

CHAPTER 4 HOUSING STRATEGY

AIM: To facilitate the provision of housing in a range of locations to meet the needs of the county's population, with particular emphasis on facilitating access to housing to suit different household and tenure needs in a sustainable manner and in appropriate locations.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023 was following a period of recession in the national property market post 2008. A review of the Housing Strategy and preparation of Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA) as required by NPO 37 of the National Planning Framework was commissioned by Laois County Council in July 2020 and carried out in consultation with Downey Planning Consultants to reflect the fundamental changes that have taken place in the economy.

High levels of market uncertainty and the changing nature of housing demand, including mitigating factors such as income, demographics and credit conditions are key aspects which underline the current housing market.

4.2 HOUSING STRATEGY SYNOPSIS AND POLICY

This section has evolved from the analysis of the housing issues that have emerged during the preparation of the strategy. Firstly, it outlines a number of broad principles that inform the overall approach to the strategy. Secondly, it formalises these aspects through a number of recommended housing objectives. The preparation of this section has necessitated a review of existing housing policy contained in the current development plan and the recommendations set out below are designed to build upon and complement that reviewed.

4.3 KEY PRINCIPLES OF THE HOUSING STRATEGY

- To work to deliver the revised county population target of **94,700** by 2027 and **97,500** by 2031, having regard to the National Planning Framework, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and county's established Settlement Hierarchy as set out in the Laois County Development Plan;
- To promote socially balanced and inclusive communities in all housing areas across Laois;
- To provide for varying identified needs in the county with respect to housing typology, size and mix;
- To monitor the housing strategy, allowing for adequate consultation with those who are central to the implementation of the policies in the strategy.

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) sets out clear requirements for the monitoring and review of local authority housing strategies. Section 95 subsection (1) (b)

requires that a planning authority's development plan should include objectives to ensure that the housing strategy is implemented. These objectives should relate to:

- The existing and likely future need for social housing;
- The need to ensure the availability of housing for persons who have different levels of income;
- The need to provide different types and sizes of housing, to match, in so far as possible, the different types of households to be provided for;
- The special needs of the elderly and those with disabilities must be provided for; and
- The need to counteract social segregation in the provision of housing.

The County Laois Housing Strategy and Housing Needs Demand Assessment is closely aligned with the Core Strategy in that the future housing need is based on the population and household projections outlined in the Core Strategy in Section 2.8.1 of the Plan. The Strategy includes an analysis of housing requirements in the context of affordability and addresses the need to ensure that housing is available for persons with different levels of income. It also assesses the mix of house types and sizes (including accommodation for the elderly and persons with disabilities) and highlights the need to counteract undue segregation in housing between persons of different social backgrounds.

The Housing Strategy estimates that there will be a requirement for 1,200 social and affordable units between 2021 and 2027 (1,200 households which are not qualified for a mortgage over the Plan period, 793 no. households (20.4%) do not meet the affordability criteria for the private rental market).

The mechanisms for delivering social housing include the following:

- Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).
- Direct construction by Local Authorities or in partnership with Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs).
- Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), Social Housing Lease Initiatives and Housing Assistance Payments (HAPs).
- Purchase of new or second-hand residential units.
- Casual vacancies.

The Housing Strategy and Housing Needs Demand Assessment can be found in Appendix 3 of this Plan.

4.4 HOUSING STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

To ensure the successful implementation of this Housing Strategy, it is necessary to keep it under review. Therefore, not more than two years after the making of the Development Plan, the Chief Executive of Laois County Council will give a report to the elected members on the progress achieved in implementing the Housing Strategy and the Development Plan objectives.

Where the report indicates that new or revised housing needs have been identified, the Chief Executive may recommend that the Housing Strategy be amended and the Development Plan varied accordingly.

The Housing Strategy has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended as a basis to address the following key issues:

- The identification of housing need within County Laois;
- The identification of social and specialist housing needs within the County;
- The identification of supply side requirements to satisfy identified needs, including the consideration of appropriate land zoning in Laois;
- The consideration of specific policy response to the above.

The preparation of this strategy has included the assessment of all relevant and up-to-date publications and data resources, which have been analysed in detail to provide a robust basis for future policy development and implementation. In addition to meeting the statutory requirement for its production, this strategy ensures that the proper planning and sustainable development of Laois provides for the housing needs of existing and future populations in an appropriate manner.

4.5 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE URBAN REGENERATION AND HOUSING ACT 2015

The Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 provides for the imposition of a Vacant Site Levy within areas where housing is required and areas in need of renewal. The levy will support the implementation of the Development Plan and Core Strategy objectives, particularly in respect of promoting the renewal and regeneration of urban areas thus ensuring a compact urban form and sustainable growth patterns. The Urban Regeneration and Housing Act set out two broad categories of vacant land that the levy may apply to:



- Lands zoned primarily for residential purposes
- Lands in need of regeneration

Laois County Council has determined that a need for housing exists in the Towns of Portlaoise, Portarlinton, Mountmellick and Graiguecullen as indicated in Table 4.1 below. The Planning Authority may determine that a need for housing exists in additional Laois Towns during the Plan period.

4.5.1 REGENERATION SITES

Laois County Council has identified a number of regeneration sites within Volume 2 - Settlement Plans, having regard to NPO 35 of the NPF and the principles of compact development. A regeneration strategy is also included for each settlement. The review of the Local Area Plans for the County (Portlaoise, Portarlinton, Graiguecullen and Mountmellick) will also provide a strategy for regeneration and include site specific objectives for each settlement. Strategic regeneration sites identified in the Portlaoise and Portarlinton Local Area Plans are outlined in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Regeneration Sites for Local Area Plans

TOWN (LAP)	GENERAL LOCATION	OVERVIEW
Portlaoise	<p>The Former Centerpoint development, Mountrath Rd</p> 	<p>This brownfield retail site is a key site for regeneration, formerly a petrol station and commercial units located at Mountrath Road, with access also from Harpers Lane and an extensive surface car park. The site is within a 10 minute walk of both the Train Station and the Town centre and is in close proximity to both primary and secondary schools.</p> <p>Its Prime location is not located within an Architectural Conservation Area or contains any protected Structures.</p> <p>Future developments shall comprise a high quality design, fine grained active frontage blocks providing a strong built edge to the surrounding public thoroughfare. New buildings should be permanent, timeless and contemporary structures. Development could be intensified to provide a key landmark or gateway building.</p>
	<p>The Former Maltings Site Harpurs Lane</p> 	<p>This former brownfield site is located on the N80 (Mountmellick Road) in Portlaoise and within a 5 minute walk of Portlaoise Train Station. It previously had Planning Permission for a substantial mixed use development and is currently the subject of both residential and nursing home permissions;</p> <p>Its extensive site curtilage has been cleared for redevelopment and it is not located within an Architectural Conservation Area.</p> <p>Development could be intensified to provide a key landmark or gateway building at this location to replace the once tall malting buildings.</p> <p>Future development proposals should address both Mountmellick Road and Harpurs Lane and be designed to an exceptional standard. Development shall comprise high quality design, fine grained active frontage blocks providing a strong built edge to the surrounding public thoroughfare. New buildings should be permanent, timeless and contemporary</p>

structures.

Fitzmaurice Place Portlaoise - Convent Site and CBS Lands



Both former school sites (Convent Lands and CBS) occupy a substantial portion of the lands within the Town Centre.

Part VIII approval has been granted for approx 130 units (total) on both sites.

Both developments have paid due respect to the Fort of Maryborough and archaeological considerations, their location within Portlaoise Architectural Conservation Area and the need to address the Protected Structures on both sites.

Portarlinton

Colltederry, Lands West of Ballymorris Rd



The site is a prime site located in close proximity to the town centre. The 3.84ha. greenfield site is fully serviced and outside of Flood Zones A and B.

A Mixed use developments compliant with the zoning objective will be encouraged. The building should address the extensive street frontage and be designed to an exceptional standard.

A high quality public realm will be required in any development including pocket parks and green links between Sandy Lane and Ballymorris Road.

