

Chapter 4 Rural Living and Development

“Support the role of rural areas in maintaining a stable population base through a strong network of villages and small towns and strengthening rural communities by supporting a resilient rural economy and the sustainable management of land and resources”.

4.1 Introduction

Galway County Council recognises the important role that the rural area plays in the county from a housing, economic and social perspective. The county boasts a rich variety of natural amenities, vibrant towns, attractive villages, uplands, extensive grasslands, lake environs, inland rivers, streams, islands and scenic coastline.

Galway is one of the most rural counties in Ireland, with almost 78% of the population living in the rural areas. Therefore, the rural area and its importance will be reflected with key policy objectives and will accord with national policy. ‘Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities’. Rural areas play a key role in defining the identity, in driving the economy and the high-quality environment and will form a key part of the county’s strategic development during the plan period.

As outlined in *Chapter 2 Core Strategy, Settlement Strategy and Housing Strategy*, the settlement hierarchy identifies a number of villages and the general rural countryside. It is the Council’s policy objective that the Settlement Hierarchy will facilitate the rural generated housing requirements of the local rural community while also making the villages within this category as attractive places to live whilst still experiencing rural living. The balance between reinforcing and strengthening sustainable rural communities whilst protecting the rural countryside from over development will be a key priority of this plan.

With the changing work practices and more remote working there is an opportunity to provide rural villages as a real alternative for people wishing to live in a rural setting. There will be greater requirement to provide alternatives to living in large urban centres, but a balance is required in order to sustain the urban and rural areas. It is considered that the towns and villages now present an opportunity for people who would like to live in a rural area, but who do not comply with housing need criteria.

The county is home to a diverse range of uses ranging from agriculture, horticultural and equine industries, centres of local food production, agri-food businesses and recreational and agri- tourism activities. These combine to provide both residents and visitors with an opportunity to enjoy a quality environment to live, work and recreate.

4.2 Strategic Aims

Galway County Council shall ensure that developments in rural areas are provided in accordance with the following strategic aims:

- To harness a pride of place among rural communities and to assist rural communities to promote their cultural and natural resources;
- To reinforce the vitality and future of rural villages and the open countryside and to recognise the roles that they play in the wider social and economic context;
- To encourage and support the social and economic development of rural parts of the County;
- To support local rural economies and facilitate the diversification of local rural enterprises;
- To maintain and support into the future the County’s rural/coastal communities including the traditional family farm;

- To help foster ‘green growth/management practices’ (including food security, quality and diversity) in primary food production methods within the agri-food, fisheries and forestry sectors within the County;
- To support and promote the sustainable social and economic development of rural areas
- To protect and enhance the visual qualities of rural areas through the sensitive design of associated development

4.3 Strategic Context

This chapter is prepared in the context of the following National and Regional Plans, Policies and Guidelines:

National Planning Framework – Ireland 2040
National Development Plan 2018-2027
Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region 2020-2032
Climate Action Plan 2019
Sustainable Rural Housing, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2005
Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future - A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009- 2020
Food Wise 2025
Food Harvest 2020
Realising our Rural Potential: Action Plan for Rural Development
Our Rural Future Governments Blueprint to Transform Rural Ireland
Charter for Rural Ireland, 2016 Department of Environment, Community and Local Government

4.3.1 National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) acknowledges that rural areas have a major role to play in Ireland and encourages Local Authorities to ensure that connectivity gaps are addressed and that planning and investment policies support job creation in the rural economy. NSO 3 Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities is of relevance to rural development. The NPF acknowledges that there are numerous examples of vibrant rural communities right across the country in towns, villages and the countryside and that there are clear differences between these types of rural areas and rural communities in relation to scale, accessibility and pressure from adjoining urban areas. There is also the acknowledgement that there are challenges facing these rural communities which range from urban generated pressures in areas adjacent to the large urban areas to a declining and ageing population and poor accessibility in relation to infrastructure and new technologies. It seeks to manage the growth of areas that are under strong urban influence to avoid over-development, while sustaining vibrant rural communities.

4.3.2 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) recognises the importance that smaller towns, villages and the rural area play in the region. While the vibrancy and vitality of the rural areas are required to be conserved, at the same time a sense of place, culture and the quality, character of the landscape is also required to be maintained. The RSES also recognise the important economic role of rural settlements at a local level, whilst identifying the need to strengthen rural economies and communities by broadening the employment base of rural areas, improving connectivity and addressing infrastructural deficits. Several Regional Policy Objectives (RPO) are included that strive to make the rural areas more resilient to challenges that they are experiencing. RPO 3.4, RPO 3.7, RPO 3.8 and RPO 3.13 are the key RPO’s to address rural development which will be considered in detail in this chapter and throughout the plan

4.4 Climate Change

Rural housing and Rural Development will play a key determinant in addressing the challenges faced by climate change in the county. In supporting rural communities and protecting the countryside, consideration must be given to the impact of the pattern of development associated with one off housing and rural development on the climate and environment. The sporadic nature of one-off housing results in an over-dependence on the car, with limited opportunities for people to walk or cycle due to the distance between homes and school, work or local services. As we strive to mitigate against the impacts of climate change, it is important that future development patterns reduce our carbon footprint, protect our environment and promote more sustainable ways of living. It is considered that the settlement hierarchy in Chapter 2 and the policy objectives contained in this chapter relating to villages and the open countryside promotes a sustainable pattern of development where growth is envisaged in settlements within the county. In relation to agriculture sector there is support for the transition to economically and environmentally viable farming methods that reduce greenhouse gases emission and are beneficial for local biodiversity and rural communities whilst still providing high quality food and animal welfare. The policy objectives in this chapter will promote a balanced rural development strategy.

