

CHAPTER 7: RETAIL AND TOWN/VILLAGE CENTRE MANAGEMENT

Aim: Ensure that the town and village centres of co. Laois retain their vitality and viability and that all future retail development is plan led in line with the settlement strategy.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Towns and to a lesser extent villages are at the heart of trade, commerce and jobs in Laois. Towns and villages also have a strong community and social functions. They are a big part of a county's identity and perceptions about quality of life. Towns are good locations for labour intensive companies involved in internally traded goods and services.

An attractive and lively town centre can attract inward investment and can energise local entrepreneurship. Equally town or village centres blighted by vacancy and dereliction discourage investment and job creation. A flourishing town can function as a tourism hub as well as being a good place for local businesses. Retail uses are strongly associated with town centres where a range of convenience (food and goods for everyday needs) and comparison (durable) goods are available. The concentration of a wide mix of uses within a small area gives rise to a multiplier effect, where a local person or visitor makes multiple transactions with different traders during a short space of time.

The rural-focused *Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) 2015* report emphasises the role of towns as economic drivers for their rural hinterlands. The CEDRA Report emphasises the importance of re-invigorating the relationship between urban and rural Ireland.

Towns and villages in County Laois have much to offer in relation to their history, architecture, appearance and the community spirit of their residents. Towns like Abbeyleix and Durrow and villages like Ballacolla, Ballinakill, Castletown and Timahoe show local pride and care. Perceptions of a town as thriving or declining are informed by the appearance of its town centre and its public realm as well as the range and order of available retail and commercial services.

Town Centres were adversely effected by the recession and some have been in decline over longer periods, careful town centre management is now required. An intensification of retail, commercial and residential uses in these town centres is needed, as well as the enhancement of their public realms and less tangibly an increased sense of connection and pride among local people to their towns.

Looking at commercial/retail vacancy rates, Portarlinton has high vacancy rates with over 18% (Geodirectory Q2/2019) vacant commercial/retail stock. Using this measure Mountmellick performed the best. The national vacancy rate is 13.5% (Geodirectory, June 2020) which means that Laois has more vacant commercial/retail stock than the national average.

Looking at Retail Excellence Ireland's review of towns in 2015 (based on customer/traders surveys in the town centre), Graiguecullen residents enjoyed the use of a strong town across the border in Carlow. Portlaoise and Mountmellick performed equally in the third quartile and Portarlinton performed the poorest. Portlaoise, Portarlinton and Mountmellick performed well in relation to people's views of:

- Safety and security in the town centre;
- The family-friendliness of the town centre;
- Town centre presentation and maintenance.

The towns performed poorly in relation to:

- Things to do and see in the town centres;
- Lots of events and promotions being run in the town centres.

Portlaoise scored well in relation to the number of quality retail stores to choose from and the large number of quality restaurants and pubs to choose from and it performed poorly on the price of car parking.

Portarlinton scored poorly as a first-choice shopping destination and just over 50% of those surveyed thought the town has a unique and positive image.

Around 75% of those surveyed thought Mountmellick has a unique and positive image, that there was abundant car parking available and that it is competitively priced. The retail, restaurant and pub choice in Mountmellick was considered poor.

To address this issue, in 2017 Laois County Council commissioned Consultants to prepare a Public Realm Strategy and a vision for the Town Centre. Portlaoise 2040 and Beyond – A strategy for a better Town Centre was prepared which, following consultation, presented a number of actions to address town centre management such as improvements to the public realm, increasing the residential capacity within the town centre, transitioning to a low carbon town. In tandem with this, the establishment of Portlaoise Town Team was enabled to drive actions in relation to the strategy.

