

Chapter 1 Introduction

“Promote the creation of an attractive county to live, work, visit and enable businesses to flourish in an environment that offers a range of housing options, robust and diverse range of employment opportunities, access to quality infrastructure and community facilities with a high quality sustainable environment for all”.

1.1 Introduction

The Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 sets out a range of proposed policy objectives with supporting narrative for development up to 2028. In accordance with national policy, the plan is seeking to develop in a sustainable and environmentally sensitive manner. It promotes the climate change agenda and it sets out the housing and economic priorities for the relevant period.

In 2016 the CSO recorded a population of almost 180,000 persons in County Galway. Geographically Galway is the second largest county in Ireland. The county borders Mayo to the north, Clare to the south and Roscommon and Offaly to the east and Tipperary to the south-east. Other natural boundaries include Galway Bay to the west along with Shannon and Lough Derg to the east and south east respectively. The county is characterised by a diverse and natural landscape that includes features such as the mountainous Conamara region west of the River Corrib, fertile agricultural lands to the east and a more varied limestone area to the south. These topographical attributes combine to give Galway its outstanding and widely varied landscape setting.

There is a considerable network of settlements of varying scales and the largest Gaeltacht population in Ireland, which accounts for approximately 49.7% of the Gaeltacht population nationally as recorded by the CSO in 2016.

The county now forms part of the North-West Region along with the seven counties of Mayo, Roscommon, Leitrim, Sligo, Donegal, Monaghan, Cavan and Galway City. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) identifies a new metropolitan area which includes the entirety of Galway City and the settlements of Baile Chláir, Bearna and Oranmore. Ballinasloe and Tuam are designated as Key Towns and Athenry is identified as an area with Strategic Potential. The historic status of Ballinasloe as the County Town is acknowledged.

Galway is now served with a motorway network to the east of the county (M6 and M17/M18) and rail service from Galway to Dublin/Limerick provide a sustainable means of travel.

Figure 1 overleaf illustrates key demographic data relating to the 2016 census. It includes reference to the overall population, where people live, work and household formation.

