



Chapter 8

Sustainable Communities

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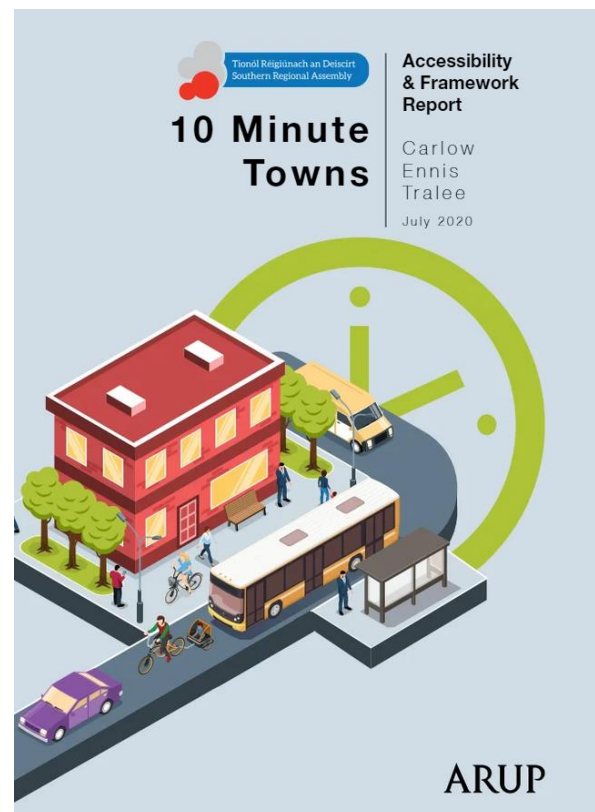
Aim: To facilitate the development of sustainable and inclusive communities in Carlow-Graiguecullen that respond to the needs of the current and future population of the joint urban area, and through support for the provision, expansion and enhancement of key facilities, services and amenities including healthcare, education, childcare, recreation, arts, and culture.

8.0 Introduction

Prioritising the development of inclusive and sustainable communities in Carlow-Graiguecullen is central to safeguarding and improving the quality of life of all residents in the joint urban area. This aim is reflected in the strategic objectives of this draft plan and in the overarching aim of this chapter. There is a requirement to respond to the demographic and societal changes occurring in the joint urban area to ensure that support for new and improved community, recreational and amenity services and facilities are provided for. Local authorities act as core agents in placemaking and operate at a community level and are appropriately positioned to engage with stakeholders and respond accordingly with appropriate supporting policies, public interventions, and targeted investment opportunities.

8.1 Connected Communities – The 10-Minute Town

The idea of the 10-minute neighbourhood or town is a central starting point to building inclusive and sustainable communities and first gained popularity in North America and later in Europe as an urban planning concept. It focuses on reducing car dependency by seeking to have all community facilities, services, and amenities accessible within a 10-minute walk or cycle from homes or by public transport. It focuses on creating sustainable and connected communities, through first understanding how neighbourhoods work, and secondly designing or retrofitting the built environment where possible to provide more compact, connected, and permeable places.



The Southern Regional Assembly commissioned the undertaking of a 10-Minute Town study for Carlow, which formed part of the Regional Action Plan for the Interreg Europe MATCH-UP project. The main findings of the 10-Minute Town study highlight some of the challenges facing Carlow-Graigucullen in supporting and creating inclusive and sustainable communities. These challenges relate to (inter alia) urban sprawl, a car dependent built environment, self-contained/disconnected residential estates, and deficiencies in active travel infrastructure. The findings of the study highlighted that:

- There is generally a lack of direct access from residential estates to main roads.
- The need to improve existing footpaths, not only for safety reasons, but also to encourage residents and visitors to walk within their 10-minute catchment rather than rely on the car.
- There is potential to promote cycling as a means of transport by providing adequate cycling facilities, including parking.
- There is potential for new local bus routes and/or increases in frequency for existing routes.

The incorporation of design and retrofitting measures to support the 10-Minute town would have numerous benefits for Carlow-Graigucullen. These include reducing the need to travel (which therefore reduces car dependency, emissions, air pollution and congestion), but also promoting physical activity and opportunities for community interaction – creating socially connected neighbourhoods and improving the overall quality of life for everyone. Associated policies and objectives concerning integrated land-use and transport planning can be found in the Chapter 6: Sustainable Travel and Transportation.

