

CHAPTER 5: QUALITY OF LIFE & SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Aim: To facilitate the delivery of social infrastructure throughout the county, improve physical access to services, facilitate the maintenance and upgrading of cultural and heritage facilities for communities and to enhance the environmental, amenity and physical attributes of communities which creates healthy placemaking.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Building strong, inclusive communities is an integral component to achieving sustainable development objectives and the principle of healthy placemaking. Apart from housing and employment opportunities, sustainable communities require the provision of and access to a myriad of support infrastructure in the areas of education, childcare, health and community support services, recreational and leisure facilities and a good quality built environment. Communities also require opportunities to meet, interact and form bonds, all essential prerequisites to the evolution of a sense of place and belonging.

5.1.1 NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The objectives and policies of this chapter are informed by the principles of the following national policy documents:

- National Planning Framework;
- National Development Strategy 2018 – 2027;
- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy;
- Our sustainable future – A Framework for Sustainable Development;
- Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach, 2012, National Disability Authority;
- National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan 2013-2015, National Disability Strategy Implementation Group;
- National Women’s Strategy 2007-2016, Department of Justice and Equality;
- Get Ireland Active, National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland, 2016;
- Charter for Rural Ireland, 2016 Department of Environment, Community and Local Government;
- Our Communities: A Framework Policy for Local and Community Development in Ireland, 2015, Department of Environment, Community and Local Government;
- Tobacco Free Ireland, Department of Health;
- Healthy Ireland - A Healthy Weight For Ireland, Department of Health;
- The National Positive Ageing Strategy;
- Time to move on from congregated settings – A strategy for community inclusion;
- The Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide;
- Rejuvenating Irelands Small Town Centres;
- Research 195: Health Benefits from Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure;
- National Biodiversity Action Plan;
- Smarter Travel Policy;
- National Cycle Policy Framework.

5.2 SOCIAL INCLUSION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

One of the overall aims of the Plan is the promotion of social inclusion. Social inclusion can be defined as a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in society and have access to social infrastructure services. It is important that our living, working and leisure environments are designed and maintained in a manner that is accessible to all.

In order to facilitate social inclusion at local level, the Social Inclusion Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2022 is overseen by the LCDC, with the aim of tackling poverty, social exclusion and long term unemployment through engagement and participation between community organisations, public sector agencies and certain sectors of society. In Laois, the Public Participation Network acts as the main link through which the Council will connect with and seek representation from the local Community/Voluntary, Social Inclusion and Environmental sectors, to progress their work in the areas of arts, sports, community and social inclusion initiatives. This is vital in helping to attract economic investments to local areas, promoting tourism and providing local services and supporting the isolated in our community.

5.2.1 LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE AND LOCAL ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY PLAN

As previously stated, new local government structures brought about a greater emphasis on community development with the introduction of Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) in each local authority to address the need for creating sustainable communities for each County. This reform also brought about the requirement for the LCDC to prepare a Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) every six years, of which policies and actions will inform the County Development Plan. The Laois LECP 2016 – 2021 and the Laois County Development Plan operate in tandem and must be consistent with each other. The LECP provides the supporting framework for economic and local community development of Laois, whereas the County Development Plan provides an overarching strategy and statutory policy support for the proper planning and sustainable development of the County at a spatial level.

Overarching Social Inclusion and Community Development Policy Objectives	
SCPO 1	Deliver on the objectives and actions set out in the National Planning Framework, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (EMRA), Laois Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 (and any subsequent LECP) and relevant National Guidance documents to strengthen community and social development in the County
SCPO 2	Ensure that sufficient lands in appropriate locations are zoned to cater for new and existing social and community needs.
SCPO 3	Promote the highest levels of universal accessibility in all social and community facilities including flexible housing typologies, buildings and public spaces/areas
SCPO 4	Ensure that all arts and cultural facilities in the ownership and management of the Council are accessible to the wider community and to promote the role of

