

SECTION 13: GENERAL LOCATION AND PATTERN OF DEVELOPMENT

13.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of zoning is to indicate to property owners and the general public the types of development which the Planning Authority considers most appropriate in each land use category. Zoning is designed to reduce conflicting uses within areas, to protect resources and, in association with phasing, to ensure that land suitable for development is used to the best advantage of the community as a whole.

Section 10(8) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) states that there shall be no presumption in law that any land zoned in a particular development plan (including a development plan that may have been varied) shall remain so zoned in any subsequent development plan.

The land use zoning matrix gives guidance as to the acceptability of a list of uses under each zoning objective.

13.2 ZONING PRINCIPLES

The NPF requires for a targeted approach to growth within significant infill/brownfield in settlements. This Plan has specifically provides linkage between zoning of land and the availability of infrastructure.

An infrastructure assessment has been carried in order to differentiate between zoned land that is available for development and zoned land that requires significant further investment in services for infrastructure for development to be realized which is required by the National Policy Objectives 72(a) – (c) of the National Planning Framework.

There are many other planning considerations relevant to land zoning beyond the provision of basic enabling infrastructure including overall planned levels of growth, location, suitability for the type of development envisaged, availability of and proximity to amenities, schools, shops or employment, accessibility to transport services etc.

Weighing up all of these factors, together with the availability of infrastructure, has assisted Laois County Council in determining an order of priority to deliver planned growth and development.

Sufficient lands have been zoned at appropriate locations throughout the county to facilitate the land use requirements for the period 2021-2027;

- A. Promote the redevelopment of brownfield sites within urban centres;
- B. Ensure that appropriate locations are sought for new developments.

The land use zoning matrix details the most common form of land uses in accordance with the county's zoning objectives. These are considered as to their acceptability under the following categories:

Table 13.1 Land Use Zoning Acceptability

Y= Will Normally be Acceptable	A use which will normally be acceptable is one which the Local Authority accepts in principle in the relevant zone. However, it is still subject to the normal planning process including policies and objectives outlined in the Plan.
O= Are Open for Consideration	Land uses that are listed as 'open for consideration' may be acceptable to the Planning Authority subject to detailed assessment against the principles of proper planning and sustainable development, and the relevant policies, objectives and standards set out in this Plan. Such uses may only be permitted where they do not materially conflict with other aspects of the County Development Plan.
N= Will Not Normally be Acceptable	Development which is classified as not normally being acceptable in a particular zone is one which will not be entertained by the Local Authority except in exceptional circumstances. This may be due to its perceived effect on existing and permitted uses, its incompatibility with the policies and objectives contained in this Plan or the fact that it may be inconsistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The expansion of established and approved uses not conforming to land use zoning objectives will be considered on their merits.

13.2.1 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS AND LIMITATIONS IN THE TYPES OF USES

There are a wide range of land use types identified under each of the Land Use Zoning Objectives. Proposals for development will need to demonstrate compliance with the various written provisions of the Plan, as relevant, including those relating to environmental protection and management. Environmental considerations, such as those related to elevated levels of flood risk or European site ecological designations, may limit the types of uses that may be possible at certain sites. Prospective applicants are encouraged to engage with the planning authority at the earliest opportunity to seek guidance as to the appropriateness of emerging proposals.

13.2.2 ESTABLISHED USE AND NON-CONFORMING USES

Throughout the county there are uses which do not conform to the zoning objective for the area. These are principally uses which were already in existence on the 1st of October 1964. Extensions to and improvement of premises accommodating these uses may be permitted where the proposed development would not seriously injure the amenities of the area or prejudice the proper planning and development of the area. In some cases, the Planning Authority may encourage relocation of permitted incompatible uses, for example by exchange of sites.

Existing uses which do not conform to the zoning objectives outlined will continue to operate. A reasonable expansion of non-conforming uses will generally be accepted notwithstanding the zoning objectives. The intensification of a non-conforming use will be considered with regard to zoning objectives as well as general Planning considerations.

