

*Chief Executive
Report on
Submissions
Received
During the
Pre-draft
Consultation
Stage*

MULLINGAR

Local Area Plan

2024-2030



Mullingar Local Area Plan 2024-2030

Chief Executive's Report on submission received during the Pre-Draft Consultation Stage

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1 Introduction & Purpose of the Report

Westmeath County Council has commenced the preparation of a new Local Area Plan for Mullingar. The Mullingar Local Area Plan will set out a comprehensive strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the administrative area of Mullingar and its immediate environs for the period 2024 to 2030. The emerging Plan will build upon the aspirations and success of the Mullingar Local Area Plan 2014-2020 (as extended) and aims to implement a progressive approach to the physical, economic and social development of Mullingar in a manner that is highly responsive to local character, sense of place, climate resilience and community, whilst protecting, and enhancing the cultural and environmental assets of the town.

The purpose of this Report is to outline the extent of public consultation undertaken during the pre-Draft stage of the Plan, together with summarising and responding to submissions and observations received during this initial stage of the plan making process. It is intended that this report will assist in developing a robust evidence basis to inform the preparation of the Draft Mullingar Local Area Plan 2024-2030.

1.1 Overview of the Pre-Draft Consultation Stage

Section 20 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), hereafter referred to as the Act, sets out the statutory process for the making of a Local Area Plan, and at present, the plan-making process is approaching completion of Stage 1 'Pre-Draft'. A critical component of Stage 1 is the establishment of a clear evidence base. Developing this evidence basis requires comprehensive engagement with stakeholders, including but not limited to, individuals and communities, Elected Members, community organisations, statutory and non-statutory authorities, and effectively, anyone who has an interest in the future of Mullingar. In this regard, Section 20(1) of the Act specifically states,

“A planning authority shall take whatever steps it considers necessary to consult the Minister, the Office of the Planning Regulator and the public before preparing, amending or revoking a local area plan including consultations with any local residents, public sector agencies, non-governmental agencies, local community groups and commercial and business interests within the area”

In this regard, the Planning Department implemented a collaborative approach to engaging with Mullingar’s local communities and interested stakeholders to gain an understanding of the key issues relevant to Mullingar up to 2030.

The preparation of the Mullingar Local Area Plan 2024-2030 commenced on the 10 October 2023 with the publication of the Stage 1 Pre-Draft 'Strategic Issues Paper'. The Strategic Issues Paper was prepared to stimulate thought and encourage discussion from the public in relation to the content of the proposed Plan. Drawing from higher order strategies within the Irish Planning Hierarchy, this document is organised under nine themes and presents a broad overview of some of the key planning and development issues and challenges affecting Mullingar which may need to be addressed by the emerging Plan:

- Emerging Vision
- Housing and Sustainable Communities
- Economic Development & Employment
- Regeneration & Place-Making

- Cultural Heritage & Tourism
- Transport & Mobility
- Green-Blue Infrastructure
- Enabling Infrastructure
- Climate Action

The Strategic Issues Paper was also presented and discussed at the Planning & Transportation SPC.

2 Public Consultation & Engagement

2.1 Public Awareness

The 'Pre-Draft Consultation Stage' of the Mullingar Local Area Plan 2024-2020 took place over a six week timeframe between 10 October 2023 and 23 November 2023. A notice was published in the Westmeath Examiner on 10 October 2023 notifying the public of the intention to prepare a new Local Area Plan for Mullingar. The Strategic Issues Paper was published online on the Council's public consultation portal and made available for inspection at County Buildings. During this initial phase of public consultation, all stakeholders were invited to make submissions on the Strategic Issues Paper. The Planning Department undertook a public engagement campaign utilising written correspondence and social media, to raise awareness of the Mullingar Local Area Plan and generate interest in participating in the plan-making process. The promotional materials used in this campaign are provided in Appendix 1.

Both Article 14 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) and Section 20 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) identify the prescribed authorities required to be consulted on the preparation of a local area plan, which are listed in Table 2.1 below. The Strategic Issues Paper was referred to said Prescribed Bodies in addition to a broad range of non-statutory bodies and local stakeholders including the Public Participation Network (>900 groups) as outlined in Appendix 2. Table 2.1 below highlights the outcome of engagement on the Mullingar Strategic Issues Papers.

Consultee	Engagement Outcome
Prescribed Authorities	
Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage	N/A
Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media	N/A
Uisce Éireann	WM-C79-MLAP-8
Kildare County Council	N/A
Longford County Council	N/A
Meath County Council	N/A
Cavan County Council	N/A
Roscommon County Council	N/A
Offaly County Council	N/A
An Bord Pleanála	N/A
Office of The Planning Regulator	WM-C79-MLAP-22
Non-Statutory Bodies	
The Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly	WM-C79-MLAP-6
Mullingar-Kinnegad Municipal District Elected Members	WM-C79-MLAP-9
Pat Murtagh (Westmeath County Council – Community & Corporate Services)	N/A
Department of the Environment, Climate & Communications	WM-C79-MLAP-23
Department of Education	WM-C79-MLAP-19
Department of Transport	WM-C79-MLAP-4
Electricity Supply Board	WM-C79-MLAP-29
Office of Public Works	WM-C79-MLAP-11
National Transport Authority	WM-C79-MLAP-16
Transport Infrastructure Ireland	WM-C79-MLAP-32
Health Service Executive	WM-C79-MLAP-28

Health & Safety Authority	WM-C79-MLAP-2
Inland Fisheries Ireland	N/A
Waterways Ireland	N/A
EPA	N/A
Failte Ireland	N/A
Westmeath Childcare Committee	Interview
Eastern & Midlands CARO	N/A
Mullingar Chamber of Commerce	WM-C79-MLAP-26
Mullingar Sustainable Energy Committee	Interview
IDA	N/A
Longford Westmeath Education Board	N/A
Comhairle Na nÓg	Interview
Tidy Towns	Interview
Westmeath Active Travel Team	Interview
Westmeath Council Sports and Recreation	Interview

Table 2.1 Outcome of Engagement on the Mullingar Strategic Issues Paper

2.1.1 Social Media

The Council’s social media platforms were used extensively to engage the public in the Mullingar Local Area Plan making process. Both the Issues Paper and Public Information Drop In Sessions were posted to Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and X on a regular basis over the duration of the consultation period. A total of 9,732 accounts were reached across the four platforms with 15,144 impressions¹ made during the consultation period as shown below in Figure 1.

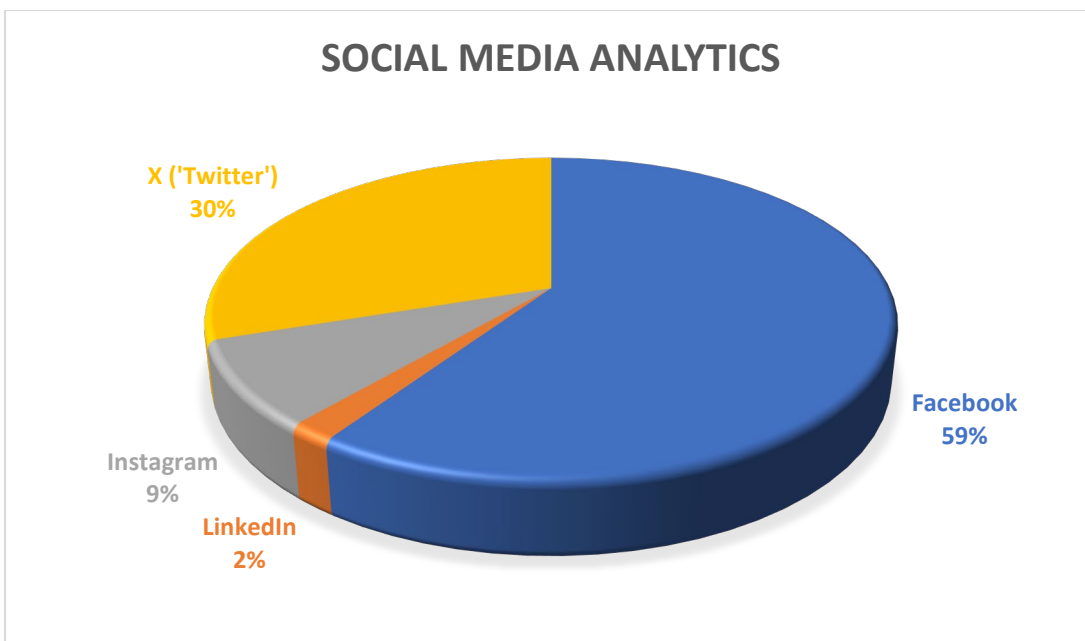


Figure 1. Social Media Analytics

The high level of engagement generated by Social Media promotion is a positive indicator that stakeholders are willing to engage in the Mullingar Local Area Plan process.

¹ Social Media Impressions refers to the number of times content was seen, including multiple views from individual users.

A total of thirty-seven (37) written submissions were received from residents, interested parties and state / semi-state bodies during the six-week public consultation period in addition to one (1) late submission received after the closing date. Appendix 3 provides a list of all Persons/Bodies who made a submission on the Strategic Issues Paper.

Westmeath County Council wishes to express its appreciation to all those who made submissions/observations and/or attended the consultation events.

2.2 Public Consultation Events

Two 'Public Information Drop-In Sessions' were held in the Mullingar Library on 26 October 2023 between 3pm – 8pm and on 21 November 2023 between 3pm - 7pm. The 'Drop-In Sessions' provided an opportunity for interested parties and individuals to directly engage with Westmeath County Council in an informal setting on matters pertaining to the plan-making process and the future of Mullingar. Visual aides such as a video, vision boards, mapping and a survey document were used to generate submissions from attendees. A total of thirty-two people attended the two 'Public Information Drop-In Sessions'. Following these meetings, the Planning Department carefully reviewed the submissions / observations received and compiled a summary of the principal discussion points raised by attendees (included in Appendix 4). The Planning Department also convened a workshop on the Mullingar Local Area Plan 2024-2030 with officials within the Council.

2.3 Stakeholder Meetings

In accordance with Section 4.1 of the *Local Area Plans – Guidelines for Planning Authorities*, Planning staff engaged with a number of representatives of statutory agencies, community and voluntary organisations. Six meetings were undertaken between the 25 October 2023 and 15 November 2023 over a range of different venues and mediums, e.g. Microsoft Teams, telephone and in-person attendance.

In order to gauge the views of children, including groups of people or associations representing children, and young adults, the Planning Department engaged with Comhairle na nÓg.

Westmeath County Childcare Committee

It was indicated that presently there is a deficit in the provision of full-day childcare services within Mullingar with existing services either unable to, or do not, provide sufficient spaces or sessions to accommodate the different age ranges of children and that these existing deficits will be exacerbated by the targeted growth of Robinstown, Mullingar South, Ardmore / Marlinstown, and the western environs of the town. It was submitted that these areas will require dedicated childcare facilities to accommodate any future residential growth in the area.

The Westmeath Childcare Committee's key vision for Mullingar 2030 is the provision of quality accessible affordable Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Aged Childcare (SAC) for Mullingar. This vision requires a proactive approach to spatial planning and development management as well as on-going collaboration between invested stakeholder such as Westmeath County Council, the Childcare Committee and private developers. The Westmeath Childcare Committee has identified the following measures and actions for consideration as part of the Mullingar LAP.

- Identify and zone appropriate areas within Mullingar for the expansion of existing, and the provision of new, ELC and SAC facilities. The co-location of ELC and SAC services with educational institutions is also considered to be a viable option.
- Specific policy focus on Special Needs Childcare Services within Mullingar including but not limited to the identification of potential sites for a Special Needs Pre-Schools, potentially within proximity of the Sapling School
- Drawing on the '10 minute' town concept, ELC and SAC services should be encouraged in neighbourhood centres and areas of concentrated employment which benefit from access to public transport, cycleways, footpaths and national schools
- The planning, assessment and provision of childcare services should be required in Phase 1 of any large scale housing scheme (including Community, Affordable and Social housing schemes) to consider the need for ELC and SAC services. The construction of childcare facilities should be a pre-requisite for the commencement of any residential units
- Facilities should be developed to the highest quality standards in line with the *Universal Design Guidelines of Early Learning and Care Settings* and the *Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Childcare Facilities (June 2001)* or any new emerging legislation and/or guidance documents referring to the design and provision of childcare facilities

Comhairle Na nÓg

The Planning Department attended the Westmeath Comhairle na nÓg's November meeting at the Annebrook House Hotel, Mullingar on the 2 November 2023 in order to gain a greater insight and understanding of the topics and matters considered important by Mullingar's youth. A combination of brain-storming discussions and surveys, in conjunction with a brief presentation on the Mullingar Local Area Plan 2024-2030, were used to engage with attendees (16 no.) and draw-out the themes and ideas underpinning their visions of Mullingar 2030. The key findings from this consultation event have been summarised below under six themes: Culture / Heritage, Recreation & Open Space, Social Infrastructure, Sustainable Mobility, Public Realm and Economic Development / Regeneration.