Connected Communities: The 10-Minute Town – Policies

It is the policy of Carlow County Council and Laois County Council to:

- CC. P1:** Promote and support the development of connected communities and the attainment of the 10-Minute town, having regard the findings of the 10-Minute Towns Study for Carlow, and with an emphasis on active travel and shorter walking and cycling timeframes to social and community facilities, improving permeability in the built environment, and encouraging a reduction in car dependency.

8.2 Social and Community Facilities

Social and community facilities have a broad remit that encompasses a variety of services and amenities in areas such as education, healthcare, childcare, sports and recreation, and a good quality-built environment. In many cases these facilities are run and managed by local communities and in a voluntary capacity, providing vital services to the young, the elderly, people with disabilities, migrants etc. They underpin and enhance quality of life and provide a vital platform for community and social interaction which many people rely on for personal health and wellbeing. Some of the key social and community facilities in the joint urban area include:

- St. Catherines Community Services Centre
- New Oak Community Centre
- Carlow Youth Centre
- Askea Community Centre and Askea Childcare Centre
- St. Fiac’s Hall
- St. Fiac’s House
- HSE Health Centre, Oakley Park

- Graiguecullen Parish Childcare Centre CLG
- Sacred Heart Hall
- Carlow Regional Youth Services
- Delta Centre
- Tintean Centre
- Cathedral Parish Centre
- Carlow Youth Training – Community Training Centre
- Carlow Senior Citizens Centre

Carlow Community and Voluntary Forum, in conjunction with Carlow County Sports Partnership, have compiled a directory of indoor community and sports infrastructure which can be accessed at [county-carlow-directory-of-facilities.pdf](#). This directory includes the community facilities referred to above, as well as sports and school facilities.

Carlow County Council and Laois County Council, along with their respective Public Participation Networks (PPNs), recognise the essential contribution facilities such as those listed above make to the quality of life in the joint urban area, and their value to community development is acknowledged. Both Councils are committed over the lifetime of this JULAP and subject to resources, to supporting and providing a range of shared, inclusive, and accessible social and community facilities that respond to the various needs and expectations of the current and future population of the joint urban area. At the same time, this JULAP acknowledges that there are challenges facing Carlow-Graiguecullen in meeting these needs and expectations. Legacies concerning the urban environment and communities must be tackled relating to (inter alia) the quality of developments, placemaking, consolidating and connecting existing and new residential areas, deficiencies in social and community facilities and social deprivation. The delivery of new and improved social and

community facilities will not be through policy alone but will require sustained measures and targeted investment over the long term. Public intervention must also foster pride of place and it calls for imaginative solutions such as support for repurposing existing underutilised urban spaces and buildings where appropriate.

8.2.1 Carlow Exchange

The Carlow Exchange at Potato Market was developed by Carlow County Council and officially opened in September 2022. It is a centrally located 332sq.m. semi-covered multi-functional community space for cultural, economic, and social activities. The development was funded under the Town and Village Accelerate Scheme and the Open Public Spaces Scheme, its purpose being to enhance the vitality and vibrancy of the urban area and contribute to improved public facilities and amenities.



8.2.2 Tullow Road Community Hub

A multi-functional community hub is proposed by Carlow County Council on land adjoining John Sweeney Park off the Tullow Road. The hub will comprise a 768sq.m. facility, with a community hall, multi-purpose classrooms, meeting and training rooms, and a coffee dock providing vital community facilities where they are most needed.



Social and Community Facilities – Policies

It is the policy of Carlow County Council and Laois County Council to:

SCF. P1: Facilitate and secure the provision of new and enhanced social and community facilities to support existing and new communities in Carlow-Graiguecullen, and in a manner which provides flexibility to respond to varied and changing needs and deficiencies, and through funding for their development where available and appropriate.

SCF. P2: Recognise, support, and encourage the role of community participation in the provision and improvement of social and community facilities, independently and in association with relevant stakeholders, including the Carlow and Laois Public Participation Networks (PPNs)

SCF. P3: Promote the highest standards of universal access and design in all community facilities.

SCF. P4: Enhance opportunities for existing and proposed social and community facilities, through support for the repurposing of existing underutilised spaces and buildings, and by facilitating the co-location and shared use of

existing such facilities by community groups, including amenities and schools, and subject to compliance with planning and environmental considerations.

