

CASTLEBAR TOWN COUNCIL

MAYO COUNTY COUNCIL

**CASTLEBAR AND ENVIRONS
DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2008-2014**



**Castlebar Town Council
Marsh House
Newtown
Castlebar
Co. Mayo.**



**Mayo County Council
Aras an Chontae
The Mall
Castlebar
Co. Mayo.**

29th May 2008

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Plan Title

This Development Plan shall be titled the Castlebar and Environs Development Plan 2008 – 2014 (hereinafter called the Development Plan) and will operate in the period 2008 to 2014.

The Castlebar and Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 supersedes the Castlebar Town Plan 2004.

1.2 Legal Status

The Development Plan has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006.

Under Section 9(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, every Planning Authority is required to produce a Development Plan every 6 years. In Section 9 (3)(a) it states that *“a planning authority...may, with the agreement of one or more planning authorities, which are adjoining county councils...make a single development plan for the area and the environs of the county borough, as the case may be”*.

During the process of making the Castlebar Development Plan (2004), the boundary of the former Castlebar Urban District Council was expanded to incorporate lands in its environs, which were formerly within the administrative area of Mayo County Council. As the 2004 Development Plan was in the process of being made, it did not take the boundary extension into account and therefore the provisions of the Castlebar Development Plan 2004 did not apply to all the lands under the administrative control of Castlebar Town Council. The new Development Plan applies to the expanded Castlebar Town Council administrative boundary while at the same time permitting the Councils to control and co-ordinate development within the wider Castlebar and Environs area.

This Development Plan has been jointly prepared and adopted by Castlebar Town Council and Mayo County Council. References within the Plan text to the 'Council' refer to the policy of both Councils as appropriate. The plan pertains to the administrative area of Castlebar Town Council (the Planning Authority for that area) and to the towns immediate environs which are within the administrative control of Mayo County Council (the Planning Authority for that area).

1.3 The Need for a Development Plan

Both the short and longer-term patterns of land use and development in Castlebar need to be guided by a set of tested sustainable principles. In particular, there is a need to ensure that such development can adequately provide for future growth requirements in an economic and environmentally sustainable manner. The Development Plan is the means by which this will be achieved.

This Development Plan sets out proposals for the development and use of lands within Castlebar and its environs over the 6 years up to 2014. The Development Plan will be used to: -

- (i) Provide a policy framework for development over the life of the Development Plan and beyond, set within a longer term strategic vision for the towns development; and,
- (ii) Provide guidelines in relation to the policy objectives and development management standards of the Planning Authorities of Castlebar Town Council and Mayo County Council;
- (iii) Guide the day-to-day activities of the Council in terms of service provision.

The Development Plan has been prepared after a comprehensive review of the current condition of the town and consideration of the submissions received on foot of the public consultation process at the Pre-Draft, Draft and Material Amendment stages of the process.

1.4 Structure of Development Plan

The structure of a Development Plan is based on three main elements:

- ❑ An early focus on the **strategic planning issues** that Castlebar faces, putting the town in the wider context as established by the NSS and Regional Planning Guidelines. This is followed by an integrated and coherent overall strategy for the town. Elaboration of the overall strategy is set out on a topic basis, under headings such as settlement, transport, enterprise and employment etc.
- ❑ The policies and objectives and other measures, (e.g. guidance notes, standards) necessary to **implement** the strategy, particularly in the operation of the day-to-day development management system.
- ❑ Ensuring that the plan contains sufficient **detail** to explain where the strategy came from.

1.5 Format of the Development Plan

The Draft Development Plan consists of a written statement and accompanying land use zoning and protected structures maps, and sets out the proposed policies, strategies and objectives for the future development of Castlebar and its environs up to 2014. The zoning plans illustrate the policies within the written statement.

In the event of any conflict or ambiguity between what is contained within the written statement and the supporting maps, the written statement will take precedence.

Under Section 19(4a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), every Development Plan must '*contain information on the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan*'. This relates to the statutory need to prepare a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Plan. In this respect an environmental report has been prepared in parallel with the preparation of the Development Plan to examine the strategic environmental, economic and social impacts associated with the implementation of the policies and objectives of the Plan.

1.6 Plan Area

This Development Plan area represents an expansion of the plan area from that of the Castlebar Development Plan 2004. The new Development Plan has been prepared to ensure that proper planning consideration is given to areas already subject to significant development pressure and to those areas likely to be in the future.

The area of the Development Plan includes administrative area of the Castlebar Town Council and part or all of the townlands of Annalecka, Corradish, Newantrim, Ballynacarriga, Coarsepark, Carrowbrinoge, Snugborough, Drumnacarta, Ballynaboll South, Ballymacraha, Aghadrinagh, Drumneen, Curry, Lisnakirka or Milebush, Lightford, Balloor, Shanvally, Kilkenny, Drumaleheen, Drumconlan, Doogary, Rinshinna, Aghalusky, Drumask, which are within the environs and under the control of Mayo County Council.

The Development Plan also includes all or part of;

- ❑ Castlebar Urban D.E.D.;
- ❑ Castlebar Rural D.E.D.

1.7 Plan Period

The Development Plan covers the six-year period from 2008 to 2014 in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). It will be valid for six years from the date of adoption by Castlebar Town Council and Mayo County Council subject to any review, variations, extensions or alterations made in the future.

1.8 Purpose of the Development Plan

The purpose of the Development Plan is: -

- ❑ To give the local community as well as environmental, social, business and economic interests, statutory bodies and the elected members the opportunity to participate in creating a short term development strategy and a long term vision for the future of Castlebar and its environment. The Development Plan has been made by the Elected Members of both local authorities. During the process of making the Development Plan all other parties have been afforded the opportunity to make recommendations on the content of the Development Plan by way of making submissions;
- ❑ To provide a detailed framework for the control and regulation of development and use of land that will guide day to day planning decisions.

In providing the detailed framework for the control of development and use of land, the Development Plan aims to:

- ❑ make proposals for the development and use of land and to zone land for specific purposes; and
- ❑ Set out the Council's objectives and policies for control of development.

1.9 Role of the Elected Members

The making of a development plan is a reserved function of the Elected Members, which in the case of this Development Plan are the Elected Members of Castlebar Town Council and Mayo County Council. This reserved function is provided for in legislation under Section 12 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006 where subsection 12(11) states that *"in making the development plan the members shall be restricted to considering the proper planning and sustainable development of the area to which the development plan relates, the statutory obligations of any local authority in the area and any relevant policies and objectives for the time being of the Government or any Minister of the Government"*.

In April 2006, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government published the *Development Plans - Public Consultation Draft Guidelines for Planning Authorities*, which sets out key principles to be considered when making a Development Plan.

Following careful consideration of these principles and the legislative provisions of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006, the Elected Members, exercising their reserved function in making a Development Plan, have ensured that the needs of the broad community are best accommodated in the zoning, policy and specific objectives identified in the Development Plan.

1.10 The Statutory Objectives

Section 10 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, outlines the format that the Development Plan shall take and sets out a list of objectives that shall and a list of objectives that may be included in the a Development Plan. The Castlebar and Environs Development Plan 2008 – 2014 includes overall strategic objectives, policy priority areas and policy objectives to achieve the proper planning and

sustainable development of the area. These policies and objectives are illustrated on accompanying maps.

The Castlebar and Environs Development Plan 2008 – 2014, is consistent with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act and includes objectives, under Section 10 (2), for;

- a) the zoning of land for the use solely or primarily of particular areas for particular purposes, (whether residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational, as open space or otherwise, or a mixture of those uses), where and to such extent as the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, in the opinion of the local planning authority, requires the uses to be indicated;
- b) the provision or facilitation of the provision of infrastructure including transport, energy and communication facilities, water supplies, waste recovery and disposal facilities, (regard having been had to the waste management plan for the area made in accordance with the Waste Management Act, 1996), waste water services and ancillary facilities;
- c) the conservation and protection of the environment including in particular, the archaeological and natural heritage and the conservation and protection of European sites and any other sites which may be prescribed for the purposes of this paragraph;
- d) the integration of the planning and sustainable development of the area with the social, community and cultural requirements of the area of its population;
- e) the preservation of the character of the landscape where, and to the extent that, in the opinion of the planning authority, the proper planning and sustainable development of the area requires it, including the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest;
- f) the protection of structures, or parts of structures, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest;
- g) the preservation of the character of architectural conservation areas;
- h) the development and renewal of areas in need of regeneration;
- i) the provision of accommodation for travellers, and the use of particular areas for that purpose;
- j) the preservation, improvement and extension of amenities and recreational amenities;
- k) the control, having regard to the provisions of the Major Accidents Directive and any other regulations under any enactment, giving effect to that Directive, of:-
 - I. the siting of new establishments.
 - II. modification of existing establishments, and
 - III. development in the vicinity of such establishments,for the purpose of reducing the risk, or limiting the consequences, of a major accident;
- l) the provision, or facilitation of the provision, of services for the community including, in particular, schools, crèches, and other education and childcare facilities, and
- m) the protection of the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht including the promotion of Irish as the community language, where there is a Gaeltacht in the area of the Development Plan.

The plan also contains objectives, which are listed in the First Schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

The strategic objectives listed above will provide an overall framework for the development of Castlebar and its environs over the plan period and beyond and each of the sections include specific policy objectives in line with the requirements of Section 10 of the Planning and Development Act (as amended).

2 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

With the introduction of the Planning and Development Act 2000 a new hierarchical framework for planning at national, regional and county levels has been provided through the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020, Regional Planning Guidelines for the Western region and the Mayo County Development Plan 2003. To be effective each layer of the planning system must reinforce and support those above and below them in the hierarchy. This Development Plan must be consistent with and implement relevant national, regional and county based policies and objectives, in a manner consistent with the National Spatial Strategy, the Regional Planning Guidelines and the Mayo County Development Plan. This system of plan making must be followed if the planning system as a whole is to function effectively. The table below indicates the broad nature of the relationships between the plans referred to above.



Figure 2.1: Relationship between plans

2.2 National Framework

2.2.1 Sustainable Development – A Strategy for Ireland

The national strategy for sustainable development was prepared in the context of the implementation of the Operational Programmes contained in the first National Development Plan 2000-2006. It provides a framework for the achievement of sustainability at the national and local level. It encourages planning authorities to take account of sustainable development considerations in the preparation of Development Plans. The principle of sustainable development is an intrinsic element of the Castlebar Town and Environs Development Plan.

2.2.2 The National Development Plan 2007-2013

The National Development Plan 2007-2013 – Transforming Ireland – A Better Quality of Life sets out the roadmap to Ireland's future as an enlarged and increasingly urbanised society with a defined urban hierarchy. The NDP integrates strategic development frameworks for regional development, based on the National Spatial Strategy framework of Gateway cities and hub towns to achieve the goals of economic growth in the regions and provide major investment for the rural economy in a sustainable manner. Strong urban centres are directly related to regional growth and development, affecting employment, incomes and quality of life.

The NDP provides general policies for infrastructure development for the regions of the country in areas such as housing, public transport, rural development, industry, water, health services and social inclusion. It was prepared to underpin the development of a dynamic and competitive economy in a

competitive global context. It includes a number of strategic objectives for the Western Region, in which south County Mayo and Castlebar are located.

2.2.3 National Spatial Strategy

The NSS was prepared to provide a spatial framework for future balanced regional development. Its main aims are to provide a better balance of social, economic, physical development and population growth between the regions over a 20-year strategic period. The Strategy seeks to establish a structure for future infrastructure investment through closer matching of where people live with where they work, in order to sustain:-

- ❑ A better quality of life;
- ❑ A strong, competitive economic position and
- ❑ An environment of the highest quality.

This is to be achieved through concentration of population in urban areas, in gateway and hub towns, with critical mass that enables a range of services and facilities to be supported to sustain a higher level of economic activity and improved quality of life. Hub towns will support the national and international role of the 9 gateway towns and will energise smaller towns and rural areas within their sphere of influence. The NSS will be supported by the Regional Planning Guidelines and extending down through County, Town and Local Area Plans.

2.2.4 Linked Hub

The National Spatial Strategy has identified Castlebar along with Ballina as part of a “linked Hub”. This designation strengthens their strategic role in the County and in the wider Western Region. As joint Hub towns it is envisaged that each town will attain a critical mass of population and employment levels that will drive competitiveness, while providing a range of services that cater for the County and Region’s needs. The policies and objectives of this Development Plan will be focused on providing the catalyst for the creation of two strong urban centres.

It is envisaged that the Western region will grow to such an extent that the hub towns of Castlebar and Ballina will have a joint population of 35,000 by 2020.

In order to achieve the projected growth of the Hub towns, co-operation is required between Castlebar Town Council, Ballina Town Council and Mayo County Council.

As a consequence of the elevated national status of Castlebar and the increased level of anticipated growth, sufficient lands must be provided to accommodate the expansion of the town. Castlebar’s role as a Hub in the National Spatial Strategy requires the planning for a sustainable settlement with adequate critical mass to ensure that services would continue to be provided over time.

2.2.5 Transport 21

On November 1 2005, the Minister of Transport announced a €34 billion transport package –Transport 21 - to be implemented throughout the country by 2015.

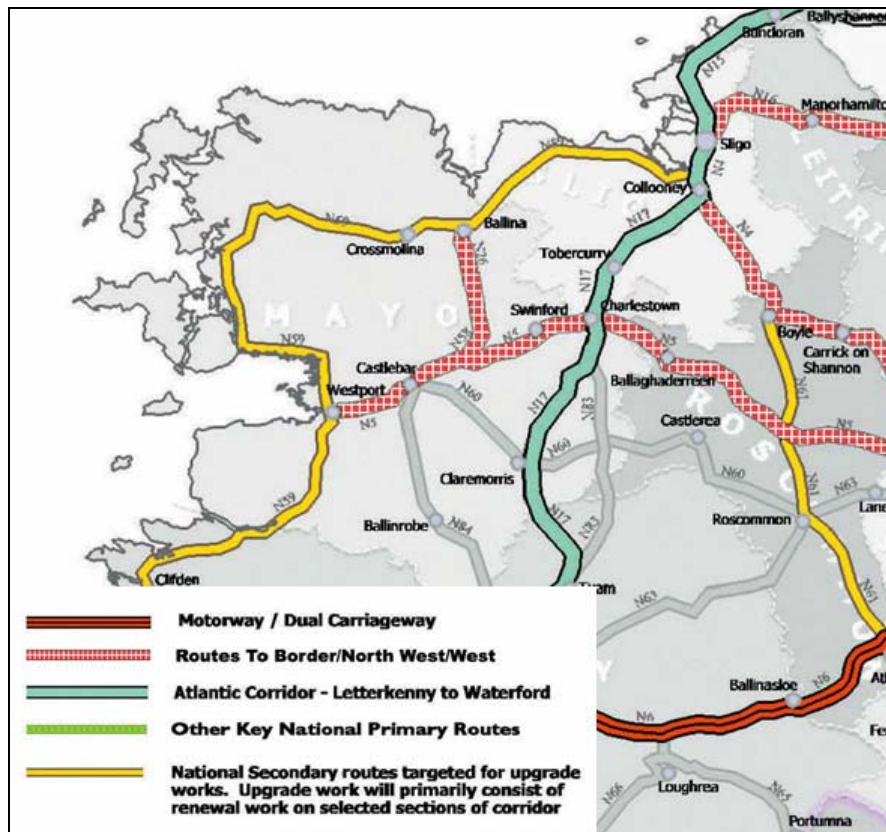
The west will benefit from this investment, both in terms of improved roads and public transport. The Minister for Transport announced in his speech at the unveiling of Transport 21 that:

“We will develop the Atlantic Road Corridor from Letterkenny through Sligo, Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford. This will connect the National Spatial Strategy’s Gateway Cities.

This route will link these towns with high quality roads, providing vital access to and between the various towns and their hinterlands. It comprises elements of the N15, N17, N18, N20 and the

N25. This should create some balance on the largely mono-centric road network and connect western towns such as Castlebar with other hubs and gateways along the Atlantic Corridor.

It also includes the improvement of the N59 coastal route from Sligo to Galway via Westport, which was outlined in the NSS as important for regional development.

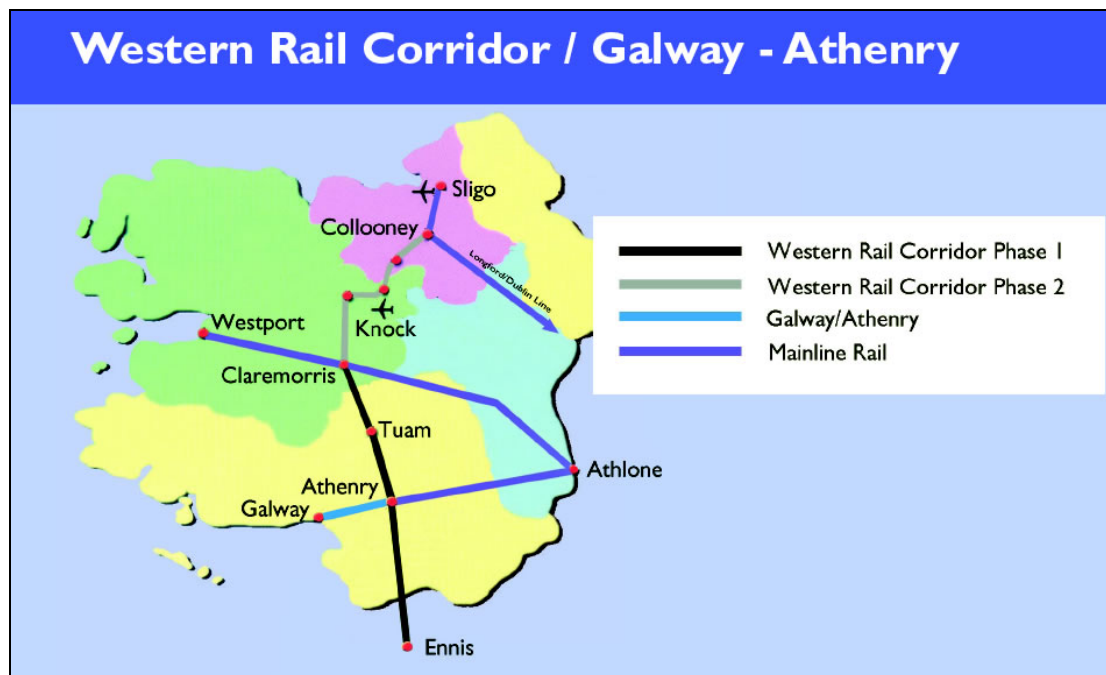


Map 2.1: Extract from Transport 21

The N5 Longford to Castlebar and Westport road is to be upgraded. This will provide a high quality link between Castlebar and Longford and will eventually connect with the dual-carriageway/motorway linking Mullingar to Dublin. The 18 km N5 Charlestown Bypass officially opened on 7th November 2007. Tenders have recently been sought for the construction of the Ballaghaderreen bypass while bypasses are also proposed for Longford and Strokestown. Plans are also being advanced for major improvements on the Castlebar/Westport section of the route.

Existing rail links to Dublin will be increased; trains will run every hour at peak times between Galway and Dublin and every two hours off peak. There will be services every two hours on the Dublin – Sligo line and four trains a day on the Dublin – Westport line, which passes through Castlebar.

Of particular interest is the announcement of the phased reopening of the western rail corridor. By 2014 trains will run from Ennis to Claremorris. This will allow interchange onto the Westport line for Castlebar, linking this hub by rail to the Western Gateways. Other rail improvements benefiting the western region as a whole will be the Galway Commuter train service to Athenry, completion of a feasibility study of the Shannon Rail link and investment in the Rural Transport Initiative.



Map 2.2: Extract from Transport 21

This improved infrastructure will provide Castlebar with the additional transport linkages it requires as a joint hub along with Ballina in the NSS and facilitate the provision of inter-regional services within the BMW Region.

2.2.6 Towards Sustainable Local Communities: Guidelines on Local Agenda 21 (2001)

Local Agenda 21 was the result of the earth summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. This set out an agreement for meeting the challenges of the environment and development into the 21st century at national level. The Government is committed to ensuring that the relationship between socio-economic growth and the environment is not negative and does not exceed the carrying capacity of the local environment.

Local Agenda 21 also encourages consultative processes which involve the whole community, local elected members and other community representative groups through the means of information awareness, public consultation and feedback, partnerships between authorities, businesses and communities, and a continuous monitoring of progress towards sustainability. Appropriate public consultation has been carried out in the preparation of this Development Plan.

2.2.7 National Heritage Plan (2002)

This Plan aims to set out a clear and coherent strategy and framework for the protection and enhancement of heritage. The plan is founded on the principle of sustainable development and seeks to ensure the protection of Ireland's heritage and promote its enjoyment by all.

2.2.8 National Bio Diversity Plan (2002)

This plan seeks to ensure the full and effective integration of biodiversity concerns into the development and implementation of other policies, legislation and programs, referring to: - eco-system diversity; species diversity and genetic diversity. The overall goal of the Plan is to "secure the conservation, including where possible the enhancement, and sustainable use of biodiversity in Ireland and contribute to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity globally.

2.2.9 National Anti-Poverty Strategy (1997)

This 10-year strategy was formulated in 1997, with the target to considerably reduce the numbers of those who are consistently poor. Consistent poverty is described in the Strategy as being below 50% - 60% of average household income and experiencing enforced basic deprivation, referring to 5 key themes:- unemployment, income adequacy, educational disadvantage, urban disadvantage and rural poverty.

The definition of poverty underpinning the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) and the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2003-2005 (NAP/inclusion) is:

People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living, which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and other resources people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities, which are considered the norm for other people in society.

2.3 Regional Context**2.3.1 Regional Planning Guidelines**

To give effect to the NSS, Regional Planning Guidelines for each of the Regional Authorities have been published. The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Western Region were published in 2004 and seek to achieve a better spatial balance of social, economic and physical development throughout the region. The aim of the RPGs is also to inform and influence the formulation of development plans at a local and county level, seeking the implementation of objectives and policies identified in the NSS.

The Western Regional Planning Guidelines are intended to take a strategic overview of development of the western region (Galway, Mayo & Roscommon). The Guidelines identify Castlebar as the County Town and administrative centre of County Mayo. As in the NSS, Castlebar is designated as a linked hub with Ballina working together to promote regional development in the north and central part of the region.

The strategic vision for the western region will be realised through:

- ❑ Establishment of a structured urban hierarchy;
- ❑ Putting policies in place to encourage Castlebar/Ballina to grow to a combined minimum population of 35,000 by 2020.
- ❑ Creating a critical mass of 100,000 people over the next 17 years in Galway City and its hinterland.
- ❑ Aiming not only to promote the gateway and hubs/linked hubs but also to support a settlement strategy that will encourage the growth of towns and villages.
- ❑ Regional infrastructure priorities, national primary routes as necessary and other major route networks such as rail and air travel.
- ❑ Identifying, formulating and implementing policies that will promote the gateway Galway and hubs Tuam and Castlebar/Ballina into achieving their targets and fulfil their role as set out by the Regional Planning Guidelines.

Table 2.1 Population of Western Region

GATEWAYS/HUBS	1996	2002	2020 GATEWAYS AND HUBS
GALWAY GATEWAY	63,695	73,614	INCREASE TO 100,000 MIN.
TUAM HUB	6,396	6,569	INCREASE TO 15,000 MIN
CASTLEBAR/BALLINA LINKED HUB	13,437	19,765	INCREASE TO 35,000 MIN
REST OF THE REGION	275,279	280,349	315,000(34,651 INCREASE)

2.4 Local Context

2.4.1 Mayo County Development Plan

The Mayo County Development Plan was adopted in 2003 and covers the period from 2003 to 2009. The Plan sets out the framework for land use development within County Mayo over this period.

The County Development Plan is an expression of the Council's vision, in partnership with the wider public, for the sustainable development of the county over the 6 year life of the plan and contains the steps needed to achieve this vision. The County Development Plan sets the context with which the Castlebar Town and Environs Development Plan must be consistent.

A strategic objective of the County Development Plan is:-

to promote and facilitate the growth of Ballina, Castlebar as a linked sub-regional development hub in accordance with the National Spatial Strategy, building on their individual strengths and potential development roles and to ensure that the necessary physical and social infrastructure supports and linkages are developed.

2.4.2 The Mayo County Housing Strategy

Under Part V of the Planning and Development Act, Local Authorities are required to produce a County Housing Strategy. The objective of this Strategy is to determine the projected demand for housing over the next six years. The Strategy has been produced in consultation with all Local Authorities across the County.

The key aim of the housing strategy is to ensure that every household in County Mayo will have available an affordable dwelling to live in. Information on population, supply and demand for housing, supply and demand for different house types, prices of houses generally, incomes of persons generally and mortgage interest rates was gathered and population and future housing demand projections were prepared. In turn, these figures have been used to determine the quantity of housing and the area of land required to accommodate the houses over the life of the development plan.

2.4.3 County Development Board Strategy

To secure more efficient and effective delivery of services at county level, County Development Boards have been established. The focus of the CDB Strategy is on economic, social and cultural development.

The "Guidelines on the CBD Strategies for Economic, Social and Cultural Development" (DEHLG, 2000) outlined the intended relationship between the CBD strategies and the development plan stating that:

“The CBDs Strategy should in future provide the socio-economic context for the statutory local authority development plan”.

“The CDB Strategy must in turn take account of the statutory development plan and its goals, needs and statutory status”.

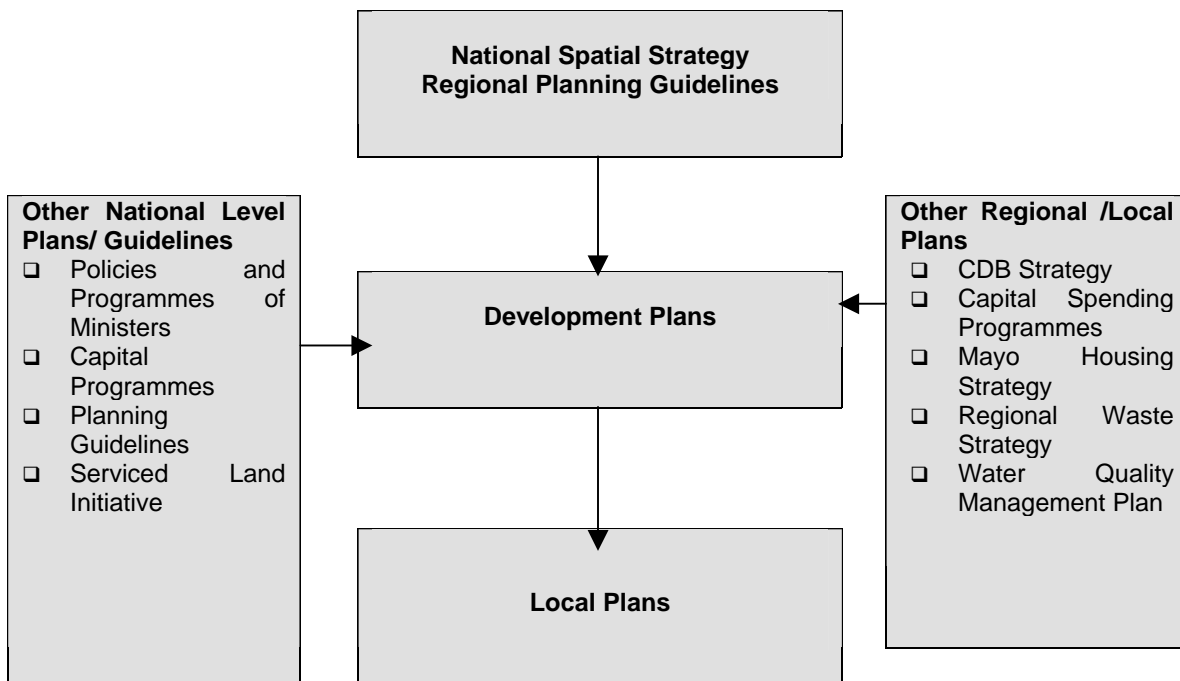
The Mayo CDB is made up of representatives of the Local Authorities, Local Development Boards, State Agencies and Social Partners. Its function is to develop a shared vision for Mayo for the 2002-2012 period and promote partnership, co-operation and co-ordination in relation to all services delivered in the county.

2.4.4 Mayo County Retail Strategy 2002

Mayo County Council adopted its Retail Strategy in 2002. It adheres to the principles outlined in the national Retail Planning Guidelines. The 2002 Mayo County Retail Strategy is a joint strategy with Castlebar, Westport and Ballina Town Councils. Castlebar is the county town and provides a wide diversity of functions, including financial institutions, industrial/ manufacturing companies, professional services, Mayo General Hospital as well as approximately 200 retail outlets. Increasing diversity in the range on offer has seen the town develop as an attractive regional shopping destination. The Strategy identifies a number of key issues relating to Castlebar's retail environment. These include: parking/accessibility, litter, dereliction, attractiveness, pedestrianisation, access for the disabled, safety, balanced development towards the Linenhall and Spencer Street areas, street lighting and signage. It outlines actions to be taken in response to each of these issues.

2.5 Relationships with other Plans, Programmes and Guidelines

As well as forming a component within a vertical hierarchy of spatial plans, development plans are also informed horizontally by other relevant plans, strategies and programmes at national, regional and local levels, illustrated below.



Examples of links at national level include the National Development Plan 2007-2013, as well as plans and programmes of Government Agencies and Semi-State bodies such as the National Roads Authority, CIE, Forfas and the development agencies. Examples at regional level include Waste Management Plans, River Basin and Water Quality Management Plans and at city / county / local level include City and County Development Board Strategies as well as capital works programmes in housing, roads, water services, recreation, social and community areas. A list of these plans has been included below.

Since the coming into effect of the existing Castlebar Town Council Development Plan in 2004, the following guidance documents have been published and have been considered for the first time in this Plan.

- ❑ Development Plans – Publication Consultation Draft of Guidelines for Planning Authorities – April 2006.
- ❑ Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Guidelines.
- ❑ Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidance for Consenting Authorities regarding Sub-threshold Development (August 2003).
- ❑ Retail Planning Guidelines (2005).
- ❑ Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines.
- ❑ Development Contribution Scheme for Planning Authorities Circular PD4/2003.
- ❑ Development Management -Consultation Draft of Guidelines for Planning Authorities.
- ❑ Architectural Heritage Protection for Places of Public Worship Guidelines.
- ❑ Implementing Regional Planning Guidelines - Best Practice Guidance.
- ❑ Quarries and Ancillary Activities Guidelines (2004).
- ❑ Wind Energy Development Guidelines (June 2006).
- ❑ Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities (April 2004).
- ❑ Consultation Draft Guidelines: Sustainable Urban Housing Design Standards for Apartments
- ❑ Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006.
- ❑ Taking in Charge of Housing Estates/Management Companies.
- ❑ NRA Circular 06/2006 – NRA Policy Statement in Development Management and access to National Roads.
- ❑ Draft Replacement Waste Management Plan for the Connaught Region 2005-2010.
- ❑ DOEHLG – Request that lands serviced by Castlebar Environs Sewerage Scheme be zoned.

Several guidance documents that were published at the time of the adoption of the 2004 Castlebar Development Plan are still in place such as: -

- ❑ Residential Density Guidelines (1999).
- ❑ Childcare Facilities Guidelines (2001).
- ❑ Guidelines for Planning Authorities – Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000.
- ❑ Implementation Manual Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000.
- ❑ Social Housing Design Guidelines.
- ❑ Landscape and Landscape Assessment – Public Consultation DRAFT (June 2000).
- ❑ Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures (1996).
- ❑ Tree Preservation Guidelines for Planning Authorities.

3 SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

3.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the broad Socio-Economic Profile of Castlebar. The policies and objectives of the Plan have been informed by the local economic and social trends identified in this Chapter.

3.2 Population

Between 2002 and 2006, the population of Castlebar Town grew by 3.57%, from 10,287 to 10,655 persons. A comparison cannot be made with the 1996 figures, as the town boundary was extended in 2001¹, although stronger growth in the rural vicinity is evident.

The combined total population of Castlebar Town and Environs in 2002 was 11,371. The 2006 total was 11,891, an increase of 4.57%. This increase is in line with development trends in the town since 2002, with a reduction in the central urban area and expansion in the suburban and rural environs.

The town's four year growth rate of 3.57% is significantly below corresponding rates for County Mayo (5.4%), Connaught (8.6%) and the State (8.2%).

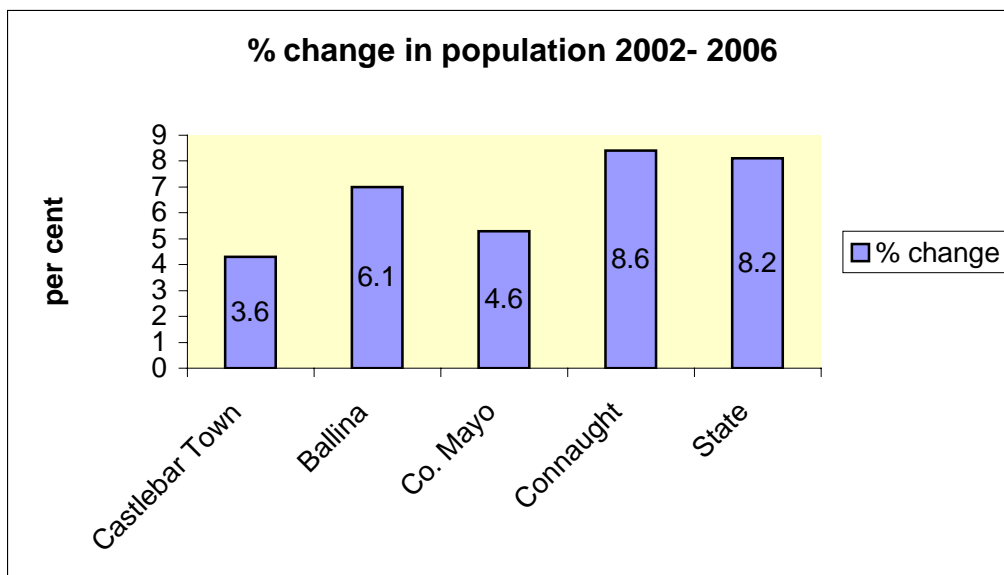


Figure 3.1: Population Growth 2002-2006
(Source: Census of Population 2006)

Table 3.1 Population of Castlebar Town & Environs 2006

Castlebar Town	2002	2006
Castlebar Urban	6,585	6,185 (-6.1%)
Castlebar Rural (part)	3,702	4,470 (+20.7%)
	10,287	10,655
Castlebar Environs	1,084	1,236
Total	11,371	11,891

(Source: Census of Population 2006)

There were considerable differences in population growth rates in the D.E.D's surrounding Castlebar (Table 3.2).

¹ SI 638 of 2001 refers

Table 3.2: Population Change 2002-2006

Castlebar Urban DED	Decrease
Cloonkeen DED	+ 1.7%
Ballyhean DED	+ 9.2 %
Islandeedy DED	-----
Burren DED	+ 5.8 %
Castlebar Rural DED	+ 8.8 %
Breaghwy DED	+ 25.1%
Turlough DED	+ 20.3%
Ballinafid DED	+ 16.1%

(Source: Census of Population 2006)

Castlebar Urban DED suffered a population decline, while the rural area within the expanded plan area grew by 20.7%. Cloonkeen to the south saw a slight increase in population. The surrounding DED's of Castlebar Rural, Burren and Ballyhean saw their populations increase by between 5 and 10%. The area to the east of Castlebar Rural DED saw the biggest increase in population. The DED's of Ballinafid, Turlough and Breaghwy and saw their populations increase by 16.1%, 20.3% and 25.1% respectively since 2002.

The Western Regional Planning Guidelines set a population target of a minimum of 35,000 for the linked hub of Castlebar and Ballina by 2020. In 2006, the combined population of the two towns was 20,711 which increases to 22,300 when the populations of the environs are included.