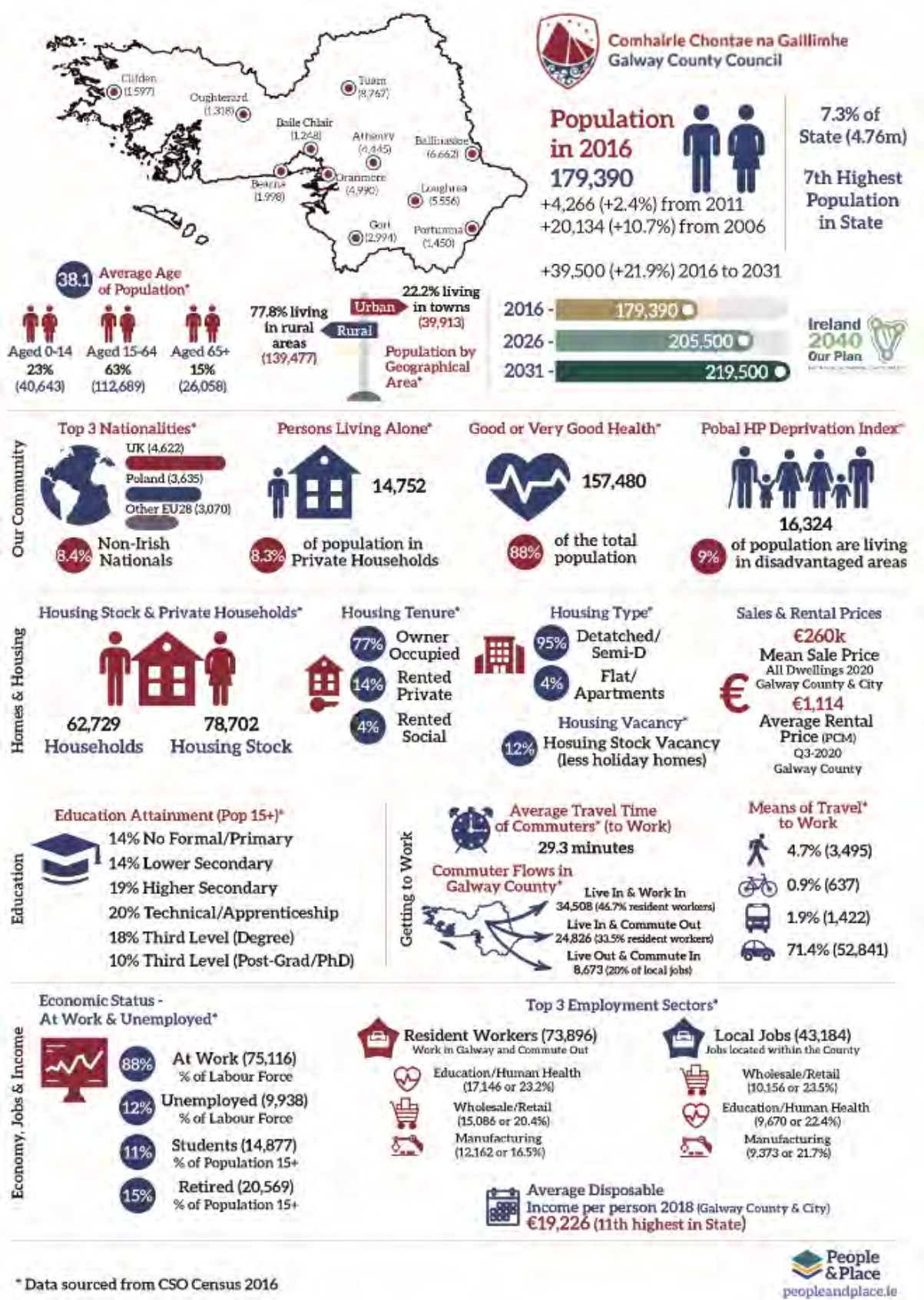


Figure 1: County Galway Overview

1.2 Legislative Context

The Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). Since the adoption of the existing Galway County Development Plan 2015 – 2021, there has been a significant amount of planning related changes in Ireland. New National and Regional policy has been adopted since 2018 which sets out a clear growth agenda in accordance with sustainable development over the coming years. The overarching national framework now in place is the National Planning Framework with three Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies providing for the implementation and delivery of the NPF. The county now forms part of the North West Region and the RSES now includes a Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan. This draft Plan has considered this policy framework and it has been set out in accordance therewith.

1.2.1 Mandatory Objectives

Section 10(2) of the Act lists the mandatory objectives which have, where relevant, been incorporated in the Plan. These include:

- Zoning of land for particular purposes;
- Provision, or facilitation of the provision, of infrastructure including transport; energy and communication facilities, water supplies, wastewater services, waste recovery and disposal facilities and any ancillary facilities or services;
- Conservation and protection of the environment including in particular the archaeological and natural heritage and the conservation and protection of European sites; Management of features of the landscape such as traditional field boundaries, important for the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network;
- Promotion of compliance with environmental standards and objectives established for bodies of surface waters and groundwater;
- Integration of the planning and sustainable development of the area with the social, community and cultural requirements of the area and its population;
- Preservation of the character of the landscape, including the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest
- Protection of structures, or parts of structures, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest,
- Preservation of the character of architectural conservation areas;
- Development and renewal of areas, identified having regard to the core strategy, that are in need of regeneration in order to prevent adverse effects on existing amenities in such areas in particular as a result of the ruinous or neglected condition of any land, urban blight or decay, anti-social behaviour or a shortage of habitable houses or of land suitable for residential use or a mixture of residential use or other uses;
- Provision of accommodation for travellers and the use of particular areas for that purpose;

- Preservation, improvement and extension of amenities and recreational amenities;
- Control of establishments under the provisions of the Major Accidents Directive;
- Provision, or facilitation of the provision, of services for the community, including, in particular, schools, crèches and other education and childcare facilities;
- Protection of the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht where there is a Gaeltacht in the area of the Plan;
- Promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas including the promotion of measures to reduce energy demand, reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and address the necessity of adaptation to climate change in particular having regard to the location, layout and design of new development;
- Preservation of public rights of way which give access to seashore, mountain, lakeshore, riverbank or other places of natural beauty or recreational utility; and
- Provide a framework for the identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes.