SCF. P5: Encourage the siting of social and community facilities in suitable locations in the joint urban area which are close to existing such facilities, and existing and planned active travel and public transport infrastructure, and in order to support increased accessibility, connectivity, and reduced travel times to and from these facilities and infrastructure and to and from peoples' homes and places of work.

Social and Community Facilities – Objectives

It is an objective of Carlow County Council and Laois County Council to:

SCF. O1: Deliver the Tullow Road Community Hub subject to the availability of financing and compliance with all planning and environmental criteria.

8.3 Education and Training Facilities

The development of high-quality educational and training facilities strengthens the fabric of communities and enables parity of opportunities, as well as sustainable and societally enriching goals. Equally, the level of education in an area can be a determining factor for some businesses when assessing new locations for their operations and can therefore also make a positive contribution to the commercial and business life of an urban centre. Carlow County Council and Laois County Council have a role in facilitating the provision of these facilities and primarily through the formulation of supporting policies and objectives, and the zoning of lands for educational uses to meet the

needs of new and existing communities in line with the pace of development.

8.3.1 Primary and Post-Primary

There are a total of 10 mainstream primary schools and 6 post-primary schools serving the joint urban area. The construction of a new 1,200sq.m. purpose-built Saplings Special School recently commenced in 2023 on a site in Fruithill, Graiguecullen. It should also be noted that the primary level educational needs of residents are to a smaller extent being met by schools in nearby settlements, such as at Bennekerry, Tinryland, and Killeshin. One of the post-primary schools (Knockbeg, St. Mary's) is located outside of the plan area and in a rural location in County Laois. Tyndall College, extending to 10,000sq.m, is Carlow's newest post-primary school and is based on the new Kilkenny-Carlow Education and Training Board's (KCETB) campus at Mortarstown on the Kilkenny Road. St. Mary's Academy CBS has also recently received planning approval for new school facilities on lands adjoining their existing grounds. In principle, it is anticipated that an increase in school place requirements resulting from projected population growth will be mitigated by a corresponding decline in school place requirements arising from underlying demographics. However, in accordance with the principle of compact growth at least 30% of all new homes to be built in Carlow-Graiguecullen are to be built within the existing built-up footprint of the joint urban area. Arising from same increased pressure for additional school places may arise Therefore, the existing school sites and land buffers around them will be of critical importance as it may be necessary to extend the existing schools to meet any increased requirements.

This JULAP also recognises that the schools in Carlow-Graiguecullen play an important role in their communities by making their facilities available outside of school hours and during holiday periods for a variety of different uses and users. The includes after-school activities, homework clubs, breakfast clubs, summer camps, sporting, and other activities for children, as well as the facilitation of community groups in the evening. Such use of school buildings for recreational and community purposes is encouraged by Carlow County Council and Laois County Council in accordance with Department of Education *Guidelines on the use of School Buildings outside of School Hours* (2017).

8.3.2 Third Level

Carlow-Graiguecullen has two third level institutions comprising South East Technological University (SETU) and Carlow College, St. Patrick's.



The SETU was formally established in 2022 following the merger of IT Carlow and Waterford Institute of Technology. The merger forms part of wider Government policy to create higher education institutions of a larger scale and greater capacity, which are to act as catalysts for innovation and regional development, increased foreign direct investment, and overall

socio-economic progress. With 11,000 students and 850 staff, SETU Carlow provides a wide range of undergraduate courses encompassing business, humanities, applied sciences and health and sports sciences, to computing, aerospace and mechanical engineering, electronic engineering, and the built environment. These are supplemented by a further range of postgraduate courses and a lifelong learning programme for adults to upgrade their skills and qualifications in line with current trends.

RSES Regional Policy Objective RPO 14 in the Southern Region affirms the role of the SETU in strengthening education provision at a regional and inter-regional level, and in providing internationally recognised higher education and research opportunities which can facilitate transformational change and act as a key driver for enabling sustainable future employment growth for the urban area. The SETU has also invested heavily in their development of a state of the art 31-acre sports campus off the Kilkenny Road, which accommodates playing pitches including all-weather pitches, walking trail, athletics track, and viewing stadium. The sports campus also facilities local community use.