Foxcroft Street Landbank



This site is in a prime location adjacent to the town centre with vehicular access from Foxcroft Street and potential pedestrian access from Main Street. The 4.08ha. is considered greenfield, backland and infill site and is fully serviced. A portion of the site is located within Flood Zone B.

There is an opportunity to create a sustainable and compact urban quarter with a mix of uses. The site is located within the study area for the Urban Regeneration Strategy currently under commission by LCC.

Pedestrian and cycle links and pocket parks between Main Street, Sandy Lane and Foxcroft Street should form key features to any proposal. Adjoining private amenity spaces of neighbouring residential properties should be protected through the design and layout of any proposal. A high quality public realm will be required in any development.

Housing Development Policy Objectives

HPO 1	Secure the implementation of the Laois County Housing Strategy in accordance with the provision of national legislation and relevant policies and standards.
HPO 2	Support the regional Settlement Strategy, taking into consideration the estimated population growth set out within the NPF and RSES, and make provision for the scale of population growth and housing allocations
HPO 3	To ensure that sufficient zoned land is available at appropriate locations to cater for the envisioned population growth within the County and to satisfy residential development needs within the County in compliance with the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy of the Development Plan.
HPO 4	To engage in active land management and site activation measures, including the implementation of the vacant site levy on all vacant residential and regeneration lands, and address dereliction and vacancy to ensure the viability of towns and village centres, i.e. Portlaoise, Portarlington, Mountmellick and Graiguecullen
HPO 5	To plan for future housing needs and housing allocation within the County in accordance with the estimated population targets and the Core and Settlement Strategy, in order to facilitate the expansion of existing settlements in a planned, sequential and coordinated manner, which ensures development is built alongside the necessary infrastructure including works with Irish Water, and to consolidate the built-up area within the existing settlements. This ensures the creation of sustainable communities in line with national policy
HPO 6	In relation to rural housing, it shall be provided where it promotes the economic role of these areas, negates isolation and promotes social inclusion. Development will be subject to infrastructure being delivered in rural areas or working with Irish Water to develop same.
HPO 7	To ensure that an appropriate mix of housing types and sizes is provided in each residential development and within communities in keeping with Development Plan standards. All new housing development is expected to be of a high-quality design in compliance with the relevant standards.
HPO 8	To promote residential densities appropriate to the development's location and surrounding context, having due regard to Government policy relating to sustainable development, which aims to reduce the demand for travel within existing settlements, and the need to respect and reflect the established character of rural areas.
HPO 9	To promote best practice and innovative solutions in relation to the ongoing management and maintenance of all housing stock and associated public realm.
HPO 10	To ensure that investment in infrastructure is distributed in a balanced manner around the County, with priority given to designated growth towns in line with the Settlement Strategy and in accordance with the sequential approach for developments. This includes working with Irish Water to ensure infrastructure is

	being delivered in rural areas.
HPO 11	To encourage the allocation of housing near co-working spaces and remote working hubs, as well as new housing in proximity of community centres which offer co-working services. This can promote a sustainable growth of the towns and villages located to the west of the County, or where deemed appropriate, and address the rising commuting daily trend from County Laois to Dublin
HPO 12	Support the development of serviced sites to address the issue of single one-off dwellings.
HPO 13	Promote residential development addressing any shortfall in housing provision through active land management and a coordinated planned approach to developing appropriately zoned lands at key locations including regeneration areas, vacant sites, and underutilised sites. This includes backland development, thus promoting a more efficient use of zoned land.
HPO 14	Encourage and ensure high standards of energy efficiency in existing and new residential developments in line with good architectural conservation practice and promote energy efficiency and conservation in the design and development of new residential units, encouraging improved environmental performance of building stock. Improving environmental performance may include measures to reduce carbon emissions, improve resource use efficiency and minimise pollution and waste
HPO 15	In order to address public safety and environmental improvement within Unfinished Housing Estates, the Local Authority shall continue to work with developers and residents of private residential developments, where possible.
HPO 16	Meet the needs of the elderly by providing accommodation in central, convenient and easily accessible locations to facilitate independent living where possible;
HPO 17	Encourage nursing homes and sheltered housing accommodation to be located within settlements to provide for easy access both for staff and visitors in order to enhance overall quality of life, increase their links with, and accessibility to, local amenities and to adopt a presumption against rural locations;
HPO 18	Provide for the housing needs of those with disabilities through the provision or adaptation of appropriate accommodation.
HPO 19	Opportunity sites identified in the County Development Plan shall be subject to a master plan for each site. A mix of type and design of dwelling is encouraged to allow for a transition between age groups such as additional single storey dwellings. Consultation should be held prior to the submission of any such application to ensure connectivity and accessibility has been a priority for the wider community.
HPO 20	The Council will facilitate the acquisition of lands by Compulsory Purchase Order to secure such lands for housing provision.
REG 1	Maintain the Laois Register of Vacant Sites, entering or deleting Sites from the Register in accordance with the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 and related Departmental Guidance;

REG 2	Identify additional Regeneration Area(s) and/or make determinations that a need for housing exists in additional Laois Towns during the Plan period as appropriate;
REG 3	Use the Derelict Site legislation to identify and address issues of dereliction within the towns and villages of the County

Development Management Standard for Residential Development

DM HS 1	<p>RESIDENTIAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>Applications for residential development will be assessed against the design criteria set out in Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009) and the companion Urban Design Manual: A Best Practice Guide (2009).</p> <p>The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DTTS and DECLG, 2013) provides guidance in relation to the design of urban roads and streets, encouraging an integrated design approach that views the street as a multi-functional space and focuses on the needs of all road users.</p>
DM HS 2	<p>RESIDENTIAL APARTMENT DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>Applications for apartments will be assessed against the design criteria set out in the Sustainable Urban Housing: A Design Guide for New Apartments –Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DHPLG, 2018).</p> <p>The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DTTS and DECLG, 2019) provides guidance in relation to the design of urban roads and streets, encouraging an integrated design approach that views the street as a multi-functional space and focuses on the needs of all road users.</p>
DM HS 3	<p>DENSITY OF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>The number of dwellings to be provided on a site should be determined with reference to the document Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009). Within these Guidelines a range of residential densities are prescribed, dependent on location, context, scale and availability of public transport.</p>
DM HS 4	<p>LANDSCAPING AND PUBLIC OPEN SPACE IN RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS</p> <p>Public open space shall be clearly defined and be of high quality design and finish which is easily maintained, easy to access from all parts of the development, easy to use including by people with disabilities, has good lighting and natural surveillance and is enjoyable to use, walk and cycle around all year round. These spaces should include informal play spaces, safe well-lit pathways which will facilitate children learning to cycle, adults able to walk safely and encouraging social interaction between local residents.</p> <p>A detailed plan for hard and soft landscaping should be submitted for each</p>

development. It should propose planting in public and private areas. Landscaping should contribute to the overall attractiveness of the development and be easily maintained.

Public open space shall comprise of the following:

- In large infill sites or brown field sites public open space should generally be provided at a minimum rate of 10% of the total site area.
- In greenfield sites, the minimum area of open space that is acceptable within the site is 10% of the total site area.
- In all other cases, public open space should be provided at the rate of 10% of the total site area.
- Where a public space is not fully usable due to the presence of infrastructure or occurrence of repeated flooding, the Council will require this to be offset by provision at another location, or addressed through a financial contribution in lieu of the shortfall arising, in accordance with the Council's Development Contribution Scheme.

SuDS are not generally acceptable as a form of public open space provision, except where they contribute in a significant and positive way to the design and quality of open space. Where the Council considers that this is the case, in general a maximum of 10% of the open space provision shall be taken up by SuDS.