Table 7.1: Assessment of Performance of Laois Towns

ASSESSMENTS OF LAOIS TOWNS Source ↻ Area ↻	Pop (2016)	DKM's Q2 2019 Commercial Vacancy Rate (no. commercial address points)
Portlaoise	22,050	15.1%
Portarlinton	8,368	18%
Graiguecullen/ Carlow	4,692	%
Mountmellick	4,777	13.2%
Abbeyleix	1,770	N/A
Stradbally	1,350	N/A
Mountrath	1,774	N/A
Rathdowney	1,271	N/A
Durrow	835	N/A

Town/Village Centre Management Policy Objectives

TC 1	Support the implementation of LECP Economic Actions and LECP Community Actions related to the maintaining and enhancing the vitality and vibrancy of Laois Town and Village Centres in particular focusing on Portlaoise;
TC 2	Support and facilitate the development of town centre strategies / Public Realm Strategies, where appropriate, liaising closely with residents, visitors and other relevant stakeholders
TC 3	Enable the establishment of Town Teams to collaborate on and address the needs of town centre management
TC 4	Encourage the maintenance of town/village centre buildings and improve the quality of the public realm in town/village centres making them more attractive and safe to locals and visitors, as well as more pedestrian and cycle-friendly.
TC 5	Assist in site assembly and facilitate appropriate new development in town/village centres by way of alterations and extensions, infill development as well as demolition and redevelopment subject to planning considerations such as architectural heritage and flood risk;
TC 6	Maintain compact and permeable town/village centres, conserve any special architectural interest of town/village centres and foster active frontages at ground floor level to ensure bustling town and village centres;
TC 7	Retain and foster a mix of uses in town/village centres including residential commercial, community-based, civic, educational, recreational, tourism and religious to bolster the central role of town/village centres in the day-to-day lives of Laois people;
TC 8	Support the hosting of markets (including farmers markets), events or festivals in town/village centre locations and the running of town-based cultural/learning facilities such as the Dunamaise Theatre, the Stradbally Arthouse and Laois' library network in the interests of vitality and vibrancy.
TC 9	Provide for night-time economy in town centres including public houses, nightclubs, restaurants and takeaways, subject to considerations of undue concentration/proliferation, and mitigate any adverse effects of these uses and other uses on the residential amenity of town centre residents;
TC 10	Encourage residential uses in town/village centres, such as at ground floor in certain instances or locations and in living over the shop arrangements through the flexible application of parking, amenity space and internal space standards where these standards cannot be practicably met on-site;
TC 11	Recognise and support the role of town/village-based community groups including trader groups that make a significant contribution to town/village centre management;
TC 12	Encourage start-up businesses and tourism businesses to set-up in town and village

	centre locations;
TC 13	Provide short-stay parking in town centres to support business and tourism activities, balancing the need to encourage people into the town centre against sustainable transport and land-use efficiency considerations.
TC 14	Develop a regeneration framework for settlements identified in Volume 2 Settlement Plans as regeneration areas to address vacancy and dereliction. Any framework may be subject to Appropriate Assessment to ensure there are no likely significant effects on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites in the County.

7.2 RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

A Retail Strategy has been prepared to coincide with the preparation of the County Development Plan 2021-2027. The retail Strategy has been reviewed in accordance with provisions set out in the *Retail Planning: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DECLG, 2012)*. The document is available at Annex 2 of this Plan.

Retail is an important employment sector in Laois. More generally shopping is a lynchpin for the vitality of town and village centres. More than 75% of retail floorspace is located in Portlaoise and it is necessary to retain that primacy to reduce leakage to other counties. Proposals for retail development will be considered in the context of the retail hierarchy and sequential approach set out in the Laois Retail Strategy 2021-2027, the quantum of new convenience and comparison floorspace identified as appropriate therein, the Retail Planning Guidelines and the policies below.

7.2.1 KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE RETAIL STRATEGY

The Retail Strategy covers Portlaoise and the remaining County area. General policies and objectives for other towns and villages are included in the strategy. The key objectives of the retail strategy were heavily informed by the Retail Planning Guidelines. These key objectives are as follows:

- a. Define the retail hierarchy in the county and related retail core boundaries;
- b. Undertake a health check appraisal of the key retail centres in Laois, to ascertain the need for interventions in these areas;
- c. Identify the broad requirement for additional retail floorspace development in the county over the plan period, to support the established settlement hierarchy, and;
- d. Provide guidance on policy recommendations and criteria for the future assessment of retail development proposals over the Development Plan Period 2021-2027.
- e. retention and enhancement of the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre core areas as shopping destinations
- f. adhere to the sequential test approach principle in determining applications for retail development

7.2.2. STRATEGIC GUIDANCE

Both the quantitative assessment (capacity assessment) of additional retail floorspace requirements for the county and the qualitative review (health checks) of the various retail centres in the county outline how the principal towns within Laois are performing at present.