Founded in 1782, Carlow College St. Patrick's is the country's second oldest university level institution. The college offers undergraduate, post graduate and evening courses focused on arts, humanities, and social, political and community studies. In 2019 Carlow College formed a collaborative agreement with SETU Carlow (then IT Carlow) for higher education and research initiatives. The agreement recognised and strengthened an ongoing partnership between the two institutions and their shared interests. In particular, it provided for

institutional alignment in delivering greater collaboration in relation to academia, research, learner engagement, facilities and resources, and community engagement. It is an action under Strategic Objective 7 in the SETU Strategic Plan 2023-2028 to seek non-core funding to enable SETU to conduct academic, financial, and legal analyses in relation to future partnership models with Carlow College St. Patricks.



8.3.3 Further Education and Training

Further Education is organised through the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) which oversees the delivery of continuing education and training for young school leavers and adults. It is also considered a lead contact point for people to re-engage with learning and is therefore a key sector for supporting lifelong learning. Carlow Institute of Further Education recently developed 10,000sq.m. metre campus off the Kilkenny Road providing courses over many professional fields, as well as realistic working environments including art studios, recording studio, science labs and automotive engineering.



Kilkenny and Carlow Educational and Training Board (KCETB), which Carlow Institute is a constituent of, also has progress agreements to higher education with SETU.

8.3.4 Community Education

KCETB's community education service supports the delivery of a broad range of education programmes in partnership with community providers/groups and in local centres throughout Carlow. The main Carlow Office is located on Burrin Street. Commitment towards the promotion and facilitation of lifelong learning, social inclusion and social/personal development in local communities is central to the education service. Courses are provided in collaboration with various community groups, such as women's groups, disability groups, active retirement groups and local development groups.

The core principles of community education are:

- Lifelong Learning (lifelong, life-wide and voluntary/self-motivated)
- Equality
- Inter-culturalism
- Active and social inclusion (addressing marginalisation)
- Developmental participation
- Reflective practice
- Collective community advancement /empowerment
- Fostering personal development
- Combatting social isolation
- Addressing social and education disadvantage

8.3.5 Carlow Youth Training

Carlow Youth Training located at Askea Business Park, is a Community Training Centre providing training, support, and work experience to early

school leavers who are most in need of basic vocational training. The training provision is divided between 'in-centre learning' and 'linked work experience learning'.



Education and Training – Policies

It is the policy of Carlow County Council and Laois County Council to:

- ET. P1:** Continue to liaise with the Department of Education as appropriate, to assist in the delivery of future educational requirements within Carlow-Graiguecullen, including the provision of school accommodation, the development of new schools, and the expansion or alteration of existing schools.
- ET. P2:** Support and facilitate the development and expansion of educational facilities in Carlow-Graiguecullen, including the protection of existing school sites for education use, and where appropriate the land buffers adjoining them.
- ET. P3:** Support and encourage, as appropriate, the multi-use of education buildings and facilities in Carlow-Graiguecullen outside of normal hours, where it does not conflict with the delivery of education services and in accordance with the Department of Education *Guidelines on*

the use of School Buildings outside of School Hours (2017).

- ET. P4:** Ensure that appropriate infrastructure and high-quality urban design is provided concurrently with the development or expansion of educational and training facilities in Carlow-Graigucullen, including where appropriate walking and cycling infrastructure.
- ET. P5:** Promote and support initiatives with relevant stakeholders to expand education and training that supports lifelong learning and meets the wide range of business skills located in Carlow-Graigucullen.
- SCF. P3:** Promote the highest standards of universal access and design in all educational and training facilities.

Education and Training – Objectives

It is an objective of Carlow County Council and Laois County Council to:

- ET. O1:** Support the role and development of SETU Carlow and Carlow College St. Patrick's in strengthening education and training provision at a regional and inter-regional level and in providing internationally recognised higher education and research opportunities which can act as a key driver for enabling sustainable future employment growth for the joint urban area.
- ET. O2:** Provide new and improved walking and cycling infrastructure and vehicular traffic calming measures in the vicinity of schools.

8.4 Childcare Facilities

The 2016 Census revealed that 0-4 years pre-school population in Carlow-Graigucullen, at 1,907, represented 7.9% of the total population of the joint urban area. In line with their above-average population growth rate over the past decade, County Laois has the highest proportion of infants of all counties that share a border with County Carlow. In this regard, Graigucullen's population growth and the proportion of infants in its population (>8%) is more typical of County Laois than of County Carlow.