DM HS 5

PUBLIC OPEN SPACE PROVISION FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

No. of Dwellings	Amenity Required
<25	<p>Landscaped passive recreational area (sitting out and setting)</p> <p>Active amenity open space (Ball Games)</p>
26-99	<p>Landscaped passive recreational area (sitting out)</p> <p>Active amenity open space (Ball Games)</p> <p>Areas for younger children (Play area/ground) (min.100m2)</p> <p>OR</p> <p>-Multi Use Games Area (tennis/basketball)</p>
100+	<p>Landscaped passive recreational area (sitting out)</p> <p>Active amenity open space (Ball Games)</p> <p>Areas for younger children (Play area/ground) (min.200m2)</p> <p>-Multi Use Games Area (tennis/basketball)</p> <p>-Grass sports pitch/ playing fields or</p> <p>-Multi Use Games Area (tennis/basketball)</p>

Public open space shall have the following characteristics:

- Public open space shall be clearly defined, easily maintained, easy to access from all parts of the development, easy to use including by people with disabilities, have good lighting and natural surveillance and is enjoyable to use, walk and cycle around all year round
- Areas of public open space should be generally flat. While some undulation may be incorporated as a design feature, areas with high gradients, containing swales or attenuation ponds, or otherwise impractical to function effectively as amenity / play areas, will not be acceptable as open space.
- Narrow tracts of land (less than 10m) or pieces of land 'left over after planning' are not acceptable.
- Public open space should be innovative in its design approach, and designed to be functionally accessible to the maximum number of dwellings within the residential area.
- Public open space should be overlooked by as many dwellings as possible.
- Houses shall not generally be permitted to back onto public open spaces.
- Natural features and biodiversity, e.g. trees, hedgerows and wetland sites, should be retained, protected and incorporated into public open space areas.
- Appropriate pedestrian and cycle linkages between open spaces should be clearly indicated on the site layout plan.
- Existing and proposed areas of open space should be linked where possible

DM HS 6

PRIVATE OPEN SPACE IN HOUSING RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

All houses (terraced, semi-detached and detached) should have an area of private open space behind the building line.

House size	Minimum requirements
1 and 2 bedroom	60 sq m
3, 4, 5 bedroom	75 sq m

Private open space shall be designed to maximise sunlight, privacy and shelter from winds and shall normally be located to the rear of dwellings. Narrow or awkward spaces, spaces which are not private and spaces also used for parking will be excluded from private open space area calculations.

In general, a minimum distance of 22m should be achieved between opposing first floor windows at the rear of dwellings. In general, it is encouraged that a 15m rear garden is provided, with innovative design and layout a lesser requirement may be considered.

The Council will only consider exceptions to the standards in exceptional circumstances where an otherwise high quality design solution is proposed, which has full regard to the characteristics and context of the site.

DM HS 7

PRIVATE OPEN SPACE IN APARTMENT DEVELOPMENTS

It is a specific planning policy requirement that private amenity space shall be provided in the form of gardens or patios/terraces for ground floor apartments and balconies at upper levels.

These spaces must be of a certain minimum depth of at least 1.5m, to be useful from an amenity viewpoint, e.g. to accommodate chairs and a small table.

Vertical privacy screens should be provided between adjoining balconies and the floors of balconies should be solid and self-draining.

Minimum floor areas for private amenity space in apartments	
Studio	4 sq m
One bedroom	5 sq m
Two bedroom	7 sq m
Three bedroom	9 sq m

DM HS 8

OVERSHADOWING OF DWELLINGS AND OPEN SPACE

High buildings or when new buildings are located close to adjoining structures may significantly overshadow dwellings and open space. Daylight and shadow projection diagrams should be submitted for such proposals. The recommendations of 'Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice', (B.R.E. 1991) or B.S. 8026 'Lighting for Buildings, Part 2 1992: Code of Practice for Day lighting' should be followed in this regard.

DM HS 9

INTERNAL SPACE STANDARDS IN HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

The design and layout of individual dwellings should provide a high quality living environment for residents. Designers should have regard to the targets and standards set out in Table 5.1 of the Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities Guidelines, DCHLG (2007) with regard to minimum room sizes, dimensions and overall floor areas when designing residential accommodation.

DM HS 10

BOUNDARY TREATMENTS

The side boundaries of rear gardens shall be 1.8m-2m in height and shall be formed by high quality boundary treatments such as concrete block walls or concrete post and rail fencing.

Two-metre-high concrete walls shall be provided between all areas of public open space and gardens to the rear of dwellings. The walls shall be suitably rendered and capped in a manner acceptable to the Council.

Landscaping along boundary walls is also encouraged to promote biodiversity and green infrastructure.

Open plan front gardens will generally be discouraged and will only be acceptable in innovative layouts and where a high level of safety is achieved and services can

	<p>be accommodated at a location which meets the needs of service providers. Open plan gardens will not be permitted on main access roads.</p> <p>In general, where provided, front boundaries shall be defined by walls or fences at least 0.5 metres high in keeping with the house design and to a uniform scheme design.</p>
DM HS 11	<p>REFUSE/RECYCLING</p> <p>The Council will require that all developments include convenient and well-designed proposals for the storage of waste and recycling receptacles (3 receptacles per home). Secure pedestrian access shall be provided to the rear of terraced homes where appropriate. Sustainable waste reduction measures shall also be included in all proposals.</p>
DM HS 12	<p>BRING BANKS</p> <p>Bring bank facilities will generally be required at appropriate locations in the following developments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant new commercial developments, or extensions to same; • Mixed use developments, proposals should provide recycling facilities to serve residents; <p>One bring centre per residential development of 1,250 persons.</p>
DM HS 13	<p>NAMING OF ESTATES</p> <p>Naming and numbering of residential estates shall be approved in advance by the Placenames Committee of the Planning Authority. Developers must submit the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed placename; • Reasons for their choice. <p>Naming of streets and residential estates shall reflect the local place names and local people of note, heritage, language or topographical or landscape features as appropriate and shall incorporate old place names from the locality as much as possible. The use of bi-lingual and Irish-Language signs will be encouraged.</p> <p>Signage should be of appropriate size and material and shall be erected in a timely manner.</p>
DM HS 14	<p>HOUSE EXTENSIONS/ALTERATIONS IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS</p> <p>Extensions and alterations to dwellings should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Be of a scale and position which would not be unduly incongruous with its context; 2) Harmonise with the principal building and fit into the site and surrounding area in terms of scale, bulk, form and materials. 3) The design and finish of the proposed extension need not necessarily replicate or imitate the design and finish of the existing dwelling. More

	<p>contemporary designs and finishes often represent a more architecturally honest approach to the extension of a property and can better achieve other objectives, such as enhancing internal natural light;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4) Not have an adverse impact on the amenities of adjoining properties through undue overlooking, undue overshadowing and/or an over dominant visual impact; 5) Be positioned to ensure the privacy and adequate sunlight and daylight to key habitable rooms; <p>Site coverage should be carefully considered to avoid unacceptable loss of private open space.</p>
DM HS 15	<p>INFILL DEVELOPMENT IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS</p> <p>Infill development is encouraged in principal where it does not adversely affect neighbouring residential amenity (for example privacy, sunlight and daylight), the general character of the area and the functioning of transport networks</p>
DM HS 16	<p>ANCILLARY SELF-CONTAINED RESIDENTIAL UNIT (GRANNY FLAT)</p> <p>The Council will consider the provision of accommodation for older people and dependant relatives attached to the existing family home subject to compliance with the following criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The unit shall be attached to the existing dwelling; 2) The unit shall be linked internally to the existing dwelling; 3) It shall not have a separate access at the front elevation of the dwelling; 4) It shall be of an appropriate size and design; <p>Should be capable of being served by adequate wastewater treatment.</p>
DM HS 17	<p>BACKLAND DEVELOPMENT IN URBAN AREAS</p> <p>There is the potential in appropriate circumstances to integrate new residential development into backland areas to produce a high quality residential environment. Development proposals should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) complement the character of the area and main building to the fore with regard to scale, massing, height, building depth, roof treatment and materials. The design of such proposals should represent an innovative architectural response to the site and should be informed by established building lines and plot width ii) Be of a form and scale which respects the scale and density of existing development. In general the scale and massing of new housing in backland areas should not exceed that of the existing dwellings fronting the surrounding streets. iii) Achieve a coherent and legible form and where possible provide a shared access with the development to the fore. New development should not inhibit vehicular access to car parking space at the rear for the benefit of the main frontage premises, where this space exists at present. iv) Integrate existing landscape features which form part of a backland plot,