4.5 Profile of Rural Communities

In Galway there are a number of rural villages that provide a key function in the provision of facilities such as places of worship, educational, social and housing. In the last number of years these villages have suffered a decline in population and in the provision of local services that cater for the local population and wider hinterland. Historically there would have been residents of these villages commuting to the larger towns and Galway city for employment and secondary education especially. However, in the last year there has been a significant change in work practices with more remote working and it is this change in work practices that provide rural villages within the county an opportunity to “regenerate” with inward population in order to sustain and develop further. The policy objectives of this plan are to continue to support the sustainable development of rural areas in Galway by encouraging growth in villages that are identified in level 7 of the settlement hierarchy and balanced and sustainable development in our rural countryside. The provision of rural housing in the open countryside is also an important parameter to consider when referring to rural communities, these areas have witnessed significant development pressure and as such a balanced approach to sustain these communities is required. The approach to rural living and development is based on promoting sustainable rural development which is aimed at maintaining a vibrant and viable rural communities, while also seeking to transition to a low carbon resilient society and protect the amenity, recreational and heritage value of the rural landscapes and countryside of the county. A number of the level 7 villages within the settlement hierarchy are serviced with wastewater and water infrastructure. Other villages do not have this benefit, but they play a critical role in the community and the wider rural hinterland. This critical community role merits their inclusion at level 7 villages with limited development potential.

4.5.1 Strengthening Residential Rural Communities

The NPF and RSES recognise the importance of towns and villages in creating a vibrant and sustainable rural community. Throughout the county there are villages that have suffered a reduction in services and a loss of vitality in the community. The rural Settlement Hierarchy for the county recognises the importance of striking a balance between facilitating residential development in the open countryside and revitalising the villages. As outlined in National Policy Objective 18b of the NPF a national programme will be developed for “new homes in small towns and villages” with Local Authorities,

public infrastructure agencies such as Irish Water, and local communities providing serviced sites with appropriate infrastructure which would act as an alternative to single houses in the open countryside. If this initiative was successfully implemented, this would provide a platform for the development of sustainable rural communities, whereby there would be a co-ordinated increase in population, which would help create or sustain in some instance's businesses and local services.

4.5.2 Residential Development Potential in Level 7 Settlements-Serviced /Un-Serviced Villages and Countryside

A number of the villages in this category of the settlement hierarchy are small villages that consist of a cluster of houses and limited level of services available. Some of these villages are served by public mains water and /or wastewater supply, whilst there are others that are un-serviced. It is recognised in this plan that there is capacity in these villages to accommodate a small level of growth, with the capacity to accommodate growth dependant on the size of the village. Placemaking within the rural villages as outlined in *Chapter 3 Placemaking, Regeneration and Urban Living* are key components to enhance the rural vitality and rural experience.

4.5.2.1 Serviced Villages

In the serviced villages it is considered that there is potential for mutli unit-development is considered be appropriate with a site-specific design strategy required to guide the development of each plot. Several design elements are required to be considered for the development to fit within the individual village.

4.5.2.2 Un-Serviced Villages

In addressing the villages that have a deficiency in wastewater infrastructure it is warranted to support the clustering of five houses or less on sites with individual waste water treatment plants in in certain circumstances to enhance the viability and attractiveness of these areas and to provide a viable alternative to the single house in the countryside. Rural Clustering in relation to the Village of Clarinbridge.

4.5.2.3 Open Countryside

The open countryside is and will continue to be a living and lived in landscape focusing on the requirements of rural economies and rural communities as outlined in section 4.7 of this chapter, however there is a necessity to avoid ribbon and over spill development from the urban area. The NPF prescribes national policy in relation to the development of rural housing and as outlined in NPO 19, there is a requirement to provide a clear distinction between areas under urban influence and elsewhere, which will be further expanded on in section 4.6 to follow.

Policy Objectives Rural Communities

RC 1 Sustainable Development in Villages

It is the policy objective of the Council to encourage the sustainable, balanced development of our villages in an incremental manner, with the emphasis on small scale development over a medium to long term period, in keeping with the character of the settlement.

RC 2 Rural Housing in the Countryside

To manage the development of rural housing in the open countryside by requiring applicants to demonstrate compliance with the Rural Housing Policy Objectives as outlined in Section 4.6.3.