In terms of key issues affecting the region, the Regional Planning Guidelines indicate that the major driver of regional population growth in the west is net in-migration, which will see the population of the region rise by 80,000 by 2020. Planning authorities must therefore ensure that population increases happen in areas close to employment sources and where essential physical and social infrastructure such as transport and water services as well as schools, retail, community, healthcare and recreational/sporting facilities are available or are planned. These conditions are normally encountered in and around large towns and cities.

3.3 Population Structure and Demographic Profile

Figure 3.2 shows that Castlebar has a high proportion of persons in the 25-44 age cohort. This indicates that a relatively large work force exists in the town, reflective of its role as the county town. In contrast, the town has a relatively small proportion of persons in the 45-64 age cohort.

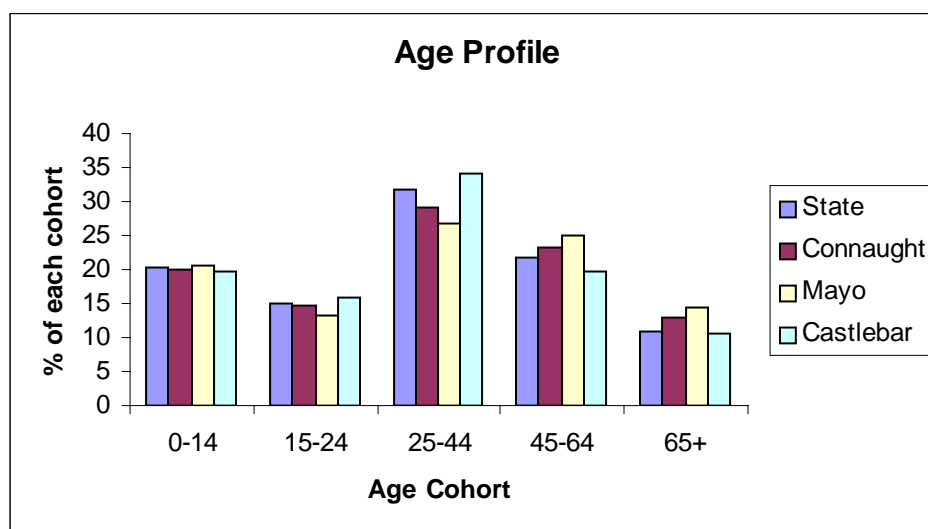


Figure 3.2: Age profile of the state, Province, County and Town (Census 2006).

3.4 Population Projections

The task of accurate population projection is onerous given the interplay of numerous factors of uncertainty. The projected population will be influenced by variable fertility rates and the extent of migration, which is in turn dependent upon the economic welfare. The recent trend indicates that the population of Castlebar continues to grow, albeit at a slower rate than the county and the state as a whole.

The population projections, which have been prepared for the County Development Plan, have allocated a population increase to Castlebar of 2,976 persons between 2006 and 2013. This will represent an increase in population from the estimated 12,592² to 15,568. The actual population of Castlebar and its Environs in 2006 was 11,891, 701 persons less than forecast in the Draft County Housing Strategy. The current household size is stated as being 2.82 persons per house and is expected to reduce to 2.59 persons per household by 2013.

Town	1996	2002	2006	2013	2014
Castlebar	8,532	11,371	11,891	15,568	16,028
% Change		33.3%	4.57%	30.92%	2.95%

In order to achieve the above population levels, the average population growth over the 2006 to the end of 2013 period will have to be 460 additional persons per annum. By projecting this average out for the life of this Development Plan to July 2014, the target population will increase to 16,028. Therefore, in order to achieve regional and national growth targets, the population growth between 2006 and 2014 will need to be 4,137. Based on the median household being at 2.7 persons per unit in 2013 a total of 1,532 housing units would be needed over the life of the plan³.

In accordance with the *Development Plans – Publication Consultation Draft of Guidelines for Planning Authorities – April 2006*, a Development Plan should provide sufficient residentially zoned land to cater for the projected growth for at the life of the Development Plan and for a further 3 years after that time⁴, which means that a minimum of an additional 2681 units have to be provided for up to 2014. This figure is based on the provision of 75% additional lands over and above the projected growth rate requirement.

3.5 Employment

As the County Town and administrative centre of Mayo Castlebar provides a wide variety of functions to a large catchment area. It is the location for the headquarters of the County and Town administration, financial/banking institutions, various industrial companies and professional practices, the Mayo General Hospital and a number of Government Departments as well as secondary and tertiary educational institutions.

The strongest employment sector in Castlebar is the Professional, Technical and Health sector (20.4%). A large percentage of the labour force is employed in Sales and Commerce (15.7%). A further 14.4% is employed in the Clerical, Management and Government sector. Services and Manufacturing remain strong, employing 13.3% and 10.7% respectively (Figure 3.3).

The most substantial growth since 2002 has been in the Building and Construction sector which has increased from 6.6% to 10%. The Services sector has also experienced an increased. The remaining occupation groups have declined or remain static.

² Draft Mayo Housing Strategy 2007

³ See Section 5.5 for more detailed analysis of the housing projections.

⁴ Section 4.14 of the *Development Plans – Publication Consultation Draft of Guidelines for Planning Authorities – April 2006*,

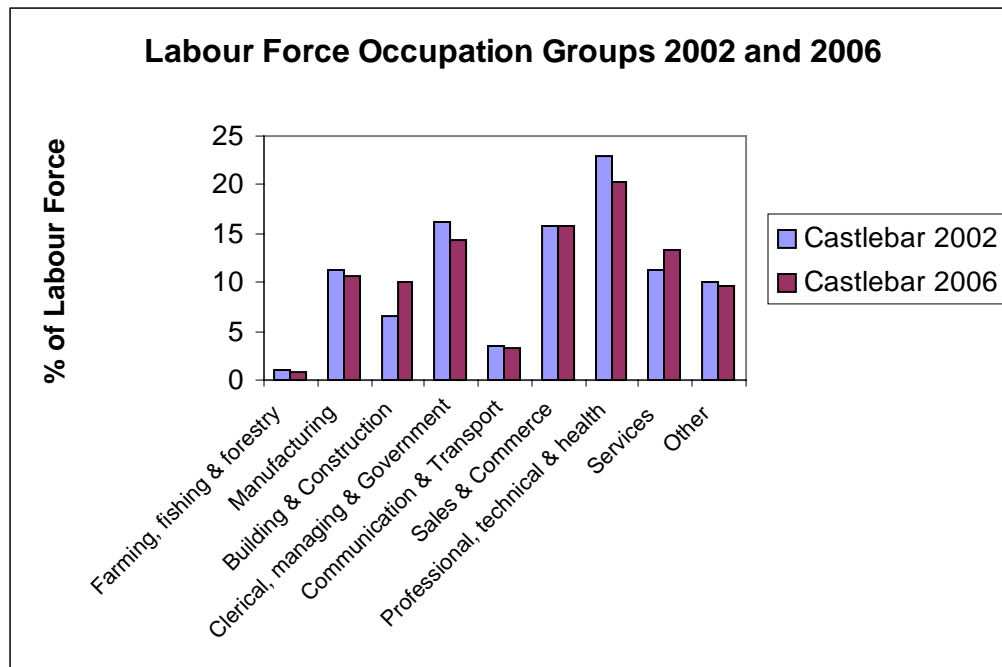


Figure 3.3: Occupation groups as percentage of Labour Force (Census 2002 and 2006).

3.6 Unemployment

An indication of unemployment levels in Castlebar and Environs can be gained from the CSO's monthly Live Register reports. The numbers of unemployed persons on the live register for the Castlebar office as recorded in December of each year and April 2008 is indicated in Figure 3.4. Numbers fell consistently from 1996 to 2000. This was followed by a 3-year period during which unemployment figures rose. From 2003 to 2006, figures fell each year to a ten year low of 737 in 2006.

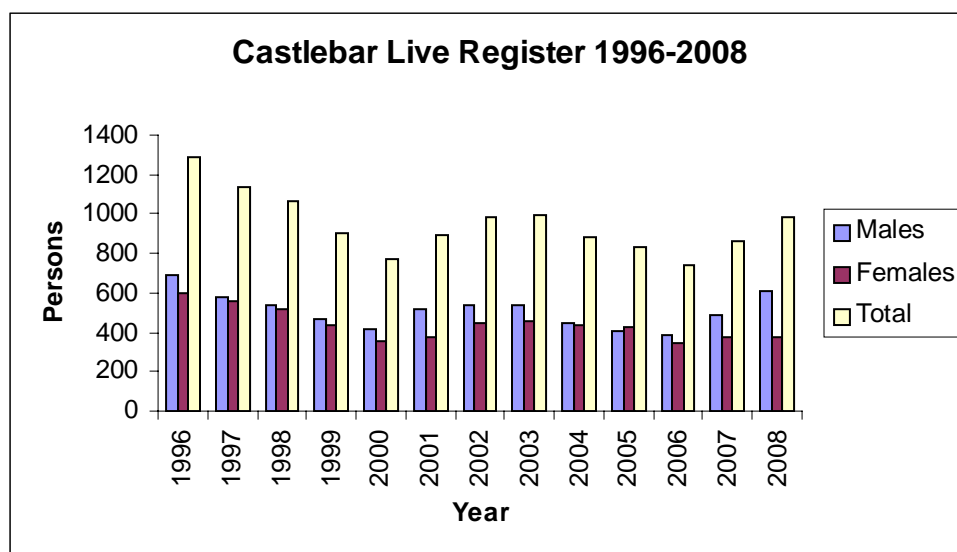


Figure 3.4: Live Register (C.S.O.)

Since 2006, numbers on the Live Register have once again increased to a five-year high of 981 in April 2008. The increase in numbers is particularly significant among males and is indicative of a slow down in construction.

3.7 Social Structure

The National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) 1997 is a ten-year Government plan to reduce poverty. The Government's second National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion was more recently launched in 2003. The key areas identified for action in these strategies include unemployment, income inadequacy, educational disadvantage, health, housing and disadvantaged rural and urban areas.

3.8 Socio-Economic Structure

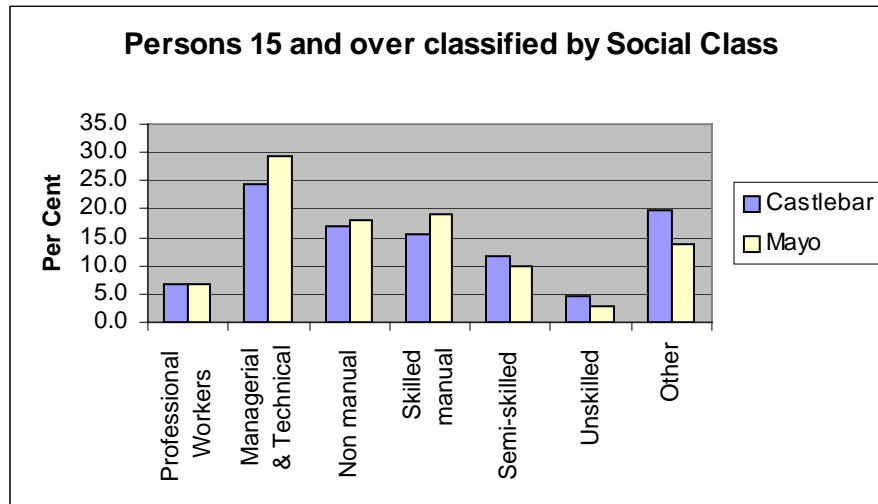


Figure 3.5: Population classified by Social Class (Census 2006)

3.9 Conclusion

The conclusions drawn from the above details form the basis for the aims, objectives and guiding strategies of the Development Plan, which in turn inform the policies and objectives of the plan. The key aims are:

- ❑ Plan for an increase in population and retention of existing population through the provision of employment with an improved 'quality of life', improved services and physical regeneration;
- ❑ Strengthen the strategic role of the town as the administrative and services centre of the county;
- ❑ Enhance the existing strong community spirit through social inclusion, particularly for disadvantaged and other groups at risk;
- ❑ Provide stimulus to retain and attract appropriate manufacturing, commercial, clerical and professional employment opportunities in the town;
- ❑ Protect and enhance the quality of the built and natural environments;
- ❑ Provide the necessary infrastructure and community services;
- ❑ Ensure adequate supply of zoned lands to meet anticipated needs;
- ❑ Ensure all future development adheres to the principals of proper planning and sustainable development.

4 DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

This Chapter of the Development Plan sets out the Council's strategic vision for the future development of Castlebar and its environs. The Policies and Objectives of the NSS, RPG's and the Mayo County Development Plan provide a Strategic context for the Castlebar and Environs Development Plan.

4.1 Vision

The vision for the future of Castlebar over the plan period is to ensure that the town develops in a manner that will provide a high quality environment, which is attractive to residents, workers, visitors and investors. In order to achieve this vision, the plan aims to consolidate Castlebar's position as one of the principal service centres in the region.

The plan will promote and facilitate the economic and social development role of Castlebar as the County town in partnership with the linked hub, Ballina, so as to provide a strong development focus based on its existing role as a regional centre of national importance. It will be necessary to ensure that the physical and social infrastructure supports and linkages are developed to enhance quality of life for the existing and future resident population.

The extension to the Castlebar and Environs Sewerage scheme has delivered a significant area of land for development purposes, subject to other parameters being satisfied. Likewise the proposed Castlebar Ring Road Project is one of the constraints to development. The drumlin topography, lands liable to flooding and lakes and other waterways all present issues to be considered in the overall development framework for the plan. The following paragraphs set out some of the main considerations taken into consideration in the preparation of the development strategy and the preparation of the land use zoning map.

4.2 Overall Development Strategy

The general approach and the key elements of the land use strategy is summarised as follows:-

- ❑ Facilitate the continued development of Castlebar as the county town and to promote its status as a joint Hub town with Ballina.
- ❑ Consolidate the existing Town Centre Development area as the principal shopping area in the town.
- ❑ Provide for a range of residential densities providing for residential infill on sites within the town center, for the existing residential/infill lands and the new residential medium and low-density areas.
- ❑ Provide for the consolidation of growth in the new residential areas by providing sufficient zoned lands to cater for the projected population growth of the town.
- ❑ To reserve land corridors, free from development, for the provision of the southern N5 bypass, the northern Regional Route bypass and the inner relief road over the medium to long term.
- ❑ Control of ribbon development along main approaches to Castlebar, within the areas zoned low density.
- ❑ To protect from insensitive development, lands identified for Low Density Residential development in the Castlebar Development Plan 2004 through promotion of appropriate structure planting and avoiding development, which breaks the skyline.
- ❑ Protect the visual character of the drumlin landscape, by controlling the siting and development of new buildings and through the promotion of appropriate structure planting.
- ❑ Improve the town's amenities, in particular the Castlebar River.
- ❑ Enhance residential areas throughout the town, by providing recreational facilities, pedestrian/cycling linkages.
- ❑ Provide for the development of neighbourhood centre facilities to cater for the new residential area south of the rail line at Saleen and on the Westport road.
- ❑ To support and encourage more sustainable forms of transport (public transport, walking and cycling) in order to reduce car usage and support the principles of sustainability.

5 HOUSING



Strategic Objective

It is the objective of the council to facilitate and provide for the housing requirements of the plan area to provide for a range of new residential accommodation appropriate to the changing needs of the population.

5.1 Introduction

The council has a statutory obligation to ensure that sufficient land is zoned for all types of housing to meet the towns projected housing requirements over the lifetime of the plan and to ensure that an undue shortage does not arise. In order to ensure a sustainable pattern of development, the expansion of Castlebar needs to address the various opportunities and constraints presented by: - the existing traditional settlement pattern, the natural environment, infrastructure and service provision, the projected population change for the settlement and its environs, recent house building performance, the role of the town within the local and regional contexts and its status as a joint Hub Town under the NSS. Due regard also needs to be paid to the Residential Density Guidelines for Planning Authorities (1999) or any other document which supercede these Guidelines.

It is expected that the demand for new dwellings will continue over this plan period as a result of population growth, net in-migration, housing renewal and changes in the average size of households. In the short to medium term, sufficient land has been zoned to cater for the projected population growth. The majority of land within the original Castlebar U.D.C. (Town Council) boundary has been developed. A large tract of the serviced land, located within the expanded Town Council boundary has also been developed.

In order to cater for the controlled growth in the Housing stock a series of objectives have been developed.

General Housing Objectives

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| HO1 | It is an objective of the council to meet the needs of the enlarging and diversifying population of Castlebar and its environs through the provision of a suitable range of residential types, sizes and styles and in particular to meet the requirements of smaller household size. |
| HO 2 | It is an objective of the council to provide for a range of new residential accommodation, including: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and Affordable housing under Part V of the Planning and Development Acts. • Accommodation for traveller families in accordance with the Traveller Accommodation Plan 2000-2004 (as updated) and to provide a Halting Site in the event that sufficient accommodation cannot be provided in houses. • Housing for the elderly and persons with special needs in central locations on a needs basis. • Private and public residential developments. |
| HO 3 | It is an objective of the council to ensure that housing policies and objectives are linked with employment, environmental and infrastructure policies and objectives with the aim of improving the quality of life and the attractiveness of Castlebar Town and environs. |
| HO 4 | It is an objective of the Council to encourage the use of upper floors of retail premises for residential accommodation. |

Housing Policy

In order to implement the objectives listed above a set of policies have been prepared. It is the policy of the council: -

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| HP1 | To zone additional residential lands only where justified in terms of the overall strategy to consolidate the development of the town. This relates to infill sites in reasonable proximity to the town centre, on lands surrounded by other established developments and on lands where piped services are already available. |
| HP 2 | To restrict ribbon development on the fringes of the town. |
| HP 3 | To ensure that the residentially zoned lands within the Plan Boundary be developed in a sequential manner and that no multiple housing developments should take place on unserviced lands or lands zoned for low density residential until such time as most of the land within the core area is developed. |
| HP 4 | To require the provision of childcare facilities in all new residential developments as required. |
| HP 5 | To require the provision of playground facilities in all new residential developments of more than 20 units. |
| HP 6 | To promote energy conservation and renewable energy technologies in new residential developments. |

5.2 Residential Density Guidelines

The Department of the Environment, (Heritage) and Local Government issued "Residential Density Guidelines for Planning Authorities in September 1999. The guidelines arose out of concern about increasing car dependence, under-utilisation of infrastructure and the demand for new houses. They provide for increased density in the development of residentially zoned lands. Planning authorities are required to take these policies on residential density into account in preparing development plans. Higher densities are, in particular encouraged in the town centre, on "Brownfield Sites" and close to corridors of public transport. Densities of between 20 to 30 dwellings per hectare (8 to 12 per acre) are to be encouraged in these areas. Densities of this nature are considered appropriate and will be in keeping with the existing densities in the town. Higher densities should apply in the town centre, based upon plot ratio.

These Guidelines will be superceded by the (Draft) *Planning Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas* (Feb 08) and the *Best Practice Urban Design Manual* (Feb 2008) once adopted by the DOEHLG.

Objectives

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| HO 5 | It is an objective to consolidate the development of the town of Castlebar by permitting higher density on the residentially zoned lands and other lands zoned for residential and a mix of other uses, which are closest to the town centre. |
| HO 6 | It is an objective of the Council to develop infill sites in existing residential areas of the towns as a means of providing additional housing and increasing density. |

It is the policy of the Council:-

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| HP 7 | To encourage higher density of residential development in accordance with the Residential Density Guidelines as published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (September 1999) and any subsequent document that supersedes these Guidelines. |
| HP 8 | To require a high standard of design and layout of all residential developments in view of requirements for the increase of density of residential development. |
| HP 9 | To facilitate the elderly and smaller family units by facilitating the development of 'Granny Flats', apartments and condominiums in higher density areas subject at all times to proper planning and sustainable development of the area. |

5.3 Housing Strategy

A draft Housing Strategy has been prepared by Mayo County Council in conjunction with the review of the County Development Plan and the preparation of the Mayo County Development Plan 2008-2014. Under the strategy, the planning authorities within the county, including Castlebar Town Council and Mayo County Council, will "as a general policy reserve the maximum permissible 20% of land zoned for residential, or for a mix of residential and other uses" for social and affordable housing.

There should be provision for a minimum of 150% headroom in terms of zoned lands, or more if there is evidence that zoned land is not being/cannot be brought forward for residential development. The Draft housing Strategy notes that there is sufficient land zoned for residential purposes in the town.

5.4 Social and Affordable Housing

The Council will promote and encourage the provision of housing accommodation in accordance with the proposals outlined in the document '*Social Housing – The Way Ahead*' (DoE 1995) and will seek an element of social housing in all new developments. This document describes the broad aim that every household has a dwelling suitable to its needs, located in an acceptable environment, at a price or rent it can afford. It embraces all sectors of the housing market: owner-occupier, public rented and voluntary housing. In addition, it recognises the importance of conserving and improving the existing housing stock in line with concepts of sustainable development.

The National Development Plan 2007-2013 identified a need to increase social housing output in order to meet rising demand. According to the Draft Housing Strategy 34.1% of households in County Mayo will require assistance in obtaining housing during the next 6 years. This increased output will be met in a number of ways through the following measures:

- ☐ Affordable Housing/Joint Venture/Shared Ownership Schemes
- ☐ Local Authority House Building Programme
- ☐ Sale of Developed Sites Scheme
- ☐ Voluntary Housing Sector and Rental Subsidy Sector
- ☐ Capital Assistance Scheme
- ☐ Disabled Grants Scheme
- ☐ Essential Repairs and other measures

- ❑ Homeless Forum Initiative
- ❑ Traveller accommodation

Part V Agreements

In formulating any agreement under Part V, the Council will have regard to the provisions of the Planning and Development Acts and Part V guidance issued, with respect to the manner in which planning applications comply with this requirement. The Council will also require that developers/applicants hold pre-application discussions prior to the formal planning process, in order to negotiate details of the operation of Part V in relation to specific development.

The applicant/developer will be required to submit details supporting the appropriateness of the design and layout proposed and details of the management of the proposed scheme.

Objectives

- HO 7** It is an objective to implement the Housing Strategy adopted jointly with Mayo County Council under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as updated in 2008 County Development Plan and to work in partnership with private developers and with the voluntary housing sector in delivering social and affordable housing.
- HO 8** It is an objective of the council to require that 20% of lands zoned for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses, be made available for the provision of social and affordable housing.
- HO 9** It is an objective not to direct local authority housing to areas where there is currently a high concentration of local authority housing.

It is the policy of the Council:-

- HP 10** To facilitate the implementation of the County Housing Strategy Review (2003-2009). To address the current imbalance between housing demand and housing supply, the following will be required by agreement under Part V of the Planning and Development Acts (2000-2002), or other suitable options as negotiated with the Council:
- 20% social¹ and affordable² housing will be required on all sites that are zoned for residential or a mixture of residential and other uses.
- 1 Housing for persons referred to in section 9(2) of the Housing Act 1988.
2 Housing on land made available in accordance with section 96(9) or (10), for eligible persons.
- HP 11** To acquire land in the interest of providing additional public sector housing and to assist local authorities providing community housing, shared housing and social housing.
- HP 12** To support and facilitate the role-played by the voluntary housing sector in meeting Social Housing needs.

5.5 Housing Projections

Table 18 of the Draft Mayo Housing Strategy 2007 sets out the proposed household increases in each settlement over the period of the housing strategy up to 2013. The scenario set out for Castlebar is as follows: -

Table 5.1 Housing Projections 2006-2013

Town	Projected Household Increase 2006 –2013	Household Completions allowing for 75% additional construction	Density (per Hectare)	Land required (hectares) allowing for 50% zoning overhead	Hectares required to be zoned and serviced	Land currently zoned and serviced	Surplus (shortfall)
Castlebar	1,550	2,713	20	108.52	162.8	356.0	193.2

Source: Draft Mayo Housing Strategy 2007

Based on the population projection provided for the draft County Development Plan and on the average household accommodating 2.59 persons per unit in 2013, a total of 1,296 housing units would be needed over the life of the plan to accommodate the projected population increase of 3,357.

The reason for the differential between the projected population increase and household number provided in Table 5.1 above is based on 2 required adjustments:

1. Additional provision of land must be made for the construction of second and holiday homes, unoccupied investment properties and dwellings to replace obsolete stock.⁵
2. Additional provision must be made in zoned lands in order to provide choice.

A density of 20 units per hectare (8 units per acre) has been established as the density for the medium density lands (orange on zoning map), while a density of 10 units per hectare (4 units per acre) is permitted in the Low Density Residential zone.

In accordance with the *Development Plans – Publication Consultation Draft of Guidelines for Planning Authorities – April 2006*, a Development Plan should provide sufficient residentially zoned land to cater for the projected growth for at least the next nine years⁶ (a minimum of an additional 50% of land should be provided for residential growth over and above the projected growth rate).

In this case a projected 75% increase in house building has been forecast, which requires that sufficient lands be zoned for a projected increase of 2,713 households at 20 units per ha. It is estimated that a total of 135.65ha of residentially zoned land may be required during the lifetime of this Development Plan.

The Plan has provided 157.4ha of medium density lands, which on their own are capable of providing for the projected population growth plus seventy five percent. The existing residential/infill lands extend to c240ha and are capable of accommodating limited additional growth, while 4,370 additional dwellings may be constructed on the low-density lands, which cover 504 ha. Opportunities for further residential development exist in the Town Centre as well as on some institutional lands, which may be re-developed during the life of the plan.

Undeveloped greenfield medium/low density lands alone have the capacity to provide for 7,058 additional units, which is approximately 5.4 times the Projected Household Increase for Castlebar over the 2006 –2013 period.

5.6 Supply of Housing Land

According to the Draft Housing Strategy a total of 356ha of lands was currently zoned and serviceable in Castlebar in the 2004 Development Plan. The Development Plan 2008-2014 has changed the manner in which lands are zoned and has divide the residential zoned lands into several categories including

- ☐ Existing/Residential Infill;
- ☐ New Medium Density Residential;
- ☐ New Residential Low Density;
- ☐ Residential/Commercial.

Residential development will also be permitted in the Town Centre.

The *Existing Residential/Infill* lands are mostly built up and cover an area of 240.39ha. The *New Residential* lands, on which the majority of the new residential units will be built, covers an area of

⁵ It is acknowledged that this principle may apply more in the county area than specifically in Castlebar but it is nonetheless a factor that has been considered in the projections.

⁶ Section 4.14 of the *Development Plans – Publication Consultation Draft of Guidelines for Planning Authorities – April 2006*,

157.4ha. The proposed density of new development is 20 units per hectare (8 units per acre). Consideration is also being made for the provision of services sites in this area.

Lands zoned for residential or residential and a mix of other uses in the Draft Development Plan.

Table 5.2

	Zoning	
A	Existing residential/Infill	240.39ha of lands zoned as existing residential infill are included in the Development Plan. These lands are primarily built up and include roads and open space areas in the overall figure. Some small pockets of lands within this area may become available for development or redevelopment. This principally applies to an area of land on the south of the Westport Road at Knockaphunta. This land may or may not become available for development during the life of the plan.
B	New Residential Medium Density	<p>The area zoned for new residential development extends to 157.4ha and is all located within the northern and southern road reserves for the Castlebar Ring Road Project. All the lands are serviceable by gravity to the proposed existing sewerage network or by the extended sewerage network. At a density of 20 units per hectare (8 units per acre) the lands are capable of accommodating 3,148 residential units.</p> <p>c23 ha of land have been subject to a recent grant of permission for residential development and therefore the future permission capacity of the remaining lands is for c2,688 residential units.</p> <p>The new residential zoning is contained in 4 separate areas of the town which are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ The first of two areas located in the north of the town is located between the west running R311 Newport Road and the Coarsepark Road. The area measures 28.1 ha. ❑ The second area measuring 30.2 ha. incorporates 8 separate areas of land dispersed between existing housing developments in the area between the R310 Pontoon Road and the northern side of the N5. ❑ 37ha. located in the southwest of the town to the north of the proposed inner relief road and Lough Lannagh. ❑ 60.72 ha located to the south of the town between the rail line to the north and the N84 Ballinrobe Road to the west. The LP704 Belcarra Road also dissects the lands providing significant road frontage and good access to the lands. Permission was already been granted for the development of c 23ha of these lands.
C	New Residential Low Density (Grid Pattern)	The low-density zoned area extends to 504ha (1,244 acres) (c67ha of which is already developed by one off houses/agricultural buildings. Approximately 437ha (1079 acres of lands are available for potential development. Approximately 403ha (995 acres) are serviceable by the extended gravity sewerage system that is under construction in the town, while a further 101ha (250 acres) will require pumping of sewerage in order to gain access to the gravity sewer. The existing developed lands are located predominantly (c95%) within the area of the extended sewer, with the result that c340ha of undeveloped Low Density Housing Lands are capable of being developed, while c 97ha of land can be developed, by connecting to the sewer by pumping. At the density of 10 units per hectare (4 units per acre) the undeveloped low-density zone is capable of accommodating 3,400 units by gravity sewer and 970 units by pumping, giving a total of 4,370 units.

E	Town Centre/ Commercial	Residential Development in the Town Centre will be based upon Plot Ratio rather than density. See Chapter 14 for further details.
F	Residential/ Commercial	No new areas are proposed to be zoned Residential/Commercial. The existing lands are already served by the public sewer. The lands are small and already developed, however, they may present redevelopment opportunities at key locations.
I	Community /Institutional	Several of the major areas of Community/Institutional land are under-utilised and may present opportunities for redevelopment including residential use. Any redevelopment of Community/Institutional lands will be subject to Action Area Plans.

The Development Plan has provided for 134.4 ha of undeveloped *New Residential Medium Density* lands, which is in excess of the required 108.5ha by 23.8%. These lands can accommodate the projected household numbers subject to household size, density and layout requirements. The *New Residential Low Density* lands, which have the capacity to accommodate 4370 units, have not been factored into the housing projections as the majority of these lands are outside of what was considered in the housing projections for the draft housing strategy.

5.7 Consideration of lands suitable for development

Only land that is considered likely to be available for development, during the plan period has been zoned medium residential in the Development Plan. Large areas of lands which are zoned as low-density housing or rural character are considered to have long term development potential but should not be intensely developed until such time as the majority of the *new residential medium density* lands have been developed.

5.8 Housing Design and Layout

Several of the areas zoned new residential contain large areas that can be master planned. Master-planning will provide a strategic development framework for roads, services, open spaces and layout in a coordinated manner. Other smaller sites are located in proximity to existing housing developments and the layout of the schemes will be required to respect the layout and form of the existing developments.

Design Guides such as the Best Practice Urban Design Manual (Feb 2008, Foras Forbartha "Streets for Living", the Essex Design Guide, Northern Ireland Planning Service 'Creating Places' Design Guide, Urban Design Compendium should be used as a useful guide to the good layout and housing developments. These guidelines incorporate guidance on layout and access. Proposals shall also have regard to the Waste Management Strategy including the spatial requirements of householders relating to waste separation, recycling etc.

New residential development will need to provide a high quality living environment for all residents, both in terms of the standard of individual units and the overall layout and appearance. The Council will assess such proposals in accordance with the Residential Density Guidelines (*Draft Planning Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (Feb 08)* once adopted) and the Development Standards set out in Chapter 14 of this Plan.

- | | |
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| HO 11 | It is an objective of the Council to encourage the high quality design and layout of residential development that reduces reliance on the motor car, supports movement by pedestrians and cyclists, provides adequate and convenient access to public transport and connects well with the wider locality. |
| HO 12 | It is an objective of the Council to encourage innovative housing design and layout solutions that address concerns of environmental sustainability with regard to matters such as energy efficiency and use of materials |

HO 13 It is an objective of the Council to promote social inclusion by supporting the provision of community facilities and in particular child care facilities in new and established residential areas.

HO 14 It is an objective of the Council to ensure that adequate green space and recreational areas are provided in all new housing developments.

It is the policy of the Council:

HP 8 To encourage the development of several residential neighbourhoods with associated services and amenities.

HP 9 To require a high standard of design and layout of all residential developments in view of requirements for the increase of density of residential development, it is also the policy of the planning authorities.

5.9 Serviced Sites in New Residential zone

In addition to seeking the provision of a greater range of house types and higher quality residential layouts, within the *new residential* zoned lands, residential serviced sites will be promoted by the Council as offering an alternative for individuals wishing to build and design their own houses in more sustainable locations rather than the open countryside.

Residential serviced sites will be of an adequate size to accommodate individually-designed houses within a high quality landscape setting. Density will be intentionally low, between 5-10 units/hectare according to location and the landscape features of the site. Plots will be of not less than 0.10 hectares (0.25 acres), except in exceptional circumstances. Larger plots will be required for houses exceeding 250sq.m. to allow sufficient space for private amenity, parking and landscaping.

Whilst individual house design will be encouraged, the overall layout and content of the serviced site scheme must be consistent in terms of scale, proportions and material finish. Traditional forms and materials appropriate to the setting should be used in a contemporary manner, requiring high quality innovative architectural design.

For sites in excess of 2 hectares, a Master Plan will be required from the developer showing the overall layout, infrastructure, services and landscaping for the whole of the serviced site, together with any desirable linkages to adjoining sites, at the planning application stage. The Master Plan will be accompanied by a Design Statement that sets out and illustrates the principles adopted for the scheme, including the proposed massing and scale of the built form, materials and typical details, pedestrian and vehicle circulation, and hard and soft landscaping components. All development would be constructed thereafter in accordance with the agreed Master Plan and Design Statement, unless otherwise agreed with the Planning Authority.

5.10 Traveller Accommodation

Mayo County Council has adopted a Traveller Accommodation Plan for the county for the period 2005-2008 under the Housing Traveller Accommodation Act 1998. The plan covers the County of Mayo as well as the Castlebar Town Council area. The Plan is reviewed annually and an updated version will also be included as part of the new Mayo County Development Plan 2008-2012.

As the period of the above Traveller Accommodation Plan is shorter than that of the Town Plan, it will be necessary to continually review it in the lifetime of the Town Plan and have regard to any new Traveller Accommodation Plan that may be prepared after 2008.

The Traveller Accommodation Programme, Policy Review, January 2007 showed that the Council's secured 87% (7 out of 8) of its target for housing travellers in 2006, in Castlebar.

Through the assistance of Mayo County Council staff, particularly the Traveller Accommodation Liaison Officers, and of the Mayo Traveller Support Group, the private rental market has recently

opened up to Members of the Traveller community, and thus makes the achievement of accommodation targets much more attainable.

It is a policy of the council:-

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|--------------|---|
| HP 10 | To facilitate the implementation of the Mayo Traveller Accommodation Plan within the plan boundary. |
| HP 11 | To provide for the accommodation needs of Travellers as far as is reasonable and feasible using the full range of housing options available to the Council. In the provision of accommodation, priority will be given to members of the Traveller community who were born in Mayo and who have lived in the county continuously, or who, having returned to the county have lived here for a period of one year or who having moved into the county have lived for a period of not less than three years. |

5.11 Low Density Housing

A substantial area of land 504ha (1244 acres) has been zoned as low-density housing. The following objectives apply to developments in the low-density zoned areas.

Objectives

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| RHO 3 | It is the objective of the Council to ensure that new housing in the low density zoned lands, respect the character, visual quality environment and amenity of the countryside and its vernacular traditions in order to safeguard the built and natural heritage of the area. |
| RHO 4 | It is an objective of the Council to ensure that as far as possible, new housing development in the lands zoned for low density housing lands is of the highest design standards. |
| RHO 5 | It is an objective of the Council to protect the visual character of the drumlin landscape, by controlling the siting and development of housing so that ridgelines do not break the skyline and no development will occur in the top third of the hillside. |

5.12 Rural Housing

Policies on rural housing must be responsive to the dispersed patterns of settlement in Ireland. According to the 2002 Census, around 40% of the Irish population overall lives in rural areas, including smaller towns and villages. In some counties particularly in parts of the midlands and in the west, a much higher proportion of households – up to 70% - live in the open countryside.