One of the functions of the strategy update is to review the broad quantum of additional retail floorspace that is required for the county over the period so as to maintain and enhance the positive economic performance of Portlaoise and the county. The Retail Strategy will indicate where the additional retail floorspace should be located. In this context, the location and extent of new retail development must have regard to the planning framework for the county and will be assessed against the criteria contained in the *Retail Planning: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DECLG, 2012)* and the Development Management Standards hereafter.

Central to the provision of additional retail floorspace is the need to reinforce the Retail Hierarchy of the county, in existing town and village centres. Therefore, it is vital that Portlaoise, as the Key Town continues to develop its retail function to meet expanding shopping needs and to ensure a healthy and competitive retail environment.

To achieve the key objectives of the strategy due cognisance must be taken of the strategic policy framework that underpins the updated specific policies and proposals in this document. This framework is set by:

- i. Portlaoise's position in the national Retail Hierarchy;
- ii. Identifying the County Retail Hierarchy;
- iii. The spatial distribution of new retail development with the County Retail Hierarchy;
- iv. The core retail areas;
- v. The sequential approach; and
- vi. A consideration of need.

7.2.3 PORTLAOISE'S POSITION IN THE NATIONAL RETAIL HIERARCHY

Portlaoise is the primary settlement and largest population centre within County Laois. Census 2016 records the population of Portlaoise at 22,050. Centrally located within the county, and having the advantage of excellent quality local, regional and national linkages, the town has become a settlement of regional importance.

The value of the town and the support function which it provides to its residents as well as those of its hinterland has been recognised at both a national and regional context. The Retail Planning Guidelines, recognises that the town provides a regional important retailing function. The importance of the town within a local and regional context has also been recognised by the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines, which has defined the town as being a Principal Town, the term also adopted as part of the Core Strategy.

7.2.4 IDENTIFYING THE COUNTY RETAIL HIERARCHY

The purpose of the Retail Hierarchy is to indicate the level and form of retailing activity appropriate to the various urban centres in the county. Taking a criteria-based approach enables the Council to protect each centre's overall vitality and viability whilst allowing each centre to perform its overall function within the county's settlement hierarchy. It is the core concept of the Retail Hierarchy that the Key Towns are supported by Self Sustaining Growth Towns and to a lesser extent local service towns and villages.

The Retail Strategy focuses primarily on the upper levels of the hierarchy. It is important to note that this is not to deter or discourage smaller scale retail development and investment in the smaller villages. Rather, it is important to set a clear hierarchy which identifies where the distribution of new retail floorspace should be delivered and which is appropriate in scale and character to the hierarchical role of the centre. The Laois County Retail Hierarchy 2021-2027 is set out in table 7.2 as follows:

Table 7.2: Laois Retail Hierarchy

Status under Retail Hierarchy for the Region (Table 6.1 RSES)	Town	Action
Level 1	Dublin	
Level 2 – Major Town Centres and County Town Centres	Portlaoise	Reinforce and grow high-order retail functioning with particular emphasis on historic core defined by the Primary Retail Area. Enhance the retail appeal of Laois by strengthening retail functions of Portlaoise.
Level 3 – Town and/ or District Centres and Sub County Town Centres (Key service centres)	Portarlinton	Encourage retail development commensurate with existing and anticipated growth, with particular emphasis on traditional core
	Graiguecullen	Provide for shopping, amenity, commercial and community facilities of a scale and type to serve residents living within the district without undermining Carlow Town Centre.
Level 4 Neighbourhood Centres / Local Centres – small towns and villages	Mountmellick, Abbeyleix, Mountrath, Stradbally, Durrow, Rathdowney, Ballylynan	Sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of the central parts of the town in conjunction with the utilisation of strategic backland areas.
		Provide and retain essential shopping facilities in smaller rural settlements to serve local residents and the wider hinterland.
		Provide and retain essential shopping facilities in smaller rural settlements to serve local residents and the wider hinterland.
Level 5 - Corner shops and small Villages	Various small towns and villages as identified in the settlement strategy	Provide for shopping, amenity, commercial and community facilities of a scale and type to serve neighbourhood residents without undermining the town centre.