	these facilities as focal points for the community
SCPO 5	Support and encourage communities in the regeneration and expansion of community centres subject to budget allocations
SCPO 6	Promote social inclusion through equality of access to services and facilities and to assist in the removal of barriers to full participation in society
SCPO 7	Increase accessibility to public transport and walking and cycling infrastructure within main residential areas with schools, community and sports facilities to encourage more sustainable modes of transport
SCPO 8	Seek to improve the energy efficiency of the County's existing building stock to promote energy efficiency in the design and development of all new buildings in the County, in accordance with the Building Regulations Part L (Conservation of Fuel and Energy)
SCPO 9	Encourage that new social infrastructure development proposals maximise energy efficiency through siting, layout, design and incorporate best practice in energy technologies, conservation and smart technology
SCPO 10	Support and encourage pilot schemes which promote innovative ways to incorporate energy efficiency
SCPO 11	Require, where feasible and practicable, the provision of Photovoltaic solar panels in new public and community buildings for electricity generation/storage and/or water heating purposes so as to minimise carbon emissions and reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels and reduce energy costs.
SCPO 12	Require the use of SuDS within Local Authority Developments and other social infrastructure projects in accordance with the Greater Dublin Regional Code of Practice for Drainage Works
SCPO 13	Encourage the use of Green Roof technology particularly on leisure and educational buildings.

Development Management Standard

DM SC 1	<p>ACCESSIBILITY</p> <p>The Council will require that the design of buildings and the layout of developments incorporate measures to ensure accessibility.</p> <p>Access requirements for parents and carers, people with disabilities, the elderly and others who may be temporarily impaired must be incorporated into the design of buildings, public spaces, car parking, footpaths and general facilities and services.</p> <p>Universal design will be encouraged in all new developments. Developers must have regard to or comply with (as appropriate) the following criteria in the preparation of development proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Part M of the Building Regulations and the requirement for Disability
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. Access Certificates (DACs); iii. Buildings for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach (National Disability Authority, 2012); iii. Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas: Guidelines for Planning Authorities and its companion document Urban Design Manual (DEHLG, 2008); <p>Applications for significant development have regard to Appendix 6 of Buildings for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach (National Disability Authority, 2012).</p>
DM SC 2	<p>SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE</p> <p>In assessing planning applications for social infrastructure¹ both urban and rural locations, regard will be taken of considerations such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Practicalities of site location in terms of site location, uses, impact on local amenities, desirability, and accessibility; 2) Provision of renewable energy sources 3) The potential for multi-use by other groups/members of the community. <p>Conformity with the requirements of appropriate legislative guidelines.</p>

5.3 SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

5.3.1 EDUCATION

Education is critical to achieving the full socio-economic potential of the County. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) indicates that there has been a slight decrease in birth rates in the County between 2012 and 2016 at 1,276 and 1,118 respectively. Nonetheless the provision of childcare facilities and primary and secondary level schools infrastructure in the County is essential. There are 66 primary schools in the County catering for 9,883 students and 10 post primary schools in the County catering for 4,954 pupils. Both of these figures equate to 17.5% of the population. The Department of Education and Skills is responsible for the delivery of educational facilities and services, however, in terms of planning for the provision of education infrastructure in Laois, the primary role of the Planning Authority is to identify and reserve sufficient lands at the most optimum locations within the study area. The Council works proactively with the Department of Education and Skills on an ongoing basis to identify educational needs and the spatial and land use implications of same as they arise.

The Council recognises the important role of higher education in providing for the economic and social wellbeing of the County's population. In terms of adult education, the Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board promote Adult Learning Services, Back to Education Initiative and Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme with Portlaoise Institute of Further Education offering many QQI Level 5 and 6 Courses. Portarlinton Further Education and Training Centre, Lifelong Learning Department is the County's only third level institution which offers accredited part-time third level programmes. Laois Local Enterprise Office also offers business information and advice, business skills training and mentoring support as well as other skills and training options

¹ including leisure facilities, sports grounds, playing fields, play areas, community halls, organisational meeting facilities, medical facilities and other community orientated developments

to support businesses in the County. The development of linkages between new and existing employers with the aforementioned institutions will add to the attractiveness of the area for investors due to the availability of potential future employees with the necessary skills locally.