	<p>the design should seek to retain these and integrate them into the new development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> v) Provide parking within the site boundary unless otherwise agreed to by the Council. vi) Provide open space to the rear of the new building and shall be landscaped so as to provide for a quality residential environment vii) The distance between the opposing windows of mews dwellings and of the main houses shall be generally a minimum of 22m <p>Laois County Council will actively encourage schemes which provide a unified approach to the development of residential backland areas where consensus between all property owners has been agreed. This unified approach framework is the preferred alternative to individual development proposals</p>
<p>DM HS 18</p>	<p>CORNER/SIDE GARDEN SITES</p> <p>The Council notes that some corner/side gardens are restricted to the extent that they would be more suitable for extending an existing home into a larger family home rather than to create a poor quality independent dwelling, which may also compromise the quality of the original house.</p> <p>The planning authority will have regard to the specific criteria contained in the section when assessing proposals for the development of corner/side garden sites such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The character of the street; • Compatibility of design and scale with adjoining dwellings, paying attention to the established building line, proportion, heights, parapet levels and materials of adjoining buildings; • Impact on the residential amenities of adjoining sites; • Open space standards and refuse standards for both existing and proposed dwellings ; • The provision of appropriate car parking facilities, and a safe means of access to and egress from the site; • The provision of landscaping and boundary treatments which are in keeping with other properties in the area; • The maintenance of the front and side building lines, where appropriate.
<p>DM HS 19</p>	<p>LANDSCAPING AND BIODIVERSITY</p> <p>All applications for residential developments shall include a Landscape and Biodiversity Plans and should provide for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The creation of a coherent landscaping scheme appropriate to the type and scale of development and its surroundings

- 2) The creation of paths through significant areas of open space
- 3) The retention of any existing valuable features including trees, hedgerows, ponds, and areas of wildlife or ecological value
- 4) The use of native trees, shrubs and plants in the planting schedules, planting schedules which include invasive species will not be accepted (a schedule of invasive species and native plants are included in Appendix 8). Preferred native deciduous tree species to be used are hawthorn, whitethorn, rowan, ash, oak, hazel, sycamore and holly. Beech (*fagus sylvatica*) shall not be used.
- 5) The linking up of site landscaping with adjacent open spaces, green spaces, foot or cycle paths; or linking up site landscaping with adjacent linear landscape features such as lines of trees or hedgerows
- 6) The use of planting belts to absorb developments into the landscape, taking account of important views
- 7) The creation of a pleasant environment for users, including sunny and shady areas.
- 8) The screening of development from neighbouring properties and from public roads for privacy
- 9) Earthen berms in combination with planting belts are favoured to screen commercial developments such as quarries, waste disposal facilities or other large developments from the surrounding landscape.
- 10) A Habitat mitigation scheme shall be included in all housing schemes on Greenfield sites to mitigate any loss of habitat.

4.6 OPEN COUNTRYSIDE AND RURAL HOUSING

In support of the overall pattern of rural and small town development in Ireland, the NPF seeks to protect areas that are under strong urban influence from unsustainable over-development on the one hand, and to encourage population to be sustained in more structurally weak areas, that have experienced low growth or decline in recent decades, on the other, while sustaining vibrant rural communities. However, the NPF, through National Policy Objective 19 requires a clear distinction to be made between areas under urban influence and elsewhere in providing for the development of rural housing.

National Policy Objective 19: Ensure, in providing for the development of rural housing, that a distinction is made between areas under urban influence, i.e. within the commuter catchment of cities and large towns and centres of employment, and elsewhere:

- In rural areas under urban influence, facilitate the provision of single housing in the countryside based on the core consideration of demonstrable economic or social need to live in a rural area and siting and design criteria for rural housing in statutory guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements;
- In rural areas elsewhere, facilitate the provision of single housing in the countryside based on siting and design criteria for rural housing in statutory guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements.

Laos County Council’s rural housing policy has had careful regard to national advice and guidelines as set out in the National Planning Framework, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, Climate Action legislation, *Sustainable Rural Housing: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG, 2005)* and also the Habitats Directive with regard to Appropriate Assessment and the *Planning System and Flood Risk Management: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2009)*.

The Council’s rural development strategy is based on promoting sustainable rural development aimed at maintaining vibrant and viable rural communities while also seeking to transition to a low carbon society and protect the amenity, recreational and heritage value of the rural landscapes and countryside of the county.

The implementation of the Settlement Strategy, as set out in Chapter 2 and the actions required to transition to a low carbon economy and society (Chapter 3) together with the conservation and protection measures in Chapter 11 Biodiversity and Natural Heritage of this Plan are considered to be essential towards achieving this aim. The designation of settlements for development enables the Council to promote the strengthening of villages and settlements which will sustain the development of rural communities.

4.6.1 RURAL AREA DESIGNATIONS/TYPOLOGIES

The RSES indicates the EMRA Functional Urban Areas (FUA) which is indicated in Figure 4.1. Within County Laois, much of the County is split between two Large Town FUAs – stemming from Portlaoise and Tullamore. The eastern county boundary also lies along the ‘Core Region’ FUA boundary, which is the peri urban hinterlands within the commuter catchment.

Laos County Council is sensitive to the needs of the rural community and recognises the need to facilitate housing development for people who are an intrinsic part of a rural community. The HNDA accounts for the potential demand for single rural dwellings over the lifetime of this Development Plan which is indicated at approximately 100 dwellings per annum.

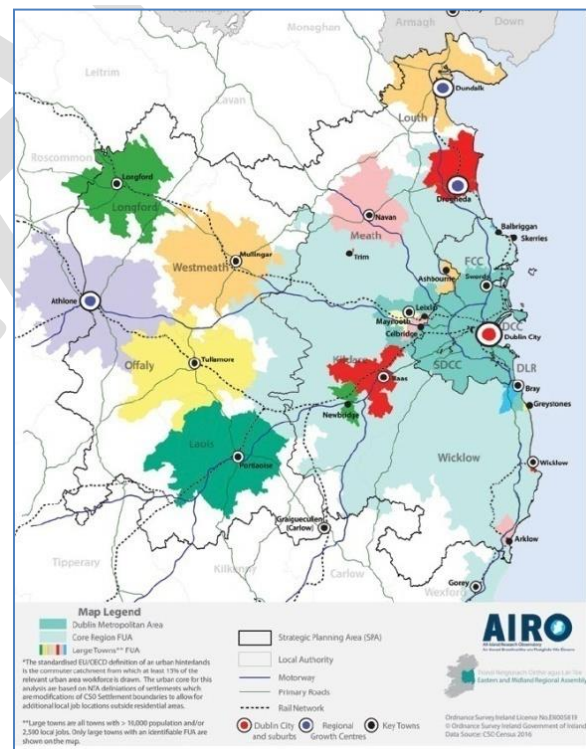


Fig 4.1: Functional Urban Areas, Dublin and Large Towns CSO 2016

The approach taken towards the accommodation of residential development in the countryside has been twofold. In the first instance small scale settlements were identified. These are small scale settlements or small villages with an established identity that were considered suitable for the development of small scale housing schemes and/or single dwelling houses. The second part of the approach was to determine the capacity of the countryside to absorb one-off housing having regard to issues in terms of

environmental sensitivity, population trends, vacancy rates and the existing level of development in the area. In this regard the following actions were taken:

1. Commuter flows to Dublin Metro (as pre RSES) and then all other urban settlements with population >10k or >2,500 jobs;
2. Environmentally sensitive areas including; – Special Areas of Conservation, Natural Heritage Areas, Special Protection Areas, Scenic Areas were identified and mapped.
3. Population trends have been mapped in terms of each Electoral Division (ED). The period taken was from 2006 to 2011.
4. Local areas within each ED that are clearly under significant development pressure for example north-east County Laois, the environs of the main urban settlements.