The 1997 policy document 'Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland' mapped out a strategic policy framework to deliver more sustainable development. In dealing with rural housing that Strategy referred to contrasts in development trends between rural de-population in some areas and strong pressure for development of housing in other rural areas close to cities and towns. The Sustainable Development Strategy indicated that there should be a presumption against urban-generated one-off housing in rural areas adjacent to towns.

It became clear by the time the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) was being prepared that these provisions were sometimes operated over-rigidly. The NSS accordingly set rural housing policy in a broader and more flexible context, superseding the 1997 Strategy. Expanding on the rural policy framework in the NSS these guidelines provide that:

People who are part of the rural community should be facilitated by the planning system in all rural areas, including those under strong urban-based pressures,
Anyone wishing to build a house in rural areas suffering persistent and substantial population decline will be accommodated,

The development of the rural environs of major urban areas, including the gateways and hubs identified in the NSS and county and other larger towns over 5000 in population needs to be carefully managed in order to assure their orderly development and successful functioning into the future.

The principles set out in these guidelines also require that new houses in rural areas be sited and designed to integrate well with their physical surroundings and be generally compatible with: -

- ❑ The protection of water quality in the arrangements made for on site wastewater disposal facilities;
- ❑ The provision of a safe means of access in relation to road and public safety;
- ❑ The conservation of sensitive areas such as natural habitats, the environs of protected structures and other aspects of heritage.

The Guidelines make it clear that statutory designation of certain rural areas [i.e. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and National Heritage Areas (NHAs)] is not intended in any way to operate as an inflexible obstacle as such to housing development. In considering development proposals, including the attachment of planning conditions, in such areas, planning authorities should only consider approving proposals they are satisfied will not adversely affect the integrity of the designated area.

Acknowledging the trends for development of holiday homes in some coastal, scenic and lakeside parts of the country, the guidelines emphasise the importance of clustering such tourism driven activity, as far as possible, in well designed and appropriately scaled developments in or adjoining small towns and villages. In this regard, it is vital that development trends in relation to holiday homes in rural areas be closely monitored and responded to in order to avoid negative impacts.

These guidelines set out in detail how the Government's policies on rural housing are to be implemented by planning authorities in making their development plans and in the operation of the development control system to ensure a vibrant future for all rural areas.

All planning authorities should take immediate steps to review their development plans with a view to incorporating any changes necessary to ensure that development plan policies are consistent with the policies set out in these guidelines.

5.12.1 Guidelines under the Planning and Development Act 2000

These guidelines constitute Ministerial guidelines under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000. Section 28 provides that planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála shall have regard to Ministerial guidelines in the performance of their functions.

5.12.2 Policy Context

Ireland has a long tradition of people living in rural areas. According to the 2002 census, around 40% of the total national population lived in rural areas, these being defined for the purposes of these guidelines as those areas outside of urban areas with a population of 1500 and over.

The 2002 census also shows widely varying trends in relation to the population levels in different types of rural areas. Rural areas close to cities and some larger towns, those close to nationally important transport corridors linked to such cities and larger towns and those in certain more scenic areas are experiencing population growth, with very substantial rates of growth in some cases. Other more remote and economically weaker areas are experiencing population decline.

New government policies on planning for housing in rural areas came into effect with the publication of the National Spatial Strategy in 2002.

The NSS recognised the long tradition of people living in rural parts of Ireland and promotes sustainable rural settlement as a key component of delivering more balanced regional development.

The NSS called for settlement policies in development plans and their implementation in the administration of planning to take into account both the differing demands for housing in rural areas and varying rural development contexts. Different policies are needed, for example, for areas with

declining populations as compared with areas in which there are overspill issues associated with proximity to large cities or towns.

The sustainable rural settlement policy framework in the NSS has four broad objectives: -

- ❑ To sustain and renew established rural communities and the existing stock of investment in a way that responds to the various spatial, structural and economic changes taking place, while protecting the important assets rural areas possess.
- ❑ To strengthen the established structure of villages and smaller settlements both to support local economies and to accommodate additional population in a way that supports the viability of public transport and local infrastructure and services such as schools and water services.
- ❑ To ensure that key assets in rural areas such as water quality and the natural and cultural heritage are protected to support quality of life and economic vitality.
- ❑ To ensure that rural settlement policies take account of and are appropriate to local circumstances.
- ❑ The NSS also acknowledges that demands for housing in rural areas arise in different circumstances and that, taking account of the policy framework above, it was normal in policy terms to distinguish between:
 - ❑ Housing needed in rural areas within the established rural community by persons working in rural areas or in nearby urban areas (rural generated housing), and
 - ❑ Housing in rural locations sought by persons living and working in urban areas, including second homes (urban generated housing).

The NSS emphasised that as a general principle, subject to satisfying good planning practice in matters of site location, positioning on sites, design and the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and areas of high landscape value, rural generated housing needs should be accommodated where they arise. With regard to urban generated housing in the open countryside, the NSS identified four broad categories of rural area types with differing development circumstances that required tailored settlement policies in the development plan process.

In rural areas under strong urban influences, the NSS stresses that development driven by cities and larger towns should generally take place within their built up areas or in areas identified for new development through the planning process.

In stronger rural areas, the NSS suggested that the extensive village and small town structure had much potential in accommodating additional housing development catering for persons working in larger cities and towns but desiring a rural lifestyle.

In structurally weaker rural areas, the NSS emphasised the importance of accommodating any demand for permanent residential development, while acknowledging the importance of supporting the urban structure of such areas as well.

In areas where there is a tradition of highly dispersed rural settlement, particularly parts of the south west, west and north west coast, the NSS emphasised the importance of locating new housing in a way which fits in with the traditional settlement patterns and strengthens existing patterns of housing.

Implementation of the rural settlement policy framework of the NSS must be followed through in the planning process at local level.

A key objective for the local planning system is to deliver sustainable rural settlement. The widely accepted definition of sustainable development is development that meets the needs of this generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

The concept captures the important ideas that development: -

- ❑ has economic, social and environmental dimensions which together can contribute to a better quality of life,
- ❑ must strike a balance between these three dimensions to be sustainable,
- ❑ should allow future generations to enjoy a quality of life at least as high as our own, and

- should respect our responsibilities to the wider international community.

In relation to rural housing, sustainable development is, therefore, much more than an environmental concept, although it includes that important element. It requires an acknowledgement of the role that people living in both small towns and villages and the wider countryside have to play in supporting a dynamic rural economy and social structure.

For example, rural areas experiencing substantial and persistent population decline risk losing the level of population necessary to sustain essential services such as schools, local shops and sporting clubs leading to difficulties in supporting a vibrant social structure. Reversing population decline by accommodating new development contributes to sustainability by helping to deliver strong social and economic benefits to rural areas. Such benefits can be maximised by locating new rural housing development as closely as is conveniently possible to essential local services and community facilities.

Implementing the rural settlement policy framework of the NSS in full, with its focus on economic, social and environmental issues and the inter-linkages between them, will be a step in making Ireland's development sustainable.

The 1997 policy document Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland established the first overall national level policy framework addressing sustainable development. The strategy mapped out a strategic policy framework to deliver more sustainable development. The strategy referred to contrasts in development trends between rural depopulation in some areas and strong pressure for development of housing in rural areas close to urban areas.

However, the rural housing policy framework set out in the NSS, as a more recent and comprehensive expression of Government policy on housing in rural areas, should now be regarded as superseding the more limited provisions in that regard set out in the Sustainable Development Strategy.

The publication of the Government's White Paper on Rural Development ¹⁷ in 1999 represented a comprehensive expression of Government policy on various facets of rural and regional development and this policy was taken into account in preparing the NSS. The White Paper stated at Section 11 that the Government's vision for the future of rural society is based on the maintenance of dispersed, vibrant rural communities.

A key objective of the White Paper was the maintenance of rural population, not just in terms of numbers, but also in terms of achieving a balanced spatial distribution of population. The White Paper recommended that planning policy should, as far as possible, facilitate people willing to settle in rural areas, especially those willing to settle in their own areas of origin, in order to achieve a balanced rural population.

The White Paper also recognised that, while the aspirations of the rural community must be respected, planning policy must be sensitive to the conservation of the rural environment including preservation of beauty spots and natural habitats. It also acknowledged that pressures for holiday homes may be causing affordability gaps for local people and recommended the targeting of investment in water services infrastructure in small towns and villages as a means of opening up development opportunities.

The National Spatial Strategy's approach to the rural housing issue took account of detailed research and analysis into the spatial structure of the different types of rural areas in Ireland. This analysis led to the conclusion that to achieve balanced regional development, it will be necessary to accommodate the scale and type of development that sustains population levels in rural communities, while also promoting development at locations ranging from the gateways to smaller rural towns and villages in the drive towards more balanced regional development.

¹⁷ Ensuring the Future – A Strategy for Rural Development in Ireland – a White Paper on Rural Development, Department of Agriculture Food and Rural Development 1999

Furthermore, the analysis in the NSS identified the need for settlement policies at development plan level to take account of local circumstances in differing types of rural areas ranging from those closest to the country's main cities and towns to those in more remote areas.

In formulating policies for rural housing that are sustainable, planning authorities, in accordance with these guidelines should: -

- ❑ Take account of the processes that are triggering changes in settlement patterns in rural areas, particularly those factors that are giving rise to demand for housing in rural areas.
- ❑ Take account of other related dimensions in relation to rural settlement such as environmental and heritage protection and the need to maintain the integrity of economic resources.
- ❑ Act as a facilitator in bringing together, within existing local structures, the main interests concerned with rural settlement such as the elected members, farming and community organisations, organisations representing rural dwellers, county development boards, environmental organisations and any other relevant organisations such as the providers of rural public transport.
- ❑ Develop within the broad interests outlined at (3) above, an awareness of the facts on the ground in relation to population and economic trends in rural areas as well as environmental indicators, that will inform the policy options for the planning authority's development plan.
- ❑ Work with interests such as those at (3) above to create a shared view of how the issue of rural settlement should be addressed through the development plan in the particular authority concerned.
- ❑ It is vitally important that planning authorities work to bring the elected members, officials, the wider public and interest groups together in building ownership over the development plan and its implementation."

6 EMPLOYMENT GENERATION & ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT



Strategic Objective

To facilitate the expansion of existing industries, promote sustainable economic growth and employment opportunities.

6.1 Introduction

This Chapter addresses the economic profile and performance of Castlebar. It is important that the policies and objectives in the Plan support the growth of the local economy in order for the town to fulfil its regional role and continue to meet the needs of its inhabitants in the future. The National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines provide for the growth of Castlebar as a self-sufficient settlement that provides for its inhabitants and the population of the surrounding hinterland.

In general terms, planning policy can promote the growth of an increasingly self-sufficient local economy in a number of ways. The adequate supply of land for residential development facilitates the growth of the local labour force. The provision of appropriate infrastructure and the supply of suitable land in convenient locations attract enterprise to the town.

The role of the Council is largely as the facilitator of economic development, in conjunction with the private sector. The Council will not normally be directly involved in the implementation of the various economic development initiatives but will work in partnership with the various agencies in forwarding the economic objectives for the plan area.

Employment Generation and Enterprise Development

The Development Plan can act as facilitator identifying suitable land for business and helping to ensure that Castlebar remains an attractive place in which to locate business.

6.2 National and Regional Context

It is a priority of the National Development Plan 2007-2013 to promote sustainable growth and employment. The National Development Plan identifies key determinants of sustained economic performance, both nationally and regionally, and these include: -

- ☐ Ease of access to foreign and domestic markets;
- ☐ A modern telecommunications network;
- ☐ Back-up research and technology infrastructure which is accessible to enterprises in all sectors;
- ☐ A well developed educational system;
- ☐ A highly qualified and skilled workforce;
- ☐ High quality physical infrastructure, including inter-urban transport and energy transmission systems;
- ☐ An adequate supply of housing;
- ☐ A good overall quality of life and;
- ☐ A high quality and sustainable environment.

The areas that are best endowed with these characteristics are generally the larger urban centres, which have a strategic location relative to their surrounding territory. These areas possess good social and economic infrastructure and support services, and have the potential to open up their zones of influence to further development.

6.3 Employment Context

6.3.1 Occupations

In 2006, the highest percentage of the labour force for Castlebar was within the Professional, Technical and Health sector (20.4%). This reflects Castlebar's role as a professional services centre and regional health centre. The second largest occupational sector was Sales and Commerce (15.7%), reflecting Castlebar's role as the commercial hub of the County. The lowest percentage was in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector (0.9%).

The figure of 660 or 10.7% for Manufacturing was lower than the equivalent percentage in Co. Mayo (13.4%) and the national figure (11.6%)

Table 6.1: An analysis of Labour Force in Principle Occupation Groups (Census 2006)

	Numbers in Occupation Groups Castlebar	Percentages in Occupation Groups Castlebar	Percentages in Occupation Groups Co. Mayo	Percentages in Occupation Groups Nationally
Farming, fishing & forestry	56	0.9	8.8	4.2
Manufacturing	660	10.7	13.4	11.6
Building & Construction	617	10.0	12.0	8.7
Clerical, managing & government	883	14.4	12.9	17.3
Communication & transport	204	3.4	4.5	5.5
Sales & Commerce	966	15.7	11.8	13.5
Professional,	1,252	20.4	14.8	16.2

Employment Generation and Enterprise Development

technical & health				
Services	814	13.3	11.6	10.7
Other	598	9.7	8.9	11.0

In terms of classification, the highest category of employment in Castlebar was the non-skilled manual sector (21.4% of the labour force) and the next largest category was within the lower professional sector (13.4% of the labour force).

Table 6.2: Persons aged 15 yrs and over in Castlebar classified by socio-economic group

Town	Employer/ Manager	Higher prof	Lower prof	Non- Skilled manual	Manual Skilled	Semi- skilled	Un- skilled	Own Account workers	Farmer s	Agri workers	Others
Castlebar	1127	638	1,281	2,043	676	668	420	306	111	24	2017
% of labour force	11.8	6.7	13.4	21.4	9.5	8.6	4.3	3.2	0.9	0.3	19.9

6.3.2 Economic Status

The issue of long-term unemployment remains a concern in certain parts of Castlebar, with a close correlation between low educational achievement and high unemployment.

Table 6.3: Persons aged 15+ by economic status (Census 2006)

	Castlebar % persons 15+	Co. Mayo % Persons 15+	National % Persons 15+
Employed	58.5 (5,586)	48.6	53.1
Looking for first regular job	1.0 (92)	0.8	0.7
Unemployed	4.9 (467)	5.0	4.5
Student	11.1 (1,061)	10.8	11.4
Looking after home / family	8.9 (845)	15.3	14.2
Retired	11.5 (1,096)	13.0	10.8
Unable to work	4.0 (383)	5.4	4.2
Other	0.2 (23)	1.2	1.2
Total	9,552	100	100

In 2006, the total employed workforce in the town was equivalent to 58.5% of the persons ages 15 and over in Castlebar. This compares favourably with 53.11% in Co. Mayo and 57.18% nationally.

Castlebar has a labour force participation rate⁸ of 64.4%, which is higher than the county and national averages of 58.44% and 52.77%.

⁸ Labour force participation rate is the total labour force (those at work, unemployed and first time job seekers) as a percentage of the population ages 15+ years and over. *A low labour force participation rate is an indicator of deprivation.*

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6.4 Educational Attainment

A key requirement for a successful local economy is the availability of an educated workforce. Table 6.4 compares educational attainment in Castlebar to Co. Mayo and the state.

Table 6.4: Educational attainment for persons 15 years and over (Census 2006)

	Castlebar % of population	Co. Mayo % of population	National % of population
Primary education/ No formal education	10.5 (1,004)	20.8	15.2
Lower Secondary education	14.6 (1,394)	18.0	17.0
Upper secondary education	25.4 (2,427)	25.2	23.8
Third level non-degree	10.6 (1,013)	8.1	8.9
Third level degree or higher	16.8 (1,608)	11.1	15.6

One of Castlebar's strengths is its relatively high participation rates in second and third level education. The number of persons with a degree or higher in 2006 was 1,608 or 16.8 % of those whose full time education had ceased. This is significantly higher than the figure for Co. Mayo (11.1%) and the national figure of 15.6%. Educational attainment at upper secondary level and third level (non-degree) was also higher in Castlebar than both the county and state.

The number of persons with primary education or no formal education was 1,004 or 10.5% of those whose full time education had ceased. This compares to 20.8% in Co. Mayo and 15.2% nationally.

These trends highlight the success of the Galway Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) Castlebar Campus in providing facilities and opportunities for the people of Castlebar. GMIT provides Castlebar with a local source of academic and technical/research expertise. Castlebar has access to a further student (full-time and part-time) population of c. 26,000 from Institute of Technology Sligo in Sligo, and GMIT and National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG) in Galway City.

Working with the County Enterprise and Development Boards, the IDA, Enterprise Ireland and the Chamber of Commerce will enable a greater understanding of the potential for the area as well as the weaknesses. Research needs to be undertaken to gain a greater understanding of likely skills needed in the future and current skills shortages.

It is the policy of the council:-

EP 1 To work with and encourage the development of the Galway Mayo Institute of Technology and assist in the development of linkages with the Institute between existing and new employers in Castlebar.

6.5 Employment Activity in Castlebar

The economic profile of Castlebar has been changing from one where a significant amount of employment was provided by manufacturing to one where the majority of employees belong to the professional services and business sectors (see Chapter 3 Socio-Economic Context). This is broadly in line with national economic trends.

Manufacturing in the town is mainly concentrated to the east of the town centre around Drumconlan. This area is characterised by a mix of old and modern industrial units. The manufacturing sector is dominated by a small number of multi-national corporations, such as Baxter Healthcare, Volex, APC, Fort Wayne Metals and Johnson Industries. These industries are major sources of employment and

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have greatly benefited the town. However, the closure of such plants in an increasingly competitive global economy leaves the manufacturing sector vulnerable.

The expansion of office and enterprise uses in the town is evidence of the growth of Professional Services, Public Administration and various other office and small unit based enterprises.

The role of Castlebar as a focal point for a wide hinterland has resulted in the development of a range of retail, financial, entertainment and general services. Main Street hosts services such as: small higher order retail; newsagents, travel agents, hairdressers; estate agents; as well as office uses such as solicitors and accountants. The periphery of the town contains retail warehouse uses.

The growth of Castlebar as a linked hub in accordance with the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) requires that the economic profile of the town as a service and employment centre be enhanced. In order for the town to achieve the level of self-sufficiency envisaged in the NSS and the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG), there will need to be an expansion of employment facilities, both in the town and environs.

Objectives

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| EO 1 | It is an objective of the council to promote Castlebar as a major employment and services centre in the County Mayo. |
| EO 2 | It is an objective of the council to promote the enhancement of the telecommunications infrastructure. |
| EO 3 | It is an objective of the council to work in conjunction with the County Enterprise Board, the I.D.A. and other appropriate agencies in order to encourage the development of a highly skilled workforce within the town |

It is the policy of the council:-

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| EP 2 | To provide an adequate supply of appropriately zoned lands for Enterprise and Employment uses. |
| EP 3 | To facilitate the continued expansion of industrial activity in the town. |

6.6 Enterprise and Employment Land Use

Enterprise and employment uses are currently concentrated to the east of the town. The 2004 Development Plan contained approximately 25 ha of industrial zoned land in this area. A significant amount of the existing industrial and commercial development is located in the Mayo County Council administrative area. As a result, sites such as Baxter, APC and the new Castlebar Retail Park are now zoned for the first time. The plan has extended zoning to the east and north. This extended land block of 85.9 hectares (approx.) is zoned 'Enterprise and Employment' to reflect the areas mixed use commercial and industrial character. Although much of this land block is developed, there is still scope for consolidation and redevelopment. In particular, lands adjacent to the quarry have considerable development potential and are strategically placed to benefit from the proposed Ring Road development. In total the area is 127ha in extent.

While there is a considerable amount of land zoned for employment purposes, there is still potential to zone land to accommodate local needs as well as for inward investment. Providing a choice of locations for employment will help to stimulate investment in other locations within the plan area allowing for more sustainable development. The plan has therefore sought to identify new lands suitable for the development of business parks and industrial estates. As a result, a significant area to the south of the town which was identified as having industrial zoning in the 2004 Development Plan has been zoned for *Enterprise and Employment* and has been extended to the west and south. This land block constitutes a further 125 hectares (approx.) of 'Enterprise and Employment' lands. The land is accessed by the N84 and is strategically located adjacent to the proposed Southern Ring Road.

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These areas provide for additional employment land supply to allow choice in the market and the opportunity for existing business to relocate to locations beyond those available in Castlebar at the current time. The Development Plan has sought to increase flexibility and encourage more opportunities for employment. A significant area of land has been zoned to provide opportunities for the growth and enhancement of Castlebar as a regional employment centre, over the plan period and beyond.

It is a policy of the council that: -

EP 4 Employment generated proposals will normally be expected to locate within lands zoned for Enterprise and Employment, as identified on the land use zoning map.

In order to encourage the sustainable use of land and influence travel patterns, the plan policy seeks to provide the majority of new land in proximity to the Castlebar urban area and to major transport nodal points. This policy seeks to protect other areas such as the fringe areas and countryside from inappropriate employment generating development proposals.

Objectives

EO 4 It is an objective of the council to reserve lands in key strategic locations that are suitable for a range of employment and economic activities. These lands will be protected from inappropriate development that would undermine their future economic development potential.

EO 5 It is an objective of the council to ensure that Castlebar will attract economic activity through the provision of suitable, well managed employment zones and in industrial estates.

EO 6 It is an objective of the council to require all developments to provide for sustainable forms of transport, namely walking cycling, and public transport.

EO 7 It is an objective of the council to encourage the provision of office space in Castlebar in order to facilitate its development as a centre for administrative, professional and commercial functions.

6.7 Economic Development

While there are clear limitations to the influence that the Council can have on employment creation, the Council will wherever possible use its influence to promote and facilitate employment creation in Castlebar, in land-use terms and through working with the key organisations to identify needs and requirements.

Retaining existing jobs and creating new employment opportunities are key priorities for the Council. A healthy economy contributes to the quality of life for those who live and work in the town and its environs. The Council is therefore particularly concerned that there is a range and quality of employment opportunities to meet the needs and aspirations of the local population.

The Council will work with other local organisations in this regard, such as the County Enterprise Board, Castlebar Chamber of Commerce, IDA and Enterprise Ireland. In this regard, proposals put to the Council for employment generating uses will be treated in a positive manner, unless there are clear reasons in the interests of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area to adopt a contrary view.

It is the policy of the council: -

EP 5 To facilitate enterprise and employment by continuing to co-operate with employment creation agencies such as Enterprise Ireland, the County Enterprise Board, the IDA and other local agencies such as the County Development Board, County Enterprise Board and the Chamber

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of Commerce, as well as the private sector, and will assist the work of these agencies in seeking to provide employment opportunities.

Less attractive consequences of an active economy, including traffic congestion, pollution, incompatible neighbourhood development, loss of open space, noise and disturbance, are also addressed by the Plan. The Council will seek to balance the need for economic development against the overall improvement in quality of life throughout the plan area.

It is the policy of the Council: -

- EP 6**
- a) To facilitate the provision of adequate land for employment uses, including sites at suitable locations for industrial, enterprise, retail and other small business uses having regard to spatial planning, infrastructure, environmental and transportation requirements and compatibility with adjoining land uses;
 - b) To support and protect the existing economic base and seek to diversify the economy through both inward investments at key growth areas within the town and the environs;
 - c) To secure the town's role as the regional location for economic growth in Co. Mayo;
 - d) To enhance the visitor potential, facilities and services, and economy of the town centre over an extended daytime/evening period; and
 - e) To promote the development of tourism in the town and its environs in a manner that is compatible with the conservation and enhancement of its environment.

This Policy is intended to reinforce the economic potential of Castlebar by recognising its regional significance and concentrating employment opportunities in the town and its immediate environs.

6.8 Future Employment, Enterprise & Economic Strategy

The Council will support economic development, which will be determined in the first instance by market forces, and secondly by agencies with a remit for specific intervention in this area. The Planning authorities can assist the development of all economic sectors by the implementation of policies relating to: -

1. Supporting the provision of an efficient transportation system;
2. The zoning of sufficient and appropriately located lands for industrial and commercial development;
3. Supporting the provision of sanitary services and other urban infrastructure;
4. Supporting the provision, in conjunction with other agencies, of enterprise centre provision and training infrastructure related to small and medium sized enterprises;
5. The zoning of adequate residentially zoned lands and the creation of an attractive urban domain to facilitate residency of the projected labour force;
6. Developing the public realm and amenities of Castlebar so that the quality of life of employees and residents can be improved;
7. Working in partnership with other agencies and the private sector in order to promote economic development within the town.

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6.9 Retail Park Provision

There has been significant development of retail warehousing in Castlebar in recent years. Castlebar Retail Park is located on Breaffy Road at the site of the old airport. The park is anchored by Woodies DIY and also accommodates Castlebar Furniture, Funster Play Centre and Ellendae Furniture.



6.10 Showrooms

The site of the old Volex plant on Breaffy Road has also been redeveloped and now accommodates a number of businesses including EZ Living, Casey Ford dealership and the Renault dealership. Monaghan & Sons Skoda dealership is also located on Breaffy Road.



6.11 Small Scale Light Industry

Light industry in this Plan refers to activities that involve the processing of goods or raw materials on a small scale. These would include, for example, car mechanics, craft workshops such as joiners, furniture repairs and glass cutters, etc. Taken together, such activities are an important source of employment in the town and provide a range of often specialised services to its inhabitants. The Council recognises the contribution to the local economy by Small Scale Light Industrial uses.

EO 8 It is an objective of the council to facilitate their development (Small Scale Light Industry) where such activities do not interfere with residential amenities.

6.12 Tourism

Tourism is recognised as a growing and highly important sector within the national economy, and domestic tourism is becoming increasingly important due to greater disposable income levels. The trend is reflected by the increased number of visitors to Castlebar during recent years, also due in part to the improvement in the appearance of the town and the enhanced quality and quantity of tourist accommodation. The recently reopened Days Hotel is a welcome boost to the hotel industry in the town.

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EP 7 The Council will promote and support tourist development and will seek to provide effective access to recreation and leisure opportunities within the natural environment and to maximise the local economic development opportunities while safeguarding the natural and build heritage.

The Council recognises that there is a major opportunity to further develop the tourist profile through the promotion of Castlebar as an attractive market town rich in heritage, for its strategic location in Co. Mayo, for its wealth of historic buildings, and as an attractive center for visiting the wider Western Region. The continued success of festivals such as the blues festival and walking festival can be further developed. The Castlebar River, as an important salmon and trout river, can also be more actively promoted as an angling attraction.

Measures to actively encourage the development of tourist related uses in the town will be pursued by the Council, including increased and improved bed spaces and accommodation, leisure, amenity and conference facilities, and as a visitor base/gateway to the natural, built and cultural environment of the wider area, providing access to the combination of hill walking, fishing, cycle ways, places of interest and local villages.

7 TRANSPORTATION



Strategic Objective

To develop a safer, efficient and environmentally friendly integrated transport system, linked to land use objectives with improvements to the existing road network and facilitation of planned roads, with a view to a reduction in the need for travel, tackling traffic congestion and promoting public transport while enhancing pedestrian, cyclist and vehicular safety.

7.1 Introduction

Access to various kinds of transport is by far the most important and wide range issue affecting the short, medium and long-term physical development of Castlebar and its environs. The accessibility of homes and jobs, of services and public facilities, and of opportunities for recreation and leisure, are key factors affecting the quality of life of every individual. Close integration of transportation and land use is vital in order to ensure the provision of the most effective links, the minimisation of the demand for travel and the most efficient use of resources. The Council will continue to provide those elements of the transportation system, which are within its remit and to facilitate the development of those elements provided by others.

At the macro level, the realization of the Castlebar Ring Road Project and the development of the new N5 southern bypass are critical in the development of the lands to the south of the town, while the proposed regional route to the north would also assist in the realisation of the development potential of the lands to the north. Without the development of these two roads and the proposed inner relief road, through Ballynaboll and Knocknaphunla, large areas of land, which may have development potential, will not be accessible or developable. These roads will have a profound effect on the future development of the town and were a key factor in the zoning of lands in the Castlebar and Environs Development Plan 2008-2014.

At the micro level, traffic movement in the town centre has been examined in the context of the Castlebar Transport Study 2002. Several town centre car parks have been identified as key redevelopment opportunities. The key to the development of these car parks lie in the

development an alternative parking solution, as the need to cater for private car parking in the town centre will continue in the short term. Without the resolution of this issue, pressures will be exerted on the council to provide for out of town shopping facilities.

Within the six-year lifetime of this development plan, which is only a small step in the overall development of the town, it is critical that lands, which are currently accessible are developed and that road improvements or the construction of new roads is not compromised by piecemeal or premature development on the edge of the town.

7.2 Roads

Castlebar is located on the N5 National Primary Route, which links Westport in the west, to Dublin via Longford and the N4-N5-N6, while the N84 connects the town to Galway City. The N60 links Castlebar with Roscommon via Claremorris. A series of radial regional routes, connect the town with northern parts of the county while the numerous minor roads interconnect to all of the larger roads and provide the town with a reasonable level of routing options for motorists. Due to the continued growth of Castlebar and its status as a hub town, major investment in roads infrastructure and public transport is required to avoid traffic congestion into the future.

Traffic levels have grown significantly and increased economic activity over the last 4-5 years as a result of the growth in population levels in the suburbs.

The town centre and the approaches to Castlebar continue to suffer from heavy traffic congestion, relating to the key through routes such as the N5, N60 and N84.

For the continued prosperity of the town it is essential that this network is maintained and consolidated in response to development demands and growth patterns.

Roads Objectives

TO 1 It is an objective of the council to maintain and improve as required the existing road network to ensure a high standard of road quality and safety.

It is a policy of the Council:-

TP 1 To resist inappropriate development on existing and/or proposed National and Regional roads that may adversely impact on traffic safety and carrying capacity. Support will be given to improvements in road infrastructure by reserving land in suitable locations, and/or protecting planned strategic route corridors by keeping them free from development that would otherwise undermine their future implementation.

7.3 Castlebar Ring Road Project

The Castlebar Ring Road Project's Preferred Route is 12.5km long and this orbital route will link/cross 4 national roads, 2 proposed national roads, 3 regional roads and 9 local roads of varying importance and where these roads intersect a roundabout/overpass or underpass will probably be the choice of junction arrangement. The current Preferred Route crosses Lough Lannagh and the Castlebar River and will also cross the Westport-Dublin railway line twice and these crossings will be facilitated by means of bridges.

Under the present preferred arrangements the Castlebar Ring Road Project will be developed as two distinct entities, part as a National Road and part as a Regional Road. The south-eastern section, from it's intersection with the N5 Westport-Castlebar Preferred Route in the townland of Ballymacraha to it's intersection with the N5 Castlebar-Swinford Road in the townland of Aghalusky via the N60 Castlebar-Claremorris Preferred Route will be developed as part of the National Road Network. The north-western section, will be developed as part of the Regional Road Network. The inner relief road will remove traffic from the existing roads and will serve as access to the lands both north and south of it.

A peer review of the preferred route alignment for the N5 Southern bypass is currently being carried out by the NRA. The final preferred route may change from the current preferred route, however, the Planning Authority will continue to protect the route in the Development Plan.

7.3.1 Northern Regional Route⁹

The proposed northern regional ring road is to be constructed as part of the Castlebar Ring Road Project. The road commences to the immediate edge of the extended town boundary on the Westport side of the town and will rejoin the N5 from a new roundabout just north of the Roadstone Quarry. As well as a roundabout at each end it is proposed to build a further 6 roundabouts to connect with all of the existing radial routes out of the town. The provision of this route will remove a significant amount of traffic from the town centre and serves as a multiple bypass as well as a local connector route.

TO 2 It is an objective of the council to reserve land corridors, free from development, for the provision of the southern National Route bypass, the Northern Regional route bypass and the inner relief road over the medium to long term.

TP 2 It is a policy of the council to restrict the development of buildings within 75m of the proposed N5 Southern National Route bypass and the proposed N60, and restrict the development of buildings within 30m of the proposed Northern Regional route bypass and the Inner Relief Road.

Careful consideration will be given to planning applications by the Council within 50 m of the road buffers along the routes of the proposed roads.



Aerial Photo View of the western end of the proposed route alignment from the NRA

⁹ **Description of Northern Regional Route** From the new roundabout on the Westport road it advances northwards through the townland of Ballynaboll north before it crosses Lough Lannagh and intersects with the Newport Road (R311) while passing through Lagnavaddoge and Snugborough townlands. It continues northwards and runs adjacent to the western shore of Black Lough before it intersects the LP725 Snugboro Road in the townland of Carrowbrinoge. At this location it orientates in a north-easterly direction, passes through the townlands of Carrowbrinoge and Coarsepark, runs north and parallel with the Coarsepark River before it intersects the LP724 Old Glenisland Road where it enters the townland of Rathbaun. From here the Preferred Route continues in a north-easterly direction, passes north of Rathbaun Lough and through the townlands of Rathbaun and Newantrim before it intersects the LP721 Burren Road. As the Preferred Route advances through the townland of Newantrim it passes along the northern fringe of Newantrim Lough and orientates slightly to the east before it enters the townland of Ballynacarriga where it intersects the R310 Pontoon Road. From here the Preferred Route continues in a north-easterly direction, passes south of Tuckers Lough and through the townlands of Carrowcurry and Corradrish before it intersects the LP719 Turlough Road on the boundary of the townlands of Corradrish, Knockthomas and Annalecka. It then advances towards the N5 Swinford Road where it passes through the townlands of Knockthomas and Annalecka, crosses the Castlebar River and enters the townland of Aghalusky before it intersects the N5 Swinford Road.

7.3.2 Southern Ring Road

The proposed southern ring road (New N5) is to be constructed as part of the Castlebar Ring Road Project. This project was listed on the NRA website as being at route selection stage in May 2008. The proposed road commences just north of the Roadstone Quarry on the north east of the town will rejoin the N5 from a new roundabout at Ballymacraha townland. The route will require 2 no rail crossings. The provision of this route will remove a significant amount of through traffic, as it will replace the town section of the existing N5, while it may also link to the Galway and Claremorris roads.

7.3.3 Inner Relief Road

The proposed inner relief road commences at the proposed first roundabout on the N5 at Ballymacraha and runs westwards in a straight line through Ballynaboll South and Knockaphunta before turning north eastwards where it terminates on the old N5 adjacent to the halting site. The road is likely to become a distributor road in the future providing access to the large areas of developable lands north and south of the road.

7.4 Town Centre Traffic

The management and appropriate use of the capacity of road space within the town is of major importance in the development of a sustainable transport strategy. With both traffic and pedestrian demands increasing, the need for more efficient use of road space and the role of traffic management becomes particularly significant.

The capacity of the existing routes must be managed to accommodate the needs of the various traffic modes in order to achieve a balanced transport system.

TO 3 It is an objective of the Council to implement as appropriate the recommendations of the 2002 Castlebar Transportation Study, including the introduction of traffic calming measures within the Central Area where required to discourage car circulation, improvements to the pedestrian environment, and supporting the development of public transport services, pedestrian networks and cycle facilities.

It is a policy of the council to: -

TP 3 Require all applicants for planning permission in the town center to prepare a Mobility Management Plan and incorporate elements of sustainable transport into their proposals.

TP 4 To implement traffic calming measures in appropriate areas of the town centre.

7.5 Car Parking

The provision of car parking in Castlebar is as a whole perceived to be adequate for now. In the future, additional and improved parking facilities (including a multi-storey car park) will be required. There are a number of large and small well-utilised car parks lying to the rear of and adjacent to the main shopping streets. The town also has limited on-street parking.