Education Policy Objectives	
EDPO 1	All sites for schools shall comply with the requirements of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'The Provision of Schools and the Planning System A Code of Practice for Planning Authorities', 2008, or any update thereof; • Technical guidance document TGD-025 (or any such updated document) in respect of primary schools; • Technical guidance document TGD-027 (or any such updated document) in respect of post primary schools.
EDPO 2	Ensure that existing and new school sites are protected for educational use and lands adjacent to existing schools are protected for future educational use to allow for expansion of these schools, if required, subject to site suitability.
EDPO 3	Facilitate the development of primary, second-level, third-level, vocational and lifelong learning facilities and digital capacity for distance learning including lifelong learning and Up-skilling generally to meet the needs of the County including mature adults i.e. back to school in existing educational infrastructure
EDPO 4	Promote the shared use of educational and community facilities for community and non-school purposes where possible.
EDPO 5	Explore the potential for a dedicated third level / technical college in Portlaoise or Portarlinton as appropriate;
EDPO 6	Ensure the provision and implementation of primary and secondary education facilities in concert with the planning and sustainable development of residential areas in order to maximise the opportunities for use of walking, cycling and use of public transport.
EDPO 7	Increase the active school flag programme to at least another 20 schools in the County
EDPO 8	Ensure new and existing school buildings are as self-sustaining as possible, endeavouring to avoid fossil fuel dependence and adapting to a lower energy society.

Education Development Management Standard

DM ED 1	EDUCATION FACILITIES Assessing planning applications for new education facilities and/or redevelopment/extensions of existing schools, the Planning Authority will have regard to the following:
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site location, proximity of school to catchment area, size of site relative to outdoor space requirements and the future needs of the school (i.e. sufficient space provided for future expansion). • Mobility Management Plan shall be submitted to ensure safe accessible pedestrian and cyclist routes to and from the school from nearby residential and commercial areas. • Provision of safe and adequate set down etc facilities for buses. • Provision of adequate, secure, covered cycle facilities. • Provision of safe access and adequate car parking and set down areas to facilitate drop off/pick up. • Adequate signage, lighting and boundary treatments. • Impact on local amenities and out of school hours uses.
DM ED 2	<p>EXTENSIONS TO SCHOOLS</p> <p>Extensions to education facilities will generally be accepted subject to scale, high quality design and satisfactory integration with the existing structure. School extensions should not negatively impact on adjoining amenities and amenities within the school site.</p>
DM ED 3	<p>TEMPORARY CLASSROOMS</p> <p>Temporary classrooms will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will generally be accepted for a temporary period not exceeding five years and such classrooms should not interfere with onsite car/cycle parking spaces or unduly impact the usability of outdoor play/sports facilities. Any such proposal shall be accompanied by a timeline for the construction of permanent facilities.</p>

5.3.2 CHILDCARE FACILITIES

Access to affordable and high-quality childcare is an essential requirement for an equitable society, a thriving economy and sustainable communities and is a critical part of the County's infrastructure. Laois County Childcare Committee supports early childcare services, throughout the County catering for full day care, after school and preschool care. The 0-4-year preschool population within the County in 2016 represents XX% of the population of Laos. Whilst the Council is not directly involved in the provision of childcare services, the Plan will seek to ensure sufficient facilities are provided in the areas required.

Childcare Facilities Policy Objectives	
CCPO 1	Encourage, promote and facilitate the provision of childcare facilities in accordance with national policy and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government Planning Guidelines on Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2001) and any other relevant statutory guidelines which may issue during the period of this Plan
CCPO 2	Ensure the provision of quality affordable childcare throughout the County in

	consultation with the Laois County Childcare Committee, and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Tusla Child and Family Agency
CCPO 3	Promote and encourage the provision of a network of childcare facilities that reflect the distribution of the residential population in the County and to minimise travel distance and maximise opportunities for disadvantaged communities;