The provision of quality affordable childcare places is therefore critical for Carlow-Graigucullen, both developmentally for children and as a support for people to participate more fully in society, particularly in accessing employment, education, and social networks.



Childcare facilities are well distributed throughout the joint urban area and predominantly comprise privately owned facilities and some community owned facilities. According to the directories held by the Carlow and Laois County Childcare Committees and the register maintained by Tusla Child and Family Agency there are a total of 21 childcare facilities in the joint urban area (6 in Graigucullen and 15 in Carlow Town). Figures obtained from the Tusla Child and Family Agency register reveal that when taken together all these facilities have an enrolment capacity for 1,069 children. However,

data obtained from both County Childcare Committees identifies that these facilities, as of January 2023, were either all at or close to full enrolment capacity for full day care pre-school spaces.

Childcare Facilities – Policies

It is the policy of Carlow County Council and Laois County Council to:

- CF. P1:** Encourage and support the provision of childcare facilities to support new and existing communities in Carlow-Graigucullen and as an integral part of proposals for new residential developments in the joint urban area. Carlow and Laois County Councils will have regard to the DEHLG’s *Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (2001) and any future revisions or updates to these Guidelines in relation to the provision of childcare facilities.
- CF. P2:** Liaise with Carlow and Laois County Childcare Committees in identifying childcare facility needs in Carlow-Graigucullen and in supporting the delivery of new, improved high quality and accessible childcare facilities at appropriate locations throughout the joint urban area, and subject to siting design considerations and compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria.
- CF. P3:** Promote the highest standards of universal access and design in all childcare facilities in accordance with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs *Universal Design Guidelines for Early Learning and Care Settings* (2019)

and any future revisions or updates to these Guidelines.

8.5 Healthcare Facilities

Public healthcare facilities in Carlow-Graigucullen are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive (HSE Carlow/Kilkenny for Carlow Town in County Carlow and Laois/Offaly for Graigucullen in County Laois). At the core of the provision of these public facilities is St. Dymphna’s Hospital/Carlow District Hospital.

The hospitals provide a broad range of community care services within their grounds off the Athy Road, including child and adult mental health services, addiction services, hospital respite and palliative care services, as well as dental, Xray and eye clinics, an audiology centre, a physiotherapy department, and civil registration for births, deaths, and marriages. The hospital grounds also accommodate Caredoc Carlow, residential accommodation at Kelvin Court, and Tusla Child and Family Agency. The HSE also operates the Sacred Heart Hospital accessed from the Old Dublin Road, which is a 63-bed facility providing respite, palliative care and rehabilitation needs for adults.

These facilities and services are further supplemented by those provided in the HSE Primary Care Centre located at Shamrock Plaza, its role being part of a national initiative to procure an integrated HSE and GP-resourced primary care centre. The primary care centre is the central entry point to community health and delivers health and social care services including public health nursing and outreach hospital consultant clinics. Graigucullen also has a Health Centre run by HSE Laois/Offaly at Oakley Park, providing (inter alia) GP services, child, disability and older people services, and occupational therapy.

In addition to HSE public facilities and services, the healthcare needs of the joint urban area are met by GP medical/family practices, nursing homes (3 no.), dentists, pharmacies, and other related facilities and services. HSE data for 2023 reveals that there is a total of 53 GPs in the joint urban area (Carlow Town 43 no. and Graiguecullen 10 no.), who are based in various grouped medical practices.

Carlow County Council and Laois County Council recognise the significant importance of all of these healthcare facilities and services to the joint urban area and surrounding hinterland, and that general practices in particular are experiencing significant pressure in the provision of healthcare. Both Councils will therefore continue to support the development and expansion of healthcare facilities and services subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria.

Healthcare Facilities - Policies

It is the policy of Carlow County Council and Laois County Council to:

HF. P1: Support the Health Service Executive (HSE) and other statutory, private, and voluntary operators in the provision of new and improved healthcare facilities and services at appropriate locations in Carlow-Graiguecullen and subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria.

HF. P2: Support the regional importance of St. Dymphna's Hospital/Carlow District Hospital in the provision of healthcare facilities and services.

HF. P3: Support and encourage the improvement and upgrade of existing

health centres, local clinics, and nursing homes in the joint urban area.