The standard of car parking provision is generally good with adequate hard surfacing landscaping (where applicable) and signage. The car park facilities in the town centre are all fee paying and / or time restricted (generally up to two hours limit), including the large surface car parks at Tesco/Dunnes and Aldi/Shaws.

Off street car parking provides a degree of penetration and pedestrian links to the traditional shopping core at Main Street and the associated side streets, such as Linenhall and Shambles Street.

The free flow of traffic in the town centre is often hindered by illegally parked cars and delivery vehicles. The lack of supply of on street town centre parking can lead to a build up of traffic circulating the centre seeking a free space rather than parking in one of the towns car parks, while the ineffective use of junctions and traffic lights lead to congestion. In the long term it is likely that these car parks will be developed as they are prime development sites. This will add significant short-term pressure to the towns parking capacity.

- TP 5** It is the policy of the council to provide: -
- a) Public car parks in its own role and/or in partnership with third parties,
 - b) In its control of on-street parking and off-street parking to provide for short term shopping and business parking requirements and for the needs of local residents, rather than long-term commuter parking.
 - c) To investigate the possibility of providing park and ride facilities within the plan area, as a means of reducing traffic in the town centre area.

7.6 Public Transportation

Due to the dispersed nature of the general population in rural Ireland and the low level of population in the town of Castlebar it is very difficult to operate an efficient short route public transport system. However, as the town continues to grow towards a doubling of its current population in 13 years there may be scope for the development of a town bus service. The council will however promote the use of the existing public transport network and strive to improve the facilities in the town.

It is the policy of the council: -

- TP 6** To supported and encouraged more sustainable forms of transport (public transport, walking and cycling) in order to reduce car usage and support the principles of sustainability.

- TP 7** To work with all agencies to improve and develop public transport facilities in the area.

7.7 Rail Services

Castlebar is situated on the Dublin-Westport rail service line and there are daily train services running through to Claremorris, Ballyhaunis and on to Athlone and Dublin in one direction and Westport in the other.

Castlebar is situated on the Westport to Dublin Rail line and is currently serviced by 3 trains per day in each direction.

- TP 8** It is a policy of the council, to promote the continued use of rail travel as an alternative to private transport on inter-city travel.

7.8 Bus Services

The town is served by regular bus services linking Castlebar to all major and regional towns such as Dublin, Galway, Athlone, Ballina and Westport.

The Bus Eireann network services the town 3 times daily from Dublin while busses depart Castlebar for the capital 5 times each day. The Galway City Route is much more frequent with 9 services per day as well as 8 return trips.

Bus Services, while offering a more frequent service than trains are not based upon the needs of the commuter, with most services being indirect and much less attractive than the private car as a means of travel.

- TO 4** It is an objective of the council, to provide 3 no. new bus stops within Castlebar, in cooperation with Bus Eireann.

- TP 9** It is a policy of the council to promote the continued use of bus travel as an alternative to private transport on inter city/town travel.

7.9 Taxi Services

There are local taxi companies serving Castlebar and its environs, with a range of pick up locations throughout the town centre. The rank on Main Street is readily accessible and well utilised.

TP10 It is the policy of the council to provide sufficient ranks at various locations throughout the town in consultation with the Taxi Operators. These ranks will be of varying sizes and will be time restricted as appropriate. The ranks shall be designed so as to provide accessibility for persons with disabilities.

7.10 Pedestrian & Cycle Facilities

Unlike some towns of a similar size, Castlebar is not serviced by a local bus service and the majority of journeys within the town are made by private car. There are no cyclist facilities in Castlebar and the lack of adequate footpaths acts to discourage people living in new development on the edge of town from cycling or walking to the town center as they feel vulnerable.

TO 5 It is an objective of the council to work together with developers with a view to enhancing cycle and pedestrian facilities on roads approaching the town within the plan area.

TO 6 It is an objective of the council to restore the priority to pedestrians in the town centre area

TP 11 It is the policy of the council to promote the development of cycling and walking as important forms of movement in the county and to minimise the conflict between pedestrians and other modes of transport

7.11 Transport Accessibility

The Council recognises that less mobile members of the population, such as children, the elderly and the disabled, require ease of accessibility for social contact, shopping, entertainment, journey's to school, church, etc., while people with disabilities require specific measures to maximise mobility, such as the elimination of architectural obstacles and the adequate equipping of public transport.

TP 12 It is a policy of the Council to ensure that in the design and planning of infrastructure and the integration of land use, infrastructure and transport modes that the widest spectrum of needs, including those with disabilities, are taken into account.

The council will ensure that the above policy is adhered to through the development control process.

8 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**Strategic Objective:**

To facilitate the provision of a range of social and community facilities within Castlebar town and its environs for the benefit of all residents and the wider community.

8.1 Introduction

Community facilities including schools, colleges, libraries, hospitals, childcare facilities, Gardai headquarters, fire stations, crèches and local services such as community buildings, post offices and banks are all important facilities within urban environments and should be accessible to all sectors of the population. They are vital to the life of any area if the community as a whole is to nurture a sense of shared belonging and inclusivity. This is particularly true of the more vulnerable members of society who can often feel left behind as the pace of social change quickens. Schools, local shops, post offices and similar small-scale service centres have a crucial role to play in maintaining the sense of community in any area. Such facilities act as centres of social interaction in that they bring a variety of people together on a day-to-day basis for common interactions and tasks. They all add to the 'quality of life' attractions for living in a particular urban area.

8.2 Health

8.2.1 Mayo General Hospital

Castlebar is located within Region West A (Network 4) of the Health Service Executive. This network includes the Mayo General Hospital, which is located on the Westport Road. Mayo General Hospital is a busy acute general hospital providing for the health care needs of 123,000 people in Co. Mayo. The hospital has 320 beds and employs over 1,300 staff.

Specialist services include General Surgery, General Medicine, Accident and Emergency, Paediatrics, Orthopaedics, Obstetrics and Gynaecology. In addition, the following services are provided at the hospital: Oncology, Limb Fitting, Palliative Care, Age-Related Medicine, Day Surgery, Endoscopy and Radiology with computerised tomography.



Mayo General Hospital is also the centre for many regional services, which are provided on a visiting Consultant basis. These include Ear, Nose and Throat, Dermatology, and Genital/Urinary Medicine.

The hospital has undergone significant development in recent years. Phase II Capital Development was completed in 2001. One of the key service developments in Mayo General Hospital as a result of Phase II was the introduction of orthopaedic surgery.

8.2.2 St. Mary's Psychiatric Hospital

St. Mary's is a Psychiatric hospital located on the Westport Road.

The hospital has an industrial therapy unit within its grounds providing sectorised community psychiatric services to the town and county, with acute in-patient and long-stay beds. It also provides an Alcohol Counselling Service. An Acute Admission Unit (St. Teresa's) is also located on the grounds.



8.2.3 Sacred Heart Hospital

The Sacred Heart Hospital, located on Pontoon Road, provides long and short term Geriatric care for up to 300 patients. It is divided into six units, one of which is now a specialised Alzheimer's Care Unit. A two-bed Palliative Care unit operates in the hospital.

CDO 1 It is an objective of the Council to co-operate with the Health Service Executive and other statutory and voluntary agencies in the provision of health and community facilities in Castlebar.

CDO 2 It is an objective of the Council to ensure that adequate lands and services are available for the improvement, establishment and expansion of health services.

CDO 3 It is an objective of the Council to ensure that high standards of design and layout are achieved in new healthcare facilities and in the change of use of existing premises to health care facilities.

8.3 Nursing Homes

Nursing Homes shall comply with the standards laid down in the Statutory Instrument 317 of 1985 "Homes for Incapacitated Persons Regulations 1985".

Permission for a change of use from a residential dwelling to a nursing home shall only be granted in cases where such a use would not give rise to a traffic hazard and where the building can be adapted to provide a satisfactory level of accommodation.

CDP 1 It is the policy of the Council to encourage, support and facilitate the provision of a range of services for the aged population.

8.4 Policing

The Divisional Headquarters of the Garda Síochána are located in Castlebar. This modern building is located south west of the Courthouse overlooking the Green.

The station has a public office, communications centre, and a range of facilities.

In 2006, the Garda Information Services Centre was opened in Castlebar. The Centre employs 160 people.



CDP 2 It is the policy of the Council: -

- a) to assist in improving and maintaining general safety within the town and its environs;
- b) to promote the installation and usage of CCTV cameras along the main streets in the town centre;
- c) to promote the development of neighbourhood watch groups in newly developing and existing neighbourhoods.

8.5 Childcare Facilities

8.5.1 Childcare Facilities, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)¹⁰

Government policy on childcare is to increase the number of childcare places and facilities available and to improve the quality of childcare services for the community.

The Childcare guidelines were prepared in order to guide both Local Authorities in preparing Development Plans and assessing applications for planning permission, and developers and childcare providers in formulating development proposals. One of the requirements of these guidelines is that childcare facilities should be provided in large new housing developments, neighbourhood, district and town centres, in the vicinity of locations where there are significant numbers working... in the vicinity of schools...and adjacent to public transport corridors, park and ride facilities, pedestrian routes and dedicated cycle ways.

Development Plans should include specific land use objectives relating to the location of childcare facilities within appropriate zones.

Childcare is taken to mean full-day care and sessional facilities and services for preschool children and school going children out of hours. With the growing demand for childcare provision, there is equally a recognition that such provision must be of a suitably high quality. Quality childcare can benefit children, their parents, employers and the community in general. Childcare provision has also been recognised in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy as one measure to address poverty and social exclusion.

Where childcare facilities are to be provided it will be essential to show their location will not give rise to a traffic hazard or have adverse impact on the residential amenity of the area. Where these facilities are to be provided in larger new housing estates the Planning Guidelines have provided a standard of one facility with places for 20 children for each 75 family orientated dwellings¹¹.

All applications for crèches or preschool facilities shall be required to comply with the Childcare Act and the Childcare (Pre School Services) Regulations 1996 as amended.

Applications for crèches, playschools and pre school facilities shall be assessed with regard to the following information:

- ☐ Details of the proposed opening times;
- ☐ Proposed number and age range of children;
- ☐ Proposed number of staff;
- ☐ Internal floor areas devoted to use as crèche/playschool excluding areas such as kitchens, toilets, sleeping and other ancillary areas;
- ☐ Details of external play areas;
- ☐ Car parking arrangements for both parents and staff;
- ☐ Vehicular and Pedestrian Access Arrangements.

The Council may impose a temporary permission of between 1-5 years on any grant of permission for such facilities to assess their impact on surrounding areas and developments.

There are approximately 2,339 persons in the 0-14 age cohort as per the 2006 Census data. This represents 19.67% of the total population of Castlebar and Environs. This has implications in terms of social infrastructure provision in the town, particularly with regard to childcare facilities.

CDO 4 It is the objective of the Council to facilitate the provision of 1 childcare facility to cater for 20 children in each residential development in excess of 75 family orientated residential units.

¹⁰ Quotations directly from sections 1.2, 1.3 and 2.4 of the Childcare Facilities, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)

¹¹ A family orientated dwelling will contain two bedrooms or more and sufficient internal floor space to accommodate at least a small family (65m²).

8.6 Education

Castlebar provides a wide range of educational facilities, catering for approximately 3,200 students attending primary and post primary. There have been moderate increases in population during the lifetime of the last Development Plan, and it is likely that there will be a significant population increase in the lifetime of the Development Plan period 2008-2013.

The demands on the internal structure of the schools particularly at primary school level should be carefully monitored and provision made by the Council to identify potential future educational sites within the town.

8.6.1 Primary Education

The distribution of schools throughout the town largely covers the population base in these areas. Any future expansion of population in the town and surrounding catchment area should have due consideration to the fact that the capacity of existing primary schools in the town is limited. Existing schools may need to be expanded to cater for expected population growth.

Table 8.1: Student numbers attending Castlebar Primary Schools (2006/2007)

School	Location	Denom	Gender	Enrolment
St. Patrick's Boys N S	Castlebar	Catholic	Boys	433
Convent of Mercy N S	Castlebar	Catholic	Girls	426
Breaffy NS	Castlebar	Catholic	Mixed	303
Scoil Raifteiri	Faiche an Aonaigh	Catholic	Mixed	274
St. Peter's NS	Snugboro	Catholic	Mixed	249
St. Brid's Special School	Pavillion Road	Catholic	Mixed	18
St. Anthony's Special School	Humbert Way	Catholic	Mixed	41

A number of schools in the town cater for children with learning disabilities. St. Patrick's National Boys School caters for mild general learning disabilities and specific speech and language disorders. St. Brid's Special School caters for moderate general learning disability and children on the autistic spectrum. St. Anthony's Special School caters for mild general learning disability.

8.6.2 Post-Primary Education

There are 3 post-primary schools in Castlebar. They serve a wider catchment area, accommodating students not only in Castlebar, but from within a 10 – 15 mile radius of the town. In the academic year 2006-2007, 1,688 pupils were enrolled in post-primary schools in Castlebar and Environs. In addition, Balla Secondary School located between Castlebar and Claremorris caters for 440 pupils.

Table 8.2: Student numbers attending Castlebar Post- Primary Schools (2006/2007)

School	Address	Demon	Gender	Enrolment
St. Gerald's College	Newport Road	Catholic	Boys	589
Naomh Iosaef	Clochar na Trócaire	Catholic	Girls	581
Davitt College	Springfield	Inter denominational	Mixed	518
TOTAL				1,688

CDP 3 It is a policy of the council to work in partnership with the Department of Education to assist in the identification of school needs and possible locations for future schools.

8.6.3 Third Level Education

The Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology at Castlebar is located on approximately 20 hectares of land less than 10 minutes walk from Castlebar Town. The Institute with its extensive, mature grounds and elegant buildings constitutes a pleasant and productive environment for study. The Galway- Mayo Institute of Technology at Castlebar enrolled its first students in September, 1994. There are 1,200 students (of which 800 are full time) currently studying at Castlebar. As well as attracting students from its immediate catchment area, GMIT at Castlebar has already drawn many students from further afield. Students at Castlebar enjoy the advantages of being part of a relatively small student population with a high staff to student ratio.

The Castlebar campus offers a wide range of courses provided by departments in Business and Technology, Humanities and Nursing and Health Sciences.

The Castlebar College of Further Education, located at Newtown, offers a wide range of post leaving certificate courses accredited by FETAC (Further Education Training Awards Council). One-year courses commencing in September 2007 include Marketing, Nursing Studies, Childcare, Graphic Design and Secretarial Studies.

CDP 4 It is a policy of the council to work with Development agencies, third level institutions and businesses to identify encourage and facilitate opportunities for cluster development

CDP 5 To encourage the establishment of strategic linkages between education, educational institutions and industries to meet the future needs of employers, by introducing appropriate courses.

8.7 Community Facilities

8.7.1 Family Centre

Family Life Services based at the Family Centre, Chapel Street, Castlebar was established in 1995 as part of the pastoral ministry of the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Tuam.

The ownership of the Family Centre is vested in St. Jarlath's Diocesan Trust. A Board of Directors consisting of representatives from the community, diocese and the Health Services Executive - Western Area is responsible for the overall management of the Centre and its services.

Among the services offered at the centre are counselling, bereavement support, family mediation and legal advice. In addition, the centre offers a range of educational and training courses in personal development, family/parenting, bereavement and faith/spirituality.



8.7.2 Castlebar Youth Information Centre

Youth Information Centres are centres located around Ireland that provide free, confidential information for young people and for people who work with young people. The Castlebar Youth Information Centre is located at Newtown.



In January 2001, Castlebar Youth Information Centre launched an Information Kiosk at their centre. The Kiosk contains up to date information on issues that are relevant to young people living in County Mayo. The range of issues covered includes Careers/Employment, Travelling and Working Abroad, Health, Social Issues, Leisure, Education and Training. The centres operate a 'One Stop Shop' approach where all the information is available under the one roof.

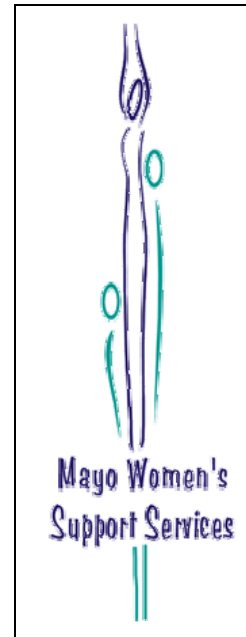
8.7.2 Mayo Women's Support Services

The Mayo Women's Support Services was established in September 1994. The main objective of the service is to provide a professional, supportive and efficient service to women in Mayo who are victims of domestic violence and are seeking help and information regarding their rights, entitlements and safety.

The service operates from a number of centres throughout the county. The Castlebar centre offers a clinic, support services and crisis/emergency accommodation.

The overall aim of the service is to support the right of women to live free from violence and abuse through the provision of a safe place, accessible community based services and ongoing campaigns to raise public awareness of the crime of violence against women.

The service offers:- Outreach; Crisis Accommodation; Support/Self Help Groups; Local Area Networks; Supported Transitional Housing; Children's Support Programme; Public Awareness, Education and Training.



8.8 Burial Grounds

CDP 6 It is a policy of the council to ensure lands are reserved free from development to allow the sequential expansion of all burial grounds in the town.

8.9 Fire Services

The Fire Service Headquarters for Co. Mayo is located at the Humbert Way in Castlebar. Mayo County Council is the Fire Authority for the administrative area of County Mayo and the three Town Council areas of Castlebar, Westport and Ballina.

8.10 Library Facilities

It is recognised that the library service plays a vital role in underpinning many cultural activities. The Mayo County Library is located at the Mall, Castlebar and offers a wide range of services to the public. In addition to the adult and children's library, there is an audio-visual section, information technology facilities and an entrance exhibition area available to local groups for exhibitions, recitals and readings.



CDP 7 To continue to expand the library service to meet the needs of the community, subject to the availability of finance.

8.11 Places of Worship

The Holy Rosary Church is the Catholic Parish Church of Castlebar and an important place of worship.



The Christian Fellowship Church is a small church located at the Rock Square corner of the Mall.



Located on the Mall, Christchurch was completed in 1739 and renovated between 1800 and 1828. The church is one of the most important historical monuments in the town.



Other religious organisations present in Castlebar include Jehovah's Witnesses and the Elim Congregation.

9 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND RECREATION



Strategic Objective

To protect, conserve, enhance and sustain the natural environment of Castlebar and its environs for future generations.

To promote the maintenance and development of opportunities for sport, recreation, leisure and the arts in accessible locations, in order to meet the needs of local communities and the overall population of Castlebar and its environs.

9.1 Introduction

The Natural Environment includes those spaces outside of the built environment such as open spaces, lakes, rivers and agricultural land. The Natural Environment provides a habitat for a variety of species and is a source of amenity for human settlements.

Despite the fact that the plan area is primarily urban in character, the town and its environs, which are located in a rolling drumlin landscape, contain several significant elements of the Natural Environment. Lough Lannagh and Saleen Lough are located in close proximity to the town centre as well as the Castlebar River, which winds through the centre of the town. These features are supplemented by a range of public open spaces and parks, significant institutional lands and playing pitches, which all combine to form an attractive physical environment that distinguish Castlebar from most other urban centers of its size.

Apart from their intrinsic ecological value as habitats for a variety of plant and animal species these elements of the environment provide direct and indirect benefits to the population of Castlebar and its surrounds. They are places where people can engage in recreational activities such as walking, swimming, water related activities and playing formal and informal field sports. These areas also

provide a visual amenity that enhances the attractiveness of the town as a place in which to live and work.

The policies and objectives of this Chapter reflect the value places on these resources and the need to sustain them for future generations to enjoy.

NEO 1 It is an objective of the Council to protect and enhance the natural environment including public and private open space, natural heritage, landscapes and water resources.

9.2 Open Space and Amenity

Access to opportunities for recreation and amenity is recognised as an important consideration in determining quality of life, and is likely to become more significant as land continues to increase in value and pressure from competing land uses becomes more intense. All forms of development, not just residential schemes, will be required to provide sufficient amenity space for their users to enjoy. Such provision will depend on the location and form of the proposed development and will be subject to negotiation with developers on an individual basis. In all cases, good quality space will be required to be an integral part of the overall design of all developments.

Presently there are significant areas of open space available in the town and environs. These areas are composed primarily of sports grounds, parks within residential areas, as well as significant areas of open space around Lough Lannagh and Saleen Lough and along the Castlebar River.

Open space can be defined as active or passive in terms of its use. The following means of distinction is often used to determine the use of public open space: -

- a) *Active open space/recreation areas* – these include children’s play areas, playing pitches, running tracks, tennis courts, golf courses, cycling tracks, rowing and boating facilities and other major sports facilities.
- b) *Passive open space/recreation areas* – these range from small local green spaces, which cater for the local community to larger parks serving the wider community.

The retention and protection of existing and proposed public open spaces within existing and new housing schemes will be required. The redevelopment of such areas for alternative purposes will normally be resisted by the Council.

NEO 2 It is an objective of the council to protect and enhance existing public open spaces as an amenity and recreational resource for the town and environs.

NEO 3 It is an objective of the council to achieve a network of new and existing recreation open space and amenity areas by promoting linkage and accessibility between these areas by using walkways and cycleways to connect them where appropriate.

NEO 4 It is an objective of the Council to identify for zoning 2 no. areas of approximately 30 hectares each on opposite sides of the town for Open Space Parks/Amenity, within 1 year of the adoption of the Development Plan.

NEP 1 It is a policy of the council that development will not be permitted to infringe upon or undermine existing areas of public open space. Any development, which is proposed adjacent to public open space, must allow for public access to these facilities.

Public open space is defined as areas in direct public ownership accessible to all. It is important to secure the future of existing parks within the area for future generations.



Frame 9.2: Public Open Space at The Green

It is the objective of the Council to protect public parks and public open space from development pressure and ensure that all members of the community have equal access to these facilities.

NEP 2 In order to fully utilise existing public open spaces it is essential to have proper and safe access to these for all persons. It is the policy of the Council to provide good access to existing public parks as well as identifying these areas as recreational resources through proper signage.

The Council will seek to ensure that all public parks such as Fairgreen and areas of open spaces will be properly signposted and environmentally enhanced to ensure quality recreational and amenity resources for residents.

NEP 3 The Council will investigate the provision of additional open space within the town and environs. It is the policy of the Council to promote and encourage the provision of additional public open space in appropriate locations throughout the town and environs.

If the town is to continue to develop as a sustainable community, open space provision must be at the heart of this development and growth. The Council will seek to identify areas for designation as open space and amenity areas. Existing landscape features such as trees, hedgerows, stone walls, streams etc. will be incorporated into the open space as appropriate for individual sites.

There is potential to develop significant amenity spaces in the new residential sectors at Saleen and to the south of the Westport Road

NEP 4 The Council will ensure that the quantity and quality of open space provision within residential areas is adequate to serve the population of the development. It will ensure that all residential developments address the issue of open space provision in a comprehensive and inclusive manner. Existing residential open spaces will be protected and enhanced to benefit the residents of each residential development.

Recreational open space is fundamental to the development of a residential area. The design and layout of residential open space determines the use and safety of the space. Open space can act as a civic amenity for residents to congregate and communicate and therefore should be seen as an

intrinsic part of the overall development of a residential scheme. And should be one of the key parameters that determine the overall layout of a scheme, particularly in residential developments. Private open space must not override the importance and provision of public open space in any development. Developers must take into account the existing natural drumlin landscape of the site when providing open space as well as creating user friendly and sustainable recreational areas for all residents.

Linkages between recreation open space and amenity areas can be achieved by means of linear parks along roads, the Castlebar riverbank and through the improvement of pedestrian safety on routes to these areas, including provision of safe crossings over busy roads, improved lighting and signage, and new or enhanced public walkways and cycleways. Such linkage will serve to provide greater accessibility for the wider community to green areas, increased social interaction, and less reliance on the private car for leisure trips.

9.3 Walking Routes

Walking routes must be encouraged to allow residents the opportunity to exercise in a safe and convenient environment. A plan has been prepared for the expansion and improvements to the existing walkway along the Castlebar River and lands have been reserved as open space along its banks.

NEO 5 It is an objective of the council to develop a continuous riverside walk along the banks of the Castlebar River, within the plan area boundary.

NEP 5 It is the policy of the Council to identify and promote walking routes within the town and environs, which will act as independent amenity resources. Existing walking routes will be protected and enhanced.

The Castlebar International Walking Festival is a four-day event attracting walkers from all over the world. A wide choice of walking routes is offered to suit all ages and abilities. Longer road walks stretch from 20 to 40km and there is also a 10km walk. A popular series of cross-country rambles lead over bogs and mountainsides to the north of Castlebar.

9.4 Sports and Recreation

Recreation and Amenity refers to the range of facilities, venues and spaces that provides the town's population with the opportunity for recreational activities such as organized sport, walking and various other pastimes. The availability of such opportunities is essential to the development of balanced and sustainable communities and attractive living environments.

Castlebar is relatively well served by recreational and amenity facilities including: sports facilities (providing for soccer, gaelic games, tennis, swimming and golf, etc.) and informal open spaces such as the Lough Lannagh area. However, the town is underprovided for in terms of formal open spaces such as parks and playgrounds. There is a significant demand for such facilities and this is likely to increase as the population of the town and its environs grow. The planning policies set out in this Chapter have been formulated in order to meet this demand.

Much of the open space suitable for sporting activities in the town belongs to privately managed clubs and organisations. The Council will continue, where appropriate, to facilitate the provision of further facilities to which public access will be available where possible.

It is the policy of the council: -

NEP 7 To seek to secure access to recreational facilities when demand for such arises, together with the development of indoor and outdoor recreational facilities on suitable sites where resources are available.

NEP 8 To retain existing public or private active recreational open space, unless it can be demonstrated that there is no longer sufficient demand to sustain the facility and alternative recreational facilities can be provided in a suitable location.

Existing public or private active recreational open space will be retained, unless it can be demonstrated that there is no longer sufficient demand to sustain the facility and alternative recreational facilities can be provided in a suitable location. In this respect Castlebar Town Council is developing a scheme at Lough Lannagh which will see the development of a new swimming pool and tennis courts, thereby freeing up valuable town centre lands for development.

The Council is committed to providing for the recreational needs of all sectors of the community, particularly people with disabilities, the young, the elderly, women, ethnic groups and those that are socially or economically disadvantaged, and ensuring that these needs are understood and incorporated into development strategies.

The Council will investigate ways of improving the quality and capacity of existing sporting and recreational facilities through initiatives in both the public and private sector, and by seeking alternative sources of funding where appropriate.

NEP 9 It is the policy of the Council to enhance the provision of children's play facilities.

9.5 Castlebar River

The Castlebar River is one of the most important heritage resources within the town. It originates in the Castlebar lakes and is a tributary of the River Moy. It is a rich limestone river and, because of its lake source, it rarely runs low in summer. The river is an important spawning ground for salmon and trout.

The interaction of the river and the built heritage gives a unique and distinct character to Castlebar. However, the full potential of the river as a major amenity and recreation asset for the town has not been realised to date.



Frame 9.3: New development along the Castlebar River

Development along the river must allow for access to the River and recreation along the riverbank.

NEP 10 It is the policy of the Council to open up access to the Castlebar River for recreational and amenity purposes.

NEP 11 All developments along the Castlebar River will be required to allocate land for a riverside walk and amenity area.

The allocated strip of land adjacent to the river can act as a new amenity resource for the town and as an ecological corridor to protect and enhance the natural heritage of the town and environs.

9.6 Nature Conservation

The natural heritage embraces various types of sites and areas that have been designated as important for nature, including designation by various authorities within Ireland as well as designation by way of EU Directives. It is government policy to secure the conservation of a representative range of ecosystems, and to maintain and enhance the country's populations of flora and fauna.

The National Biodiversity Plan (2002) sets out the framework through which Ireland will provide for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. It covers the three levels of ecosystem diversity, species diversity and genetic diversity under fifteen themes and sectors. The Biodiversity Plan details actions that will be pursued to achieve this objective. The Council is committed to the principles set out in the National Biodiversity Plan, the overall objective of which, is to secure the conservation, including where possible the enhancement, and sustainable use of biological diversity in Ireland and to contribute to conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity globally.

The Council recognises the importance of protecting designated areas of natural and heritage value. These designations include:-

- ❑ Special Protection Areas (SPA)
- ❑ Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- ❑ Natural Heritage Area (NHA)
- ❑ Flora Protection Order

At present there are no special designated sites in Castlebar, however, the Castelbar River is a tributary of the River Moy, which is a candidate SAC. The policy below covers any future potential sites that may be designated.

NEP 12 It is the policy of the council that development proposals within areas designated as sites or candidate sites of national or international importance for wildlife will only be permitted where they can demonstrate that they are sustainable, appropriate in nature and scale to the surrounding area and purpose of the designated area and are supported by a detailed Environmental Impact Assessment in accordance with the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC governing the protection of such sites, to ensure the protection and conservation of the designated area. There is a requirement to notify the Dept. of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government of any works to be carried out within or adjacent to candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs), proposed Special Protection Areas (pSPAs) and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs).

Development or land use change likely to have an adverse impact upon an undesignated site of substantive nature conservation value will be assessed against the importance of the site and the extent to which the impact can be subject to mitigating or other compensatory measures.

9.7 Landscape

The varied landscape is an inherent part of Castlebar's natural and human heritage and as such it requires protection in its own right. Therefore, the landscape must be protected against possible development, which would undermine or change its character. It is paramount to Castlebar's future development that development only takes place where visual intrusion is minimal particularly within areas of elevated topography or sparse vegetation.

NEP 13 Landscape considerations will be prioritised when considering applications for particular developments or uses, in particular, in local landscapes, which are visually sensitive and visually vulnerable, the Council will require that proposals demonstrate that proposed development would:

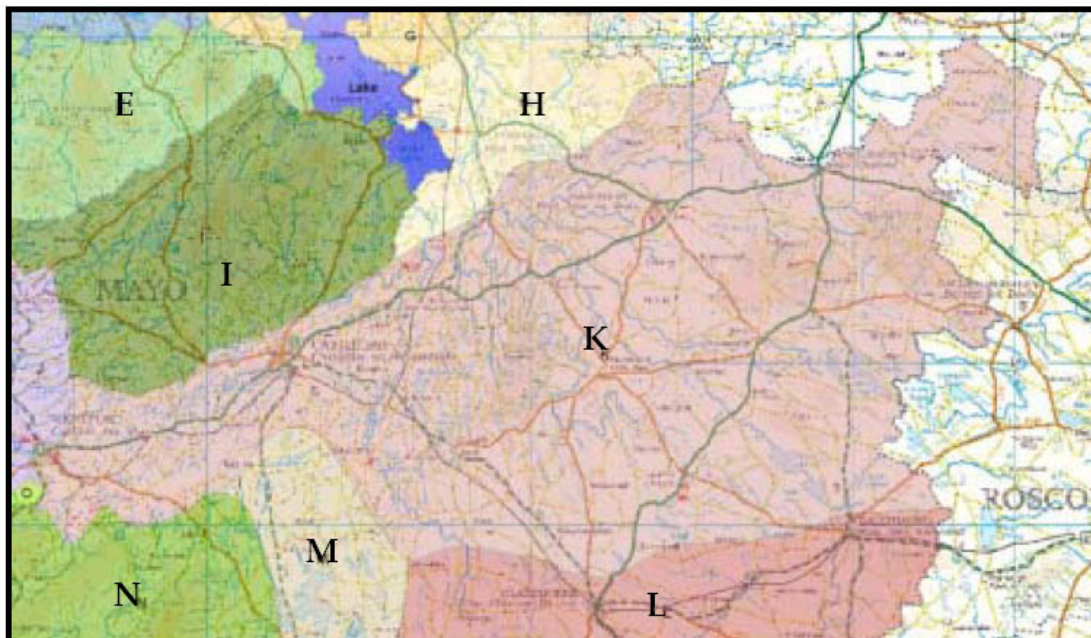
a) not detract from or adversely affect the character or uniformity of the drumlin landscape when viewed from differing locations.

- b) incorporate a high standard of site layout, design, site selection and building materials, to enhance the landscape character.
- c) ensure that the development is sympathetic and in scale with the landscape setting.
- d) be sufficiently screened so as to reduce any visual impacts on the surrounding environs.
- e) not impede protected views

The draft Guidelines for Landscape Character Assessment (2000) require a new approach to considering landscape and the development process. The guidelines set out the means for assessing landscape according to its capacity to accommodate development types and specific proposals based on a thorough understanding of its essential character.

9.7.1 Landscape Appraisal for County Mayo

In line with the guidelines, Mayo County Council commissioned an independent 'Landscape Appraisal for County Mayo' in 2002, which identifies and describes the landscape character of each part of the County. The appraisal evaluates the capacity of each character area to accept change without disproportionate effects and provides policies to guide development in each type of landscape unit.



Extract from landscape Appraisal for County Mayo

Castlebar is located within Area K – East-Central Drumlin Spine. This large geographical area is made up of glacial drumlins that are uniform at its western end near its transition with the distinct drumlins of Clew Bay. In the east, these become less uniform and severe, and the terrain merges into several sets of geologically distinct and isolated units as the unit encapsulates the towns of Castlebar, Swinford and Charlestown. The drumlin landscape runs from County Down to Clew Bay.

9.7.2 Local Landscapes

While the overall landscape of the plan area is of a drumlin nature, there are two local landscapes, which are protected. They are Lough Lannagh and Saleen Lough.

NEP 14 It is the policy of the council that all development proposals will respect and, where possible, enhance the landscape quality and character of the Plan area. Proposals that would damage or destroy features which contribute to the distinctiveness of the area will not be permitted unless significant public benefit would arise from the development.



View over Lough Lannagh from mayococo.ie

9.8 Views and Prospects

There are numerous vantage points from where the landscape setting of Castlebar can be experienced, especially along the main approach roads to the town and from elevated positions to the north. There are also important views from within the urban area and outwards to the surrounding landform, often framed by streets of traditional building form and/or individual buildings of historic merit.

NEP 15 Views and prospects from around and within the town of special amenity value or interest will be preserved, especially along the main approach roads, and improved through the control of development and encouraging the clearance of unsightly areas, and by providing visual amenity improvements where appropriate.

The visual characteristics of Castlebar are extremely vulnerable to change and views of special amenity value or special interest need to be protected from inappropriate development in order to maintain the distinctive visual character of the town and its setting. Planning applications for development in the foreground of or otherwise influencing such views will be evaluated in terms of their likely impact and appreciation of their scenic qualities.

There is a single protected view in Castlebar. This view faces south from the R311 Newport Road. The proposed northern Regional Route may impinge on this view, as its finished level is not yet determined.

Development will not be permitted where they will break ridgelines or detract from this protected view.

9.9 Trees and Hedgerows

Trees, whether individually or in groups, make a valuable contribution to the bio-diversity and visual amenity of towns. Trees perform a number of roles including absorption of pollutants, filtering noise, producing oxygen, providing a habitat for wildlife and enhancing the environment.

Within the town area of Castlebar there are two locations where trees or groups of trees are afforded protection in the Development Plan. These areas will be protected where development is proposed. Within Castlebar town, these mature trees and other individual and smaller tree stands form a valuable part of the urban environment by contributing to the distinctiveness of individual parts of the town.

The protected tree stands are located at: -

- ☐ Fairgreen
- ☐ Junction of Westport Road and Spencer Street

Tree Preservation Orders will be served where they would effectively safeguard public amenity and preserve the character of the area. Inappropriate arboricultural work to protected trees will be resisted.

Mature trees situated elsewhere in the town, whether in groups or individually, should be preserved where possible. In order to preserve their protected landscape character, the existing tree stands at Lough Lannagh and Saleen Lough will be protected from encroaching development.

NEP 16 There shall be a presumption against the felling, topping, lopping or wilful destruction of mature trees as part of development proposals. Where a development proposal involves the felling, topping, lopping or threatens the destruction of a mature tree or trees, a tree survey will need to be included in the submission, carried out by a qualified Tree Specialist to justify the exceptional circumstances for their interference.