Theme	Survey Findings & Discussion Points
Culture / Heritage	<p>Mullingar's history, musical heritage and festivals are key attributes to the town's unique character when compared to other regional towns.</p> <p>Columb Barracks and St. Loman's Hospital are important heritage assets and opportunity sites which should be targeted for regeneration.</p> <p>The provision of new street art could bolster Mullingar's cultural and arts appeal while also improving the public realm.</p>
Recreation & Open Space	<p>Mullingar's existing Green-Blue Infrastructure (GBI), such as the Royal Canal Greenway and Loughs Owel and Ennell, are considered important assets to the town's identity. Notwithstanding this, these GBI networks are not regularly used by attendees with the majority accessing these areas 1-2 times a week or not at all. Specific actions to encourage the increased use of Mullingar's GBI networks include: more attractive routes and landscaping, additional sign-posting, the incorporation of new socialising areas, street furniture and improved maintenance.</p> <p>It was submitted that Mullingar does not currently have a sufficient quantity of play areas, open spaces, public parks, sports, amenity and recreational facilities. An increase in, and variety of, such spaces would</p>

	<p>assist in accommodating the town’s growing population. In this regard, Robinstown was specifically referenced due to its potential to accommodate recreational / amenity uses. The expansion of existing sports facilities in the town was also suggested.</p> <p>It was felt that Mullingar’s existing amenity and recreational assets require renewal and investment to address issues such as safety, waste management, illegal camping and inadequate infrastructure.</p>
Social Infrastructure	<p>It was considered that there is currently a deficit of dedicated youth facilities within the town. Mullingar would benefit from an indoor Youth Hub / Community Hall, or a Community Building with youth service allocation.</p>
Sustainable Mobility	<p>Traversing through Mullingar via foot or cycling is considered ‘Easy’ to ‘Moderate’; however, road safety, the availability of cycling / pedestrian infrastructure and connectivity / linkages between the urban core and Mullingar’s suburban outskirts were identified as barriers. It was considered that the improvement of walking / cycling pathways would provide quality of life benefits for residents.</p> <p>Challenges associated with Mullingar’s public transportation were also identified including lack of reliability and inadequate capacity to accommodate service demand.</p>
Public Realm	<p>The creation of ‘pedestrian / car free’ zones within the town centre was identified as one of key drivers to improve Mullingar as an overall place to live. The provision of new street furniture and landscaping was also identified as popular measures. The public realm must be inclusive in design in order to facilitate improved accessibility for all ages and backgrounds. The management of the public realm, such as waste and tackling anti-social behaviour, also needs to be improved.</p>
Economic Development / Regeneration	<p>Mullingar’s existing commercial and retail offering is not considered adequate by the town’s youth consumers and it is considered that the town would benefit from a greater variety of shops.</p> <p>Targeted regeneration of existing under-utilised sites has the potential to improve the overall built environment. Specifically, a large, unique flagship project has the potential to draw people to the town.</p> <p>The majority of attendees were ‘Neutral’ in attitude with respect to recommending Mullingar as a destination town. This hesitancy was underpinned by the following rationale: absence of enticing factors to attract / retain visitors, concerns on friendlessness, hospitality and safety and lack of attractions.</p>

Mullingar Sustainable Energy Community

The Mullingar Sustainable Energy Community (SEC)’s principal objective for the town is the achievement of 100% carbon neutrality by 2050, i.e. ‘Net Zero’ carbon emission. While Mullingar has been making positive progress towards carbon neutrality over the last several years, it is also duly acknowledged that the 2050 milestone represents a significant challenge given the range of barriers impeding Irish climate action efforts to date. One of the key issues identified by the SEC in achieving carbon neutrality is the lack of urgency required to address climate change. Another major barrier identified by the SEC is the complexity of delivering green / sustainable projects due to existing knowledge gaps and the absence of efficient communication channels between stakeholders.

Consequently, it is considered that opportunities for investment are being lost despite sufficient demand for green alternative technologies.

The SEC envisions that a broad range of climate action measures (mitigation & adaptation) will need to be implemented over the lifetime of the Mullingar Local Area Plan to ensure the 2050 vision is achieved and deficits addressed, including step-changes in how the planning system addresses climate change, community investment and the delivery of a green, reliable and diversified energy network as follows:

- Clear messaging on the importance of top-down approaches to climate action and facilitating training / education on climate change for Elected Members, Local Authority Departments etc
- The assessment of development proposals need to 'front-load' climate change factors and climate action as part of the decision-making process
- The development of Mullingar's built environment should be underpinned by a broad range of sustainability measures: incremental pedestrianisation of the town centre, regeneration of major landmark sites, high density development with a focus on mixed-uses and direct intervention in residential dereliction within the town
- The diversification of electricity generation including support for micro / auto-production solar PV development in both residential and commercial schemes. Investigation of other green alternative technologies is also required: District Heating, Anaerobic Digestion, bi-digestion, hydro-energy, hydrogen and wind
- Sustainable mobility is predicated on the delivery of community infrastructure and safe, accessible and functional settlement linkages
- Biodiversity support measures: forestry / native woodland, re-wilding grant programmes and rehabilitation / enhancement of boglands via re-wetting works (i.e. carbon sinks).
- Investment in, and growth of, Mullingar's tourism sector should be carefully managed to ensure environmental sustainability
- As a designated Decarbonisation Zone, there are a range of opportunities to establish Mullingar as a test-bed for carbon neutral technologies such as the development of a 'Sustainable Technology Hub' and support for the announced 'EV Centre of Excellence' at Columb Barracks
- A monitoring system, incorporating reporting, targets, KPIs and timelines, needs to be implemented in tandem with the LAP

Tidy Towns

Discussion and viewpoints raised by members of the Mullingar Tidy Towns (TT) Committee include:

- **Infrastructure:** Need for infrastructure to support the growth of the town especially in terms of supporting new residential estates
- **Community Amenities:** Facilitate and encourage a Communal/Co-sharing Community Space or Hall to address Mullingar's need for dedicated meeting spaces for various groups, clubs and societies
- **Small Business Incubation hubs:** Incubation and start-up facilities for SME businesses would be advantageous for new start-ups. A similar existing set up is established at the Enterprise Centre near Shaw's Funeral Home.

- **Heritage Assets:** A museum centrally located museum for Mullingar would benefit the town. The Gaol House situated at the back of the Army Custume Barracks site was noted as a historical asset that should be preserved.
- **Tourist Facilities:** Encourage a camping van facility similar to what was organised for the Fleadh Cheoil 2022 / 2023. This kind of infrastructure would encourage tourism and the use of active travel modes of travel i.e. cycling and walking
- **Community Gardens:** Encourage the use of allotments for the growing of vegetables and produce. Community allotments would be very beneficial for younger and older people (as part of social interaction) with additional educational, health and well-being benefits.
- **Greening and Replanting:** TT have been involved with 10 biodiversity parks including St. Finian's Corner, in front of the Hospital, Army Barracks, Penny's Carpark, the Old Creamery site and Ardmore Road. Due to the benefits associated with increases in biodiversity, health and well-being, future support in TT's work should be facilitated
- **Climate Action:** TT introduced the bug hotel, the planting of wildflowers and a fruit orchard in Mullingar town park. Urban Forest-Pocket parks should be carefully provided in the right locations.
- **Streetscape Improvement:** Improve public toilet facilities in the town centre, provide sensor lighting for safety and water filter stations to encourage the use of water bottles in the town.

3 Submissions from the Prescribed Authorities

Section 3 of the report relates to the submissions received from the Prescribed Bodies and the responses provided in relation to same. Although the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly is not designated as a Prescribed Authority for the purposes of preparing a Local Area Plan; given the Assembly’s role and statutory function in relation to the spatial planning of the region, it is considered prudent to address its submission individually. Due cognisance has been given to the issues raised in the aforementioned submissions which will be used to inform the Draft Mullingar Local Area Plan.

3.1 Office of the Planning Regulator (WM-C79-MLAP-22)

The Office of Planning Regulator (OPR) has commended Westmeath County Council on the preparation of the Strategic Issues Paper with respect to the document’s overall quality, design / formatting, content, and public consultation / engagement processes.

Theme	Discussion
Strategic Policy Framework	The LAP should be consistent with the objectives of the National Planning Framework and the Eastern and Midlands Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and the specific planning policy requirements (SPPRs) of Section 28 Guidelines.
	The LAP should acknowledge Mullingar’s designation as a ‘Key Town’ within the RSES and the corresponding objectives for the same, particularly RPOs 4.64 (tourism), 4.65 (regeneration), 4.66 (Social Infrastructure) and 4.67 (employment). Specific policy focus should be given to the consolidation and regeneration of Mullingar, including opportunity sites such as Columb Barracks and St. Lomans. It is recommended that consultation is required with EMRA in relation to compliance with the RSES objectives.
Development Plan and Core Strategy	The LAP should be consistent with the objectives of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027.
	Based on the 2022 census data, there are concerns that Mullingar’s rate of population growth will not achieve the 2027 and 2031 targets of the Core Strategy. The LAP should seek to sustainably accelerate the town’s population growth by way of housing delivery and regeneration.
	The LAP should adopt an evidence-led approach to identifying the estimated housing yield available from serviced, residential and mixed use zoned lands and provide mechanisms to deal with any excess zoned lands available over the Plan lifetime.
	The quantum of zoned land required for housing should be consistent with the Core Strategy of the CDP.
Zoning, compact growth and infrastructural services	The LAP should develop adequate policy frameworks and strategies to ensure the successful implementation of compact growth and densification in compliance with the NPF (NPO 3; NPO 35) and the RSES (RPO 3.2).
	Mullingar’s land use zoning should follow a sequential approach while also ensuring that lands, which cannot be serviced within the lifetime of the LAP, are not zoned as per the tiered approach under NPO 72 a-c of the NPF.
	Any provisions or standards for the density and/or building height of residential development should have regard to relevant Section 28 Guidelines and any SPPRs.
	The LAP should provide clarity regarding the nature and extent of any significant infrastructure constraints (e.g. water supply capacity issues).
Regeneration	The LAP should facilitate a significant proportion of population growth on infill

	<p>and brownfield sites as required by the NPF (NPO 4, 6, 18a, 18b and 35).</p> <p>The LAP can deliver on urban regeneration by identifying specific opportunity sites and preparing comprehensive frameworks for their future development.</p> <p>As per CPO 7.31, the LAP should be informed by a building heights study to identify suitable locations to facilitate higher and increased building heights.</p>
Education, social and community and amenities	<p>The LAP should seek to facilitate population growth in tandem with social infrastructure on strategic sites benefitting from good connectivity and linkages to built-up areas.</p> <p>A significant increase in the provision of social infrastructure will be required to accommodate Mullingar’s projected growth. The LAP should be informed by Westmeath County Council’s <i>Local Economic and Community Plan</i> and <i>Traveller Accommodation Programme</i>, in addition to consultation with relevant local and state departments, to facilitate the co-ordination of services.</p>
Economic development, employment and retail	<p>The LAP should align with the RSES’ economic strategy in addition to any other relevant enterprise / employment objectives to support Mullingar’s role as an important employment hub. The LAP should incorporate specific policies aligned with economic development and clustering of related enterprises (refer to RPO 4.67 and CPO 5.17)</p> <p>Compact / sequential growth and opportunities for sustainable transport should guide the zoning strategic employment lands (CPO 5.7) as well as retail facilities. The reuse of appropriate brownfield sites and vacant premises should be prioritised.</p> <p>The provision of retail facilities will need to take into account Mullingar’s anticipated population growth. The delivery of new retail development should align with <i>Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012) (Retail Guidelines)</i>, and the position of the town in the retail hierarchy of the Development Plan and RSES.</p>
Transport and mobility	<p>The integration of land use and transportation is central to mitigating climate change (NPO 27, NPO 33 and NPO 64). The LAP should seek to increase sustainable mobility and active travel as well as demonstrate consistency with the Avoid-Shift-Improve principle and the 10-minute town concept. An ambitious (but realistic) modal shift target for the town should be established.</p> <p>The LAP should proactively implement the policies and objectives of the <i>Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (revised 2019)</i> and the <i>National Transport Authority’s Permeability Best Practice Guide</i>. On-going consultation with the National Transport Authority and Transport Infrastructure Ireland is encouraged.</p> <p>The key implementation measures and actions from the Area Based Transport Assessment (ABTA) should be incorporated into the final LAP.</p>
Climate action, including flood risk management	<p>The effective implementation of climate mitigation objectives through the LAP are critical to the achievement of national GHG emissions reduction targets: NPO 53 (land use), NPO 54 (climate targets); NPO 55 (renewable energy) together with the relevant objectives of the RSES and CDP.</p> <p>The LAP should set out a range of climate mitigation, adaptation, and biodiversity measures in recognition of Mullingar’s role as a Decarbonisation Zone (DZ) for the county.</p> <p>The LAP, as guided by the OPW, should be consistent with the NPF’s NPO 57 by avoiding inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding. The LAP should also incorporate measures to ensure the integration of sustainable water management solutions in new development.</p>

Environment and natural and built heritage	The LAP should be consistent with the environmental protection objectives of the NPF and RSES with consideration given to: NPOs 58 (green infrastructure); NPO 62 (greenbelts); NPO 63 (water infrastructure) and NPO 64 (air quality).
	The planning for Green-Blue infrastructure should be incorporated within the LAP with regard to the associated benefits of climate change adaptation, flood risk management and biodiversity.
	The LAP should contain location-specific objectives or measures to assist in the protection or improvement of the town’s built heritage.
Implementation and monitoring	The LAP should incorporate specific provisions for monitoring the implementation of plan objectives / policies in order to evaluate plan-effectiveness and to maintain the Mullingar evidence-base for future strategies.