13.2.3 TRANSITIONAL AREAS

While the zoning objectives indicate the different uses permitted in each zone, it is important to avoid abrupt transitions in scale and use at the boundary of adjoining land use zones. In these areas, it is necessary to avoid developments, which would be detrimental to the amenities of the more environmentally sensitive zone. For instance, in zones abutting residential areas particular attention must be paid to the uses, scale, density and appearance of development proposals and to landscaping and screening proposals in order to protect the amenities of these residential areas.

While the zoning objectives indicate the different uses permitted in principle in each zone, it is important to avoid abrupt transitions in scale and use in the boundary areas of adjoining land use zones, where such a transition would have an adverse effect on the amenities of more environmentally sensitive zones. For instance, in enterprise zones abutting residential development within predominantly mixed use zones, particular attention must be paid to the use, scale and density of development proposals in order to protect the amenities of residential property.

13.2.4 PHASED DEVELOPMENT

The Council considers it desirable that development takes place in an orderly manner but recognises it would be unduly restrictive to insist that development takes place in a rigidly phased manner.

13.2.5 ZONING

The Council recognises that land may not become available for development purposes in an orderly, phased manner and that therefore an allowance must be made over and above the acreage required to accommodate the anticipated development during the Plan period. The area zoned within the development boundary takes account of this fact and permits a more flexible approach to development. Developments in rural areas that would undermine appropriately zoned lands or policies in forgoing chapters will not be permitted.

Development cannot take place without the requisite standard of infrastructural services, and the presence of land use zoning objectives does not necessarily imply that infrastructural services or capacity exist but rather that a particular land use is appropriate to a specific location. Land use zoning objectives are indicated in Table 13.2. The uses considered appropriate to each zone is shown in the land use matrix in Table 13.3.

Table 13.2: Zoning Objectives and Purposes

LAND USE ZONING	OBJECTIVE	PURPOSE
Town/ Village Centre	<i>To protect and enhance the special physical and social character of the existing town centre and to provide for and improve retailing and commercial activities.</i>	<p>The purpose of this zoning is to enhance the vitality and viability of town and village centres through the development of under-utilised land and brownfield sites and by encouraging a mix of uses to make the town and village centres an attractive place to visit, shop and live in. The character of the town and village centres shall be protected and enhanced.</p> <p>The Council will encourage the full use of buildings and backlands; in particular, the full use of upper floors in buildings, preferably for residential use.</p>
Mixed Use	<i>To provide for a mixture of residential and compatible commercial uses.</i>	<p>To facilitate the use of land for a mix of uses, making provisions, where appropriate for “primary” uses i.e. residential and combined with other compatible uses e.g. offices as “secondary”. These secondary uses will be considered by the Local Authority, having regard to the particular character of the area. A diversity of uses for both day and evening is encouraged. These areas require high levels of accessibility, including pedestrian, cyclists and public transport (where feasible).</p> <p>Compatible uses within this zone include: residential, community buildings, civic buildings, entertainment, hotels, leisure and recreation, offices, professional/ specialist services, restaurants etc.</p>
Residential 1	<i>To protect and enhance the amenity of developed residential communities.</i>	<p>This zone is intended primarily for established housing development but may include a range of other uses particularly those that have the potential to improve the residential amenity of residential communities such as schools, crèches, small shops, doctor’s surgeries, playing fields etc.</p> <p>It is an objective on land zoned for Residential 1 to protect the established residential amenity and enhance with associated open space, community uses and where an acceptable standard of amenity can be maintained, a limited range of other uses that support the overall residential function of the area. Within this zoning category the improved quality of existing residential areas will be the Council’s priority.</p>
Residential 2	<i>To provide for new residential development, residential services and community facilities.</i>	<p>This zone is intended primarily for housing development but may include a range of other uses particularly those that have the potential to foster the development of new residential communities such as schools, crèches, small shops, doctor’s surgeries, playing fields etc.</p> <p>It is an objective on land zoned for residential 2 to promote development mainly for</p>