1.2.2 National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) replaces the National Spatial Strategy (NSS). The NPF outlines the national growth strategy for Ireland up to 2040 when it forecasts Ireland having a population of an extra 1 million people. The Framework now has statutory requirements and has been developed around ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) along with supporting text and a suite of National Policy Objectives (NPOs). The draft plan is required to comply with the NSOs and NPOs. The NPF encourages compact growth of towns and villages, good connectivity and a strong economy with the climate change responsibilities at its core. The NPF plays a key role in progressive climate change mitigation through good spatial planning practices and the transition to a low carbon climate resilient society.

The National Development Plan (NDP) is linked to the NPF. Combined, both plans form Project Ireland 2040. The NDP complements the NPF with a greater emphasis on infrastructure investment and service provision across Ireland. It includes an infrastructure and service investment plan in delivering its projects.



Figure 2: National Strategic Outcomes

1.2.3 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)

The main purpose of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) is to support the implementation of the NPF and wider Project Ireland 2040 aspirations. The RSES also supports the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing a detailed strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the North-West Region. As Galway forms part of the North-West Region, the plan must comply with the provisions of the RSES. The RSES provides a framework for the development of the region up to 2032. It focuses on the delivery of housing, job creation, infrastructure, community facilities and ensuring that the region remains attractive for investment.

The Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan is contained within the RSES. The MASP area is identified to grow considerably in population within the plan period. This growth must be in a planned and co-ordinated manner where residential and employment areas are adequately serviced with infrastructure and services such as access to public transport and a good range of community facilities.

1.2.4 Ministerial Guidelines

The Draft Plan has been prepared in full consideration and in accordance with Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended). A Statement of Compliance has also been carried out in this regard. In addition, a series of environmental assessments have also been carried out which are referenced below.

1.2.5 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The SEA provision ensures involved the systematic evaluation of the potential environmental impacts of implementing a plan or programme, prior to the adoption decision being taken. This step is required under the EU SEA Directive which was ratified by Ireland under the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (SI No. 436 of 2004) as amended.

The SEA process has been integral to the preparation of this Draft County Development Plan and the associated SEA Environmental Report is appended thereto.

1.2.6 Appropriate Assessment (AA)

The provision of AA provides for the protection of both habitats and species of European importance. This has been achieved through the establishment of an EU network of sites that are known as the Natura 2000 Network of European sites. The AA assessment focuses on the implications of a plan or project on European sites. The findings of the AA are set out within the AA Natura Impact Report that is appended to this draft plan. It sets out the likely consequences of the draft plan on the integrity of European Sites.

All of the recommendations of the AA have been integrated into the draft plan and the emerging conclusion suggests that the plan will not affect the integrity of the European sites, alone or in combinations with other plans or projects.

1.2.7 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment involves an assessment of flood risk and it includes a range of maps that show boundaries for indicative flood risk zones. The process considers a range of factors in doing this exercise which includes local knowledge, site walkovers and flood risk indicators. SFRA is required under The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (Department of Environment and Office of Public Works, 2009) and associated Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government Circular PL2/2014. The SFRA recommendations appended have been integrated into the plan.

1.2.8 Office of Planning Regulator (OPR)

The role of the Office of Planning Regulator (OPR) is to oversee and enhance the planning system in Ireland. It ensures the implementation of national, regional and local planning policy. It also monitors the performance of the Planning Authority and An Bord Pleanála. The OPR also independently evaluates and assesses development plans, regional strategies and variations accordingly. This ensures that the plan or strategy provides for proper planning and sustainable development. The OPR has powers to serve Notice on the Minister with a recommendation for a Ministerial Direction to be issued. However, it remains the role of the Minister to issue a Direction to require the Planning Authority to address any issue.