3.1.1 Response to Issues raised by the OPR

The OPR’s commendation is welcomed and reflects the sustained effort and work undertaken by the Planning Department in progressing to Stage 1 ‘Pre-Draft’ of the Plan. Issues raised in the submission are acknowledged and will be given due consideration as part of the preparation of the Draft Plan. In this regard the Mullingar Local Area Plan will be prepared in line with national and regional planning policy including Section 28 Guidelines, together with the policy framework set out in the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027. The Planning Department will engage with EMRA in relation to compliance with RSES objectives.

The Draft Plan will be informed by a Settlement Capacity Audit (SCA) which will identify zoned serviced/serviceable lands with residential development potential. The SCA will identify and prioritise the development of Tier 1: Serviced Zoned Land in the first instance, in order to grow the town in a sustainable manner, in keeping with the principles of compact growth and sequential development as set out in the NPF, the Development Plan Guidelines (2022) and the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2024). The Council will also liaise with Uisce Eireann in relation to the servicing of land.

The Draft Plan will be informed by a number of evidence based studies which will provide a detailed analysis with regard to the availability and capacity of required physical and social infrastructure within Mullingar over the lifetime of the Plan. Such studies will include, inter alia, an Area Based Transport Assessment, a Social Infrastructure Audit, Mullingar Town Centre Health Check and a Green/Blue Infrastructure Strategy. These studies will inform the selection of lands suitable for residential or employment purposes. It is also recognised that development will be require the delivery of additional community infrastructure in tandem with such development.

With regard to regeneration, the Draft Plan will support and prioritise the regeneration of in-fill and brownfield sites in order to increase housing provision in the town. Policy guidance will be provided in relation to the development of designated opportunity sites and shall include site specific objectives for increased building heights on suitable lands. Such advice will be prepared in line with the requirements of the *“Urban Development & Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2018”*.

The Draft Plan will be accompanied by a Social Infrastructure Audit (SIA) which will examine the current social infrastructure provision in Mullingar whilst also identifying future requirements for new development areas. The Council will continue to engage with the Department of Education with

respect to future school provision in Mullingar. The Draft Plan will also be informed by Westmeath County Council's Local Economic and Community Plan and Traveller Accommodation Programme.

In relation to economic development, employment and retail, the Draft Plan will consider policies to support the economic role of Mullingar (RPO 4.27), economic development and clustering of related enterprises (RPO 4.67 and CPO 5.17) and will have due regard to national and regional policy guidelines including *Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012)* and the CDP / RSES retail hierarchy. Due consideration should also be given to identified employment lands as part of the Area Based Transport Assessment (ABTA) for Mullingar.

In terms of transport and mobility, the importance of integrating transport and mobility with a land use strategy, based on achieving compact growth and the need to reduce transport emissions is acknowledged. In this regard, the Draft Plan will be closely informed by and aligned with the Mullingar ABTA, which is currently in preparation. The ABTA should address issues such as the provision of Active Travel, Universal Accessibility/Movement, Linkages, Car Parking, Electrical Vehicle (EV) charging points, and will include a modal shift target for the town. The Council has liaised with the NTA and TII in relation to the preparation of the ABTA with regard to national policies including the objectives of the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (revised 2019) and the National Transport Authority's Permeability Best Practice Guide.

Climate Action will be considered in the preparation of Draft Plan by way of climate mitigation, adaptation, and biodiversity measures. Recognition of Mullingar's role as a Decarbonisation Zone (DZ) for the County should also be considered in this regard. Whilst it is noted that the town's designation as a DZ will require the preparation of a Decarbonisation Action Plan, this will be progressed separately to the LAP process. This Decarbonisation Action Plan will set out specific targets relating to local renewable energy production and building energy efficiency. The Draft Plan should support the full implementation of any Mullingar Decarbonisation Action Plan, with regards to its goals, objectives and actions relating to planning and development.

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) will be prepared to inform the Draft Plan, in accordance with the requirements of *The Planning System and Flood Risk Assessment Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)*. In this regard, the Council will liaise with the OPW at each stage of the SFRA preparation. The Draft Plan will seek to ensure that development in flood risk areas is avoided entirely or is 'water-compatible,' as per the aforesaid Guidelines. Measures to ensure the integration of sustainable water management solutions in new development will also be incorporated in the new Plan.

The Draft Plan should include policies for the protection of the natural and built heritage in Mullingar and its environs including the lakes, landscape, biodiversity, and protected structures, as key assets in contributing to a high quality of life for the residents of Mullingar and as a significant tourism resource. A Green Blue Infrastructure Strategy will be undertaken to promote connectivity to and increased usage of existing natural heritage assets within Mullingar. Regard will also be taken of the "*Architectural Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities*" in the preparation of policy on Built Heritage.

The merit of a monitoring section as part of the Draft Plan/Final Plan is also recognised.

3.2 Uisce Éireann (WM-C79-MLAP-8)

Uisce Éireann (UÉ) has set out a range of high-level comments under the following four themes to assist the preparation of the Draft Mullingar Local Area Plan 2024-2030: ‘National and Regional Policy’, ‘Key Uisce Éireann Policies and Plans’, ‘Water Services Infrastructure Availability’ and ‘Land Development Issues’. It is positively acknowledged within the submission that UÉ is committed to engage with the Planning Department throughout the plan preparation process, including notification of updates on UÉ plans and projects.

Theme	Discussion
National and Regional Policy	The LAP should have due regard to Section 10.2 of the Eastern and Midland RSES which provides general policy direction in relation to the sustainable management of water supply and wastewater needs.
UÉ Key Policies and Plans	<p>Regard should be taken of “The Regional Water Resources Plan for the Eastern & Midland Region” in the plan preparation process.</p> <p>Drinking water source protection, as per UÉ’s Drinking Water Safety Plans, is a key consideration for UE.</p> <p>UÉ is preparing a strategy which responds to global and national climate change legislative frameworks, and in this regard, will collaborate with the Planning Authority to ensure the overarching goals of mitigating, and adapting to, climate change in relation to water and wastewater are achieved.</p> <p>The priorities of the River Basin Management Plan 2018–2021 have been incorporated into UÉ investment plans and work programmes.</p> <p>Policies and objectives on the integration of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and Green-Blue Infrastructure in new developments, including the public realm and retrofitting existing development, should be incorporated within the LAP in line with NPO 57 of the NPF.</p> <p>It should be clearly stated in the LAP that the discharge of additional surface water to combined sewers is not permitted. The LAP should strongly encourage the removal of stormwater from combined sewers as part of roads, public realm, residential or other developments. Additional objectives pertaining to the introduction of Nature-based SuDS in areas contributing to combined drainage systems, where street scape enhancement programmes or resurfacing programmes are planned, should be incorporated within the plan.</p>
Water Services Infrastructure Availability	<p>According to the Water Capacity Register, there is limited water supply capacity available within Mullingar and a <i>Level of Service</i> improvement would be required to facilitate any significant increase in demand.</p> <p>There are significant environmental constraints on securing an additional water supply to Mullingar. The long-term solution is a new connection to the Water Supply Project but there is currently no expected connection date. Interim solutions are currently being investigated.</p> <p>A wastewater network infrastructure development plan for Mullingar is currently progressing. At present, the sewer network upstream of Woodlands Avenue / Grange Crescent is constrained. The promotion of stormwater separation would generate capacity for compact growth.</p> <p>Wastewater treatment capacity in Mullingar is sufficient to support the targets of the CDP and the LAP.</p>
Land Development Issues	Sequential development in areas with existing water services infrastructure and spare capacity should be encouraged, and in this regard, UÉ is available to assist in the process of identifying suitable zoned lands. Development masterplans for

	larger areas, including phasing arrangements, should be prepared to inform strategic water services plans.
	The LAP's development management provisions should be cognisant of the following water / wastewater service provisions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sections of the wastewater network within the town are 150mm in diameter; therefore, localised upgrades are likely to be required to facilitate future development. • Where development sites are not serviced by existing infrastructure, the feasibility of extending the public network would be assessed via the Pre-Connections Enquiry process. • All new residential and commercial/industrial developments wishing to connect to the public network are to be assessed through UÉ Connections and Developer Service process
	UÉ strongly recommends that the Planning Authority refers to the GIS mapping developed for local authorities making their determinations in relation to the Residential Zoned Land Tax to inform its review of existing water / wastewater infrastructure and land use zoning.
	UÉ requests early engagement in relation to any planned road and/or public realm projects to ensure public water services are protected and public disruption minimised.

3.2.1 Response to Issues raised by Uisce Éireann

The issues raised in the submission are acknowledged and will require careful consideration as part of the preparation of the Draft Plan. The Draft Plan should be prepared having regard to the national and regional plans cited in the UE submission. The Planning Department will liaise with UE to ensure the overarching goals of mitigating, and adapting to, climate change in relation to water and wastewater are achieved in the Plan. The LAP should consider policies and objectives on the integration of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and Green-Blue Infrastructure in new developments, including the public realm and retrofitting existing development. Reference should also be made in the Draft Plan that the discharge of additional surface water to combined sewers is not permitted.

With regard to water services Infrastructure availability, the Council will commit to continuing to engage with UE in progressing the Mullingar Local Area Plan to draft stage, and in particular in the preparation of the Settlement Capacity Audit (Infrastructure Assessment) for Mullingar. The Draft Plan should support the ongoing upgrade and expansion of water supply to meet the future needs of Mullingar. In this regard, support should be given to connection to the Water Supply Project. (South Westmeath Scheme). Furthermore, any future LAP should acknowledge the need for localised sewer network upgrades where appropriate.

It is acknowledged that the RZLT mapping provides valuable information to inform any review of existing water and wastewater infrastructure in Mullingar and continues engagement is envisaged in terms of future infrastructure requirements in this area.

3.3 Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (WM-C79-MLAP-6)

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires the Planning Authority to ensure that a local area plan is consistent with the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) thus ensuring alignment between local, regional and national planning policy. The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA), welcomes the publication of the Strategic Issues Paper for the Mullingar LAP 2024-2030 and looks forward to engaging with Westmeath County Council on the forthcoming stages of the plan preparation process.

Based on its review of the Strategic Issues Paper, EMRA is satisfied that the themes and matters presented within the document align with the three Key Principles of the RSES (Healthy Placemaking, Climate Action and Economic Opportunity) and the sixteen Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSO) while also being broad enough to provide an overview of the key issues facing Mullingar. EMRA’s submission is organised under ten headings to inform the preparation of the Draft LAP and to guide the implementation of the policies and objectives of the RSES in a local context.