		<p>housing, associated open space, community uses and where an acceptable standard of amenity can be maintained, a limited range of other uses that support the overall residential function of the area.</p> <p>Within this zoning category the improved quality of residential areas and the servicing of orderly development will be the Council's priority. New housing and infill developments should be of sensitive design, which are complementary to their surroundings. No piecemeal development can take place unless it does not conflict with the possible future development of the reserved development areas of the town. Adequate undeveloped lands have been zoned in the Plan for residential use to meet the requirements for both public and private house building over the Plan period.</p>
Strategic Reserve	<i>To provide lands for future development in line with national and regional targets over the next Plan period 2021-2027</i>	Regarding lands included in the Strategic Reserve land bank, it is important to highlight that the inclusion of such lands will not in any way infer a prior commitment on the part of Laois County Council regarding their future zoning during the review of the subsequent development plan for the plan period 2027-2033. Such a decision will be considered within the framework of national and regional population targets applicable at that time and the proper planning and sustainable development of the County.
Community, Educational Institutional and	<i>To protect and provide for local neighbourhood, community, ecclesiastical, recreational and educational facilities.</i>	The purpose of this zoning is to protect and improve existing community, educational and institutional facilities and to safeguard their future provision. The land use will provide for local civic, religious, community, educational and other facilities ancillary to neighbourhood uses and services.
Tourism	<i>To provide for and improve tourist amenities in the county.</i>	The areas included in this zoning objective are intended to meet with the needs of the tourist in the county. Uses such as accommodation of all types and ancillary services such as food and beverage establishments will be encouraged within the land use zone.
Open Space and Amenity and	<i>To preserve, provide for and improve active and passive recreational public and private open space.</i>	The areas included in this zoning objective cover both private and public open space and are dispersed throughout urban centres of every size. The Council will not normally permit development that would result in a loss of open space.
Industrial and	<i>To provide for and improve</i>	The purpose of the zoning is to provide for heavy industry associated with

Warehousing	<i>industrial and warehousing development.</i>	<p>environmental emissions, including noise and odour and with intensive or hazardous processing and also provide for warehousing, light industry, technology related office development and general office development that exceed 400 square metres.</p> <p>Other uses, ancillary or similar to industry and warehousing will be considered on the merits of each planning application and may be acceptable in this zone. Where employment is a high generator of traffic, the location of new employment at appropriate scale, density, type and location will be encouraged to reduce the demand for travel. The layout of new employment sites shall have regard for alternative sustainable modes of transport. Proposed site layout should emphasize the necessary connections to the wider local and strategic public transport, walking and cycling networks. Residential or retail uses (including retail warehousing) will not be acceptable in this zone.</p> <p>Where any industrial/warehousing land adjoins other land uses, Laois County Council will require that a buffer zone is provided for and landscaped in accordance with the Development Management Standards of this Plan.</p>
General Business	<i>To provide for and improve commercial activities.</i>	<p>The purpose of this zone is to provide for commercial activities and acknowledge the existing/permitted retailing. Any specific development proposal must have due regard to the location of the site within the wider town context and be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.</p>
Enterprise and Employment	<i>To provide lands for enterprise and employment use, more specifically low input and emission manufacturing, campus-style offices, storage uses, wholesaling and distribution, commercial services with high space and parking requirements that may not be suitable for town centre locations.</i>	<p>The purpose of this zone is to provide for activities which will generate employment and encourage enterprise. Warehousing, commercial, enterprise and ancillary services should be provided in high quality landscaped campus style environments, incorporating a range of amenities.</p> <p>The uses in this zone are likely to generate a considerable amount of traffic by both employees and service traffic. Sites should therefore have good vehicular and public transport access. The implementation of Mobility Management Plans will be required for such developments as they provide important means of managing accessibility to these sites.</p>
Transport and Utilities	<i>To provide for the needs of all transport users and other</i>	<p>Car parks and commercial development associated with the provision of public transport services are considered appropriate in this zoning. This zoning also</p>

	<i>utility providers.</i>	provides for and preserves land in the ownership of the Council or other bodies charged with the provision of services such as electricity, telecommunications, water, wastewater etc. to the town.
Constrained Land Use Zoning Objective FOR Natura 2000 site	<i>to ensure that the Plan, and any lower tier plans or projects arising, will not impact on this type of designated site.</i>	In order to be granted permission, other than demonstrating compliance with other Plan provisions (including those relating to the protection of the environment), proposals for development will need to undergo Appropriate Assessment.