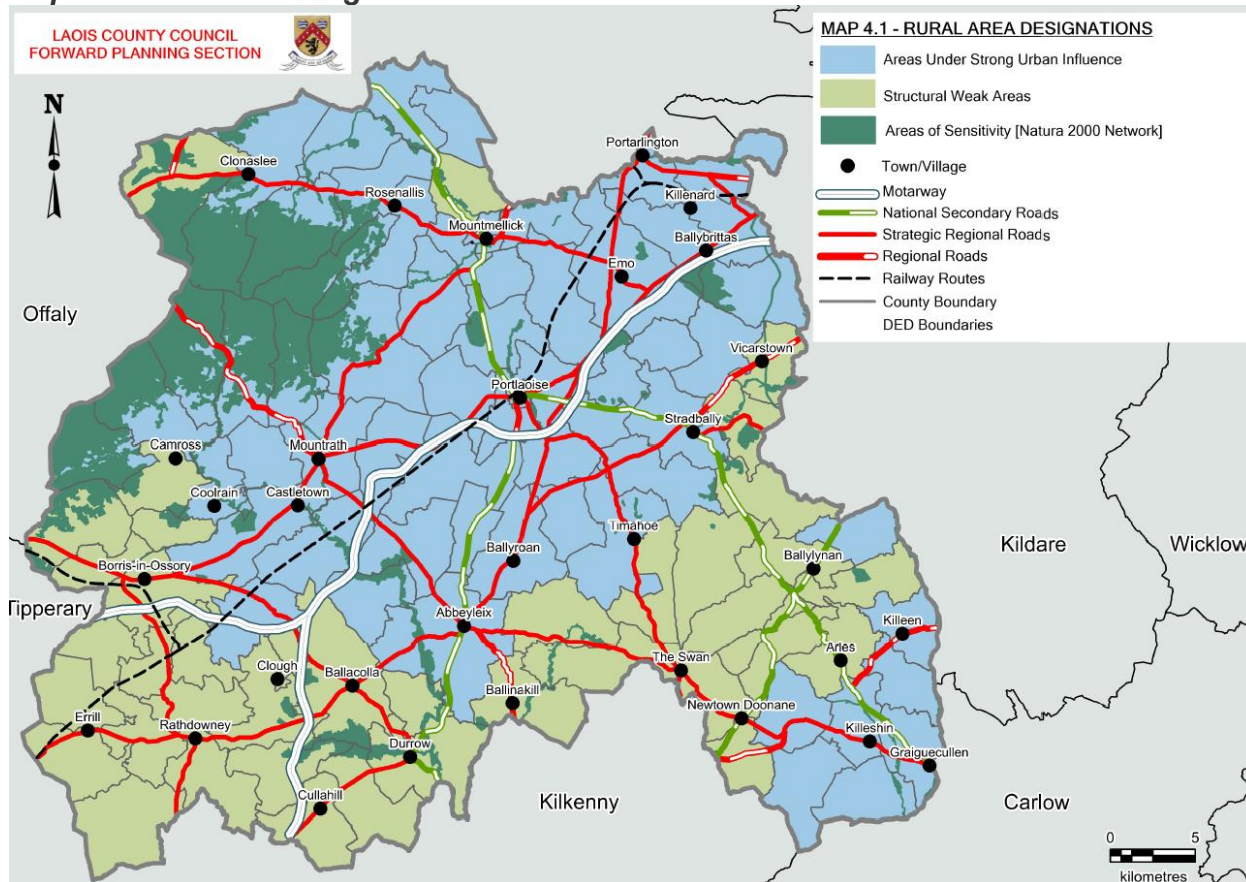
While the Council acknowledges the role of rural housing in sustaining rural communities, it also recognises that uncontrolled and excessive one-off¹ urban generated housing in the countryside is not sustainable in the long-term by virtue of the impact one off housing has on the landscape, travel patterns, energy demands, water quality, etc and measures need to be put in place to regulate this form of development to ensure that people have fully considered the impact of living in the countryside versus living in a serviced town. The overriding aim of the Council's approach to one-off houses in the countryside is guided by the *Sustainable Rural Housing: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG, 2005)*

The Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines (2005) states that 'Structurally Weak Rural Areas' will exhibit characteristics such as persistent and significant population decline as well as a weaker economic structure based on indices of income, employment and economic growth. In contrast, 'Strong Rural Area under Significant Urban Influence' will exhibit characteristics such as proximity to the immediate environs or close commuting catchment of large cities and towns, rapidly rising population, evidence of considerable pressure for development of housing due to proximity to such urban areas, or to major transport corridors with ready access to the urban area, and pressures on infrastructure such as the local road network.

The Rural Area Designations Map for Laois, Map 4.1, highlights the extent of lands which are encompassed within these defined areas, for the purposes of informing policy in relation to the delivery of rural housing over the plan period. The policy in relation to rural housing is, in certain areas, based on the local need factor which required applicants to demonstrate that they are functionally or socially related to the rural community in which the proposed site was located. Other areas, where population stagnation or decline has been occurring, are not subject to housing need to the same extent.

¹ One-off housing refers to individually designed, detached houses primarily located on large un-serviced sites in the open countryside

Map 4.1 Rural Area Designations



4.6.2 LOCAL NEEDS CRITERIA

Rural generated housing demand will be managed having regard to (1) the rural housing designations - **Structurally Weak Areas** and **Areas Under Strong Urban Influence**, and (2) the applicant's genuine local need, together with the protection of key economic, environmental, natural and heritage assets, such as the road network, water quality, important landscapes, habitats and the built heritage (3) **Areas of Sensitivity (European sites)**. In order to determine if a site lies within either of the rural area designations, please refer to Map 4.1.

4.6.2.1 Areas of Sensitivity (European sites).

The Areas of Sensitivity identified as European sites require protection and the key objectives in these areas seeks to facilitate the genuine housing requirements of the rural community as identified by the planning authority in the light of local conditions while on the other hand directing urban generated development to areas zoned for new housing development in towns and villages. For this purposes these area will be dealt with in the same manner as **Areas Under Strong Urban Influence**.

In order for the Applicant to be considered for a rural one off dwelling in the open countryside within Areas of Sensitivity, the Applicant **must be from one** of the following **categories** and

meet all of the **supporting local needs criteria** as indicated for each category in Table 4.3 below.

4.6.2.2 *Structurally Weak Areas*

The rural areas generally exhibit characteristics such as persistent and significant population decline as well as a weaker economic structure based on indices of income, employment and economic growth. These rural areas are more distant from the major urban areas and the associated pressure from urban generated housing.

To help stem decline and strengthen structurally weak areas, it is an objective of the Council that in **general**, demand for **permanent** residential development should be accommodated, **subject** to the following criteria being met in Table 4.2 below:

Table 4.2: Structurally Weak Area Criteria

CRITERIA
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The proposed development must meet the normal planning and environmental criteria• The applicant does not or has never owned a house in the open countryside• Climate action measures² have been proposed as part of the application to ensure a transition to a low carbon economy
To prohibit speculative development in these areas, any application for a single permanent dwelling must be made in the name of the person for whom it is intended. An occupancy condition will be attached to any grant of permission.

4.6.2.3 *Areas Under Strong Urban Influence*

Such rural areas are those within easy commuting distance of the main urban centres in County Laois and adjacent counties including the Greater Dublin Area which are experiencing pressure from the development of urban generated housing in the open countryside. Continued high levels of single rural houses in these locations would inhibit the growth of the County's urban areas which would result in a failure to achieve the growth targets. It would also cause further deterioration of rural amenities. The key objectives in these areas seeks to facilitate the genuine housing requirements of the rural community as identified by the planning authority in the light of local conditions while on the other hand directing urban generated development to areas zoned for new housing development in towns and villages.