Theme	Discussion
Growth Strategy	Mullingar is located within the Gateway Region and is identified as a Key Town, providing important connections with adjoining regions with capacity and future growth potential to accommodate above average growth in tandem with requisite investment in employment creation, services, amenities and sustainable transport.
Housing & Sustainable Communities	<p>Mullingar provides functions at a higher level than its resident population, including key employment and services for its extensive hinterland, high-quality transport links and the capacity to act as a growth driver to complement the Regional Growth Centre (Athlone).</p> <p>A key role of the LAP will be the identification of sufficient land to accommodate population targets and housing demand. The delivery of residential development should adhere to compact growth principles (i.e. 30% of new homes will need to be situated within the existing built-up footprint). Housing supply should provide a range of types and should engender a sense of place.</p> <p>The findings of the social infrastructure audit should guide the provision of education, childcare, sports, arts, culture and healthcare services within the plan area. In this regard and further to RPO 4.66 in the RSES, the expansion of Mullingar Regional Hospital should be a key consideration.</p> <p>The '10-minute town' concept is one of the guiding principles of the RSES and should be encouraged within the LAP.</p>
Economic Development & Employment	<p>The LAP should support the economic role of Mullingar (RPO 4.27) by realising the potential of the existing IDA presence, advance the development of high-quality enterprise and employment zones and support the promotion of sectors such as engineering and ICT, consumer products, financial services, shared services (multi-lingual), Research and Development, robotics and advanced manufacturing.</p> <p>The LAP should provide policy focus on the diversification and 'smart specialisation' of the local economy and the clustering of related enterprises such as tourism, energy and renewables, bioeconomy and circular economy (RPO 4.67).</p> <p>The LAP should clearly outline Mullingar’s role as a Level 2 'Major Town Centres and County (Principal) Town Centres' in the regional retail hierarchy.</p>

Regeneration and Placemaking	The regeneration of Mullingar is a key priority within the RSES (RPOs 9.7-9.9). The LAP should support the regeneration of strategic opportunity sites, e.g. Columb Barracks and St. Loman's. The promotion and enhancement of the town centre / public realm, targeting sites such as Blackhall, Grove Street, the Harbour Streetcar park and the Dunnes Stores carpark, would support the economic and tourism potential of Mullingar (RPO 4.65).
Cultural Heritage and Tourism	The LAP should support Mullingar's potential as a key destination for tourism, leisure and recreational activities (RPO 4.64) by establishing a policy framework for the protection and enhancement of the town's Green-Blue Infrastructure. In order to support Mullingar's role as a tourism hub, the LAP should contribute to regional initiatives in relation to the joining-up of GBI systems such as the River Shannon Blueway, the Royal and Grand Canals and the proposed Barrow Blueway (RPO 6.19).
	The LAP should maximise the amenity potential of existing greenway assets such as the Old Rail Trail, the Royal Canal Greenway, the Mullingar - Lough Ennell - Lough Owel pathways and Belvedere House and Gardens.
Transport and Mobility	The preparation of the Area-based Transport Assessment to inform the integration of land use / transportation is consistent with RPO 8.6. Consultation with the Mullingar Local Link Office should inform the preparation of the ABTA. The policies, objectives and measures set out within the ABTA are required to be incorporated within the LAP.
	The LAP should provide due cognisance to Regional Road Projects listed in Table 8.4 of the RSES such as the planned upgrade of the N4 (Mullingar-Longford).
Green-Blue Infrastructure	Pursuant to RPOs 7.22 and 7.23, the LAP should adequately reflect the importance of identifying, protecting, enhancing and managing the town's GBI networks. The preparation of the LAP's Green-Blue Infrastructure Strategy should align with the RSES' guiding principles for green infrastructure strategies (Section 7.7).
Enabling Infrastructure	It is acknowledged that Communication Technology (ICT), such as high-speed broadband and telecommunications services, are necessary to sustain existing, and attract new, businesses and enterprises to Mullingar (RPOs 6.5 and 8.25).
	The LAP should aim to maximise the return on existing and planned infrastructural investments in order to sustainably achieve the town's population targets and economic growth. Water and wastewater services are key settlement growth drivers, and therefore, on-going collaboration with Uisce Éireann should inform the plan preparation process (RPO 10.3). Specific reference should be given in the plan to Uisce Éireann's long-term water supply solution for Mullingar ('South Westmeath Scheme').
Climate Action	It is stated that the 'Regional Development Monitor', which hosts a range of environmental indicators for counties, should inform the development of the LAP's climate action monitoring and evaluation system.
Environmental Assessment	Early engagement with the Office of Public Works, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Environmental Protection Agency and Uisce Éireann is recommended in relation to the Strategic Environmental Assessment, (SEA) Appropriate Assessment (AA) and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment of the LAP (SFRA)
	With regard to the SFRA, it is suggested that it should include opportunities to enhance biodiversity and amenities, including where flood risk management measures are planned, in line with RPOs 7.14 and 7.15 of the RSES. Furthermore, the use of the most up-to-date flood mapping should inform the preparation of the LAP.

3.3.1 Response to Issues raised by EMRA

The issues raised in the submission are acknowledged and will be given careful consideration as part of the preparation of the Draft Plan.

A central component of the Draft Plan will be the preparation of a Settlement Capacity Audit to determine the quantum and location of residential zoned lands to meet population and housing targets prescribed in the Core Strategy. Consideration to the housing need will also inform housing targets. It is envisaged that the growth strategy for the Plan will be based on the principles of compact growth, sequential development, prioritising development on brownfield and infill sites and creation of sustainable communities served by active travel modes.

A Social Infrastructure Audit of Mullingar will be undertaken and its findings should inform and be incorporated into the Draft Plan.

In response to comments regarding Economic Development and Employment, the Draft LAP will seek to support the town as a key economic driver in the region. The Draft Plan should support economic development and clustering of related enterprises, together with diversification of and building resilience within Mullingar's enterprise base.

With regard to regeneration and placemaking, urban design principles will be developed to guide the development of identified Opportunity Sites within the town. Such an approach will ensure that that place-making is placed at the forefront of regeneration proposals.

The LAP should seek to promote Mullingar as a 'Destination Town' and thus capitalise upon the town's existing natural heritage assets and other attributes to ensure that Mullingar develops as a tourism hub.

In response to the comments regarding transport and mobility, the Mullingar ABTA is currently being prepared and any associated policies, objectives and measures set out within the ABTA will be considered in the preparation of the Draft LAP.

The Draft Plan will be informed by a 'Green Blue Infrastructure Strategy' which will inform a policy framework for the protection, enhancement and management of the town's green-blue infrastructure assets.

The important resource of the 'Regional Development Monitor' is recognised as a useful tool to inform the plan making process including monitoring.

Early engagement with the Office of Public Works (OPW) , Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) , the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Environmental Protection Agency and Uisce Éireann is recognised as important in the drafting of the SEA, the AA and the SFRA of the LAP.

With regard to the SFRA, consideration can be given to the inclusion of measures to enhance biodiversity and amenities, including where flood risk management measures are planned. The SFRA will be based upon the OPW's most recent flood risk mapping.

4 Overview of the Public Submissions and Response to Issues Raised

This section contains a summary of the remaining 35 no. written submissions received as part of the Pre-Draft Consultation Process and the response to the issues raised therein. The submissions have been summarised and categorised under the 12 no. headings which broadly correspond to the specific themes as set out in the Strategic Issues Paper. Each submission has been allocated a unique reference number, i.e. WM-C79-MLAP-XX, with all individual submissions and corresponding references listed in Appendix 2.

4.1 Introduction, Strategic Planning and Emerging Vision

WM-C79-MLAP-15, WM-C79-MLAP-25, WM-C79-MLAP-26.

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject area:

1. It is stated that the LAP must be strategic and goal-oriented in order to effectively implement National and Regional objectives at a local level.
2. Reference is made that the LAP should adopt a holistic and long-term perspective, supported by ambitious, realistic, and sustainable objectives, with an emphasis on delivering the right development in the most appropriate locations. In this regard, continuous land management will be crucial.
3. The preparation of the Mullingar LAP should be evidence-led to ensure that the plan's vision and supporting policies and objectives are proactive (rather than reactive) in addressing and responding to the challenges and change facing Mullingar. The plan should consider, where appropriate, the town's prospects up to 2050 based on the most up-to-date evidence available.
4. It is suggested that the LAP should commit to implementing the '10 Minute Town' approach to service provision, mobility, housing and enabling infrastructure in relation to both new and existing communities. The delivery of localised neighbourhood centres should be a key component of this approach.

4.1.1 Response to Issues Raised:

The issues raised in the submissions are acknowledged in relation to the Introduction, Strategic Planning and Emerging Vision and will be carefully considered as part of the preparation of the Draft Plan. The Draft Local Area Plan must be consistent with policy provisions in both the NPF and RSES. A number of strategies will be undertaken to inform the Draft Plan, namely ABTA, Town Centre Health Check, Green/Blue Infrastructure Plan, a Social Infrastructure Audit and a Settlement Capacity Audit. Collectively, these studies will provide the evidence base for the Plan.

The population projections and housing targets for Mullingar will be aligned with the approach as set out under the NPF, RSES and the Westmeath County Development Plan Core Strategy.

The '10 minute' settlement concept, which seeks to locate infrastructure and facilities within a 10 minute walk or cycle from homes is recognised and should be considered as part of the Plan. This can be achieved by promoting compact growth supported by sustainable travel patterns, which in turn reduce CO2 emissions within the town and improve the overall liveability of Mullingar.

4.2 Housing and Sustainable Communities

WM-C79-MLAP-5, WM-C79-MLAP-9, WM-C79-MLAP-19, WM-C79-MLAP-26, WM-C79-MLAP-27, WM-C79-MLAP-36.

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject area:

RSES and NPF Population Projections

1. It is suggested by submissions that Mullingar's population could exceed the RSES and NPF's population projections based on the current demand for accommodation in Mullingar. The case is made that the LAP should present a strong case for the need to update the town's population projections and housing targets to ensure that Mullingar continues to present itself as an attractive place to live, work, and invest. It is submitted that the results of Census 2022 need to be factored into any revised growth targets.

Framework Plans

2. It is suggested that the existing Framework Plan areas require a critical review and update in a manner that is plan-led, goal-oriented, visionary, and guided by a Development Framework Plan. Areas predominantly noted as requiring a strategic approach include Robinstown and Mullingar West.

Delivery of Housing

1. The Land Development Agency (LDA) recommend that a specific objective should be included within the LAP to support the LDA in bringing forward land(s) for the delivery of affordable housing in Mullingar. It is further stated that the cost rental model of housing needs to be recognised and supported as a viable housing tenure in the policies and objectives contained within the Plan.
2. Submissions state that housing and social housing will need to be prioritised in order to meet the demands of the forecasted population increase in Mullingar. Proposed future housing sites recommended include lands at St.Lomans, Columb Barracks and the terrace of former railway workers' houses along Clonmore Road.
3. It is recommended that significant consideration be given to providing appropriate house types for independent, assisted and full care living for the elderly, thereby potentially freeing up significant quantities of housing units for other families.
4. Submissions highlight the reduction in 'over-the-shop' living in Mullingar, with the majority of these units indicated as being now vacant or used for storage purposes and the need for the Draft Plan to encourage the renewal and re-use of these shop top living units to facilitate town centre living.
5. It is suggested that the provision of public facilities and infrastructure, including parks, green areas, recreational facilities and playgrounds, should be developed in tandem with the construction of future residential development.
6. A submission requests the introduction of a Low Density Residential Zone to support diverse housing options.

Education

1. Concerns are raised by submitters regarding the capacity of Mullingar's education system, at both primary and secondary levels, to accommodate the current and future needs of a growing population envisaged for the town over the life of the Plan.
2. The Department of Education states that projected population growth within the existing 'built-up' footprint of the town has the potential to upset the balance of uses relative to education provision in the area. It is considered as critical that the Mullingar LAP provides explicit provisions for school development to cater for such developments in existing 'built up' areas. It is submitted that a requirement for additional education provision at both primary and post-primary levels may emerge over the lifetime of the Plan if Mullingar's projected population increase occurs as outlined in the Issues Paper (i.e. 27,849 in 2031). The Department requests that the Plan is explicit in its support for the provision of adequate and suitable school accommodation, including the development of new schools and the expansion, or alteration, of existing ones.

Community Facilities

1. The need for additional community facilities to support the growing population of the town was noted by submitters with suggestions including a regional sports centre and swimming pool. The lack of a Community Centre or Civic Centre in Mullingar was also specifically noted.
2. It is noted by submitters that Mullingar Town Park should accommodate more amenities with suggestions including a public tennis court, basketball court, handball court and band stand for local residents to enjoy, particularly young people.
3. Submitters requested the creation of a community garden or allotment spaces and proposed the open space at Columb Barracks as a potential location.
4. Some submitters suggested that the Council investigate the feasibility of permanent glazing over Market Square in an effort to create a year round public meeting place while also supporting activities such as music, dance, outdoor dining and etc.

Healthy Communities

1. It was suggested that inclusiveness should be prioritised as a cross-cutting theme within the Mullingar LAP to ensure that no one is excluded from active participation in their community. It is recommended that the future development and growth of Mullingar should therefore be age and gender friendly, delivering for persons with a disability, providing safe spaces to socialise and play for youth/adolescents, protect disadvantaged and marginalised groups and support the ethnic and cultural mix in Mullingar.
2. Submissions suggest that the Mullingar LAP should support sustainable and healthy diets for the people of Mullingar by encouraging and enabling local grown food and assisting in the delivery of a Tobacco Free Ireland as per Government Policy (2013-2025).

4.2.1 Response to Issues Raised

The issues raised in the submissions are acknowledged in relation to Housing and Sustainable Communities in Mullingar and will require careful consideration as part of the preparation of the Draft Plan.

The population projections for Mullingar are prescribed in the Westmeath County Development Plan Core Strategy. Reference to the recently published 2022 census should be included in the Draft Plan.

It is considered that the critical role of the LAP will be the provision of housing and to ensure the zoning of an adequate quantum of appropriately located serviced and serviceable land to provide for residential development, in keeping with the provisions of the County Core Strategy. In this regard, the Plan should provide for a mix of house types and tenures to meet the future needs of Mullingar. This process will involve a review of the existing Framework Plans in the plan area. Furthermore, there will be a need to ensure that policy supports the development of a range of housing types to meet the needs of an aging population, including policies to support Mullingar as an 'age friendly' town. Particular emphasis should be placed on the need to create successful places characterised by high quality sustainable design and layout. In this regard the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2024 will provide a guide.