HF. P4: Encourage the provision of healthcare facilities and services that are well located in new and existing communities in terms of accessibility and convenience to walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure.

8.6 Inclusive Communities

In developing and improving community facilities and services in a manner that supports diverse and inclusive communities in Carlow-Graiguecullen, consideration must be given to the specific design and planning needs of key cohorts of the local population. This includes young people, older people, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and the Irish Traveller community. Census 2016 population data for the joint urban area revealed the following in regard to these groups:

- People aged 18 and under accounted for 26.4% of the population, which was marginally higher than the county figure for Carlow (26%), below that of Laois (28.6%), but higher than the state figure of 25%.
- 10.3% of the population were 65 and over, which was below the county figures for Carlow (12.9%) and Laois (11.3%).
- 15.4% of the population had a self-declared disability, almost two percentage points above the state figure of 13.5%.
- Non-Irish nationals accounted for 16% of the population, notably higher than the state figure of 11.4%.
- Irish Travellers constituted 1.4% of the population, higher than the county figures for Carlow (0.9%), Laois (0.9%) and the state figure of 0.7%.

More recently Carlow-Graiguecullen has witnessed the arrival of refugees from Ukraine who are fleeing the war and seeking protection in Ireland. Carlow and Laois County Councils and voluntary services have a key role to play in responding to this unprecedented crisis by supporting the integration of Ukrainians in local communities and ensuring they have access to key community facilities and services.

Inclusive Communities – Policies

It is the policy of Carlow County Council and Laois County Councils to:

- IC. P1:** Support the role and work of community agencies, groups, and organisations in the delivery of new and improved community facilities and services in Carlow-Graiguecullen for young people, older people, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, refugees and protected persons, and the Traveller Community.
- IC. P2:** Promote social inclusion and tackle disadvantage through equality of access to facilities and services for all residents in Carlow-Graiguecullen, including refugees and displaced persons to whom temporary protection applies under relevant European and National legislative provisions.
- IC. P3:** Consider the needs of young people, older people and people with disabilities and additional needs, in the provision of outdoor and indoor play and recreational facilities in Carlow-Graiguecullen and consult with relevant stakeholders as maybe appropriate regarding design considerations for local authority developments.

8.7 Sports, Recreation, and Play

Carlow-Graiguecullen is home to a wide range of purpose-built sports, recreation and play facilities. These facilities are provided through a mix of public, private, third level, school, community facilities, and voluntary organisations. The built and natural environment of the joint urban area, including its public roads and footpaths, open spaces, the River Barrow and Burren River, also supports an array of sports, recreation and play activities such as walking, jogging, cycling, boating, and fishing. The aforesaid are further supplemented by commercial operated leisure facilities, such as fitness centres, gyms, and children’s play centres.

Sports and recreation clubs in the joint urban area cater for GAA, soccer, rugby, rowing, tennis/squash/badminton, golf, swimming, karate, kickboxing, boxing, athletics, archery, and scouts. Some of the key sporting clubs and facilities include:

- Netwatch Cullen Park
- SETU Sports Campus
- Graiguecullen Swimming Pool
- Carlow Lawn Tennis Club
- St. Laurence O’Toole’s Athletics’ Club
- Carlow Town Hurling Club
- Carlow Rowing Club
- Eire Og, O’Hanrahans, and Graiguecullen GFCs
- Carlow Rugby Football Club
- Carlow Golf Club
- Carlow Sports and Social Club
- St. Patrick’s Boys, New Oak, and Hanover Harps FCs
- St. Fiac’s FC
- Carlow Youth Centre

Carlow and Laois Sports Partnerships are at the forefront of the development and promotion of

these sporting and recreational activities. They work with clubs, schools, and community groups to ensure that structures are in place to enable participation for all community members.

Some of the key recreational and play facilities serving the joint urban area, existing and planned, include the following:

Oak Park Forest Park

Includes mature woodland traversed by looped walking paths, a children’s playground, and an outdoor exercise area.



River Barrow and Barrow Track

Known locally as the Barrow Track, the former towpath along the River Barrow functions as an important amenity for residents of Carlow-Graiguecullen, and particularly for walking, cycling, and angling. The river itself is used for leisure boating and regularly by Carlow Rowing Club. Project Carlow 2040: A Vision for Regeneration, which is discussed in further detail in Chapter 10, recognises that the Barrack Track

is underutilised and has much greater potential to contribute to the recreation and amenity of the urban area.