1.3 Structure of the Plan

There are two Volumes to the County Development Plan, and a number of documents that are appended to the Draft Plan which include:

- Volume 1 Written Statement
- Volume 2 Settlement Strategy
- Appendix 1 Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy

- Appendix 2 Housing Strategy and Housing Need Demand Assessment
- Appendix 3 Galway County Transport & Planning Strategy
- Appendix 4 Landscape Character Assessment
- Appendix 5 Rural Housing Design Guidelines
- Appendix 6 Record of Protected Structures
- Appendix 7 Architectural Conservation Areas
- Appendix 8 Geological Heritage of Ireland
- Appendix 9 Environmental Reports

The Written Statement comprises 15 chapters listed below. Chapters 1 – 14 include a vision, strategic aims and policy objectives. Chapter 15 sets out the Development Management Standards.

Chapter Heading	Chapter Summary
<i>Introduction</i>	This chapter provides an overview of the county and the statutory process of making the development plan. The key legislative and guidance requirements to which the plan must adhere have also been addressed.
<i>Core Strategy, Settlement Hierarchy and Housing Strategy</i>	The Core Strategy set the growth agenda in the county over the plan period. This is informed by the projected level of growth set out in the NPF and RSES. The Settlement Hierarchy has outlined the role and function of the identified settlements in accordance with and close alignment to the RSES. The Housing Strategy is informed by this process with the focus on the provision of housing, household size and housing types that will meet the forecasted growth.
<i>Placemaking, Regeneration and Urban Living</i>	This chapter outlines the process of placemaking and how the towns and villages can achieve this and deliver attractive places for people to live. Regeneration focuses on the various legislative requirements that must be carried out while urban living supports the development of sustainable communities that facilitates the changing circumstances in which people live.
<i>Rural Living and Development</i>	This chapter sets out the development priorities for the rural area including villages and the open countryside. There is also a focus on rural development, which includes agriculture, agri-development and farm diversification.
<i>Economic, Enterprise and Retail</i>	The focus of this chapter is on the creation of jobs across the county. It details the jobs profile of the county and sets out how the plan can support continued job prosperity and enterprise development. The retail section of the chapter sets the development priorities for the main shopping streets in the town and villages.

	The chapter also touches on the changing work habits and the needs of the population in terms of its integration with towns and villages.
<i>Transport and Movement</i>	In accordance with the national agenda this chapter places particular emphasis on sustainable modes of transport where possible while recognising that private transport will remain dominant in the more remote parts of the county. The Galway County Transport Planning Study is appended to the plan and it sets out the transport and movement priorities for the county during the plan period.
<i>Infrastructure, Utilities and Environmental Protection</i>	The chapter recognises the importance of achieving sustainable growth. The role of key infrastructure in delivering this growth is recognised. It includes the provision of water supply and wastewater treatment as well as the importance of broadband infrastructure to assist modern living. The importance of environmental protection is also recognised and how planning must ensure that a high standard of environmental quality and amenity is maintained.
<i>Tourism and Landscape</i>	This chapter identifies the main tourism priorities that are pertinent to the county. The aims and supporting narrative of the chapter outlined the continued development of the tourism industry while the supporting policy objectives equip prospective applicants in contributing to the tourism industry aspirations. The significance of the landscape and its varying character is recognised in this chapter. It is also recognised that the landscape is a living and changing feature in the county where a balance must be struck between change and preservation.
<i>Marine and Coastal Management</i>	This chapter provides guidance on the range of various opportunities that present themselves in the marine sector such as food production and off shore renewable energy generation. The impact of coastal flooding and coastal erosion has also been referenced.
<i>Natural Heritage, Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure</i>	The importance of natural heritage and biodiversity in the county is recognised and a range of appropriate policy objectives have been formulated to ensure the county continues to prosper while simultaneously acknowledging the importance of these assets. The provision of green infrastructure (GI) networks across the county and adjoining wider regional and national GI routes is recognised as a key sustainable amenity for use by inhabitants and visitors in the county alike.