Development Management Standard

DM CC 1	<p>CHILDCARE FACILITIES</p> <p>Require the provision of childcare facilities of an appropriate type and scale in suitable locations throughout the County. In particular, the development of childcare facilities at the following locations will normally be required;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • areas of concentrated employment and business parks; • neighbourhood centres; • integrated into large retail developments and retail warehouse parks; • in, or in the vicinity of, schools or major educational facilities; • adjacent to public transport nodes; • in, or adjacent to, community centres and • within new and existing residential development.
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5.3.3 HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

Healthcare and medical facilities are provided by public, private and voluntary agencies within County Laois. The Health Service Executive (HSE) is the primary organisation responsible for the delivery of health care and personal social services to the people of the County. The primary role of Laois County Council with regard to health care is to ensure that there is an adequate policy framework in place which includes for the reservation of lands should additional services be required and that the health care facilities would be permitted subject to good planning practice. The Planning Authority will reserve sites within town and village boundaries for health care facilities in consultation with the HSE.

<i>Health Care Policy Objectives</i>	
HCPO 1	Co-operate with the Health Service Executive and other statutory and voluntary agencies in the provision of appropriate health care facilities covering the full spectrum of such care from hospitals to the provision of community based care facilities subject to proper planning considerations and the principles of sustainable development
HCPO 2	Ensure that adequate lands and services are available for the improvement, establishment and expansion of health services and ensure that adequate services such as water supply or wastewater treatment are in place prior to development taking place;
HCPO 3	Encourage the integration of healthcare facilities within new and existing communities and to discourage proposals that would cause unnecessary isolation or other access difficulties, particularly for the disabled, the elderly and children

HCPO 4	Encourage, support and facilitate the provision of a range of services for the aged population.
HCPO 5	Support the development and expansion of the Midlands Regional Hospital at Portlaoise in accordance with RPO 4.74 of the RSES
HCPO 6	Have particular regard to public transport access in considering proposals for major hospital facilities or the re-location of major hospital facilities to a new location. This should include both public transport access from the catchment area of the hospital and, where the facility serves a specialist or national need, from outside of the catchment

Development Management Standard

DM HC 1	<p>CHANGE OF USE RESIDENTIAL TO HEALTHCARE FACILITY</p> <p>Consider change of use applications from residential to health care facilities / surgeries only where the privacy and amenity of adjacent occupiers can be preserved and the proposal does not have a detrimental effect on local amenity by way of an increase in traffic, car parking or noise.</p> <p>Conversion of part of a dwelling to a medical or dental surgery will normally be permitted where the dwelling remains as the main residence of the practitioner and where a need has been demonstrated.</p> <p>Conversion of the ground floor of a dwelling to a surgery with a separate apartment on the upper floor may be permitted where there are no other more suitable premises available.</p>
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5.3.4 EMERGENCY SERVICES

Fire services and civil defence are important emergency response and safety services provided by Laois County Council. The fire service also has a responsibility in relation to fire safety standards in the design of new and improved buildings, changes of use and also in relation to the fire safety aspects of the daily use of buildings which are accessed by the public. Under the Building Regulations, separate applications are sent to the Fire Service to obtain a Fire Safety Certificate and this is obtained prior to construction. There are eight fire stations at strategic locations throughout the County; Portlaoise (the headquarters of the network), Portarlington, Abbeyleix, Rathdowney, Mountmellick, Stradbally, Durrrow and Mountrath.

<i>Emergency Services Policy Objectives</i>	
EDPO 1	Continue to support the provision of a modern and effective fire service for the County through a programme for fire station development and improvement at existing and future stations.
EDPO 2	Facilitate the accommodation of fire service facilities in locations that allow ease of access and safe functioning with respect to the road network

EDPO 3	Ensure new and refurbished developments are as self-sustaining as possible, endeavouring to avoid fossil fuel dependence.
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5.3.5 CRIME PREVENTION

Informed, positive planning, particularly when co-ordinated with other measures, can make a significant contribution to tackling crime. Sustainable communities are communities which succeed economically, socially and environmentally, and respect the needs of future generations. They are well-designed places where people feel safe and secure; where crime and disorder, or the fear of crime, doesn't undermine quality of life or community cohesion. Designing out crime and designing in community safety should be central to the planning and delivery of new development.