Hedgerows and stone walls are an inherent part of the environs landscape and function as an important wildlife habitat. Historically they mark parish and townland boundaries and are important in terms of local heritage value. Section 40 of the Wildlife Act, 1976 (as amended by Section 46 of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000) provides for the protection of birds during the nesting season against cutting, grubbing etc. of any vegetation on uncultivated land between 1st March and 31st August.

Developers will be required to seek guidance on maintenance and protection of hedgerows from the Council Officers and guidance on the maintenance and protection of stone walls from the Conservation Officer.

NEP 17 It is a policy of the council that any new development proposals must seek to protect, maintain and, where necessary, enhance hedgerows, shelterbelts and stone walls.

Mature trees and hedgerows are capable of adding a sense of permanence, amenity and completion to development sites. They will therefore be incorporated into development proposals wherever practicable and suitably protected during the construction process in accordance with relevant standards. The Council may request that a tree survey is undertaken as part of a development submission, to ensure that proposals will not damage or result in the loss of trees or hedgerows listed for preservation.

9.10 Water Resources

It is fundamental to the sustained development of the area to protect water resources for drinking, bathing, fishing, water based activities and conservation. At present water sources are at risk from pollution due to excess development and agricultural practices. Therefore, all necessary measures must be taken to ensure that threat of contamination of sources must be reduced.

NEP 18 Any proposals for development must take into account existing water resources and their amenity, heritage and environmental importance. Any development, which is likely to have direct or indirect impacts on any local watercourses or water bodies, will not be permitted. Development proposals, which may impact on water resources, should be accompanied by an EIS.

Groundwater is increasingly relied upon as a source of drinking water, particularly in areas not served by water mains. Depending on the geology of the area, aquifers can be vulnerable to contamination, particularly from waste water treatment systems. It is crucial that such resources are protected from the risk of groundwater pollution. In this regard, the Groundwater Protection Scheme for County Mayo provides useful information on the relative aquifer potential and vulnerability to contamination.

NEP 19 In areas around potable groundwater sources or over vulnerable areas of aquifers, development proposals will not be permitted where the council, in consultation with the appropriate authorities, considers that there would be a significant risk to the quality of the underlying groundwater.

According to the Geological Survey of Ireland G.S.I. waters in several areas of the town are vulnerable to pollution. These areas are around the Roadstone Quarry and general Moneenbradagh area, along the Castlebar River to the north east of the town centre and in New Antrim and Rathbaun areas to the north. For the remainder of the town only an interim study was carried out. The affected areas are in some cases developed and where undeveloped will be protected under the Development Plan. The majority of the town sits on a regionally important karstified aquifer.

10 PUBLIC UTILITIES



Strategic Objective

To facilitate the economic and social development of the town through the provision of adequate physical services infrastructure and to optimise the return of investment on such infrastructure.

10.1 Introduction

Castlebar has witnessed accelerated levels of economic growth in recent years and this has led to increased pressure for residential and other developments. Existing infrastructure has come under pressure and the growth requires the provision of additional infrastructure. In order to sustain future growth and development within Castlebar and its Environs, the provision of essential physical infrastructure must be secured. In this regard, the provision of infrastructure and services will be a pre-requisite to development.

10.2 Sanitary Services: Drainage

The Council has made considerable investments in wastewater treatment facilities in recent years. The pipe laying for the Castlebar and environs sewerage extension scheme has been completed and the upgrade of the treatment plant is to commence in July 2008. The scheme provides for: -

- ❑ Extension of foul and surface water sewers to serve new growth areas of Castlebar and Environs.
- ❑ Remedial work to existing sewers, which have deteriorated over time.
- ❑ Elimination of storm overflows which have resulted in a decline in water quality of the Castlebar River.
- ❑ Upgrading and extension to Castlebar Wastewater Treatment Works to cater for the short term and long-term (up to 2020 and beyond) requirements of Castlebar and Environs.
- ❑ The extension of treated outfall to confluence of Castlebar and Manulla Rivers.

The Wastewater Treatment Plant at Knockthomas caters for a population equivalent of 28,000. It is the intention of the Council to increase capacity to 35,000 to cater for the growing population and to facilitate enterprise.

PUO 1 It is an objective of the Council to continue to develop and expand the foul and surface water drainage system for the town and environs in order to facilitate the supply of serviced land for residential, commercial and industrial development.

PUO 2 It is an objective of the Council to collect the foul sewerage from within the town and environs and discharge it after treatment in a safe and sustainable manner.

PUO 3 It is an objective of the Council to separate foul and surface water drainage where feasible, in order to reduce the volume of material entering the treatment plants and to ensure that all new developments provide separate on-site foul and surface water drainage systems.

PUP 1 It is a policy of the Council to discourage the use of pumping stations to service new developments.

PUP 2 It is an objective of the Council to facilitate the extension of the existing wastewater treatment plant up to a capacity of 35,000 pe. (population equivalent).

Development will only be permitted where the Council is satisfied, after relevant consultation, that adequate provision for water and wastewater can be made, consistent with the sustainable management of water and wastewater services and other environmental considerations.

There are a number of ways to provide more sustainable drainage by collection of surface water on site. Artificial lakes and ponds can be created, suitable open space can be flooded during storm conditions, and underground storage tanks can be installed. The value of sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) is recognised as a means of controlling run-off from new development and all proposals will be expected to incorporate such systems for the disposal of surface water.

The re-use and recycling of surface and domestic water within developments will be encouraged by the Council.

PUP 3 The Council will promote the use of suitable storm water retention facilities for new developments and existing catchment areas in the design and layout of development to enable the collection and where possible recycling of surface water according to sustainable drainage techniques.

A licence is required for the discharge of any trade or domestic effluent to surface or ground water other than for domestic sewage discharge not exceeding 5 cubic metres in any period of 24 hours, which is discharged to an aquifer from a septic tank or other disposal units by means of percolation area, soakage pit or other method.

10.3 Sanitary Services: Water Supply

Castlebar receives its drinking water supply for the Lough Mask Regional Scheme. Lough Mask is capable of supplying a yield of 60Ml/d. The water is treated at Tourmakeady water treatment works and from there is piped to the Castlebar reservoir, which is located just outside the northern boundary of the plan. The reservoirs two storage tanks receive their water from 2 trunk mains and have a total storage capacity of 20Ml. The scheme also serves Ballinrobe, Ballindine, Claremorris and their surrounding areas. The reservoir is deemed to be in good condition and the source is highly reliable. The current supply is capable of catering for the projected population growth.

It is the policy of the council: -

- PUP 4** To facilitate the provision of an adequate, sustainable and economic public water supply to provide for the existing and future populations of the town and its environs.
- PUP 5** To continue with the implementation of a programme for up-grading water supply mains so as to provide adequate standards of water quality, pressure, storage and fire safety.
- PUP 6** To implement measures to ensure that the quality of treated drinking water is in compliance with the Water Quality Directives of the EU and national legislation.
- PUP 7** To implement a Water Conservation Programme in order to conserve valuable water resources by reducing wastage.

10.4 Waste Management

Waste Management is one of the most controversial and problematic issues facing local authorities throughout the country. Regional Waste Management Plans aim to improve waste management at a regional level.

The Connacht Region Waste Management Plan 2006-2011 follows the statutory review of the 2001 Waste Management Plan for the six local authorities of Galway City and Galway County, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo in accordance with Section 22 of the Waste Management Acts 1996-2005 and the Waste Management (Planning) Regulations, 1997.

The Waste Management Act 1996 requires adherence to a 'waste hierarchy'. This hierarchy places the greatest emphasis on prevention and minimisation of waste production, followed re-use, recycling and recovery (including energy recovery), with disposal to landfill as the least preferable option.

The original targets of the Connacht Waste Management Plan 2001 (48% recycling, 33% energy recovery and 19% disposal) were set for 2013 and these targets remain in the new Waste Management Plan.

- PUO 4** It is an objective of the Council to promote the implementation of the Connacht Regional Waste Management Plan 2006-2011 in conjunction with the other local authorities in the region.
- PUO 5** It is an objective of the Council to promote the development of facilities in accordance with the waste hierarchy principles, which involves a shift towards preventative and waste minimisation measures.
- PUO 6** It is an objective of the Council to reduce waste consigned to landfill sites.
- PUO 7** It is an objective of the Council to encourage the recycling of construction and demolition waste and the re-use of aggregate and other materials in future construction projects.

Mayo County Council is the permitting local authority for the issuing of waste collection permits to all waste collectors in the Connacht region. Waste collection permits ensure that collection is conducted within the region safely and no environmental pollution results from the collectors' activities. In addition to waste collection permits, anybody disposing or recovering waste must hold a waste permit.

Mayo County Council has two Licensed Landfills located at Derrinumera and Rathroeen.

Under the Waste Management Plan it has been recognised that as a society we must reduce our dependence on landfill, increase recycling rates through an extension and upgrading of the Bring-Bank Network. There are a number of bring centres located throughout the town.

The Civic Amenity Sites at Derrinnumera and Rathreen offer the public the opportunity to recycle a wider range of waste types and are open to the public from Monday to Saturday. Items, which can be recycled at this facility, include glass, plastics, cardboard, scrap metals, textiles, tyres, batteries and white goods.



PUP 7 It is a policy of the Council to endeavour to locate additional Bring Banks as is deemed necessary throughout the town.

10.5 Flood Risk Management

Flooding is a natural event, which can be exacerbated by natural and manmade occurrences. Areas along the Castlebar River, particularly to the east of the town are particularly prone to flooding. Proposed development on these lands must be sensitively designed and appropriately sited to ensure the flood plain is avoided and to reduce the risk of future flooding.

PUP 8 Development proposals in areas, which are at risk from flooding or perform a flood control function, will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that such development: -

- a) has been designed to minimise risk of inundation and will not contribute to or increase the risk of flooding elsewhere (either up or down stream)
- b) has adopted all reasonable measures to improve the management of flood waters on and adjacent to the site and to assist the protection of properties within the vicinity of the site
- c) does not impede the flow of floodwater or the ability of the floodplain to store water and to flood naturally and takes account of the impact on supporting ecosystems.
- d) incorporates building design measures and materials to assist evacuation and minimise damage from inundation; and
- e) can provide for the maintenance of any approved privately funded flood defence measures to the satisfaction of the Council.

The Council supports the precautionary principle whereby action is taken now to avoid possible environmental degradation in the future. The Council will restrict inappropriate development from locating within areas, which function as local floodplains. Floodplains and bogland should be actively protected to ensure that the flood regime of the area is properly maintained.

Development must so far as is reasonably practicable incorporate the maximum provision to reduce the rate and quantity of runoff. e.g.:-

- ☐ Hard surface areas (car parks, etc.), should be constructed in permeable or semi-permeable materials.
- ☐ On site storm water ponds to store and/or attenuate additional runoff from the development should be provided.
- ☐ Soak-aways or french drains should be provided to increase infiltration and minimise additional runoff.

For developments adjacent to watercourses and in particular the Castlebar River any structures (including hard landscaping) must be set back from the edge of the watercourse by a minimum of 6m to allow access for channel clearing/maintenance.

PUP 9 The Council will seek to adopt a 'Sustainable Urban Drainage System' (SUDS) approach to storm water drainage to reduce the likelihood of flood risk.

The Council will seek to retain and protect existing morphological features, which contribute to the attenuation of surface water runoff therefore preventing the discharge of surface water onto public roadways from adjacent lands and development.

The adoption of SUDS protects water quality and regulates water quantity so as not to cause or exacerbate flood risk. SUDS slows down floodwater, releasing it gradually to watercourses to avoid flood peaks, or letting it gently infiltrate into groundwater. It is an efficient and cost effective alternative to conventional drainage design and implementation, which replicates natural drainage.

10.6 Telecommunications

The document "Telecommunications, Antennae and Support Structures – Guidelines for Planning Authorities" published by the Department of the Environment in July 1996, offers recommendations on telecommunications related developments. In considering such applications the Planning Authority will follow these guidelines.

The Council recognizes the importance of high quality telecommunications services and acknowledges that the development of such infrastructure is a key component of future industrial and employment creation.

PUP 10 It is policy of the Council to support the roll out of broadband to all residents in the town.

PUP 11 It is the policy of the Council with regard to the erection of masts, antennae and ancillary equipment for telecommunications purpose, to take into consideration the following:-

- a) the visual impact of the telecommunications equipment.
- b) the co-location of antennae on existing support structures. Planning permission will only be granted where it can be demonstrated that no other support structures are useable.
- c) the safety aspect of locating such structures within the vicinity of land where the public presently gather or reside.

PUP 12 It is the policy of the council that new telecommunications infrastructure services should be located underground and that existing overhead cables and associated equipment should progressively be located underground in the interest of visual amenity

10.7 Control of Major Accidents

The Council will have regard to relevant EU, National, Regional and County level Policy in relation to the zoning of new employment land and the siting of major new employment uses. At present there are no Seveso sites in the town.

The Council will seek to ensure that the objectives of preventing major accidents are taken into account in the land use policies for the siting of new establishments, the modification of existing establishments and new developments in the vicinity of existing establishments, in line with the Major Accidents Directive 96/82/EC (SEVESO II).

PUP 13 It is a policy of the Council to have regard to the provisions of the Major Accidents Directive 96/82/EC and to seek to ensure that the objectives of preventing major accidents are taken into account in land-use policies through controls on: -

- a) the siting of new establishments;
- b) modifications to existing establishments;

Member states are required to ensure that the objectives of preventing major accidents are taken into account in land use policies. In addition, the Local Authority must identify establishments or groups of establishments where the risk or consequence of a risk could be increased due to the location and the proximity of the establishments and their holdings of dangerous substances.

In seeking to minimize the potential and impact of possible major accidents, it is vital that adequate healthcare services are maintained and enhanced within the plan area. This includes ensuring that full services, and particularly accident and emergency services are maintained at the local general hospital.

11 RETAILING



Strategic Objective

Assist in the development of Castlebar's Hub status as a Regional Employment Growth Centre & Regional Shopping Destination.

Direct new development to the existing town centre; in accordance with the development strategy and other plan policies.

11.1 Introduction

Castlebar is the principal retail and service centre in County Mayo. It is ideally located within Co. Mayo enabling it to draw from an extensive catchment area.

The majority of retailing in Castlebar is concentrated in the town centre around the main shopping streets on Main Street, Bridge Street, Linenhall Street, Shambles Street, Duke Street, Ellison Street and Hopkin's Road. In addition, there has been considerable out of town development in the form of retail warehousing.

11.1 Retail Planning Guidelines for Local Authorities (2005)

The Department of the Environment and Local Government re-issued amended Retail Planning Guidelines (RPG) in December 2005. They set out 5 key policy objectives, which are to provide the framework for accommodating retail growth in an efficient, equitable and sustainable manner. These include the need to: -

- ❑ Ensure that all future Development Plans provide clear policies and proposals for retail development.
- ❑ To facilitate a competitive and healthy environment for the retail industry. It is not the purpose of the planning system to inhibit competition, preserve existing commercial interests or prevent innovation.
- ❑ Ensure all forms of retail development are easily accessible to consumers. Such facilities should be in locations which have good access to transport corridors and public transport, whereby multi-purpose shopping, business and leisure trips can be encouraged on the same journey.
- ❑ Support the primary roles of city, town and district centres.
- ❑ Presumption against large retail centres located adjacent or close to existing new or planned national roads/motorways.

Some of the key objectives identified in the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities, of relevance for a Town & Environs Development Plan are: -

- ❑ To support the continuing role of town and district centres;
- ❑ These established centres should be the preferred locations for development that attract many trips;
- ❑ This policy will also support their role as centres of social and business interaction in the community;
- ❑ In order to achieve this objective, the preferred location for retail development, should be within town centres, consistent with the requirement to achieve good access especially by public transport;
- ❑ If there are no development sites available within a town centre, then the next preference should be a location on the edge of the town centre;
- ❑ Only where there are no sites, or potential sites, within a town centre or on its edge, or satisfactory transport accessibility (including park and ride) realistically cannot be ensured within a reasonable period of time, should out of centre development be contemplated.

The Guidelines describe the role of town centres together with district centres as providing a broad range of facilities and services and acting as a focus for the local community. They provide a range of commercial and community activities, resulting in a mix of land uses, which contribute to a sense of place and identity. They also provide a high level of accessibility to employment, services and facilities for all the community. These policies are reflected in the Development Plan.

The characteristics of the different tiers in a retail hierarchy are defined in the Retail Planning Guidelines as follows: -

- ❑ **Town Centre**
The term 'town centre' is used to cover city, town and district centres which provide a broad range of facilities and services and which fulfil a function as a focus for both the community and public transport. It excludes retail parks, local centres and small parades of shops of purely local significance.
- ❑ **District Centre**
Either a traditional or purpose built group of shops, separate from the town centre and either located within the built up urban area or in a suburban location on the edge of an urban area, usually containing at least one food supermarket or superstore and non-retail services such as banks and restaurants.

❑ **Local Centre or Neighbourhood Centre**

Small groups of shops, typically comprising a newsagent, small supermarket, grocery / general grocery store, sub-post office and other small shops of a local nature serving a small, localised catchment population.

Active, modern and responsive retailing is essential to maintain the vitality and viability of the town core in the face of external competition.

11.2 County Retail Strategy

Mayo County Council published a joint Retail Strategy for its administrative area and the Town Councils of Castlebar, Ballina and Westport. As is stated in the Retail Planning Guidelines, it is a key requirement of the Retail Strategy to set out confirmation of the retail hierarchy within the county and the role of centres and the size of main town centres.

In terms of the national retail hierarchy, Castlebar is designated as a third tier shopping location. In terms of the county retail strategy, the town is designated as a first tier major town centre, along with Ballina and Westport.



Castlebar is the most dominant town within this tier of the hierarchy. It has seen considerable expansion of its retail base in recent years. In 2006, a review of the existing Retail Strategy commenced. The Draft Mayo Retail Strategy 2007 includes an estimate of current, committed and projected floorspace requirements.

Convenience floorspace accounts for approximately 13% of the total in Castlebar, while comparison floorspace, both bulky and non-bulky, accounts for approximately 87%¹². With such a wide range of both convenience and comparison shopping on offer the town is increasingly being seen as a convenient and attractive alternative to shopping in Galway City.

Figure 11.1 Mayo's Retail Hierarchy

Table 11.1 Net Retail Floorspace Breakdown 2006

	Convenience (m sq)	Comparison Non-Bulky Goods (m sq)	Comparison Bulky Goods (m sq)	Total (m sq)
Castlebar	7,141	11,605	34,272	53,048
Ballina	6,644	10,214	29,750	46,608
Westport	4,832	8,680	2,578	16,090

¹² Retail goods categories are defined by reference to the National Income and Expenditure Accounts and can be divided into convenience goods and comparison goods as follows;

Convenience – food/alcoholic and non alcoholic beverages/tobacco/ non durable household goods

Comparison – clothing and footwear, furniture, furnishings and household equipment (excluding non durable household goods) medical and pharmaceutical products, therapeutic appliances and equipment; educational and recreation equipment and accessories; books newspapers and magazines; goods for personal care and goods not elsewhere classified

There has been a significant expansion of comparison floor space since the last survey. This has increased from 11,087m² in 2001 to 34,272 m² in 2006, an increase of over 200%. The provision of convenience floor space has fallen slightly from 8,334 m² to 7,141 m².

The figures above include floorspace under construction and thus anticipate additions to floorspace over the next few years.

RO 1 It is an objective of the council to address leakage of retail expenditure for the town and its catchment by facilitating the strengthening of the range and quality of retail on offer.

Table 11.2 sets out new floorspace approved or under consideration by the planning authority or on appeal, but not commenced.

Table 11.2 Floor space in planning system or permitted. (July 2007)

Town	Approved but not Commenced				Within the Planning System			
	Convenience	Comp Non-bulky	Comp bulky	Total	Convenience	Comp Non-bulky	Comp Bulky	Total
Castlebar & Environs	-	3,506	-	3,506	1,403	-	-	1,403
Ballina & Environs	-	6,440	15,300	21,740	1,870	1,750	-	3,620
Westport & Environs	-	630	-	630	-	-	-	-

In Castlebar, 3,506m² of non-bulky retail floor space has been granted permission but not yet commenced. In addition, 1,403m² of convenience floor space is within the planning system.

11.3 Retail Core

The County Retail Strategy defines the boundaries of the core shopping area of Castlebar. The core area includes the main shopping streets i.e. Main Street, Bridge Street, Linenhall Street, Shambles Street, Duke Street, Ellison Street and Hopkin's Road. Two Town Centre Retail Development sites are identified within the core area. These sites are backlands to the rear of Main Street and are currently used for surface car parking.

The Retail Strategy also defines the Outer Core Shopping Area as well as Edge of Centre Retail Development.

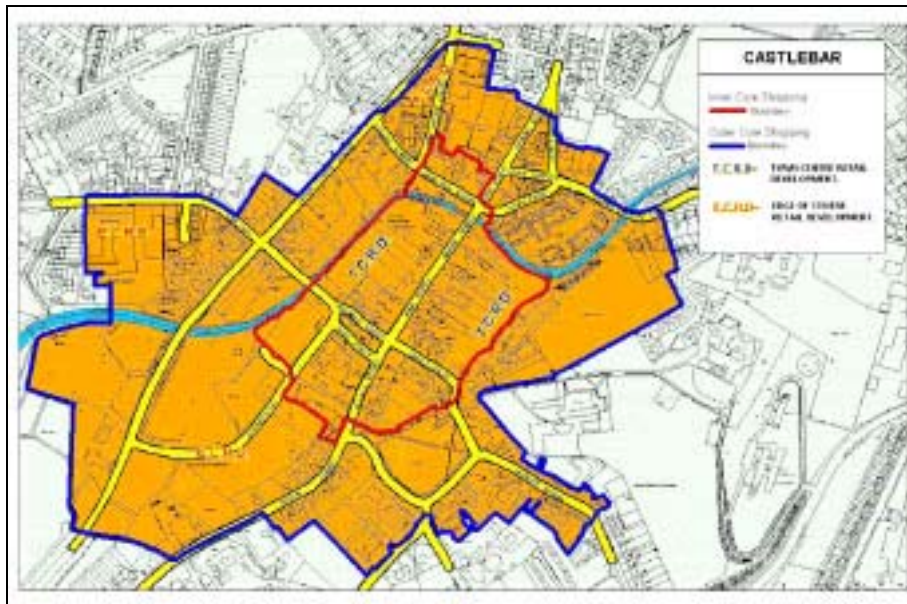


Figure 11.2: Inner and Outer Core Shopping areas

It is a priority of the Council to maintain the town centre as the principal shopping area for the town and the wider region and as such the loss of retail uses and frontage will be resisted within the principal shopping areas.

RP 1 It is the policy of the Council to resist the conversion of the ground floor of premises on the principal shopping streets to non-retail uses.

The Council will in exceptional circumstances allow some level of professional and financial services to exist at ground floor within the prime retailing area provided that it offers a service that is frequently visited by the public and that an active ground floor window display is in place.

RP 2 It is the policy of the Council to seek to maintain and enhance the role of the town centre as the dominant commercial and retailing area of Castlebar and its Environs.

RP 3 It is the policy of the Council to limit, except where permitted by other policies within the Plan, retail developments outside the town centre retail core. Town Centre sites will be favoured over out of town sites. The sequential approach should be adopted if it is demonstrated that no town centre site is available.

11.3.1 Convenience Retail

The major multiples of Dunnes Stores, Tesco, Aldi and Penny's are all located in the town center area. There are several major opportunity sites available in the form of car park areas which may be developed to add additional shopping facilities for the town and consolidate its position as the principle shopping area in the county.

RP 4 It is the policy of the council to promote and encourage the enhancement and expansion of the retail facilities on offer in the town centre whilst enduring high quality design and all retail proposals

RP 5 It is the policy of the council to promote the potential of Castlebar Town Centre for additional convenience floorspace at appropriate locations such as the existing car parking areas to the rear of Main Street and at Castle Street car park.

11.3.2 Comparison Retail

Until recently the town centre contained the majority share of comparison retail floor space in Castlebar. These include clothes, electronic goods and hardware shops. With the movement out of town of Toys R' Us and the arrival of Woodie's and other major retailers at the Castlebar Retail Park, a gradual movement of bulky comparison retailers from the town centre may be underway. Niche comparison retail use is the most suitable and desirable type of retail for Castlebar town centre as it has the potential to give the town centre a competitive advantage over other retail centres and does not have the same level of dependency upon car borne custom. This would include, for example, high value clothes stores, antiques shops and art galleries, etc. This type of retail use does not require large floor plates to the same extent as other retail uses. In order to retain and strengthen its retail function, Castlebar town centre needs to expand its comparison retail offer.

RO 2 It is the objective of the Council to facilitate the development of additional floor space within the town centre for comparison or non-food retail use.

In the defined principal shopping streets, proposals, which would involve a net loss of convenience or comparison shopping floor space at ground floor level, will be resisted.

11.4 Assessing the Vitality and Viability of the Town Centre

As part of the retail study, undertaken in 2001, an assessment to determine factors affecting the vitality and viability of the town centre was undertaken.

The main findings are as follows;

- ❑ Castlebar provides a wide diversity of functions. These include local government, finance and banking, industry and manufacturing, professional practices and medical services.
- ❑ The increasing diversity in the range of shopping on offer has enabled the town to compete with other main centres in the region.
- ❑ The town offers a good choice of pubs, nightclubs, restaurants and multi-screen cinemas.
- ❑ Over half of the retail outlets surveyed attract customers from the entire county / region.
- ❑ There are approximately 200 retail outlets in Castlebar, ranging from the large national and international multiples to small independent retailers.
- ❑ A large proportion of the comparison retail outlets in the town are family/locally owned, while the convenience market is dominated by national and international multiples.
- ❑ Castlebar is a strong retail centre with a wide variety of both local and multiple retailers providing a dynamic retail environment.
- ❑ The relatively healthy state of the retail sector in the town is emphasized by the following:
 - ❑ The low level of vacant street level property in the primary shopping area.
 - ❑ The significant increases in retail rents noted by 75% of retailers.
 - ❑ Continued interest in new retail developments as evidenced by the number of planning applications received.
- ❑ The provision of multi-storey car parks would provide more capacity, while peripheral car parks would alleviate congestion and free up town centre sites for development.
- ❑ Parking charges along town centre streets would ease congestion in the town.
- ❑ The pedestrianisation of Main Street, Castle Street and Market Square area would reinforce the town centre as the primary shopping area and create a more attractive shopping environment.
- ❑ The use of Compulsory Purchase Orders for dealing with dereliction and assembling or releasing potential development sites is vital to good town centre management.
- ❑ The development of the river as an integrated space would provide an attractive feature for the town centre.
- ❑ The redevelopment of the old Dunnes Stores site on Bridge Street would act as a counter-balance to development in the Market Square area and attract more people to the Linenhall Street end of the town centre.

- ❑ The Spencer Street area would benefit from the redevelopment of the old cinema and improvements to the accessibility of the Spencer Street car park.

11.5 Castlebar Retailing Trends

Retailing in Castlebar has been enhanced in recent years by the provision of modern developments situated off the traditional shopping street (Main Street). This includes Dunnes Stores, Tesco, Aldi, Shaws, Argos and other retailers. There has also been recent out of town development in the form of retail warehousing (i.e. Woodies DIY and garden centre, Toymaster etc.)

The Castlebar town and environs population has grown considerably in recent years and this trend is expected to develop and grow in line with its NSS role as a linked hub with Ballina. This will simultaneously be reflected by the scale, range and offer of retail provision in the town.

The level and significance of applications for retail development within the Castlebar area helps to demonstrate the important role that Castlebar plays within the wider region and indeed the anticipated increased role that it is expected to play as a shopping destination in the future. It is a priority of the plan to maintain and strengthen the role of Castlebar as the principle-shopping destination within the county and the wider region.

11.6 Future Retail Space Requirements

The Draft Mayo County Retail Strategy 2007 includes an assessment of floor space required in Co. Mayo to 2021 based on expenditure projections (Table 11.3).

Table 11.3 Floor space Requirements.

	Requirements		
	Convenience	Pure Comparison	Bulky Goods
2006-2011	2,000	7,500	-
2011-2016	3,000	10,000	-
2016-2021	4,000	16,000	-
Total	9,000	33,500	20,000

In terms of the spatial distribution of future retail space, the Draft Retail Strategy provides broad approach on which to base policies for retail development:-

- ❑ The focus on **convenience** shopping should be on the provision of local and accessible facilities, which actively encourage a more sustainable approach to shopping. This would necessitate the provision of modern supermarket developments in each of the main town centres.
- ❑ Regarding (general) **comparison** shopping, the thrust of the retail strategy should be towards achieving a critical mass of higher order shopping facilities in the twin hub centres of Castlebar and Ballina. Indicatively, the strategy suggests that up to 75% of the identified comparison goods requirement will best be directed to Castlebar and Ballina.

The existing Retail Strategy 2002 identifies the following as potential retail development sites in Castlebar:-

- Town Centre:** The car parks / backland areas on either side of Main St. have considerable potential for Town Centre retail development, especially high order comparison shops.
- Edge of Centre:** Hopkin's Road, especially for high and middle order comparison shops. The Hat Factory site on Newport Road and the corner at Lower Chapel St. / New Antrim St. junction, both suitable for middle order comparison shops.
- Out of Centre:** Moneen and Breaffy Rd. areas for Retailing Warehousing developments.

11.7 Retail Hierarchy

Whilst Castlebar is an important sub-regional retail centre, it does not yet have sufficient critical mass to sustain out of centre district centres without damage to the vitality and viability of the core retail area.

RP 6 Retail Hierarchy

In order to guide the location of shopping and other services, the following retailing hierarchy is identified:

- a) Castlebar town centre is the prime regional shopping location and destination within the county and region;
- b) Neighbourhood Centre – There is a need for one large neighbourhood centre
- c) Local Centres are identified as important local service centres meeting the daily needs of the local community.

RP 7 Castlebar Town Centre

There will be a presumption in favour of proposals for retailing within Castlebar town centre where such proposals would enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre, in accordance with the policies set out, subject to;

- a) impact on the surrounding built environment - proposals should respect the character, setting and scale and be sensitively designed.
- b) infrastructure and access provision - depending on the significance of the proposals - a Traffic Impact Assessment may be required.
- d) Parking and public transport arrangements - proposals entailing significant floor space additions may be required to provide or contribute towards the provision of extra parking spaces within the town. There will also be a requirement to demonstrate linkages with local public transport provision

Castlebar is the primary retailing centre for Mayo and plan policy will seek to enhance this role. The Council will seek to ensure that proposals for the town centre contribute to the vitality and viability of the town centre and are not likely to adversely impact on the local environment.

The urban area of Castlebar is characterised by a relatively dense central area. Beyond this area, development becomes progressively less dense and is increasingly characterised by relatively dispersed suburban areas. These areas have tended to be separated from the principal employment, shopping, educational and recreational uses, with the resultant reliance on private transport and excessive consumption of agricultural land and urban sprawl.

An essential element of a sustainable urban strategy is the development of a compact town, which is characterised by the consolidation of existing, and the establishment of new neighbourhoods. Whilst on a spatial front, Castlebar remains relatively compact, the manner in which residential development has developed almost in isolation from support services, impacts adversely upon the town centre in terms of traffic movements, which create car parking demands in the town centre.

11.8 Neighbourhood Strategy

District centres comprise purpose built groups of shops separate from the Town Centre and normally located in large suburban areas or on the edge of urban areas. A district centre would normally contain at least one food supermarket or superstore, a range of unit shops and non-retail services such as banks, post offices, beauticians, restaurants etc. District centres cater for catchments within 15 – 20 minutes drive time and are likely to comprise approximately 10,000 m². A district centre of this scale would not yet be acceptable in Castlebar and Environs in the context of:-

- ☐ A proven level of existing retail under provision;
- ☐ Meeting the needs of a major growth in population either existing or planned.

There may be scope for the provision of a large neighbourhood centre to serve the needs of the larger newly developed neighbourhoods of the town.

RP 8 It is the objective of the Council to examine the potential of Castlebar to accommodate a large Neighbourhood Centre.

The town centre will be supported by identification of a series of neighbourhood / local centres. The location of neighbourhood / local centres seeks to ensure that all of the existing and future residential areas of Castlebar are adequately serviced by local facilities and services, including commercial and community centres. The provision of neighbourhood / local centres also seeks to provide a strong local focus for residential areas, creating a sense of place and community. A range of uses will be encouraged at neighbourhood centres – in addition to the retail uses. Such uses might include post office, credit union, dental and medical surgeries, places of worship, crèche and childcare facilities. The scale, size and number of units will be restricted to ensure that they serve local needs in local centres.

In order to act as a focal point in a residential area, high urban design quality will be sought for purpose built neighborhood centres. Buildings comprising the neighbourhood centre or in the immediate vicinity will generally be permitted to increase their heights to three or four storeys to reflect their prominence. A mix of uses will be encouraged at the centres, with residential and office uses promoted above first floor levels.

Local parks, civic spaces and community facilities will be encouraged in the immediate vicinity of neighbourhood centres so as to enhance their role in the community and encourage linked trips by modes other than the private car where such journeys are practical.

The provision of cycleways and footpaths linking the neighbourhood centres to surrounding residential areas will be encouraged. The neighbourhood centres will be encouraged to site on existing, improving or developing public transport routes.

RP 9 Neighbourhood Centres

Proposals for retailing within neighbourhood centres will be considered in relation to the size of the centre, the proximity to the town centre and the level of existing service provision within the centre.

The Council will seek to ensure that the local/ neighbourhood shopping needs of local residential areas are accommodated to the extent justified by the size of the neighbourhood catchment.

It is the objective of the Council to provide for the development of sustainable neighbourhoods, focused on neighbourhood centres with a mix of uses, densities and public services.

It is the objective of the Council to retain, protect and improve the environmental qualities of the existing suburban areas, to reinforce their neighbourhood centres and to provide for additional community services, amenities and facilities as identified in this Development Plan.

The neighbourhood plan identifies a series of local neighbourhood / local centres, which perform an important function of meeting the daily needs of the local community. It is a priority of the plan to maintain and where appropriate, enhance the retailing element of such centres commensurate with their size and existing role.

Proposals for new retail development will be generally required to conform to the locational and retail hierarchy. When considering proposals for local shopping development, the Council will have regard to the guidance set out in the Mayo County Council Retail Strategy. New developments which would be likely to have an adverse impact on the vitality and viability of established town centres should be rejected.

The merits of out of centre retail applications must be judged against the following criteria: -

- ❑ The broad need (floor space requirement) for additional retail development to serve an identified local community;
- ❑ Size of development;
- ❑ Quality of design and layout;
- ❑ Effect on the nearby environment;
- ❑ Effect on vitality and viability of existing town centres;
- ❑ Servicing;
- ❑ Accessibility and car parking.

The neighbourhood centres should provide where possible a mix of uses to meet the daily needs of the local community living which could include: -

- ❑ Local shops – from corner shop/newsagents to a small-scale
- ❑ Supermarket;
- ❑ Grocery/Butchers;
- ❑ Post Office/Bank;
- ❑ Public House/Restaurant;
- ❑ Pharmacy;
- ❑ Health Centre/GP Facilities/Dentist;
- ❑ Professional Services – Solicitors/Estate Agents;
- ❑ Childcare Facilities;
- ❑ Educational Facilities – Primary/Secondary Schools;
- ❑ Community Hall/ Training Centre;
- ❑ Office space for professional services etc.;
- ❑ Recreational/Open space areas;

The size and diversity of uses will depend on the area in question, its proximity to other centres, the size of the local population and the demand for such services.