Carlow Town Park

Is a centrally located open space located alongside the River Barrow in Graiguecullen and is linked to Carlow Town by a pedestrian bridge. The park includes a playground, landscaped open space with pedestrian paths, slipway, and small marina.

Burren River Linear Park

The Burren River Linear Park was opened in 2013 and is a key asset in the area, including a hard surfaced cycling and walking route along the east of the river. The linear park extends to c. 2km, with direct access to Carlow and to and from several residential areas along its length.

Hanover Park

Improvement works were completed in 2022 at Hanover Park with a focus on biodiversity and the provision of new pathways, seating, and lighting. A second phase of works are also planned, to include an accessible and inclusive playground, a bike pump track, and a mini-basketball court.

Skate Park

The concrete skate park was opened in 2020 on a site off the Burrin Road and features a bowl and street area for skateboarding and BMX bike users.



An Gairdín Beo

An Gairdín Beo is a 2-acre community garden located off the Old Dublin Road and on land leased from the Sisters of Mercy.



Delta Sensory Gardens

Delta Sensory Gardens are set on 2.5 acres of land at Strawhall Estate. The gardens are part of the Delta Centre which was established in 1990 as a centre for adults with disabilities. The Sensory Gardens were created as a therapeutic outlet for those attending the service and also as a means of providing funding for the centre.

River Barrow Water Activity Centre

Carlow County Council received approval from An Bord Pleanála for the development of a River Barrow Water Activity Centre on land beside the Carlow Town Park. The development of such a centre is part of an urban regeneration initiative

and long-term objective to provide a community and recreational asset that would enhance the user experience of the river. The centre will provide a base for many clubs active in the area, will include storage, changing and community facilities, and a central café facing the river.



Carlow County Council and Laois County Council will continue to liaise with sporting clubs and organisations, communities, and other relevant stakeholders, to ensure that where possible that needs are met in the provision of quality sports, recreational and play facilities. Developments which seek to cluster activities and integrate them with community facilities, including schools, will be encouraged to ensure a more sustainable and efficient use of shared arrangements such as access, parking, changing rooms etc.

Sports, Recreation, and Play – Policies

It is the policy of Carlow County Council and Laois County Council to:

- SR. P1:** Facilitate collaboration between Carlow and Laois Sports Partnerships, clubs, communities, and partnerships within and beyond sport, to increase sport and physical activity participation levels in Carlow-Graiguecullen.
- SR. P2:** Support local community and sports groups in developing and improving sports facilities at appropriate locations

in Carlow-Graiguecullen. To facilitate the creation of multi-user community hubs, new facilities should where possible, be clustered with other community facilities.

SR. P3: Promote the highest standards of universal access and design in all sports, recreational and play facilities and that proposals for new such facilities are accompanied by appropriate infrastructure including car and bicycle parking and changing rooms.

SR. P4: Ensure that sufficient and appropriate open space, recreation, and amenity facilities, both passive and active, are provided in Carlow-Graiguecullen to meet the changing needs of new and existing communities in the joint urban area.

SR. P5: Encourage and facilitate the provision of public open spaces in accordance with the standards in the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009), and any future revisions or updates to these Guidelines.

SR. P6: Prohibit the loss of existing public and private recreational zoned open space unless alternative recreational facilities are provided at a suitable location.

SR. P7: Support and encourage, where appropriate, the multi-use of all sports and recreational facilities, including sports hall, community halls and centres.

SR. P8: Support local communities in the provision of play facilities at appropriate locations in the joint urban area.

SR. P9: Facilitate appropriately scaled play areas within new and existing residential developments, and provide, in so far as is possible, play facilities adjacent to community and childcare facilities.

SR. P10: Protect and develop the connected networks of existing green spaces in the joint urban area to serve the growing needs of local communities.

SR. P11: Prohibit the development of areas in Carlow-Graiguecullen zoned open space/amenity or areas which have been indicated in a previous planning application as being open space.

SR. P12: Support local community groups in the development of open spaces, such as parks, community gardens, and allotments, subject to residential amenity and compliance with all planning and environmental considerations.

Sports, Recreation, and Play – Objective

It is an objective of Carlow County Council and Laois County Council to:

SR. O1: Deliver the River Barrow Water Activity Centre subject to the availability of financing and compliance with all planning and environmental criteria.