Crime Prevention Policy Objectives	
CPPO 1	Support the provision of Garda liaison facilities within community facilities as resources allow
CPPO 2	Co-operate with an Garda Síochána's Older Person Strategy to ensure contact and safety of elderly and rurally isolated citizens through the support of local CCTV, community alert/ neighbourhood watch schemes

Crime Prevention Development Management Standard

DM CP 1	<p>DESIGNING OUT CRIME</p> <p>The following principles of designing out crime must be considered for all developments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access and movement: places with well-defined routes, spaces and entrances that provide for convenient movement without compromising security; • Structure: places that are structured so that different uses do not cause conflict; • Surveillance: places where all publicly accessible spaces are overlooked; • Ownership: places that promote a sense of ownership, respect, territorial responsibility and community; • Physical protection: places that include necessary, well-designed security features; • Activity: places where the level of human activity is appropriate to the location and creates a reduced risk of crime and a sense of safety at all times; • Management and maintenance: places that are designed with management and maintenance in mind, to discourage crime in the present and the future.
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5.3.6 ARTS AND CULTURAL FACILITIES

The library service of Laois County Council plays an increasingly important educational, community, information and outreach role in the County. Libraries such as Portlaoise, Portarlinton, Stradbally, Mountmellick, Abbeyleix, Mountrath and Durrow serve as key arts and culture outlets within the County. In terms of future projects, replacement libraries are planned for Portlaoise, with a new state of the art 1,800sqm public space which is partially funded under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund.

The County Laois Arts Development Plan 2014-2017 (check for update) sets out measures to encourage heightened awareness and interest in the arts and increase public participation by all sectors of the community including those previously not involved. The Arts Plan also includes objectives in relation to public art.

Arts and cultural facilities are wide ranging across the County and include - Dunamase Arts Centre in Portlaoise, Mountmellick and Attanagh museums, Laois Arthouse in Stradbally and outdoor music venues such as the internationally acclaimed Electric Picnic site in Stradbally Hall.

Arts and Cultural Facilities Policy Objectives	
ACPO 1	Continue to expand and improve the library service to meet the needs of the community, in line with the objectives and priorities of the Library Development Plan and subject to the availability of resources
ACPO 2	Investigate the delivery of library services to rural villages using public private partnerships and electronic networking, subject to availability of resources
ACPO 3	Develop links between existing library facilities for third level education and outreach facilities in relation to distance learning
ACPO 4	Continue to recognise the importance of the arts in areas of personal development, community development, employment and tourism and to endeavour to create further opportunities in each of these areas
ACPO 5	Ensure that all arts and cultural facilities in the ownership and management of the Council are accessible to the wider community and to promote the role of these centres as focal points for the community
ACPO 6	Continue the physical enhancement programme of arts spaces in libraries countywide, including visual art galleries, performance and workshop facilities, subject to availability of resources
ACPO 7	Promote the provision of public art, including temporary art and sculpture, through such mechanisms as the government supported Percent for Art Scheme and the development management process
ACPO 8	Encourage and support the creation and display of works of art in public areas, including appropriate locations within the streetscape, provided no unacceptable environmental, amenity; traffic or other problems are created

5.3.7 BURIAL GROUNDS

The individual Settlement Plans and Local Area Plans will examine the adequacy of the existing graveyards and burial grounds and will reserve lands within each development centre for burial facilities. In addition to the actual provision of burial grounds, another important planning issue is to recognise and protect the heritage value of the existing cemeteries, often located in the grounds of old churches. Cemeteries had been provided on a parish basis in Ireland and very frequently were in the vicinity of and associated with the ruins of churches that had existed in previous centuries.