7.2.5 SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF ADDITIONAL RETAIL WITHIN THE COUNTY RETAIL HIERARCHY

The Laois County Retail Strategy provides a strategic policy framework, in accordance with the provisions of the Retail Planning Guidelines, for the spatial distribution of new retail development in the county. While such a framework inherently emphasises strategic guidance on the location and scale of major retail development, it must ensure that the strategy does not inhibit appropriate scale retail development in identified centres within the county, specifically in smaller settlements. Thus, it is implicit in the key objectives of the strategy that such developments should be encouraged and facilitated where possible to enhance the sustainability, vitality and viability of smaller centres within the county.

7.2.6 CORE RETAIL AREAS

The Council will promote greater vitality in town centres through the implementation of a sequential approach to the location of all subsequent retail development. This sequential approach prioritises development within the town centres or core retail areas at the expense of more peripheral edge-of-centre or out-of-centre locations, which traditionally have poorer functional and spatial linkages with the core. This approach recognises the importance of core areas as the most suitable locations for higher order fashion and comparison goods, as they are easily accessible for the majority of the catchment population and also provide a compact and sustainable critical mass of commercial activity and public amenities, thereby reducing the need to travel.

Portlaoise's Core Retail Area is to be the focus and preferred location for retail development during the Plan period. Portlaoise has a vibrant retail core but has a notable deficiency in high-end, modern comparison retail floor plates. The lack of high value comparison anchors in the town core has undoubtedly contributed to the growth of expenditure leakage from the town's catchment area as the retail profiles of competing centres have developed at a faster pace. In order for Portlaoise to compete effectively with other urban centres of a similar scale, it is imperative that sufficient high-end comparison shopping is in place in the town core area.

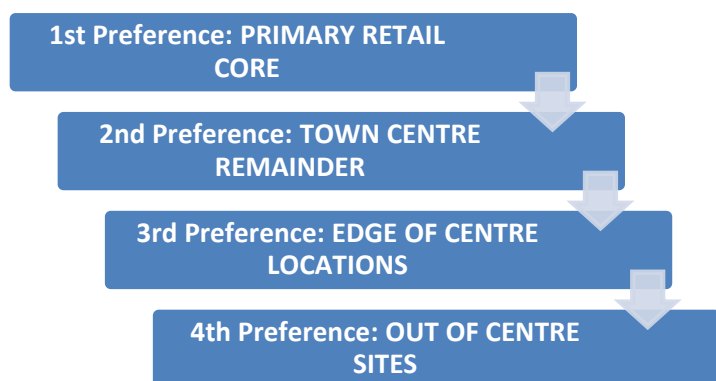
It is essential in terms of the sustainable development of the town going forward that this high-end comparison shopping provision is retained and substantially enhanced within the town core area and that leakage to the periphery is prevented. A proactive approach to urban design will be taken and substantial redevelopment in the core area should utilise opportunities to facilitate attractive and vibrant environments designed at a human scale, with enhanced pedestrian permeability, visually engaging, secure and inviting public realms that promote and encourage passive and active recreation.

7.2.7 THE SEQUENTIAL APPROACH

The Retail Planning Guidelines state that the order of priority for the sequential approach is to locate retail development in the town centre and only to allow retail development in edge-of-centre or out-of-centre locations where all other options have been exhausted.

All applications for retail developments at edge-of-centre or out-of-centre will be subject to the sequential test as outlined in the Retail Planning Guidelines. Where an application for a retail development edge of centre and out of town centre is lodged to the planning authority, the applicant shall demonstrate that all town centre options including but not limited to opportunity sites have been assessed and evaluated and that flexibility has been adopted by the retailer in regard to the retail format.

Figure 7.1: Order of Priority – Sequential Approach



7.2.8 CONSIDERATION OF NEED

Developing the retail offer of the county, especially in respect of high end high street comparison shopping, is vital if Laois is to remain competitive and arrest the levels of both convenience and comparison expenditure leakage to centres outside of the county.