The principle of active land management is recognised as an important component of an overall development strategy for Mullingar. It is envisaged that the Plan will include a range of provisions to facilitate active land management, with particular emphasis on the delivery of residential development at sustainable densities on appropriate lands. In this regard the merits of the LDA in bringing forward land(s) for the delivery of affordable housing in Mullingar is recognised.

The Draft Joint LAP should carefully consider policy to support the delivery of schools in Mullingar at appropriate locations. As part of the preparation of the Plan, a Social Infrastructure Audit of Mullingar will be undertaken. This will, inter alia, look at the anticipated demand for further school places in the town at both primary and secondary levels, taking into consideration the targeted population growth of the town over the lifetime of the Plan. The Council will engage with the Department of Education regarding school provision and will ensure that sufficient land is identified for educational purposes. Policy to support the expansion of existing schools within the town together with the need for special education facilities will also be considered in this regard.

The LAP will be accompanied by a Social Infrastructure Audit (SIA) which will examine the current context with respect to social infrastructure provision in Mullingar whilst also identifying future requirements for the town, together with recommendations on priority areas for investment. The Draft Plan should support and facilitate the development and expansion of community infrastructure, facilities and services by working with the relevant agencies as appropriate to ensure the timely provision of same.

It is considered that the Draft Plan should continue to implement the Council's Development Contribution Scheme which supports the provision of critical social infrastructure and amenities within Mullingar.

4.3 Economic Development and Employment

WM-C79-MLAP-9, WM-C79-MLAP-25, WM-C79-MLAP-26, WM-C79-MLAP-27.

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject area:

Mullingar as an Industry Hub

1. It is submitted that emphasis is placed in the Plan on the importance of supporting and expanding Mullingar's industry and employment sectors. It is further noted that Mullingar's strategic location and current industry offering are key drivers for supporting local employment, which in turn, assists in positively reducing travel and reducing impacts on the environment. It is requested that the LAP should re-enforce Mullingar as a major hub for industry and ensure the Advanced Unit in the IDA Park is progressed without further delay.

Small Business Development

1. Concern is raised that the Strategic Issues Paper's 'Economic Development and Employment' section is considered vague with an absence of quantitative analysis pertaining to the current scale of built office and industrial space in the town, in addition to the amount of land zoned for such purposes.
2. It is submitted that there is limited to no availability for small business growth within Mullingar. This should be addressed as a priority in the LAP with specific zoning or locations identified to accommodate this type of development.
3. It is suggested that Mullingar does not have a serviced office remote working hub of any significant scale, and provision of such a facility should be a priority investment within the Plan.

Sustainable Spatial and Economic Growth Objectives

1. A submission has stated that the Mullingar LAP should set out stringent, sustainable spatial and economic growth objectives for the town to facilitate reverse commuting from the Dublin Metropolitan Area and assist employment growth.

4.3.1 Response to Issues Raised

The issues raised in the submissions in relation to the Economic Development and Employment are acknowledged and will require careful consideration as part of the preparation of the Draft Plan.

It is recognised that the Draft Plan will need to include policy to support economic development of the town including the identification of a sufficient appropriately zoned lands to facilitate development over the lifetime of the Plan. It should be a priority to ensure that employment lands are developed in a plan-led, orderly and sequential manner. Furthermore, the Draft Plan should seek to support the right jobs in the right places by placing a particular emphasis on achieving greater alignment between where people live and work, to reduce the need to travel and facilitating sustainable travel modes.

The role that dedicated remote working hubs play in the modern economy is also recognised and will be considered in the formation of economic policy.

4.4 Regeneration & Placemaking

WM-C79-MLAP-3, WM-C79-MLAP-21, WM-C79-MLAP-26, WM-C79-MLAP-27.

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject area:

Impacts of regeneration on existing community facilities

1. It is submitted that the Mullingar LAP will need to consider the potential regeneration of existing areas within the town's core (e.g. 'over-the-shop' living and vacant building stock') and the cumulative impacts of regeneration and redevelopment on existing community facilities. In this regard, the provision of new community facilities, including a new swimming pool and associated running/walking paths to facilitate various clubs and groups, also needs to be considered within regeneration schemes.

Columb Barracks and St. Lomans Sites

1. Blackhall, St Lomans and Columb Barracks are identified in a number of submissions as key regeneration sites which should be earmarked for development within the Plan. Suggested potential uses for these sites range from residential, community or educational use such as an educational campus at St. Lomans and a college of trades and student accommodation at Columb Barracks. It is recommended that the regeneration of these sites incorporates higher densities and increased building heights. It is stated that future development must be cognisant of the significant archaeological and built heritage of these sites.

Streetscape Improvements

1. It is stated that the installation of LED lights in Mullingar is a positive improvement, however poor lighting in the town centre and along greenways remains a concern in terms of safe access and mobility. Accordingly, targeted improvements to the public realm are suggested.
2. Reference is made to the need for enhanced street furniture, including segregated, compactor and compost bins in the town, together with public utilities such as drinking water refill stations and dog litter bags / bins.

4.4.1 Response to Issues Raised

The issues raised in the submissions in relation to regeneration and placemaking are acknowledged and will require careful consideration as part of the preparation of the Draft Plan.

A key consideration of the Mullingar LAP will be the promotion of regeneration and place-making principles together with 'Town Centre First' policies. In this regard, the importance of initiatives such as 'living over the shop' and provision of residential development on brownfield sites within the town centre are recognised. The importance of delivering social infrastructure in tandem with future development is recognised as an important consideration in the development of future planning policies in meeting the town's social infrastructure needs.

It is envisaged that the new LAP will continue the practice established under the current Plan in relation to the preparation of a Development Strategy for identified Regeneration/ Opportunity Sites

in Mullingar. The development of these policies will require careful consideration of issues such as urban design and building heights standards.

As noted under the Issues Paper the protected complexes of both Columb Barracks and St. Lomans Hospital offer potential for regenerative development initiatives in line with a tailored policy approach to guide their future development, having due cognisance of the need to protect the built heritage of these sites.

The Draft Plan will also consider the regeneration and development of the town centre and improvement of the existing public realm. It is acknowledged that the attractiveness, offer and vitality of the town centre is a key determinant in enticing people to live and work in Mullingar.

4.5 Cultural Heritage and Tourism

WM-C79-MLAP-3, WM-C79-MLAP-9, WM-C79-MLAP-21, WM-C79-MLAP-27, WM-C79-MLAP-29, WM-C79-MLAP-33, WM-C79-MLAP-36.

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject area:

New Museum

1. Concern is raised that the absence of a museum in Mullingar is considered a barrier for the town, given its designation as a tourism hub and 'Destination Town'. Support is requested for both the provision of a transport museum and a military museum in the Plan, given the town's long military history (Columb Barracks) with potential linkages between the two museums.
2. It is further suggested that the town would benefit from a music themed museum, having regard to Mullingar's musical heritage, with potential to further integrate Joe Dolan's legacy with the town.

Improved Tourism Facilities

1. It is submitted that there is a significant need for additional tourism offering and improved facilities / amenities in Mullingar and its surrounding hinterlands. In this regard, it is recommended that provision be made in the Plan for additional tourist amenities at Lilliput Adventure Centre, Belvedere House & Gardens, the upgrading of existing and provision of new wayfinding / information signposts and street furniture along places of interest and scenic areas such as the Royal Canal. It is also suggested that additional services are also required along the Old Rail Trail to ensure it becomes a 'must-visit' destination'.
2. Having regard to Mullingar's successful hosting of the Fleadh in 2022/2023, it is suggested that the Council should explore the possibility of closing streets to vehicles, e.g. Oliver Plunkett St, Mount St and Pearse Street, to facilitate on-street entertainment/music and busking/sports/market/carnival events.
3. It is submitted that consideration should be given to the improvement of linkages between Mullingar and other tourist attractions, namely the Hill of Uisneach, Lough Derravaragh, Loughs Owel, Ennell and Fore, together with the provision of new walking linkages along the River Brosna.

Built Heritage

1. It is submitted that the currently listed Protected Structure RPS No. 019-216 should be removed from the Westmeath Record of Protected Structures.
2. A number of submissions indicate that the Market House should be re-utilised, such as a restaurant or pub, to invigorate Mullingar's night-time economy.

4.5.1 Response to Issues Raised

The issues raised in the submissions are acknowledged in relation to the Cultural Heritage and Tourism and will require careful consideration as part of the preparation of the Draft Plan.

Cultural Heritage and Tourism is an important component of healthy sustainable communities and as such should be a key consideration in the preparation of the Plan.

The economic benefits of improving the tourism offering in Mullingar and its immediate surrounds are recognised and acknowledged. The Draft Plan should acknowledge the value of Tourism to Mullingar's economy and should take due cognisance of the Westmeath's Tourism Strategy 2021-2027, which makes reference to specific policy provision in relation to Mullingar. Furthermore, the Council will continue to engage with Failte Ireland, Waterways Ireland and other tourism service providers in relation to developing the tourism product in Mullingar and to improving connectivity to existing tourist attractions. It should be noted that reference is made in a number of submissions to tourist attractions which extend outside the remit of the Mullingar LAP.

The support for a new museum and promotion of festivals and events in Mullingar, as highlighted by many submissions is noted. The Draft Plan should include policy which support the provision of Art Galleries, Museums, festivals and events in Mullingar, having regard to their contribution to the cultural and tourism offering in the town.

There is a strong support for the protection of the natural and built heritage in Mullingar and its environs including the lakes, landscape, biodiversity, and protected structures, and this should be reinforced in the Draft Plan as they are recognised as key assets in sustaining a high quality of life for the residents of Mullingar and an important sustainable tourism resource. The challenge between protecting the natural environment and the need to promote economic opportunities within Mullingar and its environs is acknowledged. The Draft Plan should continue to protect, conserve and manage Mullingars' cultural and built heritage assets and provide for its sustainable growth.

The Record of Protected Structures (RPS) for Westmeath is contained within the CDP 2021-2027. There is a statutory process set out in the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) in relation to removal of structures from the RPS. It is therefore considered that this matter extends outside the scope of the Mullingar LAP.

4.6 Transport and Mobility

WM-C79-MLAP-3, WM-C79-MLAP-4 and WM-C79-MLAP-9, WM-C79-MLAP-16, WM-C79-MLAP-21, WM-C79-MLAP-23, WM-C79-MLAP-27, WM-C79-MLAP-30, WM-C79-MLAP-37.

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject area:

Active Travel

1. The National Transport Authority (NTA) states that facilitating the required modal shift to active travel and sustainable mobility will require appropriate policies and objectives in the Plan, together with improved active travel infrastructure and measures. It suggests that the following actions should be investigated by the Mullingar LAP:
 - a. Reallocation of road space in appropriate locations in accordance with the road user hierarchy in order to prioritise walking, cycling and public transport use
 - b. Marketing of GBI networks as viable transportation routes
 - c. New strategies to shift school commuting from passenger cars to active travel modes (Safe Routes to Schools programme)
 - d. Stringent requirements on pedestrian connections for new housing estates
 - e. Extension of the Mullingar bike rental scheme, such as the addition of cargo and electric bikes and new locations outside the town centre (e.g. Petitswood).
 - f. Provision of new pedestrian and cycling infrastructure including a foot bridge at Saunders Bridge and provision of a pedestrian and cycle link from Mullingar to Belvedere House and Gardens
2. Pedestrian safety remains a concern in Mullingar with the specific example of Derrycarne House (Ballinderry) raised with regard to the blocking of a pedestrian footpath.

Universal Access and Mobility

1. It is requested that the Mullingar LAP incorporate appropriate policies and objectives to enable and promote universal access and design in the external built environment.
2. Reference is made to the Make Way Day Report 2023, which outlines the obstacles and barriers that can negatively impact the lives of people with disabilities. The report identifies the lack and misuse of disabled parking spaces in Mullingar centre, the inadequate space of existing disabled parking to accommodate vehicles with ramps, the lack of wheelchair access at Mullingar based schools and potentially dangerous crossing times for those with mobility issues.

Regional and Inter-city Rail

1. It is submitted that the Mullingar LAP should support investment in regional and inter-city rail services, and in doing so, maximise the benefits associated with improved rail connectivity. Support is provided for the reopening of the Mullingar - Athlone railway line to connect these two major towns and associated commuters to all railway destinations. It is further stated that due regard should be given to the relevant guiding principles and improvements identified by Iarnród Éireann and the NTA as part of ongoing investment programmes.

Strategic Road Network

1. Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and the NTA state that the preparation of the Mullingar LAP should be in accordance with the DOECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines (2012).