11.9 Local Shops

There are several small local centres scattered throughout the town and environs. These facilities are generally not purpose built but rather have evolved over time. Local shops located in communities perform an important function in that they satisfy the local retailing requirements of the community. Similar to neighbourhood centres they play a vital economic and social role in communities and are important for essential day-to-day needs, with their accessibility to the less mobile sectors of the community of particular importance. The Council acknowledges the local importance of existing local shops and will require that they should be safeguarded and additional ones may be considered in areas where there is a clear deficiency of retail provision.

RP 10 It is the objective of the Council to protect existing local convenience shops and encourage the provision of new local convenience shops in residential areas where there is a clear deficiency of retail provision, subject to the protection of residential amenity.

RP 11 New Local Shops and Services

The Council would favourably consider the development of small-scale individual or a small group of shops providing for the daily needs of a local community at locations identified as local centres or where there is no suitable existing provision and there is a recognised need subject to: -

- a) scale of service commensurate with local area.
- b) provision of adequate parking and servicing.
- c) accessibility by a choice of means of transport.
- d) the proposal would not detract from the residential amenity or adversely affect highway safety or free flow of traffic.
- e) accords with the guidance set out in the adopted Retail Strategy.

11.10 The Sequential Test

To maintain Castlebar's status as the principal retailing destination within the county and region, retail proposals will be required to meet the requirements of the sequential test.

RP 12 Sequential Test

Except where specifically permitted by other policies, retail development outside the town centre core shopping areas should be resisted.

If it is demonstrated that no suitable town centre site is available for a proposed retail development, the Council can reasonably expect the developer to consider first an edge of centre site as an alternative location before seeking sites elsewhere in and around the town.

Proposals for edge of centre retail development should not be permitted where they would: -
a) be out of scale and character with the area concerned; or
b) materially prejudice the amount and variety of land identified for other types of development in the plan.

Only if it can be demonstrated that there are no suitable sites available in or on the edge of the defined town centre / core shopping area should out of centre sites be permitted for retail development, and then only if: -

- c) the development would not be detrimental to the vitality and viability of the existing town centres; and
- d) the site is accessible by a choice of means of transport; and
- e) the scheme would not be out of scale and character with the area concerned;
- f) the proposals would not materially prejudice the amount of land zoned for employment uses in the plan, or result in the loss of existing or committed housing land.

11.11 Retail Warehousing

An exception to the overall policy of consolidating and reinforcing the retail function of the town centre is the provision of retail warehousing. This is typified by large single storey buildings specialising in the sale of bulky goods such as carpets, furniture, electrical goods, garden products and DIY items. They are generally served by a surface car park and ease of servicing, requirements which are not readily accommodated in a town centre location and would represent an inefficient use of serviced and zoned town centre sites.

Retail warehousing should be restricted to truly 'bulky goods' and conform to pre-agreed size thresholds to be established by the Council. In order to reduce the adverse impact of car traffic, it is considered appropriate to group retail warehouses on a single site to facilitate multiple shopping trips using a shared or communal surface car park. For similar reasons there may be a case for co-locating a retail park with a large neighbourhood centre including a discount store.

RP 13 Retail Warehousing

Retail warehousing will be permitted within those areas identified for this use on the Land Use Zoning plan subject to conditions limiting the range of goods sold or the size on units and to minimise any adverse effect on the vitality of town centres.

11.12 Petrol Filling Stations

Most of the town's petrol filling stations and associated forecourt shops are located outside the main commercial core of the town. Traditionally the primary use of these sites was as a petrol filling station

with a small ancillary retail outlet. However, the scale of retail outlets has increased and in some cases threatens to overcome fuel sales as the traditional use of the site.

National Retail Guidance indicates that the retail use of a site as a petrol station, pending the scale of such a convenience store, can adversely impact on traditional retail outlets such as local corner shops. Subsequently, 'The Retail Planning Guidelines' state that the size of a shop associated with any petrol station should take account of the following factors: -

- ❑ Large stores tend to attract additional custom, which can lead to additional car borne trips primarily for shopping purposes.
- ❑ Large numbers of parked cars in station forecourts can cause disruption and queuing for those simply wishing to use petrol pumps.
- ❑ The preferred location for retailing is in town centres, not isolated sites outside these preferred locations.

Notwithstanding the above, a shop of up to 100m² (net) retail floorspace is considered acceptable when associated with a petrol filling station.

11.13 Ancillary Retail

To help maintain the vitality and viability of the town centre and to protect local areas, it is important that retailing is undertaken within the defined centres as stipulated by policy. It is also reasonable to allow for ancillary retailing to be undertaken associated with the commercial and industrial uses, outside of the main retail centres, in a non-significant ancillary nature.

RP 14 Ancillary Retail

Outside of the town centre, industrial and commercial premises can only undertake retailing of their goods as an ancillary function of their business as a whole.

For the purposes of clarification of this policy, ancillary is defined as 10% of the total floor space.

11.14 Discount Food Stores

To maintain Castlebar's status as the principal shopping destination, retail proposals must comply with the requirements of the sequential test. Discount Food Stores are, along with other shops, capable of anchoring a large neighbourhood centre.

RP 15 Discount Food Stores

Discount Food stores should only be permitted where they are in accordance with the sequential test, and where they support the overall retail strategy for the town.

12 THE TOWN CENTRE



Strategic Objective

To promote Castlebar town centre as the focal point of the town's archaeological, cultural and historic heritage, the shopping, commercial and administrative core, and location for key community and residential uses.

12.1 Introduction

The town centre acts as the focus for community life and economic activity of the town and its hinterland and is a major component of the town's identity. The concentration of shops, places of employment, leisure venues and meeting places characterizes town centres. The accommodation of these uses and functions and the management of the pressures they create is the key to a successful and vibrant town centre.

Castlebar town centre acts as the social, economic, retail and cultural focal point for a large surrounding rural hinterland. However, like many regional towns in Ireland, the vitality and viability of the town centre is threatened by increasing pressure for out of town retailing developments. To date there have been no significant out of town convenience shopping developments, however, several comparison detail area have developed in the Enterprise and Employment zoned areas to the north east of the town. It is a consistent policy of the Council to strengthen the role of the town centre as the primary retailing centre for both the town of Castlebar and the wider region.

12.2 Town Centre Issues and Opportunities

Castlebar town centre contains the greater proportion of the town's archaeological, cultural and historic heritage, the shopping, commercial and administrative core, and key community and residential uses.

In common with many urban centres of a similar size, the core of the town has become depopulated as land use has become predominantly commercial. A population decline of over 6% was experienced in the Town Centre during the intercensal period 2002-2006.

Castlebar town centre remains an attractive location in which to shop, do business and live. Several new shopping developments have recently been opened in the market Square/Knockacrogery area, which has consolidated the town centres dominance as the principle retail area. A new streetscape has been created and is populated by high street retailers, boutiques and cafes, centred around the main multiple retailers of Dunnes Stores, Tesco and ALDI. The Town Centre has retained much of the day and night vitality which other centres lack once business hours cease. As well as the essential contribution of active traders, a variety of factors contribute to this vitality. Many of them to be found in the unique built form and heritage of the streets and urban spaces themselves. These factors include the town centre's compact nature, the topography, the skyline, the presence of the Castlebar River, the level of permeability offered by the historic street and lane networks and the wide mix of activities to be found in a relatively small area.

The Council views the town centre as the jewel in the crown of Castlebar, a place where people should have the widest variety of shopping, entertainment, cultural and leisure facilities, a place where people can walk safely and feel secure, while enjoying a pleasant urban environment.

12.3 Retail

The continued focus on the town centre for commerce, employment and various other services in Castlebar has heavily influenced its growth and contributed to its identity. However, in common with many other town centres, it has come under increasing pressure from out-of-centre and out-of-town shopping centres in recent years. Despite retail being the main use in the town centre, the size and range of shops has remained relatively static compared to what is on offer outside the town and this is reflected in the expenditure leakage from the town centre shops to other urban centres, particularly Galway. It is considered that the recent developments in the market square as well as the realisation of the potential of several other key town centre sites will allow this leakage to be halted and Castlebar's share of the market can grow over the life of this plan and beyond. Traffic congestion, lack of car parking space, small individual floor plate sizes and the generally constrained size of the town centre have affected its ability to compete for customers and retailers.

12.4 Town Centre Office Development

Office uses have a significant presence in Castlebar town centre. This use can often have a complementary relationship with that of retail. Whereas retail uses will generally occupy the ground floor, the upper floors of buildings in the town centre will often be suited to office uses that do not require ground floor presence, particularly professional services. Uses such as this provide important services and employment to the population of Castlebar town and the wider region.

Within the shopping core it is important to maintain a predominance of shop fronts at ground level in order to retain continuity and vitality in the main shopping area. Therefore there will generally be a presumption against business office development at ground floor level in the main shopping frontages. Office development will be permitted in these areas above ground floor level and behind frontages. Separate access to office developments in these locations is desirable in order that future use of upper floors is not prejudiced.

TCP 1 It is a policy of the Council to facilitate the provision of office space particularly in the upper floors of buildings in the town centre.

12.5 Entertainment and Leisure



Entertainment and leisure uses include hotels¹³, pubs, nightclubs, restaurants, cafes, theatres, cinemas and tourist attractions. These uses attract people into the town centre in large numbers sustaining activity after normal business hours in the evening and maintaining its position as the focal point for community life in the town. Most of these uses in Castlebar are concentrated in the town centre. The demand for such uses will increase as the town expands in line with the projections in the national and regional planning strategies. Due to the competition between various other uses for limited space within the town centre, it is inevitable that a certain amount of this demand will be met outside of the town centre. In order to

ensure that the town centre maintains its profile as the primary venue for such activities it will be important that planning policy encourages and facilitates the expansion of these essential town centre activities.

TCP 2 It is a policy of the council to facilitate, where appropriate, the development of entertainment uses at locations within the town centre. The town centre shall be promoted as the most appropriate location for such uses.

12.6 Residential

It is desirable to maintain an element of residential use in or close to the town centre as it provides after hours life and activity and informal surveillance outside normal commercial hours. The provision of new town centre housing will be favourably considered on suitable town centre sites, subject to the provisions of Chapter 14. The Council will also actively encourage the conversion of disused or under used commercial or other properties for residential use. The Council may require that any new residential developments within the town centre shall incorporate a non-residential, preferably retail use at the ground floor.

TCO 1 It is an objective of the Council to facilitate, where appropriate, the provision residential uses within the town centre. A mix of upper floor uses including apartments over shops shall be encouraged.

12.7 Urban Form

The central core of Castlebar town centre is traditionally formed of two and three-storey buildings defining the main streets. These buildings generally date from the turn of the 20th Century. The traditional urban forms of that time prevail at present. For the main part, the facades running through the centre of Castlebar are well maintained and are visually attractive.

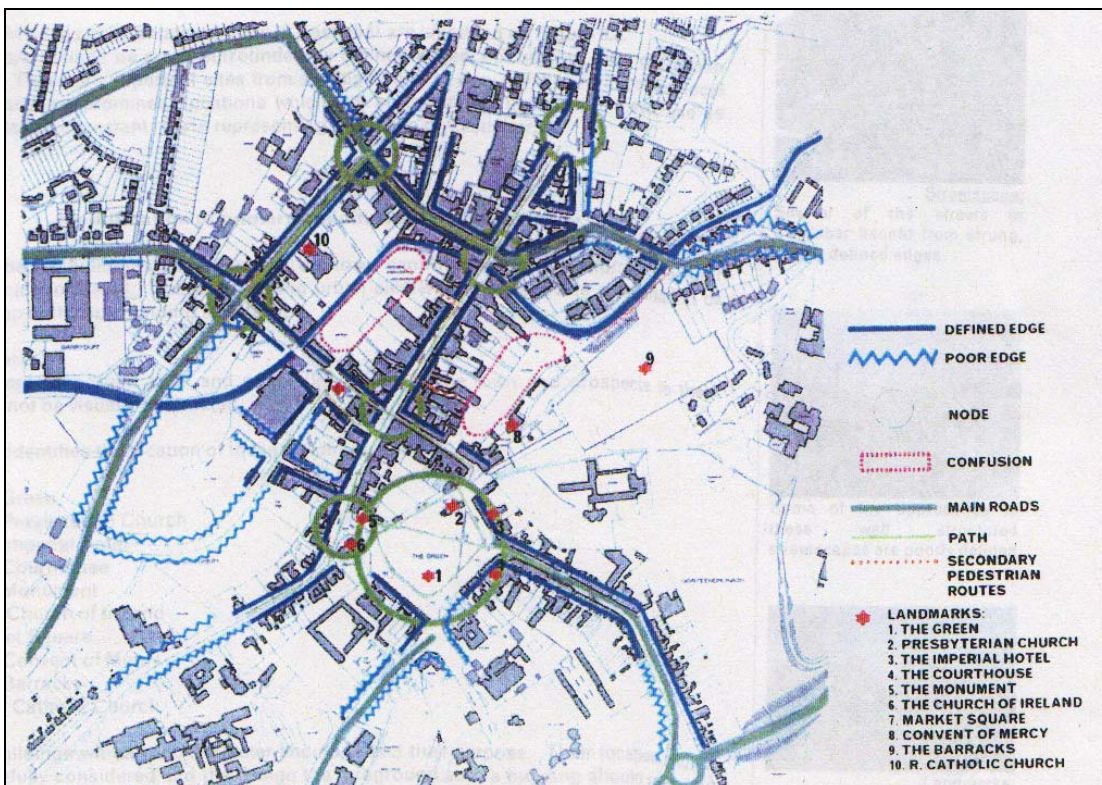
The 'Castlebar Design Guide' includes an analysis of the townscape. Several of the streetscapes in the town benefit from the existence of strong, clearly defined edges. However, in some instances, the approaches to these well-structured streetscapes are poorly defined and have a negative impact on the visitor's first impression of the town. These areas would greatly benefit from a structured urban design approach for their redevelopment. It is important that the town establishes a visual 'branding' to the visitor and presents itself as a cohesive, clearly defined place.

¹³ Picture of recently reopened Days Hotel in frame.



Frame 12.2 2 and 3 storey streetscape

TCO 2 It is the objective of the Council to protect the existing streetscape and enhance poorly defined edges on approach roads. New or redeveloped buildings shall respect the height of the existing streetscape, except in instances where the Council consider there are valid urban design reasons for increased height, for example, where a building would add definition to an urban space or key junction/corner site.



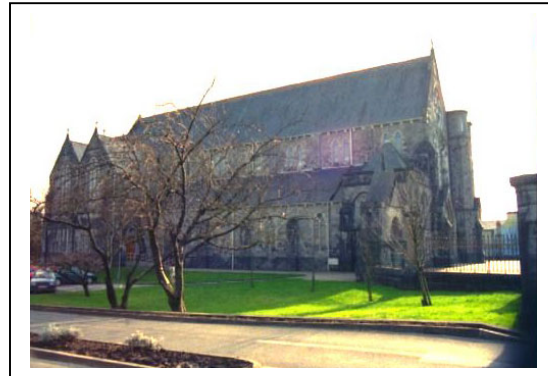
Streetscape Analysis. Source: Castlebar Design Guide

Nodes are defined as areas surrounded by defined edges, connecting main circulation routes. These are important sites from a design point of view, as they form natural focal points and are prominent locations, and as such, play an important role in representing the image of Castlebar.

A number of buildings and spaces in the town centre are remarkable for architectural style, scale or detail. These are strong urban elements, which provide a foundation backdrop to the surrounding streetscape.

Landmarks are important focal and orientation points in the town and prospects to them should not be visually obstructed. Landmarks in Castlebar town centre include: -

- 1) The Green
- 2) The Presbyterian Church
- 3) The Imperial Hotel
- 4) The Courthouse
- 5) The Monument
- 6) The Church of Ireland
- 7) Market Square
- 8) The Convent of Mercy
- 9) The Barracks
- 10) The Catholic Church



The architectural language of Castlebar generally takes its style from the historical core. In this area the prevalent architectural style is typically Victorian, with buildings having a strong vertical emphasis due to the narrow plot widths and proportions of tall, narrow windows.

It is the intention of the Council to build on the strengths of the town centre's fabric and to improve the quality of the public realm, during the course of this Plan. The designation of an Architectural Conservation Area along Main Street will ensure the protection of the historic character of the town centre and allow it to inform its ongoing development.

12.8 Principles for Good Development within the Town Centre

The principles set out for good development within the town centre seek to ensure that any new development respects the character and setting and would not detract from the townscape in terms of use, layout or design.

Any new developments within the town centre will be required to respect the heritage and architectural character of street, maintaining a vertical emphasis and should: -

- a) respect the character of the streetscape in terms of design detail including proposed materials.
- b) conform with the scale, massing, layout, height and urban grain of the streetscape as far as possible to ensure continuity of street frontage and definition of public and private space.
- c) observe the historic building line, avoiding any setbacks where possible.
- d) respect and not restrict important view / vistas or landmarks within the townscape.
- e) where possible contribute to enhancing the focus of pedestrian movement within the town centre.

12.9 Traffic and Transport

All new developments in the town centre should take into account the traffic generated by its users, and the effect of this traffic on the public realm.

In particular, the promotion of pedestrian circulation over vehicular traffic in the town centre would enhance the creation of a place, which would be more pleasant to spend time in. Recent studies have shown that, in tandem with the creation of a more pleasant experience for pedestrians, increased pedestrian traffic generally leads to an increase in retail turnover.

TCO 3 It is an objective of the Council to facilitate the development of an accessible town centre with particular reference to persons with reduced mobility, pedestrians and cyclists and to improve the availability of public transport, and short, medium and long stay car parking facilities in collaboration with the private sector, transport providers and other public bodies.

The concept of pedestrianisation of the Main Street has been promoted by the Castlebar Chamber of Commerce in recent discussion. This would help remove the issues of heavy through traffic and congestion, whilst also enhancing the overall town centre shopping and environment and its attractiveness.

12.10 Shopfronts & Signage

Good signage on shops and commercial premises can contribute to the character, appearance and vitality of the town centre. Castlebar has many fine examples of traditional shop fronts together with some contemporary shop front treatments, which respect traditional design. However the appearance of large parts of the town centre is marred by the imposition of inappropriate signage and shop fronts. This takes the form of both poor design and inappropriate use of materials. The Council shall seek to encourage sympathetic shop front and signage treatment.

When considering shop fronts, the Council will also consider the condition of the façade of the building and in particular the contribution, which the façade makes to the streetscape. Having regard to the contribution made by shop fronts to the overall environment of the town centre, it is important to protect and enhance the shop fronts traditional character that typifies Castlebar.

TCP 3 It is the policy of the Council to encourage the retention of traditional shop fronts of high quality. The replacement or repair of shop fronts will be completed with standards set out in Chapter 14, Development Management.

12.11 Town Centre Ambience

Retail provision is not the only function of the town centre. The town centre provides a number of functions and operates on a number of levels. Retail policies and objectives must be pursued in conjunction with a significantly enhanced public realm that establishes a sense of place and which embraces and celebrates the strong history and heritage in the town. In this respect, the Council will encourage design, which focuses on urban spaces, buildings, linkages, design and interpretation of the town's heritage through sculpture and other forms of public art.

The Council will also seek to encourage development proposals including change of use proposals, which add social vibrancy to the town centre. Proposals may include arts / cultural venues / entertainment venues / restaurants / bistros / cafes etc. The maintenance of a healthy evening economy will be a priority and in this respect the Council will encourage public safety measures.

TCP 4 It is a policy of the Council to encourage the reuse of under utilised sites and buildings within the plan area.

12.12 Infill and Backland Development

Infill and backland development is in many cases an appropriate means of redevelopment. It can be considered a suitable method of promoting a sustainable use of land within the built up areas,

improving the attractiveness of an area and also ensuring the continued viability and vitality of the town centre.

The form of the shopping core is mainly linear with only limited in depth development behind the main retail frontages. There is scope for expansion of the shopping area in depth by development to the rear of existing frontages. This is particularly the case to the rear of properties on both sides of Market Street and Bridge Street.

In considering applications for backland development, the Council will treat each site on its own merits in accordance with the site capabilities and the particular location. Backland development of individual sites will not be permitted where it would be deemed likely to have a detrimental impact on the surrounding sites in that it would be likely to prejudice the comprehensive development of an area where reasonable development potential might otherwise exist.

TCP 5 It is a policy of the Council to facilitate the development of suitable backland and infill sites for appropriate uses.

12.13 Amenity

The standard of paving and footpaths throughout the town centre is relatively good and there is a relatively high quality public realm, street furniture and decorations in the more modern parts of the town centre (i.e. Tesco/Dunnes Stores area and revamped Market Square). The town is well provided with litterbins and this is evident from an overall lack of litter in most parts of the main shopping area.

The environmental quality of some of the secondary shopping streets in the town centre is somewhat less attractive, in particular more peripheral areas where there are emerging signs of deterioration and poor maintenance. The edge treatment of the Castlebar River needs to be addressed in any new development proposals.

TCP 6 It is a policy of the Council to encourage the rejuvenation of peripheral shopping areas, which are showing signs of deterioration and neglect.

The amenity value of the town centre can be considerably enhanced through environmental improvements such as street furniture, public art and tree planting. In addition, the provision of civic spaces for passive and active activities plays an important role in the enjoyment of the town centre.

TCP 6 It is a policy of the Council to seek the enhancement of the environmental quality and physical appearance of the town centre, through the use of street furniture, public art, tree planting and general landscaping, where feasible.

TCP 7 It is a policy of the Council to seek to ensure a high quality of design of open space in the town centre to create vibrant civic spaces and for a wide range of passive and active activities.

13 BUILT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE



Strategic Objective

To continue to promote Castlebar as the County town and as a regional nodal centre, while securing and enhancing the heritage character of the town.

13.1 Introduction

Cultural Heritage refers to the development history of the town since the earliest settlement of the area. This development history includes layers of past development that make a visible contribution to the identity of the town, i.e. the built heritage, and earlier layers of development that are less visible or concealed by subsequent layers, i.e. archaeological heritage.

Castlebar's identity is founded upon this Cultural Heritage and the town relies upon it for much of its attractiveness as a place to live in and visit. The importance of this heritage is recognised and provided for by national legislation such as the Planning and Development Act 2000 and the National Monuments Acts 1930-2004, which provide protection for the built heritage and archaeological remains respectively.

The Council will seek to preserve and enhance Castlebar's heritage by protecting historic buildings, groups of buildings, the existing street pattern, plot sizes and scales, while encouraging mixed use development where appropriate to the historic context. It is also an objective to develop the tourist and recreational potential of the built heritage where possible and appropriate.

13.2 Historical Context

Castlebar is named after the Norman adventurer De Barrie, who founded a castle there in 1235 (Castle Barry). By 1400, the time of the Composition of Mayo, the de Burgo Clan ruled.

The development of the town goes back to 1609 when Sir John Bingham obtained the grant of a market and fair. In 1613, King James 1st of England granted John Bingham a charter of incorporation. Under this charter the town had a Portreeve (Mayor) and a 15-member corporation. It was also entitled to elect two members to the Irish House of Parliament.

In 1691 the town being the main British Outpost in Connaught next to Galway, was made a Garrison town. Over the years several regiments of the British army were posted here including the Welsh and Scottish Fencibles, the 69th Regiment and later the Connaught Rangers. The present barracks was built in 1834 with the entrance pillars at Rock Square being completed in 1831. A portion of the barracks was burned during the Civil War in 1922.

The area is especially associated with the Bingham family who resided here from 1584 in the Lawn House. In 1776, Charles Bingham was granted the title Earl of Lucan or Lord Lucan.

13.3 Cultural Heritage Aims

The following are the aims that will govern the Cultural Heritage policies and objectives: -

- ☐ Protect the built heritage;
- ☐ Promote the sensitive reuse of protected structures;
- ☐ Ensure that the future development of the town is informed by its built heritage; and
- ☐ Protect the archaeological heritage through the preservation and/or recording of archaeological remains.

13.4 Conservation of the Built Heritage

The rich cultural heritage of Castlebar is an integral part of its attractiveness. The Castlebar Architectural Heritage Study 2000 was carried out as part of the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage in order to highlight features of architectural importance in the town. The collection of buildings and spaces surveyed include features of national, regional and local importance. Castlebar benefits from a legacy of 18th, 19th and 20th century buildings including townhouses on Ellison Street, civic and institutional buildings such as the Military barracks, and ecclesiastical buildings such as the Church of Ireland (Christchurch) on The Mall and the Catholic Church on Upper Chapel Street. The town has also inherited a Town Centre street pattern that has informed the layout of the subsequent expansion of the town.



Frame 13.2: Shambles Street

The architecture of these buildings and the spaces between them such as Rock Square, the Fairgreen and Market Square lend attractiveness to the Town Centre. The institutional and civic buildings provide historic links to the past and contribute to the town's identity as the County Town and as an important centre for public services and administration.



Frame 13.2: The Fairgreen in summer

The traditional shop fronts in Castlebar are also important to the architectural heritage of the town. The Council will encourage the retention of shop fronts according to the Council's guidance (see Development Management). New shop fronts will also be expected to respect the traditional character of the town.



Figure 13.3: Traditional style shop fronts at Main Street

13.5 Protected Structures

A Protected Structure is a structure that a Council considers to be of special interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical point of view.

The Record of Protected Structures (RPS) (Appendix 1) lists all buildings, features and sites to be protected and preserved in the plan area. A 'protected structure' is defined in the Planning Act 2000 as any structure or specified part of a structure, which is included in the Record of Protected Structures. In relation to a protected structure or proposed protected structure, the meaning of the term includes the interior of the structure, the land lying within the curtilage of the structure, any other structures lying within that curtilage and their interiors, all fixtures and features which form part of the interior or exterior of that structure. Any features specified as being in the attendant grounds are also protected. Each owner and occupier of a protected structure is legally obliged to ensure that the structure is preserved.



CHO 1 It is the objective of the Council to protect and preserve buildings, features and sites of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest under the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act 2000 (as amended) and Draft Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2001.

The Council will prevent the demolition or any material alteration of buildings, features and sites in Appendix 1 unless it can be demonstrated that: -

- ☐ All efforts have been made to sustain existing uses or find new ones, and these efforts have failed;
- ☐ Ownership by a charity or community group is unviable or unsuitable;
- ☐ Redevelopment of the site would greatly benefit the community and would outweigh the loss of the building/structure resulting from demolition;
- ☐ The building is unsafe and cannot be made safe;
- ☐ The building should first be removed from the RPS.

Under the planning system, many minor works to structures do not normally require planning permission. These works are known as exempted development. However, for a protected structure, such works can be carried out without planning permission only if the works would not affect the character of the structure or any element of the structure that contributes to its special interest. The owner or occupier of a protected structure can ask for a 'Declaration' as to what is and is not exempted development in relation to a particular building.

A planning application involving a protected structure is generally made in the same way as any other planning application. However, additional documentation must be submitted with the application and the newspaper and site notices must indicate that the application relates to a protected structure.

Outline permission cannot be granted for works to a protected structure or to any works within its curtilage, but an application can be made for a change of use. The demolition of a protected structure is not permitted, except in exceptional circumstances, and involves making an application to have the structure removed from the record of protected structures.

Each owner and occupier must ensure that a protected structure or any element of a protected structure is not endangered through harm, decay or damage, whether over a short or long period, through neglect or through direct or indirect means. The Council may: -

- ❑ Require an owner or an occupier of a protected structure to carry out works if it considers that the structure is or may become endangered;
- ❑ Require an owner or an occupier of a protected structure to carry out works if it considers that the character of the structure ought to be restored;
- ❑ Acquire, by agreement or compulsorily, a protected structure if it considers that this is desirable or necessary in relation to the protection of the structure.

Castlebar has a significant number of buildings/structures, which are important in relation to architecture, heritage and history. It is the primary objective of the Council to protect these buildings and structures in their entirety. Proposed development adjacent to protected structures must be sensitively designed to further enhance the streetscape. Innovative design is promoted once it doesn't overshadow or infringe upon or detract from existing protected structures.

The list of structures is not exhaustive and new structures may be added to the RPS under section 55 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The formal making of an addition or deletion from the Record is a reserved function of the Elected Members.

CHO 2 It is the objective of the Council to maintain and review the Record of Protected Structures in accordance with Part IV of the Planning and Development Act.

13.6 Reuse of Existing Buildings

In the context of sustainable development a commitment to reusing and maximising the retention of buildings will further protect and enhance buildings and structures for future generations. Appropriate materials and techniques must be incorporated during refurbishment. In this regard underused buildings will again become an intrinsic part of the urban landscape and add to the vitality and liveability of the plan area.

CHO 3 It is an objective of the Council to invoke the provisions of the Derelict Sites Act 1990 to address problems of dereliction in towns.

CHP 1 It is the policy of the Council to encourage the appropriate reuse, renovation and rehabilitation of older buildings, which are not protected, but have some architectural, historical or heritage merit.

13.7 Architectural Conservation Area

Architectural Conservation Areas are places, areas, groups of structures or a townscape, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or contribute to the appreciation of protected structures. Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA) are provided for in accordance with section 81 of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

The inclusion of ACAs within the Development Plan gives greater control over the form of development and decreases instances of inappropriate development, particularly within the town centre.

CHO 4 It is the objective of the Council to designate areas of special interest and importance as Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA's) as provided for in Section 81 of the Part IV of the Planning and Development Act, 2000.

CHO 5 It is an objective of the Council to protect all buildings, structures and sites which are an inherent part of the streetscape and which contribute to the Plan area's heritage, diversity and history.

Proposed development within or adjacent to conservation areas will only be permitted if it would conserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area. The demolition of non-protected structures will be granted within the ACA if they do not contribute positively to the character or appearance of the ACA or where it can be proven that the building is beyond viable repair.

Permission for alterations and extensions will be granted to non-protected structures within an ACA if the alterations and extensions preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area.

Planning permission will be required for any changes to the exterior appearance of buildings contained within an Architectural Conservation Area even if the buildings are not on the record of Protected Structures.

13.8 The Record of Monuments and Places

Archaeological remains and deposits can advance the understanding of how Castlebar Town and its environs have developed over the centuries and increase the knowledge of its past. It will, therefore, be important to preserve the archaeological remains within any future developments, either by protecting/preserving archaeological remains in situ or by removing and recording them.

The town and environs has a rich archaeological history. There is abundant evidence of enclosures, crannogs, earthworks and later stone fortifications around Lough Lannagh, while a large part of the town centre is designated as a single protected site.

CHO 6 It is an objective of the Council to secure the preservation (i.e. preservation in-situ or, as a minimum, preservation by record) of all archaeological monuments included in the Record of Monuments as established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994, and of sites, features and objects of archaeological interest generally.

The Council also acknowledges the significance of lacustrine¹⁴ and riverine¹⁵ areas in relation to archaeological potential. Therefore any development or works that may impact on an area of archaeological potential including underwater areas may be subject to archaeological recommendations and mitigation prior to construction.

Planning applications for development likely to impact upon in situ archaeological deposits or structures shall be accompanied by archaeological surveys, test excavations and/or monitoring by an appropriately qualified archaeologist.

The Council recognises that there may be important archaeological deposits located outside the Zone of Archaeological Potential. Where such deposits are uncovered through development, the Council will have regard to the recommendations of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in promoting their preservation and recording. The Council may request that archaeological field evaluation take place as part of the application or before development proposals are implemented, where there is evidence that archaeological remains are present.

13.9 Irish Language

As the County Town and administrative centre of the county, which is home to a Gaeltacht area it is important that the Council embraces the Irish language in its service provision. The protection of the Irish language is a national aim enshrined in the Planning and Development Act 2000. The provision of services through the medium of Irish is encouraged.

Following the introduction of the Official Languages Act 2003, public bodies are statutorily obliged to deliver services through Irish where required.

CHP 1 It is a policy of the Council to promote the use of the Irish language, so that it is used regularly in the home at work and within the wider plan area.

¹⁴ Lough Lannagh and Saleen Lough

¹⁵ Castlebar River

14 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

14.1 Introduction

Development Management parameters and guidelines along with strategy, policy and objectives contained in the plan form the backbone of the overall planning system and are the benchmark against which all planning applications are assessed. In order to ensure the proper planning and sustainable development of the town, it is essential that these parameters be clearly stated in order that potential developers can assess the likely acceptability of a development proposal to the local authority. As such, development should conform to a number of requirements, which are set out in this chapter under the main headings outlined below. It is important from the outset to stress the Council's commitment to quality and sustainability in urban design. In particular, emphasis will be placed on creating a sense of place in relation to new developments through respecting the local setting and townscape, responding to the individual site, incorporating innovative design and creating new spaces, which are primarily people orientated, particularly in relation to housing developments.

14.2 General Development Management Principles

In order for any development to be attractive and function well, the design must take into account the characteristics of the local setting and the urban area context. The context of the site should be analysed to ensure that the development will: -

1. Respect the design qualities of the townscape;
2. Provide spatial characteristics and building forms which are sympathetic to the surrounding townscape (height, massing and bulk); and
3. Respect local topography, flora and fauna.
4. Provide for sustainable forms of transport (good links to public transport, cycling and walking).

Depending on the nature and size of proposals it is recommended that developers engage in pre-planning discussions with the Planning Authority at the appropriate stages of the design process.

A Design Statement incorporating a visual impact analysis, should be prepared for all larger and complex developments at an early stage of the design process / pre-application stage. The Design Statement should take the form of a concise illustration or series of illustrations and a written statement. This material will form the basis of meaningful pre-application discussions with the Planning Authority. Even on smaller sites a brief design statement may be requested outlining the developer's response to local surroundings.

14.3 General Standards

14.3.1 Density

Density is a measure of the relationship between buildings and their surrounding space. As a standard it is used to achieve the optimum use of urban land appropriate to its location with respect to walking catchments to urban centres, public transport, employment centers and community services and facilities.

It can be expressed in terms of population, in terms of buildings or, as is common in Ireland, in terms of dwelling units per hectare. The latter measure is useful with respect to existing or proposed developments, which are purely residential in use, but is flawed with respect to a mixed-use area or Town Centre area, for which plot ratio is a more accurate measure.

14.3.2 Plot Ratio

For all development in the town centre area, including residential, density will be applied on a plot ratio basis. Plot ratio is the relationship between the site area and the total floor area of the buildings erected on it and is calculated by dividing the gross floor area of the building by the site area. It is

expressed as a ratio. The gross floor area is the sum of all floor space within the external walls of the building(s), excluding plant, tank rooms, basement storage areas and parking areas. In the case of a group of buildings within a common curtilage the floor area will be aggregated.

The purpose of the plot ratio control is to: -

- ❑ Prevent the adverse affects of both over-development and under-development on the amenity and layout of buildings within the town centre;
- ❑ Achieve desirable massing of heights of buildings;
- ❑ Balance the capacity of the site and the capacity of the frontage streets.

Plot ratio cannot be taken solely as a measure on its own. Other factors must be applied alongside the plot ratio measurement in order to assess the suitability of a proposal for a site. These other factors may include: -

- ❑ Building height;
- ❑ Public open space provision;
- ❑ Private open space provision;
- ❑ Road access;
- ❑ Parking standards; and
- ❑ Residential Amenity standards.

The indicative plot ratios for the Council are as follows:-

A) Town Centre/Commercial (E1¹⁶ and E2¹⁷)

The wider town centre/commercial area has been divided into two zones and also includes an area included in the north-eastern corner of the Lannagh Area Action Plan. Within the inner zone a higher density is considered appropriate, due to its central location, where maximum intensity of activities is concentrated. The plot ratio in the inner zone (E1) Town Centre/Commercial zone therefore is 1:1.5 to 1:2.5.

In the edge of center area zone (E2) a plot ratio of 1:1.0 to 1:2.0 will apply.

The Local Authority may use its discretion in permitting plot ratios in excess of this where it is considered appropriate and in the interests of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, as well as complying with the objectives of sustainable development.