This is particularly important for Portlaoise if it is to enhance its strategic role as outlined in the Midland’s Regional Planning Guidelines, as an integrated link and a principal town in the broader polycentric model for the Region including the linked gateway. It is also critical given the town’s position as a crucial urban anchor providing essential services in an otherwise predominantly rural county.

Apart from Portlaoise, the other retail centres in the county are small both in terms of population size and quantum of retail floorspace. The improvement of the retail offer of these centres needs to be encouraged and facilitated. Concurrently, in order to reduce expenditure leakage to other areas, the strategic priority must be to focus on enhancing the retailing environment of Portlaoise.

The Retail Planning Guidelines advise that Retail Strategies should “*assess the broad requirement for additional development over the plan period... these assessments of future retail requirements are intended to provide **broad guidance** as to the additional quantum of convenience and comparison floorspace provision. They should not be treated in an **overly prescriptive manner, nor should they serve to inhibit competition**”.* For this purpose, it is not the intention of this strategy to present figures as some form of cap on retail permissions in the County, but rather to guide the general scale of overall retail provision

TABLE 7.3: Additional Retail Floorspace Requirements for County Laois 2021-2027

Retail category	Floorspace (sq.m)
Convenience	7,798 m2
Comparison – non bulky	4,648 m2
Comparison – bulky	5,244 m2

Future additional retail provision within Portlaoise and its environs should address the insufficiency of the centre's highend high street comparison retail offer and traffic congestion problems in the centre.

7.2.9 CONSIDERATION OF VACANCY

In undertaking the review of the Laois County Retail Strategy, Laois County Council has sought to take a proactive approach to addressing the issue of retail floorspace vacancy, while remaining cognisant of their responsibility to facilitate growth in retail and general economic activity within the county. The Retail Strategy has taken a cumulative approach to depleting vacant floorspace, while accommodating additional floorspace where it is required.

Retailing Policy Objectives	
RTP 1	Ensure the orderly development of future retail developments in County Laois, to keep the retail strategy under review, having regard to the changes in the retail sector and have regard to any such review in determining applications for retail development
RTP 2	Maintain, and where possible, enhance the existing competitiveness of the county's main centres by facilitating the development of additional retail floorspace where it can be clearly established that such development will result in tangible improvements to the retail offering of the county
RTP 3	Acknowledge the importance of the retail hierarchy in providing a wide range of both convenience and comparison and visitor shopping in locations close to centres of population and larger, more remote retail hinterlands
RTP 4	Encourage the improvement to the designs of local retail centres in suburban areas and rural villages including the provision of facilities in the public realm
RTP 5	Encourage and facilitate the reuse and regeneration of derelict sites and buildings and vacant buildings for retail uses with due cognisance to the sequential approach as indicated in the regional planning guidelines
RTP 6	Permit retail development of a size and scale which is appropriate to the level of the town/settlement area, including its population, as defined within the County retail hierarchy
RTP 7	Ensure that all retail development permitted is in accordance with the Retail Planning: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DECLG, 2012) and the Laois County Retail Strategy
RTP 8	Protect the location of existing retail uses in town and village centres, the re-location of these uses to edge-of-centre or out-of-centre locations will not be accepted
RTP 9	Encourage uses at Ground floor level which achieve an active street frontage, generates a high-degree of pedestrian movement, operates during day-time hours