Burial Grounds Policy Objectives	
BGPO 1	Facilitate the provision of new burial grounds and the extension of existing cemeteries as appropriate to cater for the needs of a multi-cultural County and ensure the protection of groundwater dependant Natura 2000 sites which rely on the continued supply of groundwater resources to secure the key environmental conditions that support the integrity of the site and through protection of groundwater standards by the Water Framework Directive
BGPO 2	Explore the use of environmentally sound burial site options such as Columbarium Walls, in appropriate locations in the county
BGPO 3	Protect, preserve, enhance, conserve and maintain the cultural heritage of archaeological/historic graveyards and historic burial grounds(including those identified in the RMP), and continue to encourage and promote local involvement and community stewardship in the care, maintenance, rehabilitation, management and conservation of these graveyards in accordance with legislation and best conservation and heritage and principles
BGPO 4	Facilitate the provision of pet crematoriums at appropriate locations subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

5.4 NATURAL AND RECREATIONAL AMENITIES

Recreation, leisure and sport are important components of a good quality of life and have major land use implications. Adequate and accessible provision of open space, sport and recreational facilities including swimming pools, Playgrounds and public parks is an important consideration in assessing the quality of life in a town or area. It is likely to become more important as densities in central areas increase and pressure from competing land uses becomes more intense.

It is also recognised that the countryside of County Laois provides an important resource in outdoor recreational facilities not only for its own population but also for those visiting the County particularly in terms of provision of a range of forest tracks such as Togher Portlaoise, Oughval Stradbally, Dunmore Durrow and Grantstown Lake Ballacolla and Blueways and Greenways such as Grand Canal Walk Vicarstown.

The Council recognises the significance of natural amenities as a major resource for visitors and local people and attracting inward investment from tourism and increasing the marketability of

Laois as a location for industry, business and commercial activity. This chapter should be read in conjunction with Chapter 10 Infrastructure and Chapter 11 on Biodiversity and Natural Heritage in relation to walking and cycling infrastructure.

5.4.1 Sports and Recreation Provision

Laois Sports Partnership was established in 2001 as part of the Irish Sports Council initiative aimed at improving the delivery of sport at a local level. The Local Sports Partnership (LSP) initiative aims to increase participation in sport and optimise the use of local resources. Many of the sports facilities within the County are in private ownership. Laois County Council will continue, where appropriate, to facilitate the provision of further facilities to which public access will be available, where possible.

The Council will have regard to the Departments of Health and Children & Youth Affairs' policy document, "*Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*" a National Policy Framework for children and young people 2014 – 2020. It is recognized that a multi agency approach is required to deliver the needs of the young people of the County. Such needs include skate parks, youth cafes; hang out areas where young people can socialize with one another. The Council will be guided by this multi-agency Plan in the development of local play policies over the lifetime of the Plan.

Natural and Recreational Amenities Policy Objectives	
NRPO 1	Support local sports groups and community groups in the development, improvement and expansion of facilities for sporting and recreational needs of all sectors and ages through the reservation of suitable land and the provision of funding where available and appropriate
NRPO 2	Recognize the role played by natural amenities as a major resource for visitors and local people and support, protect and promote public access to mountains, Natura 2000 sites, nature reserves rivers, lakes and other natural amenities that have been traditionally used for outdoor recreation and to the countryside generally
NRPO 3	Work in co-operation with Laois Sports Partnership in exploring the potential for clustering facilities to provide a regional sports centre in a strategic location and develop County Laois as an Outdoor Activity Hub
NRPO 4	Prepare an Open Space Plan for the County having regard to the town parks, riverside walks and other amenity spaces and resources and ensure that any plan or project associated with open space planning or tourism is subject to Appropriate Assessment Screening in compliance with the Habitats Directive, and subsequent assessment as required
NRPO 5	Connect open spaces in such a way so as to provide links to, or consolidation of, areas of public open space within a settlement.
NRPO 6	Preserve the major natural amenities of the County (i.e. Slieve Bloom Mountains