In order for the Applicant to be considered for a rural one off dwelling in the open countryside within Areas Under Strong Urban Influence, the Applicant **must be from one** of the following **categories** and meet all of the **supporting local needs criteria** as indicated for each category in Table 4.3 below:

² Climate Action measures require passive house design, sustainable transport proposals, alternative energy proposals, waste reduction measures, green roofs, rain water harvesting, etc – these will be conditioned as part of any grant of planning permission

Table 4.3: Local Needs Criteria for Areas Under Strong Urban Influence

<p>CATEGORY 1: A member of a farming family</p>
<p><u>OR</u></p>
<p>CATEGORY 2: A member of the rural community</p>
<p><u>AND</u> Meet ALL of the LOCAL NEED CRITERIA set out for each category</p>
<p><u>For the purposes of this Plan, the rural area refers to areas outside built up settlements which have zoning for residential purposes.</u></p>
<p>CATEGORY 1</p> <p><u>A Member of a Farming Family</u></p> <p>The applicant must demonstrate a genuine local need to reside in the area through active and direct involvement in the running of the family farm. The farm must be in the ownership of the applicant’s immediate family for a minimum of five years preceding the date of the application for planning permission</p>
<p>REQUIRED LOCAL NEEDS CRITERIA (all criteria must be met)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant must be engaged in full time farming • The applicant must demonstrate that they have been engaged in farming at that location for a continuous period of over 5 years prior to making the application • The application must be for the applicant’s first home in the rural area • The family home must be in the rural area within 5km of the proposed site • Climate action measures have been proposed as part of the application to ensure a transition to a low carbon economy
<p>CATEGORY 2</p> <p><u>A Member of the Rural Community</u></p> <p>The applicant must demonstrate a genuine local need to reside in the rural area for economic or social purposes reasons by reason of immediate family ties or their active and direct involvement in rural employment.</p> <p><u>One of the following local needs criteria (ie Local Needs Criteria A or B) below must be met.</u></p>
<p>REQUIRED LOCAL NEEDS CRITERIA (A) (all criteria must be met)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant must have grown up and spent substantial periods of their lives (12 years) living in the rural area of Laois as members of the rural community. • The application must be for the applicant’s first home in the rural area, on the family landholding and within 5km of the family home.

- Where no land is available in the family ownership, a site within 5km of the original family home may be considered.
- Climate action measures have been proposed as part of the application to ensure a transition to a low carbon economy

REQUIRED LOCAL NEEDS CRITERIA (B) (all criteria must be met)

- The applicant is working in rural activities³ and for this reason needs to be accommodated near their place of work
- The nature of such an occupation is dependent and intrinsically linked to the rural location.
- The employment must contribute to and enhance the rural community
- The application must be for the applicant's first home in the rural area
- Climate action measures have been proposed as part of the application to ensure a transition to a low carbon economy

4.6.3 RIBBON DEVELOPMENT

The Planning Authority will have regard to the publication *Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities [DoEHLG, 2005]* in dealing with planning applications involving cases of ribbon development.

These guidelines recommend against the creation of ribbon development for a variety of reasons relating to road safety, future demands for the provision of public infrastructure as well as visual impacts. Other forms of development, such as clustered development, well set back from the public road and served by an individual entrance can be used to overcome these problems in facilitating necessary development in rural areas.

In assessing individual housing proposals in rural areas the planning authority will therefore in some circumstances need to form a view as to whether that proposal would contribute to or exacerbate ribbon development. Taking account of the above and the dispersed nature of existing housing in many rural areas, areas characterised by ribbon development will in most cases be located on the edges of cities and towns and will exhibit characteristics such as a high density of almost continuous road frontage type development, for example where 5 or more houses exist on any one side of a given 250 metres of road frontage.

Whether a given proposal will exacerbate such ribbon development or could be considered will depend on:

- The type of rural area and circumstances of the applicant,
- The degree to which the proposal might be considered infill development,
- The degree to which existing ribbon development would be extended or whether distinct areas of ribbon development would coalesce as a result of the development.

³ Such **rural activities** will normally encompass persons involved in full time farming, forestry, inland waterways or related rural occupations.

4.6.4 REPLACEMENT DWELLINGS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

There is growing concern that the tendency to replace, rather than upgrade, older rural dwellings. There is a depleting the stock of vernacular rural dwellings and vernacular structures, the preservation of which is increasingly viewed as an important element of the built heritage of County Laois. They usually occupy mature, well secluded settings and as such, sit very comfortably within the landscape. With carefully designed extensions and sensitive restoration, these houses can be brought up to a standard capable of meeting modern day demands. Hence, the Council will encourage applicants and owners along this path in the interests of preserving valuable vernacular heritage.

Permission for demolition will only be considered where it is demonstrated that a vernacular dwelling is not reasonably capable of being made structurally sound or otherwise improved. Further information and Development Management Standards on vernacular structures is also provided in Section 12.3.3, Chapter 12 Built Heritage, of the Plan.

If a dwelling is not considered to be vernacular or does not make an important contribution to the heritage, appearance or character of the locality, planning permission will be considered for a new dwelling. In this instance the Local Needs Criteria as indicated in Section 4.6.2 does not apply. In cases where a dwelling has been recently destroyed by fire or through an accident, planning permission will be considered for a replacement dwelling.

4.6.5 SERVICED SITES

In response to RPO 4.78 of the RSES - *Development plans should support the development of a 'New Homes in Small Towns and Villages' initiative which would augment the delivery of actions by local authorities, Irish Water, communities and other stakeholders in the provision of services and serviced sites to create 'build your own home' opportunities within the existing footprint of rural settlements to provide new homes to meet housing demand, this Plan is supportive of the development of serviced sites within smaller town and villages throughout the County (HPO 12)* Currently Laois County Council are working with Irish Water to obtain funding for appropriate water and waste water infrastructure under the Small Towns and Village Growth Programme to develop smaller unserviced settlements such as Coolrain, Timahoe and Emo. Such areas would have the potential to provide serviced sites, providing an alternative to the one off house in the Countryside and strengthen the structure of such smaller settlements.

Furthermore, the Settlement Strategy (Volume 2) also indicates where such serviced sites could be accommodated, however their development is dependent on significant investment in infrastructure and agreement with Irish Water.

Cluster Housing Schemes in villages should be developed in a sustainable way respecting the unique aspects of the village and the site itself, whilst also responding to current economic and social needs.

Rural Housing Policy Objectives	
RH 1	Support the sustainable development of rural areas in Laois by encouraging growth and arresting decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or

	decline in recent decades and by managing the growth of areas that are under strong urban influence to avoid over-development, while sustaining vibrant rural communities
RH 2	Having regard to the need to protect the natural resources, environment, landscape and infrastructure, it is Council policy to consider a single dwelling in the countryside subject to meeting the criteria in Table 4.3 in relation to Area of Strong Urban Influence
RH 3	Having regard to the need to protect the natural resources, environment, landscape and infrastructure, it is Council policy to consider a single dwelling in the countryside subject to meeting the criteria in Table 4.2 in relation to Structurally weak Areas
RH 4	Provide for sustainable rural housing in the county in accordance with the <i>Sustainable Rural Housing: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG, 2005)</i> ; <i>EPA Code of Practice: Wastewater Treatment Systems for Single Houses (2009)</i> and ensure that any plan or project associated with the provision of new housing is subject to Appropriate Assessment Screening in compliance with the Habitats Directive, and subsequent assessment as required;
RH 5	Require all applicants seeking to live in the open countryside to submit proposals with regard to climate action and measures to reduce carbon emissions in this regard
RH 6	Ensure that the provision of rural housing will not detract from the county's natural and built heritage, economic assets and environment and the planning authority will have regard to the relevant development plan objectives;
RH 7	Outside the settlements which are zoned and designated in the Settlement Strategy, all proposed development which is vulnerable to flooding and is located in flood zones A and B must pass the development management justification test.
RH 8	Encourage the retention and sympathetic refurbishment, with adaptation if necessary, of traditional dwellings in the countryside in sympathy with the character of the existing building in preference to their replacement; ⁴
RH 9	Facilitate the provision of accommodation for older people and dependant relatives attached to the existing family home subject to compliance with the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. be attached to the existing dwelling; ii. be linked internally with the existing dwelling; iii. not have a separate access provided to the front elevation of the dwelling; iv. be of appropriate size and design; v. be capable of being served by adequate foul drainage facilities;

⁴ Planning permission will only be granted for replacement of a dwelling where it is demonstrated that it is not reasonably capable of being made structurally sound or otherwise improved, where the building is not of architectural merit. In this instance consideration will be given to the replacement of an existing dwelling with a new dwelling at the same location, subject to appropriate design, scale of building and normal planning considerations. Local rural housing need shall not apply in this instance..