	and contributes to the vitality and vibrancy of the town/village centre;
RTP 10	Acknowledge the role of Portlaoise as the primary retail centre in the County and the focus for comparison retail development, subject to the criteria of the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012. In principle, this will not preclude the consideration of proposals in locations where mitigating and robustly justified special circumstances apply
RTP 11	Encourage the consolidation of other non retail based services within the town centres of the County utilising existing vacant retail floorspace where necessary
RTP 12	Promote the reuse of vacant retail floorspace. Where no viable retail use can be sustained, alternative uses will be assessed on their own merits against the requirements of the proper planning and sustainable development of the areas within which they are located, require applicants to undertake an assessment of the quality and suitability of existing and available floorspace in the County relative to the circumstances of their proposals
RTP 13	Enable the development of 4648sq ms of additional comparison [non-bulky] shopping floorspace, 5244 sq. ms. of additional comparison [bulky] shopping floorspace and 7798 sq. ms. of additional convenience shopping floorspace in County Laois in accordance with the Laois Retail Strategy 2021 - 2027 and Retail Planning Guidelines, to strengthen the retail offering available to Laois residents, reduce leakage and balance the need to protect the vitality and vibrancy of town centres against the need for competition;
RTP 14	Ensure retail developments on edge of centre sites or out of town centre sites will only be considered when it has been clearly demonstrated that all viable, available and suitable sites in the town centre have been fully investigated and considered in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines and in particular the sequential test
RTP 15	Improve the public realm of town centres through the encouragement of high quality civic design, including but not limited to the provision of attractive street furniture, lighting and effective street cleaning. Prepare Public Realm Strategies, where appropriate, liaising closely with residents, visitors and other relevant stakeholders
RTP 16	Undertake measures to improve the accessibility of town centres by developing a pedestrian and cyclist friendly environment, which improves safety and limits traffic congestion where possible
RTP 17	Ensure that all proposed town centre projects and any associated improvement works or associated infrastructure such as parking facilities, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, are subject to Appropriate Assessment to ensure there are no likely significant effects on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites ¹ in the County

¹ In accordance with requirements under Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the EU Habitats Directive.

Retail and Town/Village Centre Development Management Standard

DM TC 1	<p>COMMERCIAL/RETAIL DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>In assessing planning applications for commercial development a number of considerations will be taken into account:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Conformity with the land use policies in respect of commercial development;2) The design, quality and mix of uses being proposed particularly in town centres where redevelopment and changes of use need to be orientated towards creating a vibrant and lively, quality directed commercial core;3) The requirement that design quality protects but also enhances the architectural character of the town, particularly in relation to landmark structures and viewpoints;4) The potential impact of traffic generation, parking provision and desirability thereof and whether or not consideration has been given to access and commuter movements;5) Potential impact on the amenities of the surrounding areas;6) The energy efficiency and overall sustainability of the development which includes practical considerations, such as servicing, deliveries, waste/recycling and overall management thereof;7) Whether or not a land contamination assessment is necessary and is required as part of the Planning Authority requirements;8) Whether or not an E.I.S. and/or N.I.S or AA has been deemed necessary and provided as part of the Planning Authority requirements;9) The requirements for bring banks in line with council requirements; <p>Demolition within town centres will not normally be permitted unless fully justified by structural assessment and positive redevelopment proposals within the context of preceding objectives outlined above.</p>
DM TC 2	<p>PUBLIC HOUSES/NIGHT CLUBS/DISCO-BARS/DANCE FLOORS/CASINOS</p> <p>Night clubs and disco bars play an important role in urban areas providing a night use which adds to the attraction of a town.</p> <p>They will not, however, be permitted in residential areas.</p> <p>In dealing with applications for such developments the Planning Authority will have regard to the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) The effects on the amenities of adjoining properties particularly as regards hours of operation, noise and general disturbance;2) The anticipated levels of traffic generation (a traffic and car parking statement shall accompany any application for such a change of use);3) The generation, storage and collection of waste;4) Quality signage proposals – plastics and neon signage will not be permitted. <p>Noise levels at the boundaries of these establishments will be monitored as circumstances require and mitigation measures will be required at the time of the</p>