Table 13.3: Land Use Zoning Matrix

Land Use	Village / Town Centre	Mixed Use	Residential 1	Residential 2	Enterprise & Employment	General Business	Neighbourhood Centre	Com/Education/ institutional	Open Space	Tourism	Horticulture	Industrial	Transport and Utilities
Apartment	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	O	N	N	N	N	N
Car Park	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
Animal Housing	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	y	N	O
Café	Y	Y	O	O	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	O	O	N
Caravan Camping	N	N	O	O	N	N	N	O	N	Y	N	N	O
Cemetery	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	O
Cinema, Dancehall, Disco	O	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Community Hall	O	O	Y	Y	O	O	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N
Craft Industry	Y	N	O	O	Y	O	O	O	N	Y	Y	Y	N
Crèche/ Playschool	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	O	Y	O	N	Y	O	O	N

Cultural Uses/ Library	Y	Y	O	O	O	O	Y	O	N	Y	N	N	O
Dwelling	O	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	O	N	Y	N	N	N
Funeral Home	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N
Garages, Panel Beating, Car Repairs	N	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N
Garden Centre	O	N	N	N	O	O	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N
Guest House/Hostel/Hotel	Y	Y	O	O	O	O	N	O	N	Y	N	N	N
Halting Site	N	N	O	O	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N
Health Centre	Y	Y	O	O	O	O	Y	O	N	N	N	N	N
Heavy Commercial Vehicle Parks	N	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
Hot Food Takeaway	O	O	N	N	N	N	O	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Industry	N	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
Industry (Light)	O	N	N	N	Y	O	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
Medical and Related Consultants	Y	Y	O	O	O	O	O	O	N	N	N	N	N
Motor Sales	O	N	N	N	Y	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Nursing Home/ Sheltered Housing	O	Y	O	O	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	O	N
Offices < 100 sq m	Y	Y	O	O	Y	Y	O	O	N	N	Y	Y	N
Offices > 100 sq m	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	O	O	N	N	N	O	N

Park Playground	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	Y	Y	Y	O	O	N
Petrol Station	Y	Y	N	N	O	Y	N	N	N	N	N	O	N
Place of Worship	Y	O	O	O	N	N	O	Y	N	O	N	N	N
Playing Fields	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	O	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Pub	Y	O	N	N	N	O	O	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Recreational Building (Commercial)	O	Y	O	O	O	O	O	O	N	Y	N	N	N
Recreational Building (Community)	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	O	Y	Y	O	Y	O	N	O
Restaurant	Y	Y	O	O	O	O	Y	O	N	O	O	O	N
Retail Warehouse	Y	O	N	N	O	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
School/Educational Facilities	Y	O	O	O	N	N	O	O	N	N	O	N	N
Scrap Yard	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	O	N
Retail < 100sqm (Comparison)	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	O	O	N	N
Retail > 100sqm (Comparison)	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
Retail < 100 sq m (Convenience)	Y	Y	O	O	O	Y	Y	N	N	O	O	N	N
Retail > 100 sq m	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N

(Convenience)													
Sport/Leisure Complex	Y	Y	O	O	Y	O	O	O	N	Y	O	N	N
Utility structures/ Infrastructure (roads / car parking)	Y	Y	O	O	Y	O	O	O	O	O	Y	Y	Y
Warehouse (Wholesale)	N	N	N	N	Y	O	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
Workshops	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N

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13.2.6 DENSITY

The Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, DEHLG (2009) outline sustainable approaches to the development of urban areas. The guidelines recognise that land is a scarce resource that needs to be used efficiently. These guidelines set out a range of appropriate residential densities for different contexts based on site factors and the level of access to services and facilities.

Densities should take account of the location of a site, the proposed mix of dwelling types and the availability of public transport services. As a general principle, higher densities should be located within walking distance of town and district centres and high capacity public transport facilities.