Traffic Management

1. Concern is raised that existing traffic flow issues associated with the traffic junctions at Dominick Street/Mary Street and Castle Street / Pearse Street junctions need to be improved in order to encourage visitors to the town centre.
2. The NTA states that the outcomes of the Area Based Transport Assessment (ABTA) should be incorporated in to the Mullingar LAP with respect to traffic management and safeguarding pedestrians and vulnerable road users. The following matters are also recommended to be given consideration in the preparation of the ABTA:
 - a. Review of on-street parking with an aim to reallocate and encourage other modes of transport
 - b. Use of parking charges to ensure the regular turnover of spaces and to prevent over-use by commuters
 - c. Review of access arrangements to car parks with an aim to improve the efficiency of the transport networks within the town
 - d. The development of sustainable transport indicators, including mode share, for the purpose of monitoring the effectiveness of policies and development objectives
3. It is submitted that proper road safety infrastructure is urgently needed to address large scale housing developments approved in the town. Traffic calming measures are also requested in this respect with specific reference to the introduction of a 30kph speed limit to the Clonmore and Ardmore Roads.

Parking Provision and Electric Vehicles

1. The Mullingar LAP should have clear policies which promote, encourage and facilitate the use of sustainable modes and patterns of transport including the use of electric vehicles. Development management standards will need to provide clear guidance on car parking and the minimum level of EV parking provision, siting and quantity of EV charging points, micro-mobility vehicle and parking storage provision.
2. An Post requests that development standards are flexible with car parking for postal facilities, which require sufficient car parking spaces to operate in an efficient manner. Consultation with An Post on any future public realm and movement strategies is also recommended to ensure sustainable solutions for accessibility, appearance and functionality of the town centre.
3. It is submitted that the Midlands Regional Hospital is currently served by inadequate parking facilities with potential solutions to address capacity issues being a new overflow car park across the railway bridge on the Castlepollard Road.

Public Transport: Connecting Ireland and Local Link

1. The Mullingar LAP should address concerns on the lack of local bus routes and the future provision of public transportation in the town, specifically, the delivery and expansion of bus services such as the proposed BusConnects network in Mullingar and the Local Link services.

2. The NTA recommends that the Mullingar LAP includes policies and objectives to support the town bus service and any requirements identified by the NTA for bus stops / shelters, interchange facilities, layover, welfare and depot facilities and EV infrastructure.
3. The role and benefits of rural transport services, which include social and economic connectivity, should be acknowledged with policies and objectives supporting rural transport (Conthenecting Ireland Plan) incorporated into the Mullingar LAP.

Policy and Guidance Documents

1. The NTA supports the preparation of the Area Based Transport Assessment as part of the plan-making process and will continue to work with the Council during the course of its preparation. It is stated that an evidence-based approach to planning policy, supported by detailed transport modelling, is vital to integrating land use and transportation into the design of future development areas.
2. It is stated that the reduction of transport sector emissions should be prioritised within the Mullingar LAP in line with the CAP 2023 and national policy documents.
3. The Department of Transport advises that any reference in the Plan to the 2019 version of DMURS are to be replaced with references to the 2020 DMURS Interim Advice Note – Covid-19 Pandemic Response.

4.6.1 Response to Issues Raised

The issues raised in the submissions are acknowledged in relation to the Transport and mobility and will be given careful consideration as part of the preparation of the Draft Plan.

It is recognised the importance of integrating transport and mobility with land use and transport policies and in this regard the Draft Plan should be closely informed by and aligned with the Mullingar Area Based Transport Assessment (ABTA), which is currently in preparation. A key component of the ABTA will be to create a comprehensive high-quality pedestrian and cycle network in the town and promotion of public transport, in order to initiate a permanent shift away from private car use. The ABTA should address issues such as the provision of active travel modes, universal accessibility/movement, traffic management and car parking.

The Council will continue to engage with the TII, NTA and transport providers in relation to the development of transport policy and the ABTA. Specific references to the 2020 DMURS Interim Advice Note and the DOECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines (2012) should be included in the Draft Plan.

Concerns raised with regard to the quality of footpath infrastructure in Mullingar is an operational matter for the Council and falls outside the remit of the LAP.

The importance of universal accessibility considerations is recognised in terms of the developing principles of people-centred urban design and healthy placemaking. It is envisaged that the Plan will incorporate a range of provisions both through overarching objectives and specific measures to support universal movement throughout Mullingar.

The LAP will continue to support land use patterns which will support and encourage active travel and reduce the need to travel by car. To achieve emission reductions and in line with international best practice, the provision of compact growth close to public transport corridors will be encouraged.

It is acknowledged that the roll-out of measures such as EV supporting infrastructure will assist in Mullingar's transition to becoming a low carbon town. In this regard, the Draft Plan should consider policies to support the improvement of EV facilities within the town.

The need to support the provision of public transport initiatives in Mullingar is recognised.

Policy provision will be considered in terms of the future role of the Midlands Regional Hospital including any necessary supporting infrastructure.

4.7 Biodiversity

WM-C79-MLAP-1, WM-C79-MLAP-3, WM-C79-MLAP-36

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject area:

Tree Preservation Order

1. Two submissions propose new Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) in the plan.

Biodiversity

1. It is suggested that the Mullingar LAP support and encourage the establishment of community gardens, allotments, orchards, pocket parks, wildflower meadows and living walls in public open spaces, e.g. Mullingar town park. The planting of hardwood trees, rather than softwood trees, to facilitate an increase in flora and fauna, biodiversity and habitats for animals, is also recommended.
2. A submission requests that a new Invasive Species Strategy should be developed for Mullingar. It is further stated that Lough Ennell is currently considered at risk from invasive species moving downstream from the River Brosna and entering other waters. Specific policy reference to *leylandii* (invasive) should also be included within the Plan.

4.7.1 Response to Issues Raised

The issues raised in the submissions are acknowledged in relation to the Biodiversity and will require careful consideration as part of the preparation of the Draft Plan. It should be noted that there is a statutory process to be followed, as set out in Section 205 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended), in relation to the designation of new TPO's.

The Draft Plan should be cognisant of and informed by the WCC Biodiversity Plan which is currently in preparation. Consideration can be given to the inclusion of policy that supports the important role and protection of biodiversity, ecological corridors, flora, fauna, tree, hedgerows, and amenity areas which should also align with the impending WCC Biodiversity Plan.

It is considered that the issue of Invasive Species should also be given consideration as part of the preparation of the impending Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan.

4.8 Enabling Infrastructure

WM-C79-MLAP-12, WM-C79-MLAP-29, WM-C79-MLAP-23

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject area:

Protection of Infrastructure

1. It is stated that key service infrastructure is required to be delivered in tandem with, or prior to, the provision of new development in the town. Such infrastructure to include access roads, water and wastewater services, surface drainage, footpaths and cycle lanes and electricity / ICT.
2. ESB requests that the Mullingar LAP includes clear policies to ensure that the long-term operational requirements of existing ESB assets are protected, i.e. ESB Depot, at Mullingar Business Park, Mullingar.
3. The Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) requests that the Plan incorporates policy support for the rollout of 5G and the National Broadband Plan and a commitment to identify suitable urban and suburban locations to support smart initiatives and programmes.

Serviceability of Settlements

1. An Post request that the Plan provides a supportive policy framework for the future provision and enhancement of postal infrastructure and facilities, which could contribute to secondary benefits associated with increased employment generation and economic development, reinvigoration of underutilised lands and climate action measures (EV). On this basis, it is suggested that the Plan includes a specific land use classification for postal facilities.

4.8.1 Response to Issues Raised

The issues raised in the submissions are acknowledged in relation to enabling infrastructure and will require careful consideration as part of the preparation of the Draft Plan.

The Draft Plan should carefully consider infrastructure requirements and amenities required in tandem with development. It is envisaged that the Plan will include provisions to support the providers of energy related infrastructure by safeguarding existing infrastructure and strategic corridors from encroachment by development that might compromise the operation, maintenance and provision of energy networks.

A review of all land use zoning designations within Mullingar will be carried out to inform the Draft Plan. This review will inform future zoning designations having regard to the needs of the town.

On the issue of telecommunications, it is considered that the Draft Plan should include policy to support and facilitate the provision of telecommunications infrastructure, including broadband services in the town in line with statutory guidelines in the area.

4.9 Climate Action

WM-C79-MLAP-8, WM-C79-MLAP-23, WM-C79-MLAP-28.

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject area:

1. It is submitted that there is a urgent need for Mullingar to transition to a low carbon society. In this regard, it is suggested that the Mullingar LAP should take cognisance of the town's designation as a Decarbonisation Zone (DZ) with several strategies and measures proposed to facilitate Mullingar's transition to a low carbon town:
 - a. Integrated land use and transport strategy
 - b. Compact Urban Growth
 - c. Reduction of transportation emissions
 - d. Targets for local renewable energy production
 - e. Improved building energy efficiency
2. A submission suggests that the Mullingar LAP must recognise that anthropogenic climate change is the single most important threat to the town in the coming years, and therefore, there is a need to prioritise the achievement of carbon neutrality. It is recommended that Local Authority staff receive yearly training on environmental issues to address knowledge gaps and ensure coordination across departments and public outreach.
3. It is stated that the preparation of the Mullingar LAP should have regard to, and be aligned with, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, National Planning Framework, Climate Action Plan 2023, Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015-2021, the Long-Term Strategy on Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions (2023) and Response No. 25 of the National Energy Security Framework in order to deliver on climate targets and emissions reduction.

Renewable Energy

1. Support is requested in the plan for Community Renewable Energy Projects and engagement with renewable energy project teams.
2. It is suggested that the Mullingar LAP should promote the development of appropriately scaled renewable energy installations and support the development of additional grid infrastructure.
3. It is proposed that Westmeath County Council should facilitate the installation of solar PV panels on all public buildings in Mullingar while also developing support / incentive programmes for businesses to install solar panels on commercial buildings.

Energy Efficiency

1. A request is made that development management policies set out in the Mullingar LAP should encourage the electrification of heating with an aim to reduce the town's reliance on fossil fuel heating systems as per Response 17 No. of the National Energy Security Framework.
2. It is recommended that in compliance with EMRA's RSES Regional Policy Objective 7.40, retrofitting initiative policies and objectives should be incorporated in the Mullingar LAP.

District Heating

1. The Department of ECC encourage the undertaking of a district heating feasibility exercise and the use of heat mapping to inform the preparation of district heating specific policies and objectives in the Mullingar LAP.

Circular Economy

1. It is suggested that the Mullingar LAP should be aligned with the Circular Economy Act 2022, the Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy (2020) and the Whole-of-Government Circular Economy Strategy (2022-2023) in its support and promotion of circular economy principles and associated implementation policies. It is further stated that the Plan should encourage and promote the following sustainability measures:
 - a. Food waste reduction
 - b. Segregation of waste in public spaces and facilities
 - c. Free drinking water refill stations in public spaces
 - d. 'Zero waste' businesses and repair services
 - e. Litter reduction via restriction of single use plastics and packaging
2. Construction waste management policies and guidance should also be incorporated within the Mullingar LAP in line with circular economy principles

4.9.1 Response to Issues Raised

The issues raised in the submissions are acknowledged in relation to the Climate Action and will require careful consideration as part of the preparation of the Draft Plan.

Climate Change should comprise of a central cross-cutting theme which will permeate all aspects of the Draft Mullingar LAP. In this regard, the Draft Plan should contain a comprehensive range of provisions to support a meaningful transition towards low carbon development in Mullingar including support for Mullingar's designation as a Decarbonization Zone.

The Draft LAP must have regard to national policy in relation to climate mitigation and adaptation and be cognisant of the need to meet statutory climate targets. In line with national and regional policy, the growth strategy for Mullingar must be centred on the principles of compact growth, sustainable development, prioritization of the development of brownfield sites and promotion of active travel measures, thus contributing to reduced CO₂ emissions. As per the DECC submission, the Council will consult directly with the Climate Action Regional Office, in relation to all matters relating to Climate Action.

It should be noted that the town's designation as a DZ will require the preparation of a Decarbonisation Action Plan which will be progressed separately to the LAP process. It is envisaged that the Decarbonisation Action Plan may incorporate specific targets relating to local renewable energy production and building energy efficiency. An objective should be included in the LAP to support the full implementation of any Mullingar Decarbonisation Action Plan, with regards to its goals, objectives and actions relating to planning and development within its functional area.

The challenge for the Draft LAP will be to devise ways to ensure that the carbon footprint of existing and new development is reduced and to support climate resilience in new built form. Aligned to this objective is the need to support the development of energy efficient buildings under the Plan.

In planning for a low carbon town, the LAP should support the development of a circular economy in Mullingar insofar as its remit as a land use plan extends. In this regard, the Plan should seek to incorporate a range of active land management measures to maximise the efficient use of land, along with the reuse of brownfield sites and vacant buildings in the town.

4.10 Environmental Assessments

WM-C79-MLAP-11, WM-C79-MLAP-28.