	submission of the planning application.
DM TC 3	<p>PETROL FILLING STATIONS</p> <p>Applications for filling stations should have regard of the Retail Planning: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DECLG, 2012) and the Spatial Planning and National Roads: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (NRA/TII, 2012) also take account of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Be located within urban areas within speed limits; 2) Access to filling stations will not be permitted closer than 35 metres to a road junction; 3) Frontage on primary and secondary routes must be at least 20 metres in length; 4) All pumps and installations shall be set back at least 5 metres from the roads; 5) A wall, of a minimum height of 0.5 metres, must separate the forecourt from the public footpath; 6) All external lighting should be cowled and directed away from the public roadway to prevent traffic hazard; 7) A proliferation of large illuminated projecting signs will not be permitted at filling stations - Generally only one such sign will be permitted; 8) Turbo-drying or car washing facilities will be located so as not to interfere with residential amenities; 9) Petrol filling stations can include an associated shop (no more than 100 sq.ms. (net retail floorspace) that provides for the sale of convenience goods. 10) An undue concentration of filling stations shall not be permitted, as in the past oversupply has led to closures with resulting unsightly derelict filling stations; 11) Late night opening will only be permitted if it does not impact adversely on nearby residences; 12) A landscaping Plan will form part of any Planning application.
DM TC 4	<p>TAXI/HACKNEY CAB BASES</p> <p>The importance of taxi/hackney services as a means of transport in all towns is recognised. However, taxi/hackney bases will not be permitted where they are likely to interfere with traffic flows or on street parking. A proliferation of hackney bases will not be permitted in any one location.</p> <p>In dealing with applications for such developments the Planning Authority will have regard to the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The effects on the amenities of adjoining properties particularly as regards hours of operation, noise and general disturbance; 2) The anticipated levels of traffic generation (a traffic and car parking statement shall accompany any application for such a use. It should be shown that satisfactory off-street parking facilities are provided when the vehicles are not in use. 3) Taxi and hackney bases shall have universal access for all.

	Quality signage proposals are required, plastic and neon signage will not be permitted
DM TC 5	<p>CANOPIES, SMOKING SHELTERS AND OUTDOOR SEATING AREAS</p> <p>The council will ensure canopies, outdoor seating and displays add to the attractiveness and vibrancy of an area and do not disrupt movement along footpaths.</p> <p>A high standard of overall design will be required, relating to the scale, design and position of canopies. The following will apply:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Straight canopies are generally acceptable provided the footpaths are sufficiently wide and a clearing head height is provided; 2) Dutch canopies may be acceptable depending on location; 3) Advertisements placed on canopies will not generally be accepted. <p>Outdoor seating can contribute to the vitality and vibrancy of a town centre. Outdoor seating to the front of premises either on private forecourt or on the public footpath is subject to a Planning Authority license and will be considered generally acceptable if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sufficient space is available; • access arrangements are not impacted upon; • minimal impact on the amenities of nearby residents. <p>The provision of beer gardens or smoking shelters at public houses will be considered having regard to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The location of the beer garden or smoking shelter; • The impact on adjacent properties; <p>the hours of use, which may be restricted if it is considered that the noise generated would adversely affect the amenities of nearby residents</p>
DM TC 6	<p>HOT FOOD TAKE-AWAY</p> <p>The development of hot food take-aways will be strictly controlled and a proliferation of this use will not be encouraged.</p> <p>This type of development will generally only be considered in towns and villages where the development would not result in the loss of retail and office frontage. The Council may impose restrictions on opening hours.</p> <p>The opening of new fast food/takeaway outlets in close proximity to schools or children's play areas will be restricted so as to protect the health and wellbeing of children.</p> <p>In dealing with applications for such developments the Planning Authority will have regard to the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The effects on the amenities of adjoining properties particularly as

	<p>regards hours of operation, noise, odour and general disturbance;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2) The location; standalone take-aways not attached to restaurants will not be encouraged, where an existing residential unit is above or the proximity to a school or children's play area; 3) The anticipated levels of traffic generation (a traffic and car parking statement shall accompany any application); 4) The generation, storage and collection of waste; <p>Quality signage proposals, plastic or neon signage will not be permitted.</p>
DM TC 7	<p>RETAIL IMPACT ASSESSMENT</p> <p>Require a Retail Impact Assessment to be carried out for development proposals in the following general circumstances:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Proposals featuring greater than 1,000sqm of net floorspace for both convenience and comparison type developments in the Principal Town of Portlaoise; b) Proposals featuring greater than 500sqm of net retail floorspace for both convenience and comparison type developments in all other settlements; c) Or where the Planning Authority considers the development may impact on the vitality and viability of a town centre. <p>The Retail Impact Assessment shall include, at minimum, the criteria set out in the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012.</p>
DM TC 8	<p>SHOPFRONTS - GENERAL DESIGN</p> <p>The design and quality of shopfronts play an importance role in the experience of a town centre environment. It is important that they should not compromise the local character, scale and architectural quality of the host building. The Council has designated buildings with important shopfronts as protected structures and some shopfronts fall within architectural conservation areas; conservation policies will relate to these shopfronts. Generally, the Council will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Seek the retention of traditional shopfronts; 2) Encourage the reinstatement of shopfronts, where they have fallen into disrepair; 3) Consider contemporarily-designed bespoke shopfronts in new commercial areas or on historic buildings if existing shopfronts are of poor quality; 4) Ensure new shop fronts provide ramped or level access to facilitate access for all. <p>Traditional shopfronts are comprised of the following principal elements and proportions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the stallriser at the base of the shopfront, according to a general traditional rule of thumb should occupy approximately a third of the height of the shopfront 2) the shop window for the display of retails goods or the services provided

