mullingar.
12.	Group of trees on east side of the Royal Canal at Carey's Bridge, Mullingar.
13.	Trees on west side of County Road No. 662 at Gaybrook, Mullingar.
14.	Trees around south-eastern end of Lough Derravaragh.
15.	Trees on north side of road at Lough Park.
16.	Trees on south-west shore of Lough Bane.
17.	Trees on Monk's Island.



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**Appendix 9 List of Native Woodlands in County Westmeath**

NSNW No.	Woodland
1003	Castletown, Castletown
1110	Cavestown Wood, Cavestown
1097	Knockeyon Wood, Streamstown
1210	Kilcleagh, Kilcleagh
1211	Bolinarra Bog Wood, Bolinarra
1105	Higginstown Wood, Higginstown

This list is not exhaustive.



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