RH 10	Promote good rural design through the implementation of Rural House Design Guidelines prepared by Laois County Council in Appendix 7;
RH 11	Seek to retain vernacular dwellings and promote their sympathetic renovation and continued use rather than replacement. For this reason there will be a presumption against the demolition of vernacular dwellings and structures where restoration or adaptation is a feasible option ⁵ .
RH 12	Restrict residential development on a landholding, where there is a history of development through the speculative sale or development of sites, notwithstanding the applicant's compliance with the local need criteria
RH 13	Encourage the appropriate re-use and adaptation of the existing rural building stock in preference to new build such as vernacular farm building conversions
RH 14	Recognise that exceptional health circumstances, supported by relevant documentation from a registered medical practitioner, may require a person to live in a particular environment. Housing in such circumstances will generally be encouraged in areas close to existing services and facilities and in Rural Settlements. All planning permissions for such housing granted in rural areas shall be subject to a seven year occupancy condition.
RH 15	Assess applications for one-off housing, in areas bordering neighbouring counties, where the proposed site is located on family land within County Laois, at a maximum distance of 5km from the county boundary. Applicants will be required to demonstrate that no suitable family owned site is available in the adjoining county and that all other aspects of rural housing policy including local need, siting and design are complied with. The applicant shall also fully demonstrate that they are building their first rural dwelling and that it will be for their permanent place of residence.
RH 16	Review the Laois County Council Rural Design Guidelines (Appendix 7) over the lifetime of the Plan.
RH 17	Control the level of piecemeal and haphazard development of rural areas close to urban centres and settlements having regard to potential impacts on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The orderly and efficient development of newly developing areas on the edges of towns and villages; (ii) The future provision of infrastructure such as roads and electricity lines; and (iii) The potential to undermine the viability of urban public transport due to low density development
RH 18	Discourage ribbon development (defined as five or more houses alongside 250 metres of road frontage). The Council will assess whether a given proposal will

⁵ The requirement to demonstrate local rural housing need shall be waived in cases of retention and upgrade of vernacular dwellings.

	<p>exacerbate such ribbon development, having regard to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The type of rural area and circumstances of the applicant; (ii) The degree to which the proposal might be considered infill development; (iii) The degree to which existing ribbon development would coalesce as a result of the proposed development; (iv) Local circumstances, including the planning history of the area and development pressures. <p>Notwithstanding the above, special regard will be given to the circumstances of immediate family members of a landowner on single infill sites in a line of existing dwellings with 5 or more houses along a 250 metres of road frontage</p>
RH 19	<p>Only consider family members for backland development within rural areas in exceptional circumstances. The proposed development shall not have a negative impact on third parties/ neighbouring property owners and viable sites with sufficient independent percolation areas will be required in order to meet technical guidelines.</p> <p>The proposed development shall also comply with Development Management Standards in relation to Backland Development.</p>
RH 20	<p>Facilitate the sensitive replacement of a structurally unsound derelict dwelling as an alternative to the construction of a one off dwelling elsewhere in the countryside. The scale of the replacement dwelling shall have regard to the site size.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentary evidence in the form of a structural survey and photographs shall be submitted to accompany the application. • The proposed applicant shall be subject to an occupancy condition.
RH 21	<p>LOG CABINS AND PODS or wooden structures are not vernacular typologies for County Loais and will only be permitted in certain cases where they are integrated into the landscape or where there is a unique siting.</p>
RH 22	<p>In addition to complying with the most up-to-date EPA Code of Practice for Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses, proposals for development in rural nodes shall include an assessment undertaken by a qualified hydrologist, that demonstrates that the outfall from the septic tank will not, in combination with other septic tanks within the node and wider area, contribute towards any surface or ground water body not meeting the objective of good status under the Water Framework Directive.</p>
RH 23	<p>Investigate the feasibility of providing/facilitating serviced sites in pilot programmes around the County in rural villages, settlements and small town to cater for urban and rural generated housing need in conjunction with Irish Water’s Small Town and Villages Growth Programme.</p>

Development Management Standard for Rural Housing

DM RH 1	NEW DWELLING HOUSES IN RURAL AREAS
A range of criteria will be used to assess if a rural site is acceptable in principle for	

	<p>a dwelling house. The criteria are detailed in Appendix 7: Rural Design Guidance.</p> <p>New dwellings in the countryside require the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) 30 metres of road frontage, unless a considerable set-back from the roadway exists; b) minimum 0.202 hectares (0.5 acres) of site area; c) Sightlines at the proposed entrance must comply with Laois County Council Parking and Roads Standards indicated in Chapter 10 of the Plan and must be achieved within the boundary of the site only. Excessive removal⁶ of hedgerow to achieve adequate sightlines is unacceptable. d) The location and design of a new dwelling shall take account of and integrate appropriately with its physical surroundings and the natural and cultural heritage of the area and respect the character of the area. e) Appropriate landscaping of proposed development using native species. f) The capacity of the area to absorb further development. In particular, the following factors will be examined; the extent of existing development in the area, the extent of ribbon development in the area, the degree of existing haphazard or piecemeal development in the area and the degree of development on a single original landholding. g) In the interests of protecting the biodiversity of the rural areas, the ability to provide safe vehicular access to the site without the necessity to remove extensive stretches of native hedgerow and trees. The need for the removal of extensive roadside hedgerow may indicate that the site is unsuitable for development. h) The ability of a site in an unserviced area to accommodate an on-site waste water disposal system in accordance with the EPA Code of Practice for Wastewater Treatment Systems for single houses (2009), the County Laois Groundwater Protection Scheme, and any other relevant documents / legislation as may be introduced during the Plan period. i) The ability of a site in an unserviced area to accommodate an appropriate on-site surface water management system in accordance with the policies of the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (2005) j) The need to comply with the requirements of The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DEHLG (2009) k) Floodlighting of single family dwellings or the lighting of private roads in rural areas will not be accepted.
<p>DM RH 2</p>	<p>INFILL DEVELOPMENT IN A RURAL AREA</p> <p>Limited infill development shall be permitted in rural areas where the proposed site shall coalesce the existing linear pattern of development and shall not be located at the end of a line of houses but on a vacant site within the existing linear form of development subject to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant satisfies the local need criteria contained in Table 6;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence is provided that no other sites are available on the applicants or family landholding that can be developed; • Wastewater treatment can be provided for the proposed dwelling in line with the EPA Code of Practice (2009); • Maintains the existing building line and established lengths of site frontage with adjacent dwellings; • Complies with the road standards in the ; • Has a minimum 0.202 hectares (0.5 acres) of site area; • The house design proposed is in line with the advice contained within the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Landscape Character Assessment contained in Appendix 6 ○ The Rural Design Guide contained in Appendix 7
DM RH 3	<p>REPLACEMENT DWELLINGS IN RURAL AREAS</p> <p>The demolition of a dwelling house, OTHER THAN A VERNACULAR DWELLING, in the countryside and the construction of a new dwelling house in its place shall be considered where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The structure proposed for demolition is habitable - The structure must last have been used as a dwelling and the internal and external walls and roof must be intact • A report from a suitably qualified competent person shall be submitted to verify that the dwelling is habitable but that replacement of the dwelling is the most sustainable option • A replacement structure will only be accepted where the replacement dwelling is of equal or superior merit. • Refer to Rural; Design Guidance in Appendix 7 for policy on siting, design and landscaping.
DM RH 4	<p>WASTEWATER TREATMENT (UNSEWERED PROPERTIES)</p> <p>The Council will ensure that;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • only on-site wastewater treatment systems that are of a suitable design and located in a suitable area will be permitted; • the provision of wastewater treatment for single houses meets with the requirements of the EPA Code of Practice 2009 and an subsequent updates; <p>The use of alternative wastewater treatment systems for un-sewered properties, such as wetlands and reed beds and the need for tertiary treatment of wastewater will be considered on a case-by-case basis.</p>
DM RH 5	<p>BACKLAND DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS</p> <p>The proposed development shall comply with the following siting and design criteria:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only single storey bungalow (including attic accommodation) type houses will be allowed in such backland locations to limit visual impact and overlooking. • Sufficient screening will be required to screen the house from adjacent homes and this has to be in place prior to occupation of the house. • A shared entrance with the existing dwelling to the fore on to the accessing road shall be permitted only • The site shall be capable of accommodating an on site waste treatment system in compliance with EPA Code of Practice 2009 and any subsequent update
DM RH 6	<p>SERVICED SITES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A serviced sites development may be planned and designed as a complete development but may also be developed on a phased basis, where one or a number of units may be built at a time. • The density of each individual site will be influenced by servicing requirements, the character of the settlement and the natural features of the site. • Plot areas, site subdivision and location of the treatment plant will be informed by whether the site is to be serviced by public services (e.g. connection to waste or water network) or individual on-site services (e.g. private well or waste water treatment system). • Where a serviced site scheme is proposed a design statement shall be prepared to assist future home owners in designing their own bespoke home.