<i>Community Development and Social Infrastructure</i>	This chapter sets out the development priorities in delivering sustainable, inclusive communities with a broad range of community facilities and social infrastructure such as access to social, educational and other amenities that cater for a range of users.
<i>Architecture, Archaeology and Culture</i>	This chapter promotes the conservation of the architectural, archaeological and cultural heritage of the key asset to the county while facilitating sustainable development at appropriate locations across the county.
<i>Gaeltacht and Islands</i>	In this chapter the importance and preservation of the Gaeltacht, Irish Language, traditions and customs of the Gaeltacht and island communities are identified as priorities in the plan. The chapter sets out an approach for the continued development and support of the Gaeltacht and Island communities throughout the plan period.
<i>Climate Change, Energy and Renewable Resource</i>	This chapter accords with the findings set out in the Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy that is appended to this plan. The various sources of energy and the supporting infrastructure and conditions requires to secure their delivery is also referenced and supported as necessary. The national climate change responsibilities as per the Climate Action Plan are adhered to in this chapter.
<i>Development Management Standards</i>	This chapter provides detailed guidance which assist in meeting the aspirations of requirements of the policy objectives contained within the plan. It sets out the development parameters for prospective applicants to consider, that must be adhered to throughout the plan period.

1.4 Climate Action

The county is fortunate to have favourable wind conditions to generate renewable energy which contribute to our carbon reduction targets. In accordance with the Climate Action Plan a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy has been adopted by the Council which further demonstrates commitment to the climate action agenda. Climate action responsibilities have been outlined for every chapter in the plan. Therefore, the responsibilities of climate action must be adhered to in a multi-faceted manner by all sectors and the development plan policy objectives have been thoroughly climate proofed to secure sufficient contribution to the climate action agenda.

1.5 UN Sustainable Goals

In 2015 the UN General Assembly formulated and set 17 no. Sustainable Development Goals. These form the basis of a blueprint which aims to achieve better and more sustainable development for all. The County Development Plan will strive to contribute, as practicable, towards achievement of the 17

Sustainable Development Goals¹ of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which came into force in 2016. The subsequent NPF and RSES has been prepared and adopted with close alignment to the SDGs where for example the NPF places sustainability at the heart of long-term planning and the NPF seeks to ensure that the decisions we take today meet our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The policy objectives contained within the plan have been formulated to concur with the delivery of the SDGs.



Figure 3: Sustainable Development Goals

1.6 Ministerial Statement

In accordance with the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), this statement is provided to confirm the following:

- How the planning authority has implemented the policies and objectives of the Minister as set out in the guidelines when considering their application to the area or part of the area of the Development Plan, or
- If applicable, that the planning authority has formed the opinion, that it is not possible, because of the nature and characteristics of the area or part of the area of the development plan, to implement certain policies and objectives of the Minister contained in the guidelines when considering the application of those policies in the area or part of the area of the development plan and shall give reasons for the forming of the opinion and why policies and objectives of the Minister have not been so implemented.

¹ Including:

- Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

The following table demonstrates how the Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 implements applicable Ministerial Planning Guidelines, issued under Section 28 of the Act.

Section 28 Guidelines	Galway County Development Plan 2022 - 2028
Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities (2009)	The preparation of the Plan has had regard to this guidance document. A Natura Impact Report was prepared and accompanies the Plan.
Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Guidelines (2004)	The preparation of the Plan has had regard to these Guidelines. Strategic Environmental Assessment was initiated with the preparation of an SEA Environmental Report accompanying this plan.
Architectural Heritage Protection – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2004), as updated (2011)	Chapter 12 <i>Architecture, Archaeology and Culture</i> has been prepared in accordance with the Guidelines.
Implementing Regional Planning Guidelines – Best Practice Guidance (2010)	Chapter 2 <i>Core Strategy, Settlement Hierarchy, and Housing Strategy</i> sets out the policy objectives to ensure that the Core Strategy requirements of the Plan are consistent with national and regional policy (National Planning Framework 2018, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the North Western Region) as required by the 2010 Guidance document (which refers to the former national and regional strategy).
Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001) as updated by Circular letter PL3/2016 (2016)	Chapter 11 <i>Community Development and Social Infrastructure</i> has addressed the provision of community facilities across the county in accordance with the Guidelines and Circular PL3/2016.
Development Management Guidelines (2007)	Chapter 15 <i>Development Management Standards</i> has been prepared having considered the Development Management Guidelines.
Development Plan – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2007)	The Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities have informed the preparation of this Development Plan.
Guidance Note on Core Strategies (2010)	Chapter 2 <i>Core Strategy, Settlement Hierarchy and Housing Strategy</i> has been carried out in accordance with these guidelines.
Quarries and Ancillary Activities (2004)	The role and impact of quarries has been considered and incorporated into the development plan in accordance with the Guidelines.