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject area:

Flood Risk Management

1. The Office of Public Works (OPW) states that the preparation of the Mullingar LAP should adhere to the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines (2009) to ensure that the key principles of flood risk management and sustainable planning are reflected in the Draft Plan. OPW note that sequential approach to land use zoning should be implemented to manage flood risk at the earliest stage. It is suggested that due cognisance should be given to the need to ensure access requirements are preserved for the maintenance of Arterial Drainage Schemes and Drainage Districts, in the preparation of zoning maps.
2. It is stated that spatial planning decisions need to be informed by robust, up-to-date flood risk information including localised surveys, assessment of physical changes and site-specific flood risk assessments. Advises that development management standards should explicitly set out the requirements for assessing the flood risk of new development proposals including guidance on 'benefiting lands' and areas protected by agricultural embankments.
3. The OPW supports the promotion of nature based drainage solutions in the Draft LAP to reduce surface water run-off and provide other benefits such as to water quality, biodiversity and etc. In this regard, it suggests that '*The Best Practice Interim Guidance Document - Nature-based Solutions to the Management of Rainwater and Surface Water Runoff in Urban Areas*', should be cited in the Draft Plan.

Flood Risk Management Plans

1. It is noted that the protection and maintenance of the OPW's flood relief schemes should inform the preparation of the Mullingar LAP. In this regard, it is recommended that the Plan incorporate a register of key flood risk infrastructure in the Mullingar functional area where it would not otherwise be readily identified, or protected from, interference or removal.
2. Reference is made to the flood maps produced under the National CFRAM Programme which provide an important resource for plan making.
3. The OPW notes that the updated indicative flood mapping was prepared for the purpose of an initial assessment of identifying significant flood risk and should not be relied upon as the sole basis for defining flood zones.

Environmental Quality and Pollution

1. It is stated that the Mullingar LAP should identify and set out mitigation measures to improve air and water quality, including the identification of poor air quality hotspots, in line with WHO Standards and the Clean Air Strategy 2023.
2. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and A Framework for Major Emergency Management should inform the preparation of the Mullingar LAP with the latter framework addressing potential sudden and slower onset threats.
3. It is suggested that the Mullingar LAP include a noise map to address significant noise pollution concerns within the town such as the use of illegally modified vehicles along main streets and

residential areas. Policies and objectives should aim to minimise existing noise levels in order to reduce impacts on health and well-being.

4.10.1 Response to Issues Raised

The issues raised in the submissions are acknowledged in relation to the Environmental Assessments and will require careful consideration as part of the preparation of the Draft Plan.

The Mullingar LAP will be accompanied by a Strategy Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) which will be prepared in accordance with the requirements of *The Planning System and Flood Risk Assessment Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (2009) and Circular PL02/2014 (August 2014). The most up to date information on flood risk in Mullingar will be used in the preparation of the SFRA and there will be ongoing engagement with the OPW in relation to the preparation of same.

The Draft Plan will seek to ensure that development in floodplains is avoided entirely or is 'water-compatible,' as per the Flood Risk Guidelines (2009). Areas subject to flooding will therefore be recognised and preserved in the Plan to the maximum extent possible as essential green infrastructure that provides a natural defence against flood risk. Due regard shall be taken of green and blue infrastructure and the impending WCC Biodiversity Action Plan in the preparation of the SFRA.

The recent guidance on *Nature-based Solutions to the Management of Rainwater and Surface Water Runoff in Urban Areas* (DoHLGH, 2022) should be supported by the Plan.

Consideration should be given to referencing the Clean Air Strategy 2023, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, and A Framework for Major Emergency Management as part of the Draft Plan.

In response to concerns relating to noise pollution, the Draft Plan should make reference to both relevant EPA regulations and current Westmeath Noise Action Plan.

On the issue of air quality, it should be noted that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the principal authority in charge of the enforcement of air quality standards. Any monitoring of air quality conducted by the respective environmental sections of each local authority is considered to be an operational matter outside the remit of this Local Area Plan.

The Draft Plan should support and align with the Westmeath Climate Action Plan which states that WCC shall seek to continue to improve air quality throughout the County.

4.11 Land Use Zoning

WM-C79-MLAP-5, WM-C79-MLAP-7, WM-C79-MLAP-10, WM-C79-MLAP-14, WM-C79-MLAP-15, WM-C79-MLAP-17, WM-C79-MLAP-18, WM-C79-MLAP-20, WM-C79-MLAP-24, WM-C79-MLAP-25, WM-C79-MLAP-26, WM-C79-MLAP-31, WM-C79-MLAP-34, WM-C79-MLAP-35, WM-C79-MLAP-36.

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject area:

1. Fifteen (15 no.) submissions were received in relation to land-use zoning requests within Mullingar and surrounding hinterlands. These zoning submissions seek change the existing land use zoning designation of specific sites and are summarised below:

Reference No:	Name	Submission details
WM-C79-MLAP-5	William Smyth	Request that lands in Ardmore-Marlinstown which were noted as previously zoned from residential to agricultural in 2014 to revert back to a Residential zoning.
WM-C79-MLAP-7	Owen Kiernan	Requests that lands at R392 Ballymahon Road and R390, West Mullingar to be zoned to Proposed Residential.
WM-C79-MLAP-10	Noel Fay	Request that lands which abut the Royal Canal Greenway and the Old Rail Trail from Athlone to Mullingar are rezoned. No specific zone is proposed.
WM-C79-MLAP-14	Francis Kelly	Expression of Interest submitted in relation to lands identified as a culmination of gardens to the rear of properties located along McKeon Terrace, Patrick Street Mullingar, to be rezoned and proposed as possible suitable land for serviced sites.
WM-C79-MLAP-15	The Planning Partnership	Proposes that the 'retail warehouse' zoning for lands at Lynn Road can be revisited and a variation to the plan could facilitate future development of the lands.
WM-C79-MLAP-17	Shane Bell c/o Frank Bell and Son Ltd	Proposes the rezoning of lands at Marlinstown from Industrial to Residential.
WM-C79-MLAP-18	Thomas Joseph Doran	Proposes the inclusion of lands at Irishtown in the Mullingar Local Area Plan and the zoning of these lands for residential purposes.
WM-C79-MLAP-20	The KK Trust	Proposes rezoning and new zoning of a parcel of land for the purposes of residential development in the vicinity of Marlinstown Cemetery, Marlinstown,
WM-C79-MLAP-31	John Spain Associates	Requests that vacant, serviced, underutilised lands (c. 7.1 ha.) adjacent to the existing Lough Sheever Corporate Park be included within the boundary of the MLAP 2024-2030, and zoned for 'Enterprise and Employment', so that the lands can contribute to the emerging vision in terms of economic development and employment growth, as shown on their submitted map.

WM-C79-MLAP-34	Jim Buckley	Seeks the rezoning of lands at Ashe Road, Fairgreen, Mullingar from Commercial to Residential or Mixed Use to enhance the development of the site due to its strategic location.
WM-C79-MLAP-35	Peter Culleton Architectural Planning Consultant	Seeks the inclusion and zoning of the lands situate at Ballinderry, Mullingar and comprised in Folio No.'s WH12084 & WH3693F to Proposed Residential in the forthcoming local area plan.
WM-C79-MLAP-36	Ronan Casey	Multiple site proposed for rezoning. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To change zoning from 'Proposed Residential' to 'Open Space' or 'Agriculture' (5.8 ha). b) To maintain 'Agricultural' zoning at (9.2ha ha) on lands in Ardmore, Marlinstown and Ballinderry Townlands, or change to 'Open Space'. c) c. To maintain 'Educational, Community and Institutional' zoning 0.35 ha. d) To add 'Educational, Community and Institutional' zoning to 'Proposed Residential' zoning (5.8 ha). e) To maintain 'Open Space' (7.3 ha). f) To change to Mixed Use' (1.78 ha). g) To expand 'Open Space' zoning (0.3ha hectares) (0.76 ha) h) To change zoning from 'Innovation/Technology' to 'Proposed Residential'. i) To change zoning of lands at Springfield along Robinstown Link Road from 'Educational Community and Institutional' to Sport and Recreation to allow for expansion of Mullingar Town FC and Mullingar Shamrocks GAA Club. j) To change zoning from 'Open Space' to 'Sport and Recreation' to allow for expansion of Mullingar Town FC and Mullingar Shamrocks GAA Club and/or possible Westmeath GAA Centre of Excellence

The map of the submissions that relate to specific land use zoning requests is set out in Appendix 5.

2. It is suggested by a submitter that the methodology / rationale underpinning the zoning of residential land should be clearly set out within the Mullingar LAP, or alternatively, a separate working document, and should include estimated housing yields for said lands.

4.11.1 Response to Issues Raised

Zoning designations will be determined on an evidence-led basis having regard to the availability and capacity of the receiving environment with respect to both physical and social infrastructure.

In this regard, several supporting studies, including an Area Based Transport Assessment, a Social Infrastructure Audit and a Settlement Capacity Audit (i.e. Infrastructure Assessment) are being prepared to inform the Plan. Housing yields in line with the Core Strategy will also inform zoning extents with regard to residential development lands.

4.12 Miscellaneous

WM-C79-MLAP-2, WM-C79-MLAP-13, WM-C79-MLAP-24, WM-C79-MLAP-36.
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The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject area:

Major Accident Hazard Sites

1. The Health & Safety Authority (HAS) states that the Mullingar LAP must include policies and guidance on major accident hazards sites, and new developments in the vicinity thereof. It further states that HSA advice in relation to consultation distances from major hazard accident sites should be included on maps included in the plan. In this regard, it stated that specific reference should be made in the plan to Ecolab Manufacturing IE Limited Mullingar.

Consultation

1. Westmeath County Council should both acknowledge and respond to matters raised in public consultations received during the Mullingar LAP process.

4.12.1 Response to Issues Raised

The issues raised in the submissions are acknowledged and will require careful consideration as part of the preparation of the Draft Plan.

It is considered that the Draft Plan should set out planning policy and map based guidance in relation to Major Accident Hazard Sites, together with a reference to relevant sites within Mullingar.

All submissions received on foot of the public consultation on the Mullingar Strategic Issues Papers are summarised and responded to in this Chief Executive's Report. Moreover, in the interests of transparency and good practice, this Report shall be placed on the Council's online consultation portal.

To date, the Planning Department has engaged extensively on the Mullingar Strategic Issues Papers, holding two public consultation events, engaging with statutory consultees, numerous stakeholders and the PPN. Both the Mullingar Issues Papers and information on the public consultation events were advertised in local press and on the Council's social media platforms. It should be noted that there will be further opportunities for the public to engage in the plan making process at both the Draft and any Material Amendments stages of the process.

Appendix 1 – Press Notice / Public Notices



NOTICE OF PRE-DRAFT CONSULTATION IN RELATION TO THE PREPARATION OF A LOCAL AREA PLAN FOR MULLINGAR IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 20(1) OF THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT 2000 (AS AMENDED)

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to Section 20(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), that Westmeath County Council, being the Planning Authority for the County, intends to prepare a Draft Local Area Plan for Mullingar.

The preparation of the Local Area Plan has up to three stages: A Pre-Draft stage; a Draft Plan stage; and potentially a Material Alterations stage. Presently we are at the 'Pre-Draft' stage, which is followed by the preparation and publication of a Draft Local Area Plan. At all stages the Planning Authority will undertake public consultation and invite your comments.

A Pre-Draft Issues Paper has been prepared to give an overview of the main issues affecting Mullingar and sets out some of the key issues that need to be addressed by the new Plan. The Issues Paper is available for inspection at the following locations:

Online at: <https://consult.westmeathcoco.ie/en>

At the Planning Department, Westmeath County Council, Civic Offices, Mount Street, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, N91 FH4N during public opening hours.

The Planning Authority hereby invites any interested parties or individuals to make written submissions and observations in advance of the preparation of the Draft Local Area Plan for Mullingar.

Submissions or observations with respect to the Issues Papers or content of the Draft Mullingar Local Area Plan may be made no later than **5.00pm on Wednesday 23 November 2023**.

Submissions or observations must include the full name and address of the person(s) making the submission or observation and where relevant, the body or organisation represented.

Submissions or observations should be in **ONE** medium only i.e. online or hard copy and made as follows:-

Online at <https://consult.westmeathcoco.ie/>

or

In writing to: Administrative Officer, Forward Planning, Westmeath County Council, Civic Offices, Mount Street, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, N91 FH4N.

All observations or submissions received in relation to the Issues Paper will be taken into consideration before the making of Draft Mullingar Local Area Plan.

Please note that observations or submissions will be made public on the Council's website and at the offices of Westmeath County Council and will also form part of the statutory Chief Executive's Report to be presented to the full Council.

The personal information (data) collected during the consultation process (which may include the collection of sensitive personal data) is collected for the purpose of receiving and dealing with submissions and any data collected is subject to Westmeath County Council's privacy statement which can be found at <https://www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/ourservices/yourcouncil/privacy/privacynotice/>

**This is your opportunity to have a say in the future development of Mullingar.
We look forward to hearing from you.**

Become involved in the future of Mullingar



The public consultation of the Pre-Draft 'Strategic Issues Paper for the Mullingar Local Area Plan 2024-2030' has commenced with a six week consultation period from 10th October to 23rd November 2023. This is YOUR opportunity to get involved in shaping the future of your Town!