Table 13.4: Residential Density¹

Settlement	Location for New Residential Development	Density – Units per Hectare
Key Town	Town Centre/Infill/Brownfield	Site Specific
	Institutional Lands	35
	Outer Suburban/Greenfield	35
Self Sustaining Towns/Self Sustaining Growth Towns	Town Centre/Infill/Brownfield	Site Specific
	Institutional Lands	30
	Outer Suburban/Greenfield	30
Towns	Town Centre/Infill/Brownfield	Site Specific
	Edge of Centre/Greenfield	25
Small Towns and Villages	Town/Village Centre/Infill/Brownfield	Site Specific
	Edge of Centre/Greenfield	15
Rural Settlements	Infill/Brownfield/Edge of Centre	The overall expansion of larger rural settlements should proceed on the basis of a number of well-integrated sites within and around the village core. Individual housing schemes will generally not be larger than about 10-12 units

13.3 DESIGN

¹ Source: Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, DEHLG (2009)

Urban and rural design is concerned with enhancing the character of existing places and creating new places. When places are designed well, they are comfortable places to spend time, feel safe, are well-organised, are interesting to the eye and fit into their setting. With the drive at national level towards higher densities in urban areas, building design is increasingly challenging and important. With our landscapes experiencing significant change, it is as important as ever, that buildings in the countryside do not erode the essential character of our landscapes, but rather sit comfortably and are appropriate for a rural setting.

In considering applications for new residential housing estates, any extensions to town or village centres, or new mixed use developments the proposals will be examined against the following robust principles, which are key to the making of good quality places.

In its decision-making the Council will also have regard to the detailed design guidance contained in the DoEHLG's Urban Design Manual (2009) and any iteration thereafter. The character of a town or village as experienced by residents or visitors depends in large part upon the public realm. Streets constitute the largest component of the public realm; the perception of them is a major element in the overall experience of a place. Streets that are well-designed and maintained in a good state of repair, that provide for comfortable pedestrian traffic, create a positive ambience and contribute to a sense of civic pride. An attractive village or town centre will draw people in and once there encourage people to spend time, reinforcing its vitality and vibrancy.

Concerns about personal security can deter people from walking, especially when dark. Issues that can contribute to an individual's fear of crime include: poor lighting, narrow laneways, blind corners, vacancy or dereliction of buildings, absence of passive surveillance of a path, graffiti, and dense vegetation adjacent to paths. Pedestrians will generally take the shortest most convenient route regardless of the location of footpaths.

13.3.1 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT LAYOUT CONSIDERATIONS

Design considerations for new residential development should include the following:

13.3.1.1 Layout and Permeability

- All new development should provide a fully permeable and recognisable interconnecting network of streets. Permeability within town and village centre must be protected and where possible improved
- Recognisable routes which provide a coherent and easily read pattern of streets, lanes, squares, urban rooms and green spaces.
- Intersections and landmark buildings which are provided to help people find their way around and aid orientation.
- Development should be designed for a diverse community which will encourage sustainable living and reinforce neighbourhood values.
- Residential layouts should, where appropriate, utilise the perimeter block principle as a departure from cul-de-sac type layouts

13.3.1.2 Pedestrians and Cyclists

- Streets should be designed and well lit to encourage pedestrian activity. Priority should be given to pedestrians and cyclists by providing routes that are direct, safe and secure.

- Where provided, cycle routes should be safe, direct, coherent, attractive and comfortable.
- Pedestrian paths should be routed to maximise surveillance from surrounding buildings and well lit.

13.3.1.3 Buildings

- All housing should at a minimum be dual aspect and designed so that greatest advantage is taken of southwest orientation recent cul-de-sac type layouts. Buildings should be orientated to maximise privacy

13.3.1.4 Public Realm

- Attractive outdoor spaces should provide a quality public realm which is essential to providing each area with its own distinctiveness.
- Passive supervision of the public realm, which is the most effective means of preventing anti-social behaviour. Medium or high-level dense vegetation should not be planted immediately adjacent to paths unless secured by fencing
- Where developments face onto river / canals, the following design criteria should be taken into account:
 - Any proposals to increase the extent of public access;
 - The nature of any recreational use proposed; and
 - Any conflict or compliance with proposals for walking or cycling routes.