SR. O2: Deliver the redevelopment of Hanover Park, including the provision of accessible and inclusive playground, mountain bike pump track, and mini basketball court, subject to the availability of financing and compliance with all planning and environmental criteria.

8.8 Arts and Culture

The arts and culture are critical components of urban centres such as Carlow-Graiguecullen. They strengthen a sense and pride of place, promote community engagement and social interaction, and enable people to express their creativity. At the core of the arts and cultural offering are theatres, museums, galleries, libraries, and festivals and events.



Carlow-Graiguecullen is recognised as an important destination for arts and culture. There has been significant investment in the arts and cultural offering, including the development of the Cultural Quarter in an area around the VISUAL Centre for Contemporary Art and George Bernard Shaw Theatre, Carlow Courthouse, Carlow Cathedral, the Carlow County Museum, Carlow College, and Carlow Central Library. Through Failte Ireland Funding, Carlow County Council are carrying out further public realm improvement works to promote the VISUAL as a key destination / tourist hub and to encourage greater tourist and pedestrian activity in the area. The Cultural Quarter is also one of six intervention areas identified in Project Carlow 2040: A Vision for Regeneration (See Chapter 10). In addition to the Carlow County Museum located in the town centre, the County Carlow Military Museum occupies a 19th century former church building on the grounds of St. Dymphna's Hospital/Carlow District Hospital, and is

dedicated to the collection, preservation, and display of military memorabilia heritage.

In addition to the provision of traditional onsite and online information resources, the role of Carlow Central Library has expanded in more recent years as a key civic space catering for community engagement in arts and culture. The planned redevelopment of the library will see the construction of a double height 1105sq.m extension including basement, to accommodate additional library, cultural, civic, and learning space.

There are number of arts and cultural events held in Carlow every year including the Carlow Arts Festival. In 2023 Carlow hosted the International Pan Celtic Festival, which is a celebration of the cultural links between Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Brittany, Cornwall, and the Isle of Man.

Arts and Culture – Policies

It is the policy of Carlow County Council and Laois County Council to:

- AC. P1:** Encourage the provision of new or improved arts and cultural facilities in Carlow-Graiguecullen, and to recognise and support the role of arts and culture as a form of community infrastructure that can make a positive contribution to the public realm of the joint urban area.
- AC. P2:** Promote and support the role and continued expression of arts and culture in Carlow-Graiguecullen, and to facilitate and encourage the use of public spaces in the joint urban area for arts and cultural festivals and events.
- AC. P3:** Continue to promote and support the role of the VISUAL Centre for Contemporary Art and George Bernard

Shaw Theatre as a regional arts asset and venue of national significance, in supporting artists in their practice and providing opportunities for new works to be commissioned, and as a venue for residents and visitors to access.

AC. P4: Encourage and support the creation and display of works of art in public areas in Carlow-Graiguecullen, including appropriate locations within the streetscape, provided no unacceptable environmental, amenity, traffic or other adverse issues arise.

AC. P5: Promote and support the role, development and expansion of facilities, services and initiatives provided by Carlow Central Library, to cater for the diverse needs of local communities in Carlow-Graiguecullen and seek to develop links with the libraries at SETU Carlow and Carlow College, St. Patrick's.

Arts and Culture – Objectives

It is an objective of Carlow County Council and Laois County Council to:

AC. O1: Support the re-development and extension of Carlow Central Library, subject to the availability of resources and finance, and compliance with proper planning and environmental considerations.

8.9 Places of Worship and Burial Grounds

Carlow County Council and Laois County Council recognise the important role places of worship and burial grounds have for local communities in the joint urban area. There are places of worship for various denominations represented in

Carlow-Graiguecullen, including those which occupy established church buildings.

In the interests of social inclusion, Carlow and Laois County Councils will work with representative bodies of religious faiths to realise the needs of the varied communities in Carlow-Graiguecullen.

In this regard, this JULAP recognises that St. Mary's Cemetery is the principal burial grounds in the joint urban area and is nearing capacity.

Places of Worship and Burial Grounds – Policies

It is the policy of Carlow County Council and Laois County Council to:

PW. P1: Support and facilitate the development or extension of places of worship and burial grounds at appropriate locations in Carlow-Graiguecullen and in co-operation with local communities.