	and River Valleys) and to provide parks and open spaces in association with them along with facilitating walking and cycling routes linking the mountains, river valleys and major parks
NRPO 7	Investigate the feasibility of the following specific recreation and leisure projects subject to the Habitats and Birds Directives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the ongoing development of an athletic track, including provision of dressing rooms and tartan resurface in Portlaoise; • Investigate and facilitate where appropriate the provision of strategic greenways throughout the county.
NRPO 8	Encourage community gardening, allotments and other use of open space to facilitate lower carbon living education and practice
NRPO 9	Encourage and facilitate the development of green infrastructure that recognises the synergies that can be achieved with regard to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of open space amenities; • Sustainable management of water; • Protection and management of biodiversity; • Protection of cultural heritage; • Protection of protected landscape sensitivities
NRPO 10	Identify and seek to implement a strategic, coherent and high-quality cycle and walking network across the County that is integrated with public transport and interconnected with cultural, recreational, retail, educational and employment destinations and attractions
NRPO 11	Facilitate the development of the Derrycastle Experience Lakes and Trails through the development of an historical trail through Derrycastle Bog and a Heritage Museum documenting the history of the bog, turf production in the area and the former location of the town's Power Station.
NRPO 12	Facilitate development of a green corridor connecting Derrycastle Lakes and Trails, the River Barrow and The Peoples Park, Portarlinton and on to Mount Lucas in Co Offaly
NRPO 13	Facilitate the development of greenways / blueways along the main waterways through the county – Grand Canal, River Barrow and River Nore and their tributaries subject to the Habitats and Birds Directives and the proper planning and development of the areas
NRPO 14	Support the development of the following leisure facilities throughout the County: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portlaoise Leisure Centre • Portarlinton Leisure Centre • National natural playground in Emo
NRPO 15	Support the development of playgrounds and upgrade existing park infrastructure where necessary.

NRPO 16	Devise and adopt, in co-operation with other relevant agencies, a “Play and Recreational Plan for County Laois” setting out strategy for the provision, resourcing and implementation of improved social and play opportunities for children and the youth of the County
NRPO 17	Improve the provision of public playgrounds to allow for recreational areas for the elderly and the youth in appropriate locations across the county with particular emphasis on those areas with greatest need.
NRPO 18	Given the central location of Portlaoise, it is policy of the Council to acknowledge and support the role that sporting venues in the Key Town of Portlaoise play at a regional level in accommodating sporting events for the region.

Development Management Standards on Natural and Recreation Amenities

DM NR 1	<p>SPECIALISED SPORTING FACILITIES</p> <p>Proposals for sports facilities involving the use of motor vehicles, aircraft or firearms will be considered with the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be no unacceptable disturbance to local residents. There will be no unacceptable disturbance to farm livestock and wildlife; • There will be no conflict with the enjoyment of areas used for informal recreation; • The ambient noise level in the area of the proposed development is already high and the noise likely to be produced by the proposed activity will not be pre-dominant; • In certain cases, the Council may only consider it appropriate to grant a temporary permission so as to allow the impact of noise levels and other forms of disturbance and nuisance to be more fully assessed.
DM NR 2	<p>DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH WATER SPORTS</p> <p>The Council will normally only permit proposals for development associated with water sports adjacent to inland lakes and waterways where all the following criteria are met:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The proposed facilities are compatible with any existing use of water, including non-recreational uses; 2. It will not result in damage to sites of nature conservation importance or features of archaeological and built heritage; 3. The development can be satisfactorily integrated into the landscape or townscape surroundings; 4. The development will not have an unacceptable impact on the visual amenity especially with Natura 2000 sites; and <p>The development will not result in the over intensification of use leading to pollution, excessive noise and nuisance.</p>
DM NR 3	FLOODLIGHTING OF RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND PUBLIC OPEN

SPACE

In assessing planning applications for the floodlighting of sports pitches, tourist attractions or other high-order structures regard will be taken of considerations such as:

- 1) The horizontal and vertical luminance levels (lux levels) of the fixtures;
- 2) details of when the lighting are to be used;
- 3) Floodlights are to have fully-shielded light fixtures with cowl accessories to ensure that upward light emittance is low;

Street lighting schemes to residential areas and public open spaces should be modest in scale, with fixture designs that limit upward or horizontal light, in order to create safe environments, while limiting glare and enhancing efficiency.

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