13.3.2 STREETScape

Streetscape describes the space between buildings on either side of a street, and the elements contained within, such as paving materials, road surfaces, street furniture, lighting, signage and landscape treatment. The following principles are considered important to the design and maintenance of streetscapes:

13.3.2.1 Function

- Minimise clutter, remove redundant elements.
- Commercial use of footpath for tables and chairs relating to restaurants or bars can contribute to the vibrancy of a town centre or village and are appropriate where footpaths are sufficiently wide.

13.3.2.2 Quality

- Better quality materials and components will look better and last longer, returning better value when a whole life cycle approach is considered.
- The use of durable materials and a high standard of workmanship are encouraged.

13.3.2.3 Consistency

- Materials in the public realm and elements of street furniture should be consistent where possible to produce a coherent streetscape.
- Different operators that shape the public realm should coordinate as much as possible.

13.3.2.4 Sensitive to Existing Character

- The visual, spatial and historical characteristics of a street should inform the carrying out of any environmental improvements.

- Historic elements of the streetscape such as post boxes, drinking troughs and memorials are familiar landmarks within a local area and sympathetic treatment of these elements and their settings is important.
- Formal arrangement and styling of street furniture are suited to formal streets; a more informal approach should be taken to organic or vernacular areas.
- A contemporary or historicist approach to the design of public lighting schemes, surface treatments, street furniture or signage can be equally valid, depending on the local context.
- Dark, neutral or muted colour schemes for materials work best and simple, timeless designs are often the most appropriate.
- Soft landscaping can contribute shade, softness and character to the built environment.

13.3.2.5 Safety and Balancing of Interests

- It is important to create a safe environment where walking and cycling represent viable alternatives to private vehicle use. In towns and villages, there is a balance to be struck between the allocation of space to private car users to allow for fast transit and high throughput and the allocation of space for wider footpaths, footpaths on either side of the street and the provision of dedicated cycle paths.

13.3.5.6 Accessible to Everyone

- Footpath surfaces should be firm, even and slip-resistant and mobility measures such as tactile paving and dished kerbs should be provided in accord with relevant standards and best practice guidelines.
- The provision of public seating areas in town centres can be useful to elderly people as well as other users.
- Pedestrian networks should be continuous.

13.3.5.7 Legibility

- Signage, lighting, recognisable routes and landmarks all contribute to a sense of place and help users orientate themselves and navigate through an area.

13.3.2 DESIGN AND GREENFIELD URBAN DEVELOPMENT

The following guidance relates to lightly trafficked new streets serving greenfield development for example a new residential estate or a new enterprise park. Although the principles may be applied to other road types where appropriate.

- **Buildings first:** Generally, layouts of buildings and spaces should be considered first, and not be dictated by carriageway alignment.
- **Hierarchical Network of Streets:** Principal arterial routes that serve the new development should be wide and provide for designated vehicular, pedestrian and cycle travel; A reduction in street width, the use of footpaths on both sides of the street and the sharing of streets by pedestrian and car traffic is appropriate for collector/distributor streets which serve multiple buildings; the use of home zones where streets or small open spaces are shared by pedestrians, cyclists and cars are suitable for mews-style developments or where buildings are sited around small public spaces and will also be considered on a pilot basis. The street width should relate to building heights and the characteristics of the street.