B) Community/Institutional

A significant proportion of lands to the south of the town centre are zoned for Community/Institutional uses. The majority of new development within the Community/Institutional lands will be by the existing state or educational bodies. The majority of the lands are already developed. The plot ratio for these lands is 1:0.5 to 1:1.5.

However, due to the recent closures of the Military Barracks and the Convent and the ever changing needs of the Castlebar Hospital, GMIT, Religious Orders and Schools, some of the lands close to the town centre may become available for development in the short to medium term. The development of these lands will be subject to the preparation of Area Framework Plans prior to development. A maximum plot ratio of 1:1.5 to 1:2.0 is considered appropriate in these areas.

C) Suburban Areas (Zones A, B and C)

Outside the town centre, three separate areas of residentially zoned lands have been established. The first area refers to the existing primarily built up residential/infill lands (Zone A). Within this area the plot ratio will reflect the plot ratio of the adjoining lands, subject to all other issues being appropriately addressed.

¹⁶ Zone E1 represents the Inner core Shopping area illustrated in Figure 11.2

¹⁷ Zone E2 represents the Outer core Shopping area illustrated in Figure 11.2

The second zone (zone B) is for new residential at a medium density and a medium density plot ratio 1:0.35 to 1:0.50 shall apply. In the outer zone (Zone C) a lower density is appropriate due to the location of these areas further from the town centre and closer to the undeveloped fringe. A plot ratio of 1:0.25 to 1:0.35 shall apply in the C zone.

In residential terms, the use of plot ratio, rather than the traditional density measure of houses/per hectare, allows the construction of a mix of house types and allows for a range of unit sizes. This is particularly advantageous at present when household size is falling and smaller residential units are required.

The actual density permitted in any location will be determined by considering the following factors: -

1. The capacity of the infrastructure to cater for future population levels.
2. Existing landscape and other features on site.
3. Provisions relating to car parking, open space, landscaping and planting.
4. Existing building lines or townscape character.
5. Principles of sustainability.
6. Proximity to main transportation routes.
7. Design Quality – higher densities may be permitted in developments exhibiting high levels of design and layout.

D) Enterprise and Employment (Zone D)

Within the Enterprise and Employment zone a plot ratio of 1:0.5 is considered appropriate and new developments should exceed this standard.

14.3.3 Site Coverage¹⁸

Site Coverage is a mechanism used in the planning system to prevent the adverse effects of over-development and to ensure the built environment is not inappropriately overloaded with building mass. This is expressed as a percentage, determined by dividing the ground floor area of the building/s by the total site area. Site coverage shall not normally exceed 80% in any zone.

Indicative site coverage

	Zoning	Site Coverage
A	Existing residential/Infill	0.5
B	New Residential Medium Density	0.6
C	New Residential Low Density	0.5
D	Enterprise and Employment	0.8
E	Town Centre/Commercial	0.8
F	Residential/Commercial	0.6
G	Recreation/Open Space	N/A
H	Neighbourhood Centre	0.4
I	Community/Institutional	0.5

14.4 Residential Use Standards

14.4.1 Introduction - Residential Density

The issue of densities is a crucial aspect of residential development standards. The Planning Authorities recognize that appropriate design and layout providing a high quality living environment, including the availability of proper shopping, transport and leisure infrastructure, are essential if increased residential densities are to be acceptable.

¹⁸ Exceptions may be allowed when they can be justified on other grounds, for example on a corner site where it is necessary to ensure a building of adequate height on both frontages

The Council has had regard to the 'Residential Density: Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (DoEHLG 1999) in the preparation of this Plan and will have regard to same in exercising of development control functions. When published, the planning authority will also have regard to the final Planning Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas and the *Best Practice Urban Design Manual*.

The Planning Authorities reserve the right to determine appropriate standards for each specific application. Furthermore, the Planning Authorities will encourage innovative and well-designed schemes with a mix of house types.

The principal benefits of increased residential density are seen as:

- ❑ More economic use of existing infrastructure and serviced land,
- ❑ A reduced need for the development of 'green field' sites, urban sprawl and ribbon development,
- ❑ Reduced need for investment in new infrastructure,
- ❑ Better access to existing services and facilities, and
- ❑ More sustainable commuting patterns.

The use of density limits alone has limited control over the quality of the residential environment. Therefore, density will be determined by a combination of actual density limits (i.e. plot ratio/site coverage) and other standards relating to public open space, private open space, privacy, overlooking car parking, design and layout. The control of development by a combination of density provisions and standards as set out above will ensure the provision of a high quality living environment.

In the development of new residential areas, the maximum gross residential density shall be 20 dwellings per hectare (8 dwellings per acre). All proposals should have due regard to the "Residential Density Guidelines for Planning Authorities" 1999 and the final Planning Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas and the Best Practice Urban Design Manual once adopted.

Every proposal for residential development other than for exempt residential development must specify how it is proposed to provide a suitable dwelling mix / housing type, building form, and layout arrangements in order to meet the requirements of the Housing Strategy for County Mayo.

The following indicative residential densities are considered appropriate: -

Indicative residential Density

	Zoning	Units Per hectare
A	Existing residential/Infill	On individual sites the prevalent density will be the deciding factor On sites greater than 0.5ha a density may be agreed with the planning authority so long as the development does not impact negatively upon the amenities of existing residents, businesses or other landowners.
B	New Residential Medium Density	20 dwellings per hectare (8 per acre)
C	New Residential Low Density (grid)	10 per hectare (4 dwellings per acre)
E	Town Centre/Commercial	Will be determined on a Plot Ratio basis.
F	Residential/Commercial	20 dwellings per hectare (8 per acre)
I	Community/Institutional	20 dwellings per hectare (8 per acre) within the areas designated for Area Action Plan's. No residential development on other community institutional lands.
J	Rural Character	10 per hectare (4 dwellings per acre) subject to connection to sewerage system

14.4.2 Public Open Space

Public open space is one of the key elements in defining the quality of the residential environment. It provides passive as well as active amenity and has important ecological and environmental aspects. Public open space is to be provided in a two-tier system. Parks and playing fields will be provided at a rate of one hectare per 1000 population the provision of which is to be funded from the open space element of development contributions. The public open space requirement within housing development, which is to be provided by the developer, is as follows:

Greenfield/suburban sites - Minimum 20% of total site area.

Other cases - Minimum 10% of total site area.

In designing large residential development schemes adjacent to an existing development, consideration should be given to providing links and connections between open spaces. In the provision of small open spaces that may be used as children's play area, emphasis will be on ensuring that spaces are generally overlooked so that some degree of supervision may take place.

Generally, the backs of houses should not bound open space. It is more desirable that houses front onto open spaces. Open spaces should be located where they do not cause an excessive security problem for households.

Open Spaces should be completed and made available for use in tandem with the completion of houses.

Where large open spaces are provided a suitable boundary treatment, which is indigenous to the characteristics of the area shall be provided, including kerbing, low walls and/or landscaping. A boundary wall is required where open space is adjacent to a public road.

Where there is a difficulty in meeting the open space requirement, or where it is considered by the Planning Authorities that the provision of open space requirement in a particular area is not in the interests of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, the Planning Authorities may choose one of the following options: -

- ☐ That the developer makes a financial contribution towards the provision of an open space by the Local Authority elsewhere; or
- ☐ The Planning Authorities may consider arrangements whereby appropriate community facilities may be provided in lieu of the developers open space requirements.

The Planning Authorities may require that the open space provision of any development be located in a specific area in order to assemble open space quantities of satisfactory size, or to protect/enhance the existing features of the area. In every new residential development a single central open space will be required to cover a minimum of 10% of the site area.

In calculating the area of open space, roads, roundabouts, footpaths, grass margins and other grass areas of incidental open space shall not qualify for open space assessment. In large developments, a range of public open space sizes and types should be provided to cater for active and passive recreational needs as well as creating variety in the development.

Lands provided for Public Open Space purposes as part of an application for permission will be permanently retained as Public Open Space.

14.4.3 Private Open Space

Privacy is an essential part of the quality of a residential environment. The provision of an adequate sized external space, which is free from undue observation, (i.e. usually a back garden) is a fundamental part of residential amenity.

A) Houses

B) Apartments

A) Houses

To be provided at a rate equivalent to half the gross floor area of the house but not less than 50m². Houses (terraced, semi-detached, detached) shall normally provide the private open space behind the building line.

B) Apartments

To be provided as follows:

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| Town Centre | - 10m ² min. per 1 bed apartment
- 20m ² min. per 2 or 3 bed apartment. |
| Suburbs | - 20m ² min. per 1 bed apartment
- 30m ² min. per 2 or 3 bed apartment. |

This open space requirement for apartments may be provided as either private or shared open space, with regard to the Sustainable Urban Housing Design Standards for Apartments.

Private open space for apartment developments may be provided in the form of balconies or roof gardens, or in the case of ground floor apartments as small gardens. Consideration should be given to the orientation of balconies, which must be designed as an integral part of the building's composition and they shall respect townscape context and surrounding amenities. Roof gardens shall require a secure boundary, be properly landscaped and shall be designed and located so not to interfere with the privacy of adjoining residential properties. Private open space is also required in apartment developments for storage of outdoor goods, such as refuse bins, bicycles, laundry etc.

14.4.4 Overlooking/Minimum Rear Garden Size

Generally first floor windows shall not directly overlook opposing first floor windows from above ground floor from a distance of less than 22 metres. In the case of development exceeding (2) storeys adjacent to existing lower buildings, a greater distance may be required. Windows serving halls and landings do not impact to the same degree on privacy as balconies and living rooms.

A reduced garden size may be permitted in exceptional circumstances where the majority of the houses/dwellings comply with the minimum garden sizes set out above and where a particular house/ dwelling performs a particular townscape role, such as a key corner site, where due to its situation to the overall layout, it cannot be provided with a standard private garden.

Factors to be considered in determining reduced garden sizes include: -

- ☐ The size of the house – smaller, one and two bedroom dwellings may not require large gardens.
- ☐ The provision of communal open space associated with the development – smaller garden sizes may be permitted where there are increases in communal open space, provided that the space is entirely private, situated on the non-entrance side of the house, is not overlooked and is screened with a durable, long lasting material (garden trellises or wooden garden screens will not be permitted).

In addition, sufficient space should be provided around dwellings to ensure adequate circulation of air about the buildings themselves and the inhabitants within. Generally, a minimum distance of 2 metres will be required to be maintained between the sidewalls of adjacent dwellings or dwelling blocks. Side elevation windows of any habitable room, excluding bathroom or toilet, shall not be permitted to overlook adjoining property from the first floor level. A 2m high fence must screen all side elevation ground floor windows.

Where front boundary wall or fencing is provided, the design and materials shall add a pleasing design feature to the overall housing layout and shall be in accordance with the indigenous characteristics of the area.

Rear boundary walls or fences shall be constructed to a height of not less than 1.8 metres and shall be of concrete having a plastered or dashed finish, or in the case of a fence they should be of substantial

construction. Permanent screening of a similar height should also be provided between the gardens of adjoining houses for a minimum distance of 2.5 metres behind the house.

14.4.5 Infrastructure Service Standards

Applications for housing development on unserviced and unzoned lands within the Development Plan boundary will be regarded as premature.

Where water and/or sewerage infrastructure is privately provided, the type and design shall be in compliance with the standards set by the Planning Authority. In addition, provision must be made for possible future connection into the public system. All sewerage systems should conform to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and public health standards. Septic tanks, individual and/or group schemes will be required to connect to the public sewerage scheme when it is provided.

14.4.6 Car Parking

Grouped parking is preferred as it provides greater flexibility and a more efficient use of land and should be provided at the rate of 1.5 spaces per unit. The provision of one space onsite and the remainder in the form of grouped parking is acceptable in this respect. Otherwise except in the town core area car parking is required at a rate of two (2) spaces per family orientated dwelling unit. In the case of one bedroom units one (1) car parking space per unit will be acceptable. In the case of units with a floor area in excess of 250 square metres three (3) off-street car parking spaces per unit may be required. In town centre or other locations where the provision of on site car-parking would not be feasible or appropriate for urban design reasons, a contribution will be levied in lieu of car parking.

14.4.7 Bicycle Parking

Sufficient bicycle parking should also be provided in apartment development. It is recommended that 1 space be provided for every apartment/flat and should be in close proximity to all residential dwellings.

14.4.8 Surface Water Runoff

Most building developments on new sites will result in a significant increase in the area of impervious surface (roof and hard pavements). Surface water collected from these surfaces must discharge through a silt trap and oil receptor before going into a river or stream. In certain residential developments surface water may be allowed to discharge to soak pits where there is no risk to groundwater. This arrangement will not normally be permitted for industrial developments.

For developments greater than 0.5 hectare the developer must submit surface water attenuation proposals, so that the risk of increased flooding due to rapid discharge of surface water is minimised.

14.5 Standards on Design and Layout

14.5.1 Road Standards

It is an objective of the plan to promote the use of shared surfaces and traffic calming in the interests of road safety. The design standards required for carriageways, gradients, footpaths, roads and services vary according to the scale, intensity, layout, design and location of the proposed developments.

The Planning Authority's road requirements will be based on "DMRB – Road Geometry Handbook" (NRA December, 2000)" as well as the Local Authority's Taking in Charge Policy document.

In addition, the following documents may also be used for the purposes of design guidance to assist in layout of residential areas: -

- Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (UK, 1998) *'Places, Street and Movement.'*
- Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland, 1988) *'Layout of Housing Roads Design Guide'.*

In the case of development fronting district and local distributor roads, larger sites with greater building lines and detached houses will normally be required. In such cases grass/planted verges (of

indigenous species) in addition to footpaths will also be required. Building lines of 10-12m in such instances are recommended with site frontages of 15m and grass verges of 2m.

14.5.2 Building Lines

Maintenance of the traditional street line is of particular importance in the central area of the town, and some inner suburban locations.

- ❑ Generally the aim will be to create a continuous building line along a street edge.
- ❑ Consistent building lines will also be encouraged in the design of neighbourhood centres and in new industrial/business park developments, where buildings have a clear relationship to each other.
- ❑ In deciding where a building line should be located, the form of development to which it is related will be considered.
- ❑ At key locations, such as street corners and other focal points, the building form should be articulated to reinforce the legibility of the layout (e.g. by varying the building height and/or architectural treatment).
- ❑ Where located along roads of traffic importance, increased setbacks may be necessary to provide for greater amenity, to establish the status of the road, to provide for safety of road users and residents and for future road widening and for the creation of cycle paths.
- ❑ However, in specific situations, it may not be in the interests of good planning to enforce a rigid standard for building lines. Therefore, building lines may be relaxed in the following cases: -
 - For innovative designs which can positively enhance the townscape;
 - To reduce the regimented appearance of suburban layouts;
 - To incorporate key landscape features into the development layout;
 - To provide important areas of public open space, i.e., squares;
 - In order to facilitate traditional building forms with open courtyards; etc.
 - In general, parking should be provided to the rear of buildings, particularly where they front onto important public roads.

14.5.3 Building Height

A high building is defined as one, which is significantly higher than neighbouring or nearby buildings. In a few locations, particularly within the town centre, consideration may be given to developments in which an increase in height from the existing is proposed, especially where this provides added definition to the streetscape. The following factors will be considered in assessing applications for high buildings:

- ❑ The quality of the design.
- ❑ Excessive overshadowing and loss of light.
- ❑ Overlooking and loss of private amenity.
- ❑ The scale of the building relative to the existing streetscape.
- ❑ The extent to which the building detracts from structures, parts of structures or spaces, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social, or technical interest.
- ❑ The extent to which the building detracts from important landmarks.
- ❑ Attractive public views from significant vantage points that would be obscured by the building.
- ❑ The degree of obtrusion of the building on the skyline.
- ❑ The degree to which the building may contribute to the overall townscape. In particular, care will be required in the treatment of rooftops and all machine/mechanical rooms will need to be adequately screened or designed as an integral part of the building.
- ❑ The effect of the building on the microclimate in the immediate vicinity.

14.5.4 Housing Layout and Design

As part of the aim of achieving higher densities, there is an emphasis on high quality design in new developments. Furthermore, large residential areas shall generally be broken into small functional and visual groups of approximately 20 houses or less, which fulfil a social and aesthetic need for identity.

These shall be designed to create safety for young children, facilitate social interaction and introduce variety into the visual environment, avoiding monotonous repetitive type of development. Each group of houses should have its own visual identity, variations being achieved by layout, building lines, house design, colour, hard and soft landscaping and house size.

The housing development should relate to the surrounding urban form and land use. Protection and respect for the existing amenities and the character of the area is important and should be regarded as a feature of good design. Layouts should respect the need for access and the normal range of local services required by residents.

In the interests of security, all areas used by the public such as open spaces, roads and footpaths should be overlooked by housing.

Residential layouts should be designed in such a way that through traffic is discouraged. Road alignments should discourage speed and give priority to the safety and convenience of pedestrians and cyclists.

House design should make use of materials, architectural form and colour to create a high level of visual amenity. Colour may be used to create a sense of identity within the development. Natural features or landmarks such as mature trees or views or vistas should help to enrich the layout and orientation of housing.

Housing designs shall consider orientation and sun-path so as to maximise amenity, daylight and the benefits of passive solar gain to domestic heating. The Planning Authorities will require a variety of house types in developments over 10 houses. The creation of "landmarks" within the estate, whether through retention of existing features or by introduction of new features will be encouraged. These shall be agreed with the Planning Authorities prior to the commencement of development.

Future development adjoining or in close proximity to low density residential housing estates should preclude developments of apartments of two storey or more.

14.5.5 Pedestrian/Cycle Access

Pedestrian linkages between housing developments must be designed with security in mind. These linkages have many proven benefits such as:

- ☐ Greater integration between neighbouring residential areas.
- ☐ Facilitating pedestrians and cyclists, by the provision of safer and easier access to amenities,
- ☐ Shopping and community facilities and between suburban residential areas and the town centre.

Therefore, the Planning Authorities intend that provision be made for the development of pedestrian links between the various centres of activity within the town. All existing pedestrian routes should be preserved and expanded upon where possible.

14.5.6 Action Area Plans

In substantially undeveloped residential areas, an Action Area Plan is likely to be required, incorporating a phasing programme in advance of work commencing to ensure the provision of services and the proper completion of each stage of the scheme.

14.5.7 Local Shopping Provision

The Local Authority may require the inclusion of a small local shopping element as part of a residential development scheme, where the size of the development warrants such provision, or where the development is part of on-going house building in an area not adequately serviced with local shops. Generally, it is desirable that all new residential estates have reasonable access to shopping facilities. The neighbourhood centre should incorporate a range of service facilities such as convenience

shopping, a chemist and a launderette. The provision of a neighbourhood centre may be phased in conjunction with the new residential development.

14.5.8 Crèches

Applicants for housing developments should refer to the requirements for childcare facilities and the DOELG Planning Guidelines for Childcare Facilities and the Sustainable Urban Housing Design Standards for Apartments.

14.6 Designs and Layout of Flats and Apartments

14.6.1 General Standards

Where apartment blocks are proposed in existing residential areas, their height should respect surrounding developments. Blocks higher than surrounding properties will be considered on their merits, but uncharacteristically high structures will not be permitted where they are considered to interfere with the scale, amenity or visual quality of existing developments.

It is the Planning Authorities aim that apartment developments be of high quality design, in accordance with the Sustainable Urban Housing Design Standards for Apartments. This requires incorporating satisfactory car parking standards and adequate functional space to accommodate bicycle parking, laundry facilities and seating areas, as well as refuse storage areas for the use of all residents. These facilities should be conveniently located and well ventilated. Adequate internal storage areas will also be required within each unit.

Where infill development is proposed, particularly apartments and flats, a reduction in the levels of communal or private open space provided per unit may be considered acceptable where developments are considered to include appropriate building designs and suitable landscaping of communal areas, or where a specified alternative open space exists in the area which can be identified as serving the needs of the residents. The Planning Authorities may also permit the public and private open space requirement to be combined (partially or otherwise) to provide for communal amenity areas serving the development. Such developments may also be required to contribute, where appropriate, towards open space for active recreation being provided in the area in accordance with Development Plan Standards. Car parking areas shall not be considered as part of private open space.

In the case of a conversion of an existing house into flats or bed-sitting rooms, the existing private open space shall, where feasible, be available to the occupants of the converted house.

14.6.2 Layout and Design of Apartments and Flats

The conversion of houses to flats in predominantly single family dwelling areas will not normally be permitted as such conversions could lead to deterioration in the residential amenities of these areas. However, the subdivision of large houses and houses on primary traffic routes and in the town centre may be permitted in certain circumstances.

14.6.3 Courtyards

The development of courtyards and new urban spaces within blocks will be considered and fresh approaches to the design of urban space will be encouraged. Access to courtyards should be through arches in order to avoid breaking the existing street frontages. In the case of courtyard developments, open space provision should be in accordance with development plan standards.

14.6.4 Residential Mix in Apartment/Flat developments

Residential developments, particularly those with twenty or more units, should encourage a variety of residential unit types and ensure a good social mix. In apartment developments, a mix of unit sizes is also required, including two and three bedroom apartments, with not more than 40% of apartments in any single development to be one-bedroom units. The desirable residential mix will be reviewed by the local authority in relation to location and scale.

14.7 Standards for Infill Development**14.7.1 Infill Development**

Infill development policies apply to areas that are largely built up and where the proposal is not of such a scale that it represents a major addition to, or redevelopment of, the existing physical fabric. Proposed development must have due regard to the predominant design features, existing building lines and heights and the existence of particular elements, such as groups of trees and hedgerows, listed buildings or open spaces.

In those areas zoned commercial, greater flexibility over the normal development standards will be permissible. A relaxation of the car parking standards and the 15% public open space requirement should ensure development proposals are not in any way constrained by development standards more suited to locations outside the town centre.

14.7.2 Granny Flats

The demand for self-contained residential units on the site of, and attached to, existing dwellings is recognised by the Planning Authorities as fulfilling a necessary role. In order to protect residential amenities the following considerations will be taken into account in assessing such proposals: -

- ❑ The existing density of development and whether the site is adequate to accommodate a second dwelling unit.

The floor area of the unit shall not normally exceed the equivalent of 25% of the floor area of the existing house.

14.7.3 Backland Developments

Backlands are defined as lands, which do not have a frontage onto a road with a public right of way. Piecemeal and uncoordinated development of backlands, including the construction of extra dwellings in former back gardens, can result in inappropriate and disorderly development. This form of development is considered undesirable where there is an adverse effect on the residential amenity of adjoining properties, particularly where such intensification might overload infrastructure and the established use framework of an area.

It may only be considered where both garden sizes and the space between dwellings meet critical standards. It can also result in missed opportunities for large-scale renewal. It is the policy of the Planning Authorities to ensure that no development takes place that would compromise the overall development of backlands in any area.

14.8 Residential Management Standards**14.8.1 Contributions and Securities**

The development of the town will require continual investment by the Local Authority in the town's infrastructure. This includes car parking, new service roads, sanitary services, recreation facilities such as playing and community facilities. It is therefore planning policy that: -

- ❑ Developers will be required to make financial contributions, as a condition of a grant of planning permission, towards the cost of infrastructure services, already provided, or proposed to be provided at a future date by the Local Authority, and which are necessary to properly develop the area in the public interest, or which otherwise facilitate private development. The works required would be carried out to the design and specification and under the supervision of the Planning Authority.
- ❑ The level of development contributions required will be determined by the Development Contributions Scheme prepared by the Council under Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 and any supplementary Development Contributions Scheme prepared under Section 49 of the said Act.

Developers often experience difficulties or are unable to complete a project in accordance with terms of a planning permission. To counteract this problem the Local Authority will: -

- ❑ Require developers to provide a security for the proper completion of proposals, with particular emphasis on large residential developments. The security required will be linked to the amount of roads, footpaths, lighting services and open space proposed.
- ❑ Grant permission for major residential developments in a phased manner and to require the provision of security for the completion of each phase as that phase is commenced.

14.8.2 Residential Estate and Street Names

Nameplates, in Irish and English, should be provided and erected on all housing estate roads. These shall be agreed with the Planning Authorities prior to the commencement of development. The names of residential developments and roads shall reflect local place names, particularly townlands within which developments are located. The Local Authority shall approve the names chosen. The names should be fixed to walls and buildings where they can be clearly seen. Freestanding signs will not be encouraged. In order to assist the public and the postal authorities all houses shall be provided with numbers, which shall be visible from the adjoining roadway.

14.8.3 Management Companies

No management company shall be allowed to operate in estates that are taken over by the Council. Castlebar Town Council may only grant permission for management companies in certain apartment developments and may consider permission for management companies in other exceptional circumstances on their individual merits but not in any area where the development exceeds or is likely to exceed ten houses.

Castlebar Town Council shall take over estates in accordance with a formal Estate Take –over Policy to be adopted by the Council, which shall take into account issues relating to cash deposits and bonds.

Castlebar Town Council require that only a cash deposit shall be accepted as security/ bond for the proper completion of the development.

14.8.4 Occupancy Clause

There will be no occupancy clause attached to any grant of permission.

14.9 Standards for Rural and Other Residential Developments

14.9.1 Rural Development

Single houses in those areas zoned Low Density Housing or Rural Character will not normally be permitted, unless they meet the criteria set out in Section 5.12.

Where development is permitted in areas zoned for agriculture, structures should be successfully assimilated into the landscape, and positively contribute to the overall appearance of the landscape (see Section 3.7.3). Therefore, primary consideration should be given to the following factors: -

- ❑ New development should not be located on a ridgeline and the roof level should be sited below the ridgeline, preferably on the foot of the ridge. This allows the natural contours of the land to screen the development.
- ❑ Consideration should be given to the retention of existing hedgerows patterns.
- ❑ Consideration should be given to the retention of existing local unplastered stone boundary walls.
- ❑ The form of new development should follow the natural contours of the ground.

- ❑ Design detailing is important in softening the visual impact of a building. Attention to doors and windows can reduce the visual impact of development by giving a vertical emphasis to the horizontal run of a building.
- ❑ Landscaping should be considered at the initial planning stage in order to obtain maximum benefit from existing features. The object of landscaping is not to screen development but to break up and soften visual impact. Any changes to the site should help to blend development into the surrounding landscape.
- ❑ Access to existing or proposed National Primary Roads, National Secondary Roads and the Regional Road network will be restricted in order to maintain the efficient ongoing development and safe operation of these roads, except where located within a speed limit of 60km/hr.

14.9.2 Effluent Treatment

Areas zoned rural character, which are located outside the catchment of the Castlebar and Environs Sewerage Scheme may be dependent on 'on-site' wastewater treatment systems. Conventional septic tank systems (septic tank and percolation area) properly installed and maintained are satisfactory where suitable subsoil conditions exist. The design and installation of the percolation area/polishing filter must conform to the requirements set out in the *EPA Wastewater Treatment Manual for Single Houses* and or any document which supersedes it. All percolation areas must be assessed, designed and certified by a competent engineer or environmental technician. A list of other qualifications acceptable for this certification is available from the Planning Authorities.

Where suitable subsoil conditions do not initially exist, site development works may improve the subsoil conditions and make the subsoil suitable in certain circumstances. If the subsoil conditions cannot be improved then other systems may be able to treat the wastewater to the required standard.

The Planning Authorities will refuse permission for a septic tank or other effluent treatment systems if there is a risk of water pollution or contamination of water supplies, or where there is evidence of undue proliferation or excessive concentration of septic tank or other effluent treatment systems*.

NOTE: * Even where a house already exists, the installation of a septic tank system or other on-site wastewater treatment system always requires planning permission.

14.9.3 Riparian Development

Development, which is proposed along banks of the Castlebar River, Lough Lannagh or Saleen Lough, may be required to submit measures to reduce and prevent pollution during construction. Proposals for development affecting or adjacent to a number of maintainable channels of the River Moy drainage catchment within the town should be referred to the OPW Drainage Department.

14.9.4 Traveller Halting Sites

Halting sites may comprise of a hard-surfaced area, divided into bays, each bay accommodating not more than two caravans and incorporating a service block with bathroom, kitchen and toilet, and such other facilities as may be necessary for traveller needs. Only in exceptional circumstances will consideration be given to providing halting sites with more than seven bays. Provision may be made for caretaker's accommodation and other facilities for good management and control of site as deemed necessary.

14.9.5 Temporary Dwellings, Caravans etc.

Temporary dwellings are taken to include caravans, chalets, mobile homes and huts. The Planning Authorities shall prohibit the use of temporary dwellings for permanent residential purposes on the grounds that such structures are generally unsuitable for human habitation during the year. Exceptions will, however, be made in dealing with acute housing emergencies. In this case, any permission granted will be for a limited period only and such temporary homes should not be obtrusively sited. The placing of caravans and temporary structures on isolated sites will not be allowed to proliferate.

14.10 General Development Standards/Requirements

14.10.1 Protected Structures

It is the policy of the planning authorities to implement the Planning and Development Act 2000 Part IV, in order to make better provision for the protection of the Architectural Heritage in the interests of the common good. This act significantly strengthens the protection offered to the built heritage.

Protection, in relation to a structure or part of a structure, includes conservation, preservation, and improvement compatible with maintaining the character and interest of the structure or part thereof. Each owner and/or occupier of a Protected Structure is obliged to ensure that the structure is not endangered.

The term **structure** includes the entire fabric, including the interior, the land lying within the curtilage of the structure, any other structures lying within that curtilage and their interiors, and all fixtures and features which form part of the interior or exterior of any structure or structures referred to above.

A **protected structure** is a structure that the Planning Authorities consider to be of special interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical point of view. Details of protected structures are included by the authority in its Record of Protected Structures. A **Record of Protected Structures (RPS)** is the record included in a Development Plan at the time of publication. It may be amended by the addition or deletion of entries independently of the Development Plan review process.

Certain procedures must be followed if a Planning Authority proposes to deem a structure to be a protected structure. The Planning Authorities must **notify** the owners and occupiers of a structure it proposes to deem a protected structure, who are entitled to make comments on such a proposal to the authority. These comments are taken into account before a decision is made whether or not to include the structure in a RPS. The final decision is a reserved function of the Council.

The Minister of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands may make recommendations to which the Planning Authorities will give due regard. Other bodies to be consulted are the Heritage Council, An Táisce and in certain cases An Chomhairle Ealaíon.

Planning Permission

Under planning law, many minor works to structures do not normally require planning permission. However, for a protected structure, normal exemptions do not apply. No works may be carried out to a protected structure without planning permission, which would adversely affect the character of the structure or any element of it, which contributes to its special interest.

An owner or occupier of a protected structure may make a written request to the Planning Authorities to issue a **Declaration** as to the type of works, which it considers would or would not materially affect the character of the structure or any element of the structure that contributes to its special interests. The Planning Authorities shall have regard to the Architectural Conservation Guidelines issued by Dúchas, The Heritage Service.

By regulation, applications for outline planning permission for works involving protected structures cannot be entertained. Section 57(10) (b) of the 2000 Act states that a Planning Authority or An Bord Pleanála shall not grant permission for the demolition of a protected structure save in exceptional circumstances.

A planning application involving a protected structure is generally made in the same way as any other planning application. However, additional documentation must be submitted with the application. The "Best Practise Guide for Architectural Heritage Survey and Assessment" is the standard required of planning applications involving protected structures.

Sustainable Development and Conservation

In line with government policy on Sustainable Development as well as respecting the status of the protected structure, sustainable and traditional materials and finishes should be used for protected structures and in general within historic towns. Features that are part of the architectural heritage of the county testify to the social conditions of a past age. As such, they should be managed in a sustainable manner.

14.10.2 Recorded Monuments and Places of Archaeological Interest

Planning applications for development on, or adjoining, such sites and monuments will be considered in the light of (a) the appropriateness of the proposed development vis-à-vis the site or monument and (b) the recommendations of the Heritage Service.

The Planning Authorities may require a detailed report/site assessment to be submitted as part of a planning application. This report shall be carried out by a licensed Archaeologist, and be submitted both to the Planning Authorities and The Heritage Service.

- ☐ If known archaeological remains exist within the confines of the site, it will be required: -
- ☐ The archaeological excavation of the remains before development commences or,
- ☐ Supervision of normal excavation where such developments might disturb the remains,
- ☐ Funding by the applicant of monitoring, testing and/or assessment, or
- ☐ Preservation of the remains, if of prime importance.

Conditions may be imposed which modify the development in order to facilitate archaeological investigation or preservation.

14.10.3 Landscaping and Landscape Considerations

Landscaping is an integral part of any development and there is a need to ensure that existing trees, especially along field boundaries, are protected and integrated into the development, with appropriate new planting (of indigenous species) well designed and adequately carried out. The potential of existing site features should be fully explored and planning applications should include an accurate landscape survey plan. Wherever possible, existing healthy trees should be protected and retained. Where the trees are to be accommodated in rear gardens of new dwellings, the building should normally be sited at least 11.5m beyond the spread of the tree. This distance may be reduced to 6m for front gardens and 2m in the case of flank walls.

Developments should include new trees within the site at a ratio of at least two trees per dwelling. Garden areas should be adequately landscaped. Rear gardens should be treated with a 300mm minimum cover of consolidated topsoil where shrub planting is proposed, 100mm where grass areas are proposed. It may be a requirement in some cases that compacted areas be broken up and rubble/plastic/glass shall be removed as part of the site preparation.

(5) Recorded Monuments and Places is an update of the older Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), on which all known archaeological sites are marked and listed on the Recorded Monuments Register. The sites are offered legal protection under the National Monuments Acts 1930-1994.

The developer will be responsible for the grading, hard landscaping, planting and further development of any open space, including the provision of pedestrian paths and other facilities. The developer will be required to provide roadside trees, street planting and screen planting where necessary. A careful balance is necessary between quick growing species for early maturity and longer lived trees which may reach their peak in up to 100 years time. The landscape plan and the selection of plant species should consider low maintenance species. Generally single trees require more expert attention than those in composite groups, which are less vulnerable to damage. Formal, single tree lines have little effect as screen belts or buffers and for this reason grouping of young trees will be encouraged. Native tree species are more valuable as wildlife habitat than introduced species, because they support a greater ecological diversity. These will generally be preferred.

Security by means of a financial bond may be required to ensure that a landscaping plan is adequately implemented. Developers should consult with the Planning Authorities at an early stage in relation to landscaping and planting proposals.

In terms of the general **landscape** itself, the Planning Authorities will also be guided by recent DOELG guidelines on "Landscape and Landscape Assessment" June 2000, which identify the following elements: -

- ❑ Identification of Landscape Character Areas, including special treatment of landscapes of 'semi-natural' character;
- ❑ Confining development to the midslopes of hills and foothills of ridges;
- ❑ Encourage the use of traditional design, local materials and techniques on all buildings;
- ❑ Encourage the effective reinstatement and landscaping of areas affected by extractive activities or the installation in the countryside of telecommunications or other masts;
- ❑ Discourage suburban type walls, entrance gates and suburban building vernacular in the countryside;
- ❑ Discourage indiscriminate use of exotic plant species especially on roadsides and around rural gardens;
- ❑ Discourage use of brightly coloured or multicoloured brick or panel paving which is out of character with rural areas;
- ❑ The Planning Authorities shall also have regard to the provisions relating to 'Guidelines for Rural Housing Design' as set out in the County Development Plan.

14.10.4 Ducting of Public Utilities and Services

The Planning Authorities will normally require that all wires, cables and pipes for the provision of public utility services shall be ducted underground to preserve the amenity and visual character of an area, and in the interests of public safety. Developers will also be required to provide efficient systems of drainage with separate surface water and foul sewer drainage systems.

14.10.5 Access for the Disabled

The Planning Authorities will require that the layout and design of all proposed development and the refurbishment of existing development gives consideration to the needs of the disabled. Where buildings are intended for public use, the Planning Authorities will require that the design is in accordance with "*Access for the Disabled – Minimum Design Criteria*", published by the National Rehabilitation Board, 1988, "*Buildings for Everyone – Access and Use for all Citizens*", 1998, and Part M of the Building Regulations "*Access for the Disabled*", 2000. In general, building design should allow full access to the building for all disabled persons, whether employees or visiting members of the public.