Provision of Schools and the Planning System (2008)	Chapter 11 <i>Community Development and Social Infrastructure</i>
Retail Planning Guidelines (2012)	Chapter 5 <i>Economic, Enterprise and Retail</i> refers to the Guidelines and contains the policy objectives pertaining to retail.
Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines (2005)	Chapter 4 <i>Rural Living and Development</i> sets out the rural housing policy objectives for the county. These policy objectives incorporate the recommendations of the Guidelines.
Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009)	These Guidelines have been considered in the context of Chapter 15 <i>Development Management Standards</i> and also Chapters 3 <i>Placemaking, Regeneration and Urban Living</i> and 4 <i>Rural Living and Development</i> to encourage the provision of high quality design and density in the settlement areas of the county in accordance with the Guidelines.
The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)	An SFRA has been carried out for the county having regard to the Guidelines. The SFRA document accompanies the plan and identified areas at risk of flooding. Policy objectives in relation to flood risk have also been included in the plan.
Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines (2012)	Chapter 6 <i>Transport and Movement</i> contains a specific policy objective that alleviates national primary and secondary roads, outside of urban speed limits in accordance with these Guidelines.
Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2013) as updated in 2019	Chapters 6 <i>Transport and Movement</i> and Chapter 15 <i>Development Management Standards</i> address these Guidelines set out provision of practical design measures to encourage more sustainable travel patterns in urban areas and best practice in the design of street networks and individual streets.
Urban Development and Building Heights – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018)	Chapter 3 <i>Placemaking, Regeneration and Urban Living</i> cover this item in accordance with the guidelines.
Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006 and draft 2019)	Chapter 14 <i>Climate Change, Energy and Renewable Resource</i> and the Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy has been formulated having regard to the Wind Energy Guidelines.
Development Contribution Schemes – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2013)	These guidelines have been considered in the making of the plan. It is recognised that the guidelines assist planning authorities in

	achieving a balance between the cost of the services provided and the need to support economic activity and renewal through the development contribution scheme.
National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025	Chapter 8 <i>Tourism and Landscape</i> and the Landscape Character Assessment has taken cognisance of the National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025 which recognises the importance of landscape protection and its interconnectivity with biodiversity and climate change.
Sustainable Urban Housing Design Standards for New Apartments (2015), as updated (2018)	These guidelines have been considered and complied with.
Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities – Design Guidelines (2007)	These guidelines have been considered and complied with throughout the plan making process.
Tree Preservation – Guidelines for Planning Authorities	These guidelines have been considered and complied with throughout the plan making process.
Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures – Guidelines for Planning Authorities	Chapter 7 <i>Infrastructure, Utilities and Environmental Protection</i> recognises the importance of critical communication infrastructure in accordance with these Guidelines.
Interim Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Statutory Plans, Renewable Energy and Climate Change (2017)	The plan has been prepared in accordance with these Guidelines.

1.7 Implementation and Monitoring

The plan will be monitored to ensure that the policy objectives in place are effective and robust. They must be altered or amended if it transpires later that circumstances have changed. The monitoring process should continually monitor the performance of the policy objectives and by doing so identify any issues, taking action as necessary. Part of the monitoring exercise will assess if the plan is still in compliance and consistent with national and regional policy. Where these national and regional policy objectives change, monitoring will establish whether the plan should be varied to maintain consistency.

The provision of plan monitoring is set out within Section 15 of the Planning and Development Act (2000). It requires that a report must be prepared by the Chief Executive for the Elected members within two years of making the plan which details the progress achieved in delivering the policy objectives in the plan. The Planning Authority can take steps necessary to secure the policy objectives of the plan.

It is recommended in the Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2007) that an annual monitoring and evaluation report be prepared. This report will assist in highlighting any issues concerning the implementation of the

plan and it will inform the 2-year review required under Section 15. The Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report also informs the mandatory review of the existing plan and preparation of a new by as required by Section 11 of the Act.