You are invited to make a submission via:

Online Portal:	Council's online consultation portal https://consult.westmeathcoco.ie
Post:	Written observations or submissions can also be made. These should be marked 'Pre Draft Strategic Issues Paper for Mullingar LAP 2024-2030', and submitted to Administrative Officer, Forward Planning, Westmeath County Council, Civic Offices, Mount Street, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, N91 FH4N



The deadline for submissions is the 23rd November 2023 @ 5pm

MULLINGAR Local Area Plan 2024 - 2030



Westmeath County Council has commenced the public consultation of the Pre-Draft Strategic Issues Papers for the Mullingar Local Area Plan 2024-2030.

You are invited to attend an information session regarding this review process in:

Mullingar

Thursday 26th Oct 2023
3-8pm
Mullingar Library,
Áras an Chontae,
Mount Street



*It's your Town,
get involved*

MULLINGAR Local Area Plan 2024 - 2030

Appendix 2 – List of Consultees on the Strategic Issues Paper

No.	Consultee
1	The Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly
2	Mullingar-Kinnegad Municipal District Elected Members
3	(Westmeath County Council – Community & Corporate Services)
4	Department of the Environment, Climate & Communications
5	Department of Education
6	Department of Transport
7	Electricity Supply Board
8	Office of Public Works
9	National Transport Authority
10	Transport Infrastructure Ireland
11	Health Service Executive
12	Health & Safety Authority
13	Inland Fisheries Ireland
14	Waterways Ireland
15	EPA
16	Failte Ireland
17	Westmeath Childcare Committee
18	Eastern & Midlands CARO
19	Mullingar Chamber of Commerce
20	Mullingar Sustainable Energy Committee
21	IDA
22	Longford Westmeath Education Board
23	Comhairle Na nÓg
24	Tidy Towns
25	Westmeath Active Travel Team
26	Westmeath Council Sports and Recreation

Appendix 3 List of Written Submissions by Ref. No. & Name of Persons and Bodies

Reference No:	Name	Submissions relating to zoning
WM-C79-MLAP-1	Gary Moss	
WM-C79-MLAP-2	Health Safety Authority (HAS)	
WM-C79-MLAP-3	Rob McDermott	
WM-C79-MLAP-4	Department of Transport	
WM-C79-MLAP-5	William Smyth	✓
WM-C79-MLAP-6	Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA)	
WM-C79-MLAP-7	Owen Kiernan	✓
WM-C79-MLAP-8	Uisce Éireann (UÉ)	
WM-C79-MLAP-9	Cllr Ken Glynn	
WM-C79-MLAP-10	Noel Fay	✓
WM-C79-MLAP-11	Office of Public Works (OPW)	
WM-C79-MLAP-12	An Post	
WM-C79-MLAP-13	Ronan Smyth	
WM-C79-MLAP-14	Francis Kelly	✓
WM-C79-MLAP-15	The Planning Partnership	✓
WM-C79-MLAP-16	National Transport Authority (NTA)	
WM-C79-MLAP-17	Shane Bell c/o Frank Bell and Son Ltd	✓
WM-C79-MLAP-18	Thomas Joseph Doran	✓
WM-C79-MLAP-19	Department of Education	
WM-C79-MLAP-20	The KK Trust	✓
WM-C79-MLAP-21	Therese McCullagh-Melia	
WM-C79-MLAP-22	Office of Planning Regulator (OPR)	
WM-C79-MLAP-23	Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications	
WM-C79-MLAP-24	The Planning Partnership	
WM-C79-MLAP-25	The Planning Partnership	
WM-C79-MLAP-26	John Geoghegan	
WM-C79-MLAP-27	Des Walsh	
WM-C79-MLAP-28	Health Service Executive	
WM-C79-MLAP-29	Electricity Supply Board (ESB)	
WM-C79-MLAP-30	Land Development Agency (LDA)	
WM-C79-MLAP-31	John Spain Associates	✓
WM-C79-MLAP-32	Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)	✓
WM-C79-MLAP-33	Danny McGee	
WM-C79-MLAP-34	Jim Buckley	✓
WM-C79-MLAP-35	Peter Culleton Architects on behalf of	✓
WM-C79-MLAP-36	Ronan Casey	✓
WM-C79-MLAP-37	Jennifer McKeon	
WM-C79-MLAP-38	Cllr Hazel Smyth	

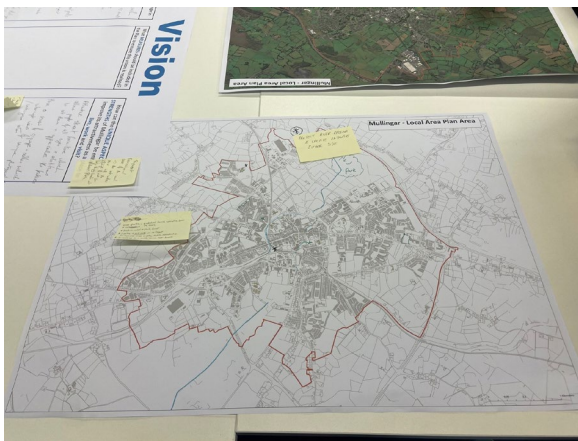
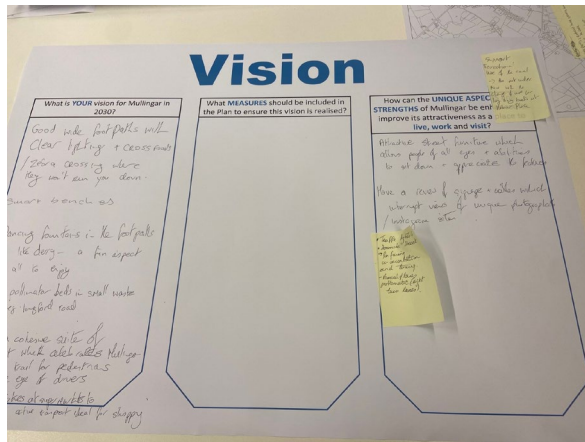
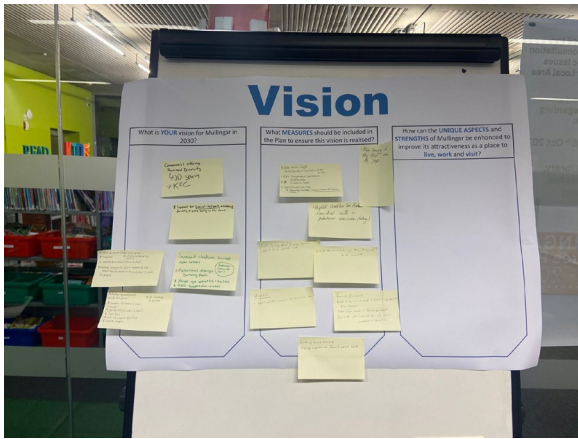
Appendix 4 Issues Raised at the Public Consultation Events

Theme	Discussion Points
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the range of housing stock and type (private / social / affordable), including specific measures to bring back into use derelict structures and encourage 'over-the-shop' living • Future residential growth should be carefully managed to prevent urban sprawl. In this regard, the C-Link Road is reaching its capacity to accommodate new residential development with alternative locations being the eastern and southern extents.
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mullingar's Day & Night Economies require greater variety and diversity of offerings. On-going support for the Town's Purple Flag status crucial. • Continued promotion of, and support for, local business to drive family businesses and SMEs • Mullingar should capitalise on opportunities associated with remote working prefab hubs • The development of a 'culinary hub' (tourism and economic benefits) <p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major film studio development near Lough Sheever represents a significant investment • Mullingar Science Park and other enterprise / industry sites are important employment opportunities • Pursue opportunities to collaborate and partner with 3rd Level Education Institutions
Tourism	<p>Mullingar should be promoted as an exemplar of what Westmeath has to offer to visitors. Improved promotion of the town is required for specific and casual visitors: marketing, sign-posting and / or the erection of public 'tour guide' maps</p> <p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blue Plaque initiative • Belvedere House & Lough Ennell • Tudenham House • Lilliput Adventure Centre • Greville Arms – Connection to James Joyce
Social Inclusion and Community Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mullingar should aspire to be a friendly, welcoming town reflective of its community spirit. Inclusivity should be at the heart of future development: review of public transportation (mobility), increase the availability of disability parking and assess public realm on wheelchair accessibility • The development of multi-functional community spaces including horticultural projects (garden allotments) • Development of a Youth Hub within the town centre as a dedicated and safe place for younger people • Investment in Mullingar's overall education sector: promotion of the town as an ideal location for a 3rd level satellite campus, greater provision of quiet study areas and on-going improvement to the town library
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mullingar's traffic system need to be reviewed in order to support future growth objectives • Public institutions need adequate facilities to allow expansion. For example, provision of overflow parking at Mullingar Hospital should be located beyond rail line via a pedestrian cross over bridge

Sustainable Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address existing deficits in Mullingar’s built environment to facilitate modal-shift: public transportation (linkages, affordability, reliability) and active travel infrastructure (connectivity, safety and cycle parking facilities) Mullingar’s train service requires increased funding / investment <p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A town shuttle system in tandem with other public transportation options Ardmore Hills (Sanders Bridge footbridge) requires critical attention Martins Lane requires improved accessibility and footpaths
Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mullingar’s Green Blue Infrastructure (GBI) are significant recreational assets which require investment to encourage increased usage and extension Blueways and water-based activities are identified as key opportunities: development of public lakeside and canal amenities, the Royal Canal and Mullingar Harbour and the River Brosna. A balanced approach to various stakeholder interest in the Royal Canal (boating / recreation) is required. Greater diversity of recreational activities and offerings would improve inclusivity amongst different age groups and backgrounds Two popular projects identified for Mullingar: a new swimming pool and multi-use sports facility (Robinstown)
Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment in the protection, maintenance and extension of Mullingar’s green spaces and associated infrastructure (e.g. benches) Public furniture should be allocated to appropriate spots on the greenways to facilitate usage. Active maintenance of existing facilities and infrastructure required to improve safety / surveillance, dog / refuse litter management and illegal camping <p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> C-Link Road (Grange South) provides opportunities for new linear parks utilizing under-used green spaces Investigate new connections to Lough Ennell
Climate Action & Biodiversity	<p>There is a broad range of Climate & Biodiversity actions which the Mullingar LAP can encourage such as the electrification of private and public transportation (carbon neutral), re-wilding initiatives, wildlife and pollinator protection and safeguarding the town’s Blueways from pollution.</p>
Public Realm	<p>Mullingar’s public realms have a pivotal role in the civic and economic development of the town. The utility of these spaces must be considered in terms of inclusivity, aesthetic / attraction, function and maintenance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Inclusivity</u>: Active consideration of accessibility and safety for all users (e.g. Wheelchair Users, blind and the elderly) <u>Aesthetic / Attraction</u>: Improved urban hard / soft landscaping, provision of street furniture for all ages and a cohesive suite of street art which celebrates Mullingar (murals) <u>Function</u>: Improvement of service availability and select pedestrianisation. <u>Maintenance</u>: Proactive measures and intervention to ensure the public realm remains clean and welcoming <p>Fleadh Event was a great success, demonstrating how well the town can be utilised in terms of pedestrianisation, open space and the public realm.</p>
Culture & Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mullingar’s musical heritage is one of its most unique and advantageous characteristics. Capitalising on the town’s link with Joe Dolan could lead to a variety of tourism and economic initiatives: annual festivals, museum and local attractions (public installations).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic assets, such as the Famine Graveyard and Union Workhouse, can contribute to Mullingar’s offering subject to promotion / marketing • Mullingar has potential to serve as a Tourism Gateway: Táin Trail, Hill of Uisneach and Children of Lir • Recognition and celebration of the local community and the individuals who contribute to Mullingar’s day-to-day culture including traditional crafts and craftspeople <p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Art Gallery • Outdoor World War Memorial Garden
Opportunity Sites	<p><u>Columb Barracks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant opportunity site requiring a clear long-term vision including Camp Field • One potential use for the site is a mixed use Education / Institution with a focus on supporting and teaching trades. A balance of residential and recreational development should be integrated to serve the mixed uses established <p><u>Blackhall</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A central component of any future development of the site is balancing a mix of residential, civic and recreation. The site should serve as an extension of the town centre due to its proximity and connectivity <p><u>St. Lomans Hospital</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the site’s history, the re-establishment of educational / institutional uses should be investigated <p><u>Mullingar Train Station Complex</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The regeneration of the train station should be plan-led and linked with broader works targeting Grove Street • The site has potential to accommodate a new transportation or industrial heritage museum

Public Consultation Information Sessions on 26 October and 21 November 2023



Appendix 5 Map indicating location of Land Use Zoning Submissions