- **Enclosure of Streets:** The extent of the street should be clearly defined and enclosed whether by a building line, where site coverage by buildings is high or by landscaping where site coverage by buildings is low.
- **Permeability:** Pedestrians and cyclists should have more than one route to get to a destination. Block sizes, open spaces and circulation networks that permit convenient, safe and comfortable linkages are desirable with new routes connecting to existing networks and movement patterns.
- **Traffic Calming:** The use of curving streets and junctions with turning radii that require low speeds are preferable over hard traffic calming infrastructure such as speed bumps. Changes in road surface materials can alert drivers to areas where they do not have right of way.
- **Streets as Public Spaces:** Streets make up a large proportion of our public realm, so it is important they are designed as spaces for people as well as spaces for movement. Landscaping, street furniture, finishing materials can contribute interest or character to a street making it a pleasant public space to use and move through

Urban Design Policy Objectives	
UD 1	Deliver a high-quality built environment throughout Laois, by consolidating the urban structure, and reinforcing and enhancing the existing character of Laois' towns and villages and focusing on place-making in new urban or suburban developments
UD 2	Ensure new structures are designed with special attention to the specific characteristics or features of the development site, its setting and the surrounding area, be it urban or rural;
UD 3	Encourage an improvement of the environmental quality of the existing streetscape in urban and suburban areas and ensure the delivery of streetscapes that are well-considered and designed, having regard to the principal functions of the urban or suburban street: place, movement, access, room for parking, drainage, conveyance of utilities and street-lighting
UD 4	Create and maintain a network of high-quality public open spaces in urban and suburban areas to foster social inclusion, community cohesion, good health and quality of life, as well to provide meeting places, play areas, sporting facilities, walking and cycling routes and wildlife habitats
UD 5	The Council will encourage a reduced density of housing on transition and edge of town/village lands to accommodate a greater range and mix of tenure of residential units, including smaller single dwelling units for occupants wishing to downsize and also larger site areas for executive style dwelling units.

13.3.3 DESIGN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Laois County Council has produced Rural Housing Guidance (Appendix 7) for all those who are thinking of building a house in the countryside. It has been prepared to show the importance of good siting and sensitive design for one-off houses in the rural areas of County Laois. The aim of the Guidance is:

- To describe the site planning and design issues that need to be addressed; and

- To clearly set out what is acceptable and what is **not** acceptable in terms of one-off houses in County Laois.

Laois County Council recognises the need to improve the quality of house design in the countryside and, in particular, that new houses are better related to their surroundings. The Guidance does this by identifying crucial site planning and design principles that need to be taken into account when considering building a new house.

This does not mean that all one-off houses should look the same. Instead the Council promotes a creative interpretation of the key principles so that individual and contemporary house designs are achieved.

The Council will require all planning applications for one-off houses to demonstrate how these guidelines have been taken into account. Proposals which fully reflect the guidelines are likely to reduce requests for further information, while those that do not are unlikely to be successful.

<i>Rural Design Policy Objectives</i>	
RD 1	Encourage the creation of attractive, usable, durable and adaptable structures, spaces and places in order to foster the development of sustainable and cohesive communities
RD 2	Encourage successful coordination of proportions, material, colour and detail. Proposed new buildings should be fit-for-purpose and use internal and external space efficiently. Particular attention will be given to form, emphasis, building lines, eaves and rooflines as these elements have a significant effect on the impression of a building.

13.3.4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AND THE PLANNING PROCESS

Certain developments may require the submission of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in accordance with the provision of Schedule 5 and 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

The assessment must include an examination, analysis and evaluation and it must identify, describe and assess in an appropriate manner, in light of each individual case and in accordance with Articles 4 to 11 of the EIA Directive, the direct and indirect effects of a proposed development on the following:

- a) Population
- b) Biodiversity, with particular attention to protected species and habitats
- c) Land, soil, water, air and climate
- d) Material assets, cultural heritage and the landscape
- e) Interaction between the above factors

The Planning Authority will have regard to the Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment August, (DHPLG, 2018) and any updated version of these Guidelines when assessing relevant cases

13.4 PRE PLANNING CONSULTATIONS

The Council in accordance with Section 247 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) provides an opportunity for applicants to engage in discussions with the Planning Authority, prior to making a planning application. The Main purpose of pre planning discussions is to advise applicants of the policy provisions within the County Development Plan and/ or Local Area Plans as they relate.

Applicants are encouraged to avail of this service, particularly for large scale developments such as residential estates, quarries and wind farms, to ensure planning applications are processed in a timely manner. It should, however, be noted that such discussions will not prejudice any subsequent decision made by Laois County Council.

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