"It should also be noted that under the Building Regulations 2000, new private houses must be accessible to the disabled."

14.10.6 Transport Assessment

Planning applications for significant commercial, industrial, residential, including Action Area Plans or other developments will be required to be accompanied by a transport assessment and road safety audit to be undertaken in accordance with best practice. The transport assessment must examine the cumulative impact of the proposed and neighbouring developments on the road network.

14.10.7 Noise

If a planning application is submitted for development within the zone of influence of an existing or planned national road, the applicant is required to identify and implement noise mitigation measures at their own expense.

14.11 Standards for Commercial, Retail, Industrial and Development in Mix Use**14.11.1 Introduction**

Many of the development standards, which are relevant to proposed commercial, retail and non-residential uses, have been dealt with in the previous section. These standards include: plot ratio (in the commercial zone), site coverage, public open space, building lines, building heights, pedestrian/disabled access, infrastructure service standards, building regulations, landscaping considerations, protected structures, sites and monuments of archaeological interest as well as the provisions on contributions and securities. Therefore, it is in the interests of the developer to consult these development standards in order to satisfy the requirements of the Development Plan.

14.11.2 Mixed Use in Town Centre Commercial Zone

Mixed use may be defined as a combination of retail, commercial and residential uses. The wider town centre commercial/mixed use area has been divided into two zones in this plan (i.e. E1 and E2). In the inner zone a higher density is considered appropriate, due to its central location, where maximum intensity of activities is concentrated. The plot ratio in the E1 zone therefore is 1:1.5 to 1:2.5. In the outer zone (i.e.E2) a plot ratio of 1:1.0 – 1:2.0 will apply.

The Local Authority may use its discretion in permitting plot ratios in excess of this where it is considered appropriate and in the interests of the proper planning and development of the area, as well as complying with the objectives of sustainable development.

Retail uses are encouraged at ground floor level on main shopping streets with office or residential uses over. The Planning Authorities may insist on a residential content in proposed developments in town centre use zones.

14.11.3 Shopping Centres and Permitted Locations for Shopping

The local authority will consider proposals for shopping centres in terms of potential adverse impact on the viability of existing centres and in particular the viability of the town centre. Shopping Centres will be encouraged to locate within the town centre zone (Commercial zone). The Planning Authorities will also be guided by Retail Planning, Guidelines for Planning Authorities – DOEHLG January, 2005 which identify the following elements: -

1. Adequacy of existing shopping outlets.
2. Size and location of existing outlets.
3. Quality and convenience of existing outlets.
4. Effect on existing communities.
5. Needs of the elderly, infirm or disabled or other persons, who may be dependant on the availability of local shopping outlets.
6. Need to counter urban decline and to promote urban renewal and to promote the utilisation of unused infrastructure facilities in urban areas.

A retail impact assessment analysis may be required as part of a planning application for shopping centres or large food/grocery chain stores. Furthermore, in relation to large-scale out of town retail developments, the developer shall submit a transport assessment in accordance with Paragraph 65 of the Retail Planning Guidelines January 2005.

14.11.4 Industry, Wholesale and Warehousing Development

The standard plot ratio for industrial, wholesale and warehousing developments is 1:1.0, whilst the site coverage index is 80%.

In terms of design and layout the following considerations will apply: -

- ❑ Surfaces within the curtilage of industrial/commercial sites shall be of hard wearing, dust free and durable material.
- ❑ Adequate space must be available for on-site storage of materials and refuse, loading and unloading and on-site circulation and parking.
- ❑ Adequate provision should be made for storage of goods and materials within the building or in a designated storage area.
- ❑ A detailed landscaping scheme for the site shall be required.
- ❑ Car parking spaces shall be clearly delineated. Parking spaces for vehicles for the disabled shall be located close to main entrances to premises.
- ❑ In the case of developments for two or more buildings, a uniform design for boundary fences, roof profiles and building lines is essential.
- ❑ A minimum open space requirement of 15% will be required and provided such that it may function as an effective amenity area. In situations where effective open space cannot be provided on site, a contribution will be payable in lieu or other arrangement similar to that employed in the provision of open space in residential areas will be required.
- ❑ An industrial development should present a pleasant aspect helped by tree planting, the judicious placing of advertisement structures, screening of open storage areas and unobtrusive loading and parking space.
- ❑ The number of signs attached to a building in such areas should be limited and no sign should be excessively obtrusive or out of scale with the building façade.
- ❑ Where security fencing is required it shall not normally be forward of the front building line of the premises. Where in exceptional circumstances, security fencing is forward of the front building line it shall be set behind a landscaped mound of at least 2m in width. Security fencing shall be palisade or chain link type and shall be plastic coated or have an appropriate colour.
- ❑ There shall be a minimum landscaped/planting strip to a width of 5 metres on all principal road frontages.
- ❑ The layout, planning and design may be subject of a detailed Action Plan to be approved by the Local Authority.

14.11.5 Retail Warehousing

Retail warehousing activity relates to the sale of non-food, non-clothing goods. This includes the sale of large-scale goods and can include furniture/carpets, bulky electrical goods, gardening supplies and toys. The activity may include outdoor display areas and is likely to generate considerable car parking requirements.

A limit on the range of goods sold will normally be imposed and individual units will normally be subject to a lower and an upper floor area limit. The cumulative effect of proposed retail warehouses will also be taken into account.

Retail warehousing will only be permitted within commercial and industrial zones where the Planning Authorities are satisfied that it does not detract from the existing businesses in the town centre. A retail impact study may be required for any proposed retail warehouse activity. It should provide a compact development form, with continuous building lines.

Retail warehouse buildings should not have an industrial appearance and signage should be limited in quantity and be of an unobtrusive nature.

14.11.6 Petrol Filling Stations and Ancillary Uses

Where filling or service stations are proposed adequate measures must be implemented to integrate them into their surroundings. No filling or service stations will be permitted in locations where by reason of appearance, traffic or fumes they would injure the amenities of an area. Filling or service stations will not be permitted outside the national speed limit areas and will preferably be located within areas with a speed limit of 50km/hr.

The essential purpose of petrol stations is to provide facilities for the sale of fuels for vehicles. However, permission will be granted for ancillary retail uses involving goods related to the motor trade. In addition, in areas not already serviced by convenience shops, permission may be granted for small shops retailing confectionery, groceries and newspapers. The net area devoted to such sales shall not normally exceed 65 square metres.

All external lighting should be directed away from the public road and a proliferation of large illuminated signs will not be permitted.

14.11.7 Bars/Night-Clubs/Disco bars/Amusement Centres

In order to maintain an appropriate mix of uses and protect night time amenities in the town, the local authority will, through the appropriate use of its development control powers, prevent an excessive concentration of any of the above uses in a particular area and shall ensure that the intensity of any proposed use is in keeping with both the character of the area (i.e. residential, mixed use etc.) and with adjoining businesses, when development proposals are being considered. The following issues shall be taken into account in the assessment of application for the above uses.

- ❑ Noise at the boundaries will be carefully monitored and noise insulation measures will be required at the time of the submission of the planning application. Other effects of the development on the amenity of nearby residents must be assessed prior to the granting of planning permission, (i.e. General disturbance, hours of operation, car parking and litter)
- ❑ The importance of safeguarding the vitality and viability of the town centre and maintaining a vibrant mix of uses.
- ❑ The Planning Authorities shall insist that proper litter control measures be in place prior to the opening of any premises.

Façade design will be carefully controlled by the Planning Authorities and in particular the type and degree of advertising signage and lighting. The design shall respect the character of the streets and the buildings.

14.11.8 Hot Food Take-Aways

A proliferation of hot food take-aways will not be permitted in any area. Regard will be had to the impact of hot-food take-aways on the amenities in the area, including noise, odour and litter. The Planning Authorities may impose restrictions on opening hours of hot food take-aways as a condition of planning permission. A condition will be attached to all new take-aways, which limits opening hours to 2am.

14.11.9 Shop Fronts

The following considerations will apply in relation to existing and new shop fronts: -

- ❑ In general the need to change old shop fronts will be carefully considered, as it is the policy of the Local Authority to preserve and retain traditional shop fronts of character.
- ❑ No projecting lighting shall be permitted to the façade. All lighting shall be concealed within the structure of the shop front. Signage and advertising shall be limited to that applied to the shop front surround itself.
- ❑ The repair, restoration and replacement of shop fronts must be sympathetically carried out to protect the architectural character of the town.
- ❑ Where existing shop fronts are of no special merit, total replacement is acceptable. The design of new shop fronts shall relate to the architectural characteristics of the building of which it forms part.
- ❑ New shop front designs must respect the scale and proportion of the streetscape by maintaining the existing grain of development along the street and respecting the appropriate plot width. Large expanses of undivided glass will generally not be permitted.
- ❑ National-chain shops, which have adopted a "corporate image", will not necessarily be allowed to use their standardised shop front design, "corporate colours" and materials.

Compatibility with individual buildings and with the streetscape will be considered more important than uniformity among the branches of one company.

- ❑ The process of trading through an opening in a building façade without a shop front will not be permitted.
- ❑ The use of loud music to attract attention to a shop will not be permitted.
- ❑ Lettering should be either hand painted or individually mounted in proportion to the size of the fascia.
- ❑ Maintenance of upper floors of inner urban buildings and highlighting of details will be encouraged.

14.11.10 Automatic Teller Machines

The Planning Authorities will strictly control the location of Automatic Teller Machines (ATM's) having regard to the following: -

- 1 The need to protect the character of the street, building or shop front into which they are to be incorporated, in particular in protected structures.
- 2 The design and location must be such that they are safe and easily accessible.
- 3 Canopies, signs and logos shall be discreetly incorporated into the overall design.
- 4 The provision of ATM's at petrol stations will be encouraged to facilitate drivers wishing to use them.
5. In general, ATM's will not be permitted where customers queuing may cause disruption to pedestrians.

14.11.11 Advertising and signage

The Planning Authorities accept that advertising is an integral part of commercial and industrial development. However, in considering applications for advertising structures, it remains the primary concern of the Planning Authorities to protect the essential character of the town. Control will be exercised to prevent clutter in any location and to limit the number of signs on any building. The Planning Authorities are opposed to advertisements in residential areas, on or near buildings of architectural or historical importance or in Architectural Conservation Areas, adjacent to amenity and recreational areas, or in open space areas.

Proposals for signs and advertising structures must: -

- ❑ Be in scale and harmony with the surrounding environment, signage shall not be permitted to exceed 10% of the façade of the building, however, where the façade exceeds 250m², then signage shall not exceed 5% of the façade;
- ❑ Not interfere with the safety and free flow of traffic;
- ❑ Not obscure traffic signs;
- ❑ Not impair the amenities of the area;
- ❑ Not interfere with windows or other features of a building façade; and
- ❑ Not project, in whole or part, above the eaves of the building or obtrude on the skyline.

Monument signs are to be favoured instead of freestanding signs. Free-standing advertising structures, such as sandwich boards, which require a license under Section 254 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, will not be allowed on footpaths or in pedestrian areas where they have the potential to cause an obstruction and may be a hindrance, particularly to disabled persons. Where locations are considered suitable, advertising panels may be permitted on builder's hoardings for a specified period.

14.11.12 Canopies and Awnings

The erection of canopies requires planning permission. The use of plastic canopies over windows will be discouraged. Where shading of a window display is required the traditional retractable awning is considered suitable.

14.11.13 Security Screens

The use of metal security grills or shutters will be discouraged. Where it is essential to use such shutters, these should be open grilled, and should be affixed to the inside of the window, or preferably behind the display area. The installation of roller shutters requires planning permission. The use of the public footpath for security stanchions or roller shutter fixings is not acceptable.

14.11.14 Illumination and spread of light

If external illumination is proposed, documentation shall be provided that clearly shows that light or glare from such illumination will not adversely affect pedestrian and vehicular traffic or adjacent properties.

14.11.15 Taxi stands and hackney bases

The Council will work with local taxi companies in the identification of suitable locations for the provision of taxi ranks.

The establishment of a taxi rank or hackney base will not be permitted where it is likely to interfere with traffic flows or parking. Satisfactory off-street parking should be provided for taxi's/hackneys when the vehicles are not in use. Planning assessments will address issues of location, pedestrian safety, traffic congestion, residential amenities and accessibility

14.11.16 Telecommunication Antennae and Support Structures

In considering applications for these structures the planning authorities will have regard to the *"Planning Guidelines for Telecommunications and Support Structures"* (DOELG July 1996).

These Guidelines include the following considerations: -

- ❑ Telecommunications antennae should be located so as to minimise any negative visual intrusion on the surrounding area, especially on landscapes or streetscapes of a sensitive nature.
- ❑ The preferred location for telecommunications antennae is in industrial estates or areas zoned for industry or in areas already developed for utilities.
- ❑ The use of tall buildings or other existing structures is always preferable to the construction of an independent antennae support structure.
- ❑ Support structures should be kept to a minimum height consistent with effective operation and should be monopole (or poles) rather than latticed or square structure.
- ❑ Sharing of installations (antennae support structures) is encouraged, as it will normally reduce the visual impact on the landscape or townscape. All applications must satisfy the local authority that a reasonable effort to share the installations has been made.
- ❑ Where it is not possible to share a support structure the applicant should, where possible, share a site or site adjacently, so that antennae may be clustered.

14.12 Standards for Community Use facilities**14.12.1 Introduction**

It is important to note that all Community use facility developments must abide by many of the development standards requirements mentioned in previous sections. These standards include: plot ratio/site coverage, public open space, building lines, building heights, pedestrian/disabled access, infrastructure service standards, building regulations, landscaping considerations, conservation objectives as well as the provisions on contributions and securities.

Where proposals for residential development are being considered on institutional lands it may be necessary to maintain the open character and any natural or built features on site.

14.12.2 Schools

- ❑ For primary schools a minimum size of 0.6 hectares of school land must be provided for schools with up to three class units and increasing in line with an increase in class units.

Provision must be made within the site for adequate car parking and informal hard surfaced play areas for organised sport activities.

- ❑ Provision should be made in secondary schools for a range of sports facilities.

14.12.3 Crèches/Playschools

Crèches will be required in all housing developments at a rate of one for each 75 residential units in accordance with DOEHLG Planning Guidelines for Childcare facilities and the Sustainable Urban Housing Design Standards for Apartments.

Crèches and playschools will only be permitted in residential areas when it can be proven that they will not cause hazard due to traffic congestion or adversely affect the amenity of adjoining residences.

Applications for crèches and playschools within a new or existing place of work or in proximity thereof, such as an industrial estate, will be favorably considered. Applications for such proposals in terraced and semi-detached houses with adequate private and secure open space, on-site car parking and suitable screening from neighbouring properties may be acceptable.

Applications for crèches and playschools should include the following information as part of any planning application: -

- ❑ Details of proposed opening times.
- ❑ Proposed number and age range of children.
- ❑ Proposed number of staff.
- ❑ Internal floor area devoted to such use, excluding areas such as kitchens, toilets, sleeping and other ancillary areas.
- ❑ Car parking arrangements, for both parents and staff members.

14.12.4 Care Facilities

A change of use from residential to a care facility to care for more than six persons with an intellectual or physical disability will require planning permission and will be dealt with sympathetically with consideration for factors such as accessibility, traffic, safety and proximity to community and shopping facilities. Houses with adequate private and secure open space and on-site car parking are generally acceptable for such uses.

14.12.5 Nursing Homes

Privately run nursing homes provide an essential service for the elderly and the infirm. The council will, subject to protecting residential amenity, consider the location of nursing homes in residential areas and on sites considered adequate in size to cater for all generated needs of the development. The development of nursing homes should not involve significant changes to the streetscape involving the loss of trees, hedges, walls etc.

Permission will normally only be granted for nursing home developments that are located in properties of adequate size, with six or more bedrooms. The premises should have adequate access and comply with parking requirements.

14.13 Standards for Parking/Loading

14.13.1 Car Parking Standards

The parking standards set out in Table 3.2 will apply as appropriate. Where a standard is not given in Table 3.2 for a particular use, the car-parking requirement will be based on the nearest use included in the table.

Type of Development	Relevant car parking standards
House and Flats	Grouped parking @ 1.5 spaces per dwelling unit otherwise 2 car spaces per dwelling unit except small one bedroom flats where one space per unit is required.

Shops	1 car space per 20 m ² of gross floor space
Supermarkets and large stores	1 car space per 25 m ² of gross floor space
Office	1 car space per 25 m ² of gross floor space
Industry	1 car space per 50 m ² of gross floor space
Warehousing (non retail)	1 car space per 100 m ² of gross floor space
Retail Warehousing	1 car space per 50 m ² gross floor space
Theatres, Cinema	1 car space per four seats
Hotels/guesthouses (Excluding restaurant, bars, conference centre, function rooms)	1 car space per 2 bedrooms
Lounge bars	1 car space per 25 m ² of public floor space
Restaurants	1 car space for every 25 m ² of public floor space
Ballroom, dance halls, clubs, function rooms, conference centre	1 car space per 50 m ²
Banks	1 car spaces per 25 m ²
Crèches	0.75 space per employee
Schools	1 car space per classroom
Nursing homes	1 car space per 4 bed spaces

Notes:

1. Allowance will be made for mixed developments. Where it can be demonstrated that different uses will generate parking demand at different times/days, the parking demand for each of the constituent uses within the scheme need not be totaled. This will for example apply to hotels that include restaurant/bar/function room etc.
2. Within the centre of the town – that is within the E1 and E2 zones – rigid adherence to these standards will not be required. It will often be more appropriate to utilise public parking or multi-storey car parks.
3. Large complex developments may be separately assessed with regard to the specific circumstances.

In addition to car parking standards sufficient space will be required within the curtilage of the site for all service vehicles involved in the operation of the business or building.

Where there is a difficulty in providing car parking spaces or where it is considered by the Planning Authorities not to be in the interests of proper planning and development of the area, the Planning Authorities may choose that the developer make a financial contribution towards the provision of a car parking space by the local authority elsewhere.

This situation will apply in particular to town centre infill or redevelopment projects where the provision of on site parking would not be appropriate for traffic, access and urban design reasons.

In dealing with planning applications for change of use or for replacement buildings, an allowance will be given for the former site use in calculating the car parking requirements generated by new development. Furthermore, in relation to Infill development a flexible application of the car parking standards will be considered.

The basic dimensions required for the layout of car parking areas are as follows:

- (i) Minimum size of parking bay 4.8m x 2.5m (Note: A minimum width of 2.3m may be permitted for a long term bay).
- (ii) A minimum width of aisle for 90 degree parking – 6.1m.
- (iii) A minimum width of aisle for 60 degree parking – 4.9m.
- (iv) A minimum width of aisle for 45 degree parking – 3.6m.
- (v) A minimum width of aisle for less than 45 degree parking and for parallel parking – 3.6m.

The local authority will encourage the provision of parking spaces through grouped and dual use parking provision where peak demands do not coincide. In the case of mixed use developments where peak demands do not coincide, it may not be necessary to meet the full car-parking requirement for all elements proposed where shared parking is provided.

14.13.2 Loading Bays and Service Vehicles

In addition to car parking standards sufficient space will be required within the curtilage of the site for all service vehicles involved in the operation of the business or building. This may not apply in town centre locations or in Architectural Conservation Areas where the imposition of such a standard might be undesirable for townscape reasons.

14.13.3 Design and Layout of Parking Areas

Parking and service spaces must be located on site so as to prevent street obstruction and should be located where possible to the rear and side of buildings and in such a manner to ensure minimal injury to the amenity of adjoining premises. Where parking is allowed in sight of the general public, adequate screening or landscaping must be provided to reduce the impact of parked cars.

14.13.4 Cycle Facilities

Cycle stands shall be provided in conjunction with any new development or change of use proposals. Stands should be in a secure location and should be located conveniently to the main entrance of the development or to employee entrances. The number of cycle stands required will be **10%** of the number of car spaces required for the development, subject to the minimum of one stand. For primary schools, it is recommended that a cycle space should be provided for one in five pupils. For secondary schools, it is recommended that a cycle space be provided for one in four pupils and for third level institutions and colleges it is recommended that cycle spaces be provided for one in three students. The provision of cycle parking facilities will be encouraged where possible at existing transport nodes, public buildings, retail centres and leisure facilities.

Where stands cannot be provided on-site, a contribution will be required towards the provision of public cycle stands at the rate of €127 per cycle unit.

14.13.5 Disabled Parking

Reasonable provision shall be made for parking facilities for the disabled. Special car parking bays for the disabled shall be provided as close as possible to the entrance of the premises to be served. Each parking bay shall have a minimum size of 4.8m by 3.3m.

Where two bays for the disabled are provided side by side, the extra space of 0.9m width may be shared by two bays. Each disabled parking bay shall be clearly marked with the relevant international symbol.

15 LAND USE ZONING AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

15.1 Introduction

This chapter of the Development Plan refers to land use zoning and specific objectives. Map No 1 indicates the Land Use Zoning Objectives and Map No 2 indicates the Protected Structures.

15.2 Land Use Zoning Objectives

It is an objective of the Development Plan that uses, other than the primary use for which an area is zoned, may be permitted provided they do not conflict with the primary use. Uses, which conflict with the primary use will not be permitted.

The purpose of land use zoning is to indicate to property owners, developers and the general public, the land use objectives for all land within the plan boundary and to indicate the types of development that are considered most appropriate in each zone. In this context, the zoning objectives allow the developer to plan development proposals with some degree of certainty, subject to other conditions and requirements as set out in the other sections of the Plan. In the control of development, zoning seeks to delimit competing and incompatible uses so as to promote greater environmental quality and thereby rationalise the land use pattern of the town. It should also help to establish an efficient basis for investment in public infrastructure and facilities while making the best use of existing infrastructure.

It will be noted that these zoning objectives relate only to land-use. Factors such as density, height, massing, traffic generation, public health, design criteria, visual amenity, and potential nuisance by way of noise, odour and pollution are also significant and relevant to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

15.3 Land Use Zoning Categories/Specific Objectives

The following land use categories have been selected in the Development Plan. The colour of each category reflects the colour attributed in the accompanying maps.

	Zoning Category	Land Use Zoning Objectives
A	Existing residential/Infill	It is an objective to protect, preserve, improve and develop existing residential areas; to provide for appropriate infill residential development; to provide for new and improved ancillary services and to provide for facilities and amenities incidental to those residential areas.
B	New Residential Medium Density	It is an objective to provide for new residential development, associated facilities and services.
C	New Residential Low Density (Grid)	It is an objective to provide for the low density housing at a density of 4 units per aces, subject to meeting the requirements of the development standards.
D	Enterprise and Employment	It is an objective to provide for the improvement of retailing, enterprise and industrial employment needs of the town.
E	Town Centre/Commercial	It is an objective to enhance the special physical and social character of the existing town centre and to provide for new and improved ancillary services.
F	Residential/Commercial	It is an objective to protect, improve and renew the existing activities of the area and to provide primarily for residential use and such offices and retail commercial uses as are consistent with the existing mix
G	Open Space/Amenity	It is an objective to preserve, provide for and improve active and passive recreational public and private open space.
H	Neighbourhood Centre	It is an objective to develop neighbourhood centres at designated locations to cater for the projected future residential growth in new residential areas.

Land Use Zoning and Specific Objectives

I	Community/Institutional	It is an objective to provide for and improve local neighbourhood, community, ecclesiastical, recreational and educational facilities.
J	Rural Character	It is an objective to protect the lands zoned rural character so that their future development potential can be realised in a strategically planned manner.

A Existing Residential/Infill

Objective It is an objective to protect, preserve, improve and develop existing residential areas; to provide for appropriate infill residential development; to provide for new and improved ancillary services and to provide for facilities and amenities incidental to those residential areas.

This zoning relates to lands, which have been granted permission or are fully or partly built on. The purpose of the zoning is to protect and preserve the amenities of existing residents while allowing for infill development at a density that reflects the existing density in the area. In any infill development proposals careful consideration must be given to issues such as design, overlooking, daylight/sunlight etc.

B New Residential Medium Density

Objective It is an objective to provide for new residential development, associated facilities and services.

The new residential zone relates to c157ha of lands in 4 distinct areas of the town where it is envisaged that new communities will develop throughout the life of the plan. The areas are intended primarily for housing but may also include a range of other uses particularly those such as schools, crèches and community buildings. A masterplan framework will be required for all sites over 2ha in size detailing layout of services, open spaces, roads, pedestrian linkages and landscaping. An adequate amount of land has been zoned in the draft plan to cater for the projected residential development requirements of the town over the plan period.

C New Residential Low Density

Objective It is an objective to provide for the low density housing at a maximum density of 4 units per aces, subject to meeting the requirements of the development standards.

It is envisaged that the development of these lands will provide for an alternative to single rural housing at a density of between 1 and 3 – 4 units per acre. The development of lands will be subject to compliance with the development management standards set out in chapter 14. With a total of 504 ha (437ha developable), the low-density lands are capable of accommodating 4,370 new residential units.

D Enterprise and Employment

Objective It is an objective to provide for the improvement of retailing, enterprise and industrial employment needs of the town.

The significantly expanded area available for Enterprise and Employment reflects the changing nature of employment in manufacturing/industry/light industry from the previous industrial zoning. This zoning allows for a more varied and flexible number of land uses. The development of convenience retailing will not normally be encouraged in this zoning.

The council will ensure that the likely demand for car parking and delivery vehicles are fully met within the site will apply the highest standards in terms of building design, finishes and landscaping and will ensure that the needs of pedestrians and cyclists are considered as well as providing for public transport links.

Objective It is an objective to prepare a restoration plan for the existing Quarry site during the life of this Development Plan

Set within the Enterprise and Employment zone it is a specific objective to provide for a restoration plan for the Roadstone quarry at Moneenbradagh, during the life of this Development Plan.

E Town Centre

Objective It is an objective to enhance the special physical and social character of the existing town centre and to provide for new and improved ancillary services.

In the pursuit of this objective major consideration will be give to the protection of the character of the existing town centre. The Town Centre includes many land uses. These range from shops, offices, houses, to public open space and some industry. The objective governing the area delineated as Town Centre means that this land use mix will continue. Certain uses, because of their particular requirements, are best located outside the town centre such as warehousing, general industry and agricultural machinery outlets.

The distinctive urban design character will be protected and enhances in the context of the implementation of this plan.

F Residential/Commercial

Objective It is an objective to protect, improve and renew the existing activities of the area and to provide primarily for residential use and such offices and retail commercial uses as are consistent with the existing mix.

There are only a few areas in this zoning category and the plan aims to protect and improve them while permitting sensitive and flexible redevelopment opportunities.

G Open Space/Amenity

Objective It is an objective to preserve, provide for and improve active and passive recreational public and private open space.

The areas designated as open space and amenity, are in public, institutional and private ownership. The areas are dispersed throughout the town including playing fields, the river walk, and adjacent to the Loughs and within housing developments. As the new residential sectors develop additional formal and informal open spaces will be developed for residents to enjoy.

H Neighbourhood Centres

Objective It is an objective to develop neighbourhood centres at designated locations to cater for the projected future residential growth in new residential areas.

Castlebar and Environs does not yet contain sufficient critical mass to sustain large-scale suburban district centres without affecting the vitality and viability of the town centre. To provide planned structure of suburban centres two suburban development nodes have been identified as follows: -

The first is at Saleen¹⁹ and can cater for a large neighbourhood centre as detailed in Chapter 11, while a smaller centre can be accommodated to the south of the Westport road at Knockthomas²⁰. These

¹⁹ Saleen – Plan for a large-scale integrated neighbourhood, with a wider range and scale of retail formats, services and community infrastructure, higher residential density and a variety of house type and formats within 400m walking distance from the centre of the locality. The centre may accommodate a supermarket within the limits set down in the Retail Planning Guidelines 2005.

²⁰ Knockthomas – Plan for integrating residential community with neighbourhood centre containing convenience stores, including discount format, local services and community facilities.

Land Use Zoning and Specific Objectives

sites are identified on the accompanying zoning map. The development of these sites will be subject to the planning process. The development of these neighbourhood centres should be subject to the provisions of the Retail Planning Guidelines 2005, will be conditional to the development of the new residential lands in the same areas and will be of a scale that will not threaten the vitality and viability of the existing town centre.

I Community/Institutional

Objective To provide for and improve local neighbourhood, community, ecclesiastical, recreational and educational facilities. It is also an objective to examine the potential redevelopment of key sites within the community institutional lands, in particular lands close to the existing town centre.

This zoning incorporates substantial areas of land close to the town centre. These significant lands are in some cases under-utilised at present and the council will work with the respective landowning institutions to seek to make the best possible use of the lands for the benefit of the town.

J Rural Character

Objective It is an objective to protect the lands zoned rural character so that their future development potential can be realised in a strategically planned manner.

Having established the plan boundary there are substantial areas of lands that are not currently serviceable by either gravity sewerage or by satisfactory roads network. Their development is therefore considered premature and therefore the potential development of the lands needs to be reserved so that they can be developed to their potential during the life of future Development Plans

15.4 Zoning Matrix

Uses other than the primary use for which an area is zoned may be permitted provided they are not in conflict with the primary use-zoning objective. The Zoning Matrix illustrates the acceptability or unacceptability of various uses for each of the zoning objectives. The land use zoning matrix is intended to provide guidance to potential developers. It is not intended to supplant the normal planning process. An indication that a proposal would be 'permitted in principle' from the matrix should not be taken to imply a granting of permission, or indeed that a planning application may be necessarily successful. Individual applications are a matter for the Planning Authority to decide and the final decision rests with them, taking into consideration the merits of individual cases and circumstances that may be relevant at a specific time or at a specific location. The matrix relates to land use only and important factors such as density, building height, design standards, traffic generation, etc., are also relevant in establishing whether or not a development proposal would be acceptable in a particular location.

The notation used for the purposes of the matrix is as follows: -

P = Normally Permitted

A use, which will normally be acceptable, is one, which the Planning Authority accepts in principle in the relevant zone. However, it is still subject to the normal planning process including policies, objectives and Development Management Standards outlined in the Plan.

O – Open for Consideration

A use, which is open for consideration, means that the use is generally acceptable except where indicated otherwise and where specific considerations associated with a given proposal (i.e. scale) would be unacceptable, or where the development would be contrary to the objective for a given area. Such uses will not be a Material Contravention of the plan.

X = Not Normally Permitted

Land Use Zoning and Specific Objectives

Development, which is classified as not normally being acceptable in a particular zone, is one, which will not be entertained by the Local Authority except in exceptional circumstances. This may be due to its perceived effect on existing and permitted uses, its incompatibility with the policies and objectives contained in this Plan or the fact that it may be inconsistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The expansion of established and approved uses not conforming to land use zone objectives will be considered on their merits.

TABLE 15.1: LAND USE ZONING MATRIX

(A)	Existing Residential/Infill	(F)	Residential/Commercial
(B)	New Residential Medium Density	(G)	Open Space/Amenity
(C)	New Residential Low Density	(H)	Neighbourhood Centres
(D)	Enterprise and Employment	(I)	Community/Institutional
(E)	Town Centre	(J)	Rural Character

P = Normally Permitted

O = Open for Consideration

X = Not Normally Permitted

USE CLASS	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Housing/Apartment Scheme	P	P	P ²¹	X	P	P	X	O	X	O ²²
Single House/Apartment	P	P	P ²³	X	P	P	X	O	X	O
Holiday Home	O	O	X	X	O	P	X	X	X	X
Holiday Home Scheme	P	P	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	X
Guesthouse/Hotel	O	O	O	O	P	P	O	O	X	X
Restaurant	X	X	X	P	P	O	X	O	X	X
Pub	O	O	X	X	P	O	X	O	X	X
Shopping Centre/Supermarket	X	X	X	X	P	X	X	P	X	X
Convenience Shop (Local)	O	O	X	O	P	P	X	P	X	X
Retail Shop (General)	X	X	X	O	P	O	X	P	X	X
Discount Foodstore	X	X	X	O	P	X	X	O ²⁴	X	X
Retail Warehouse	X	X	X	P	X	X	X	X	X	X
Medical and Related Consultant	O	O	X	P	P	P	X	O	O	X
School	O	O	O	X	O	O	X	X	P	X
Creche/Playschool	O	O	O	P	O	O	X	O	O	X
Medical Centre Clinic	X	X	X	P	P	P	X	O	P	X
Hospital	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	O	X
Nursing Home	O	O	O	P	O	O	X	X	O	X
Community Halls	O	O	X	P	O	O	O	X	P	X
Sports Clubs	O	O	O	P	X	O	O	X	O	O
Recreational Buildings	O	O	O	P	O	O	O	O	P	X
Cultural Uses – Library/Art Gallery	O	O	X	O	P	O	O	O	P	X
Offices	X	O	X ²⁵	P	P	O	X	O	O	X
ATM	X	X	X	P	P	P	X	P	P	X
Car Repair, Garages and Panel Beating	X	X	X	P	X	O	X	X	X	X
Agriculture Machinery Outlet	X	X	O	P	X	O	X	X	X	O
Garden Centre	X	X	X	P	X	X	X	X	X	X

²¹ Apartments will not be permitted in the Low Density Zoned Area.

²² Single Houses for person who meet the requirements of RHP1, RHP2, RHP 3 and RHP 4 will be permitted only.

²³ Apartments will not be permitted in the Low Density Zoned Area.

²⁴ Limited to 1,000 m² gross floor area.

²⁵ Small Home Offices, which are part of the existing house up to 40m² are open for consideration.

Land Use Zoning and Specific Objectives

Petrol Stations	X	X	X	P	X	O	X	O	X	X
Motor Sales Outlet	X	X	X	P	X	O	X	X	X	X
Car Parks	O	O	X	P	P	O	O	O	O	X
Heavy Commercial Vehicle Parks	X	X	X	P	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cinema, Dance Hall, Disco	X	X	X	X	P	O	X	X	X	X
Wholesale Outlets	X	X	X	O	X	O	X	X	X	X
Warehouses	X	X	X	P	X	X	X	X	X	X
General Industry	X	X	X	P	X	X	X	X	X	X
Light Industry	X	X	O	P	O	O	X	X	X	X
Special Industry	X	X	X	P	X	X	X	X	X	X
Workshops	X	X	X	P	O	O	X	X	X	X
Major Playing Fields	O	O	P	X	X	X	P	X	P	O
Place of Worship	O	O	O	X	O	O	O	X	P	X
Park/Playground	P	P	P	X	O	O	P	X	P	O
Camping	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	O
Cattle Shed	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	P
Broiler House	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	X
Caravan Park	X	O	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X
Gaming Arcade	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Take Away	X	X	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	X
Halting Site	P	P	X	O	X	X	O	X	O	X
Quarry	X	X	X	O ²⁶	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cemetery	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	O	X
Funeral Home	X	X	X	O	O	O	X	X	O	X
Waste Incinerator	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Landfill	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Stable yard	X	X	O	X	X	X	O	X	O	P
Boarding Kennels	X	X	O	X	X	X	O	X	O	O

P = Normally Permitted O – Open for Consideration

X = Not Permitted

Neighbourhood Centres

It is proposed to facilitate the development of two neighbourhood centres at Knockthomas and Saleen.

- Knockthomas – Plan for integrating residential community with neighbourhood centre containing convenience stores, including discount format, local services and community facilities.
- Saleen – Plan for a large-scale integrated neighbourhood, with a wider range and scale of retail formats, services and community infrastructure, higher residential density and a variety of house type and formats within 400m walking distance from the centre of the locality. The centre may accommodate a supermarket within the limits set down in the Retail Planning Guidelines 2005.

²⁶ The existing quarry development for Roadstone will be permitted to continue operating in accordance with the conditions imposed by Section 261 of the Planning and Development Act. No further quarries will be permitted in the Enterprise and Employment zoned area.