4.7 GROUPS WITH SPECIFIC PLANNING NEEDS

There are a number of groups in society with specific design and planning needs including: children/young people, people with disabilities, older people, ethnic minorities and the Traveller community. The Council recognises the importance of planning for the needs of these groups.

4.7.1 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The ESRI projection indicate that the number of people 15 and under will decline by 10% by 2040. The 2016 Census states that County Laois has a population where 31% are aged under 19 years and a birth-rate of 13. This has a bearing on the present and future need for facilities such as childcare, play areas for children, sports facilities, schools and safe walking and cycling routes in the County and the importance of bringing together key voluntary providers of services to children and young people such as Comhairle Na N-Og and Laois/Offaly Children and Young Peoples Services Committee.

4.7.2 OLDER PEOPLE

In 2016, County Laois had a slightly lower than average proportion of older adults with approximately 11% of the population in the County aged 65 or over, compared to the national average of approximately 13%. This will mean that the demand for nursing homes, residential

care homes and sheltered housing accommodation is continuing to grow. It also means that our housing developments need to be adaptable to cater for the future changing needs of our aging population. The 'Age Friendly Ireland' Initiative is a key policy document that provides leadership and guidance in identifying the needs and opportunities of an ageing population. Laois Age Friendly County Strategy 2016 - 2021 sets out key commitments for improvement to the areas of infrastructure, transportation, services and information.

4.7.3 PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

People with disabilities and mobility impairment face particular physical barriers to access and movement. The Council will ensure that development of all types provide mobility and access for people with disabilities in order to remove barriers to involvement in community, having regard for the National Disability Authority's document 'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach – Planning and Policy' (2012) and Laois Public Participation Network 'Access for All Report' (2019).

4.7.4 TRAVELLER COMMUNITY

The Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 – 2024 for County Laois assessed the need for Traveller accommodation in the County. It sets out the Council's policy regarding the provision of Traveller accommodation. According to the 2016 Census, 780 members of the Travelling Community are living in Laois. The Council will endeavour to provide accommodation for members of the Travelling Community.

4.7.5 MINORITY GROUPS

Laois is becoming an increasingly diverse County. According to the Census 2016, non Irish nationals account for 11.8% of County's population in comparison to 11.6% nationally. Portlaoise has one of the highest levels of non national residents, which accounts for 22% of the population. In this regard, service provision and community facilities in these areas should reflect the varying needs of the community.

Groups with Specific Planning Needs Policy Objectives	
HPO 19	Consider the needs of children and young people, including those with disabilities and additional needs, in the provision of indoor and outdoor recreational facilities
HPO 20	Ensure that all buildings, public and open spaces, recreational and amenity areas are accessible for people with disabilities, having regard to the Building Regulations, the objectives of 'Building for Everyone' (National Disability Authority) and 'Access for the Disabled'
HPO 21	Provide for the needs of people with visual and mobility difficulties in the design of pedestrian facilities, by assessing the options available and choosing the most appropriate design to implement on a case by case basis

HPO 22	Continue to develop and implement the Age Friendly Programme and Actions and to investigate the possibility of expanding the programme into other towns and villages throughout the County
HPO 23	Facilitate the provision of continuing care facilities for the elderly, such as own homes (designed to meet the needs of elderly people), sheltered housing, day-care facilities, nursing homes and specialised care units (e.g. dementia specific units) at appropriate locations throughout the County
HPO 24	Cater for the diversity of older people's needs by promoting adaptability and flexibility in the design of homes, and the promotion of appropriate commercial and community facilities in population centres with higher proportions of older people
HPO 25	Ensure that all new housing contemplates the principles of adaptability and flexibility, and addresses the changing needs of the homeowner, to facilitate a lifelong home for people and independent living in relation to housing for older people
HPO 26	support the concept of independent living and assisted living for older people, as well as the provision for specific purpose-built accommodation
HPO 27	Facilitate and ensure the provision of social housing and affordable housing throughout the County to sufficiently cater for social and specific housing needs and relevant requirements over the Development Plan period
HPO 28	Progress the provision of social and specific housing through partnership with approved housing bodies, voluntary and co-operative organisations, the Health Service Executive, and through agreements with private developers
HPO 29	Promote social integration and facilitate a diverse range of dwelling tenures within housing developments, including social housing within the County
HPO 30	Build and support the delivery of new housing appropriate to the needs of the county in terms of the demand for social housing, the needs of people with disabilities, homeless people, older people, and the Traveller community
HPO 31	Meet the County's housing need for social housing provision through a range of mechanisms, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), (ii) a social housing building programme, (iii) acquisition, leasing, (iv) the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme, (v) the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) and (vi) the utilisation of existing housing stock, i.e. vacant and underutilised sites
HPO 32	Ensure the provision of housing for people with varying levels of income taking into consideration the housing support system and the planning system which will ensure that an appropriate mix of units is provided in appropriate locations. All new social and/or affordable housing to be of the highest standard of design

	and in accordance with the development standards set out in the County Development Plan and the DoEHLG social housing guidelines
HPO 33	Ensure 10% of all lands zoned for residential uses, or for a mixture of residential and other uses, shall be reserved for the provision of social and/or affordable housing in order to address the requirement for social housing under Part V ⁷ , thus promoting tenure diversity and socially inclusive communities within the County
HPO 35	Implement the Laois County Council Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 (and any superseding programmes agreed by the Council) in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development

Development Management Standard For Groups with Specific Planning Needs

DM HP 22	<p>NURSING HOMES</p> <p>Provide for a mixed urban/rural setting for nursing homes in the County and to site residential care facilities for the elderly in accordance with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Facilities should be located close to community and social facilities required by occupants (e.g. shops, post office, community centres, etc) thereby ensuring that older people can remain part of existing communities. (ii) Facilities should be easily accessible for residents, employees, visitors and service providers. Such facilities will generally be acceptable in villages and rural settlements to cater for local demand. A mobility strategy shall be provided detailing connections to town and village centres for residents, employees and visitors. (iii) Facilities should be located within an environment that is suitable for their stated purpose, integrating within the wider community while providing a safe environment for residents. (iv) Facilities should be located in an area which can benefit from the creation of strong links between the care for the elderly facilities and the local community including activities linked to other community groups.
-----------------	---

⁷ In this regard, the percentage reservation for Part V shall be decided on a case-by-case basis of individual site assessment. Criteria to be taken into account will include the type and location of the housing units required by the Planning Authority at a given time, as defined by the priority housing list by the Housing Section and the existing mix of housing classes in the area. The location, house size and house design requirements for permissions that will include social housing shall be discussed at pre-planning meetings between the applicant and the Local Authority