	<p>the fascia board, according to a general rule of thumb should not exceed approximately a fifth of the height of the shopfront and is used to display an advertisement for the shop and commercial use.</p>
<p>DM TC 9</p>	<p>SHOPFRONT ADVERTISEMENTS</p> <p>The Council expects the standard of advertisement to be of high quality and not to detract from the appearance of the shopfront or the street. As a general rule, subtle and simple schemes with regard to colours, size, design and lettering work best.</p> <p>In dealing with applications the Planning Authority will have regard to the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Where a business occupies more than one building, the fascia advertisement should not extend uninterrupted across two or more shopfronts.; 2) The fascia advertisement should not extend beyond the pilasters/vertical shop front surround and not obstruct any other architectural detail, such as the cornices, corbels or first floor window sills; 3) Shop advertisements generally do not require illumination other than street lighting or lighting of shop windows. Only late opening premises, such as public houses and restaurants, should require additional illumination; 4) Modern boxed fascia advertisements, which project from the face of the building, with internal illumination are not acceptable. Neon and fluorescent lighting is not acceptable. If necessary, external illumination should be kept to a minimum and discreetly positioned; spot lighting, recessed trough lighting and halo lighting are generally acceptable; 5) The fascia board should normally state only the name or trade of the business and the street number. Avoid oversized lettering and the application of too much additional information as this can create visual clutter. Letters should generally not exceed 60 percent of the height of the fascia; 6) Painted wooden, matt finished advertisements or individually applied brass or chrome letters are preferred over large areas of highly polished finishes, glossy plastic or perspex advertisements; 7) Lettering or sign writing should usually be applied directly to the fascia. Avoid adding new fascia boards to an existing one; 8) Projecting hanging signs are a traditional form of additional advertising of commercial premises, they can complement the colour and design of the fascia, it can add interest and originality to a building and street scene; 9) No more than one hanging sign per shopfront and they should keep an adequate vertical clearance from the pavement and not project over any carriageways; <p>The erection of speakers on the exterior of commercial or residential premises will not be permitted.</p>

<p>DM TC 10</p>	<p>ADVERTISEMENTS ON PUBLIC ROADS</p> <p>Permanent advertising signs on public land along the public road network for example finger post signs and signs for businesses are subject to a license under Section 254 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).</p> <p>Planning permission is required for signs on private land along public roads, other than those exempted by the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).</p> <p>In dealing with applications the Planning Authority will have regard to the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Compliance with the Spatial Planning and National Roads: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012) and the Transport Infrastructure Ireland's policy statement on the Provision of Tourist and Leisure Signage on National Roads (March 2011) and any updated versions of these documents, when the development concerns a national roadway. 2) Signs should be of a different colour scheme to that of tourist signage; 3) Within urban speed limits signs will not be permitted for businesses; 4) Signs for rural businesses shall not compete with road signs or otherwise endanger traffic safety. They will only be considered at an appropriate junction on a regional road and one sign at each junction leading to the business; 5) Signs will not be permitted where there is a proliferation of signage within a small area that leads to visual clutter and which may constitute a traffic hazard; 6) For reasons of road safety, signs for commercial enterprises must not distract from road signs, changes to road layout or traffic lights/crossings; 7) Signs for tourism attractions and facilities will only be considered white on brown signs
<p>DM TC 11</p>	<p>BILLBOARDS ADVERTISEMENTS</p> <p>The exhibition of billboard advertisements will be permitted only where approved advertisement structures are in place.</p>