RC 3 Small Towns and Villages

To support the development of a “New Homes in Small Towns and Villages” initiative in consultation with Irish Water and other stakeholders through the provision of water services and serviced sites within the existing footprint of rural villages.

RC 4 Mixed Use Development in Villages

Support the provision of appropriately scaled commercial development within villages, this may include limited new mixed use development, including employment generating development, childcare and other appropriate commercial development.

RC 5 Rural Clustering on un-serviced lands in Villages

Support the development of clusters of five houses or less within the footprint of existing villages with individual wastewater treatment plants in accordance with the most up to date EPA Code of Practice for Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems serving single houses. All proposals shall ensure that there is the provision of safe water supply. Proposals for development in these villages shall include an assessment undertaken by a qualified hydrologist, that demonstrates that the outfall from the septic tank will not, in combination with other septic tanks within the village and wider area, contribute towards any surface or ground water body not meeting the objective of the water group under the Waste Framework Directive.

RC 6 Residential Development Potential of Villages

Within the footprint of villages, development will be considered where it involves multi-house developments, subject to services, siting, design, protection of residential amenities and normal Development Management criteria as outlined in *Chapter 3 Place Making, Regeneration and Urban Living* and *Chapter 15 Development Management Standards*.

RC 7 Guidelines for Cluster Housing Schemes in Villages

Prepare Guidelines for Cluster Housing Schemes in Rural Villages within the lifetime of the Development Plan as resources permit.

4.6 Rural Housing Strategy in the Open Countryside

The approach of the Rural Settlement Strategy for the county is guided by the NPF and the RSES. The Rural Housing: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG 2005) and the new Galway County Transport Planning Strategy (GCTPS). The Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines (2005) states that “Structurally Weak Rural Areas” will exhibit characteristics such as persistent and significant population decline as well as a weaker economic structure based on indices of income, employment and economic growth. In contrast, “Strong Rural Area under Significant Urban Influence” will exhibit characteristics such as proximity to the immediate environs or close commuting catchment of large cities and towns, rising population, evidence of considerable pressure for development of housing due to proximity to such urban areas, or to major transport corridors with ready access to the urban area, and pressure on infrastructure such as the local road network.

The Galway County Transport & Planning Strategy (GCTPS) has can be found in Appendix 3 of this plan. This strategy has indicated the pressure on the major transport corridors mainly along the M6/M17 motorways and areas surrounding the main urban areas and the metropolitan area of the county.

The Planning Authority has carried out an assessment in accordance with the following approach:

- Analysis and mapping of the data on planning applications for housing submitted since the adoption of the *Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021*
- Analysis of housing development using the An Post Geo Directory;
- Analysis of ED's that are under significant development pressure and the environs of the main urban settlements and within the Metropolitan area of the county based on commuter trips to these areas;
- Analysis of Census data 2006 and 2016 on population and household trends;
- Analysis of Landscape Character Assessment.

The main findings of this analysis are as follows:

- The pace of activity within the commuter area around Galway city;
- The level of individual houses granted between February 2015 and February 2021 in the GCTPS is approximately 1499, and areas outside the GCTPS is approximately 1059;
- Geo-Directory indicates there has been approximately 2,388 new addresses in the period from February 2015 to February 2021 in the GCTPS and approximately 1175 new addresses outside the GCTPS in the same period;
- The population variation between the 2006 and 2016 Census is significant.
 - (a) In the GCTPS area, the population in Electoral Divisions (ED's) has increased in excess of 10 to 25% and in some ED's this increase is in excess of 25%, especially around Athenry and Oranmore;
 - (b) In areas of the County to the east of the GCTPS, the population in ED's has decreased in the region of 0 to -5%;
 - (c) Areas of the County to the west of the GCTPS have also witnessed a general decrease in population numbers in ED's with less than 10% of an increase.

All of the above analysis and strategies have been considered in the identification of the areas that are under urban pressure.

4.6.1 Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure –Metropolitan Area and GCTPS

From the analysis carried out in Section 4.6 above it was determined that the areas as shown on Map no 2 reflect closely the characteristics of rural areas under strong urban pressure. These areas exhibit characteristics of growth in population at locations in close proximity to the larger towns and to which the residents of these rural areas commute to in large numbers. It is also evident from the analysis undertaken that there was pressure for development for housing due to the proximity to Galway City. The objective of these areas is to maintain a stable population base in rural areas within a strong network of small towns and villages.

The key objectives of the Council are:

- To facilitate the genuine housing requirements of the local rural community (rural generated housing), subject to satisfactory site suitability and technical considerations;
- To direct urban-generated development to areas for new housing development in the adjoining urban centres, towns identified in the metropolitan area and the towns and villages as identified in the Settlement Strategy;
- To support rural housing in areas designated as structurally weak areas
- To accommodate residential development proposals in accordance with *Chapter 15 Development Management Standards*.

In accordance with the NPF and the *Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines*, it is a generally accepted in principle that urban generated housing should take place within the built-up areas or on lands identified, through the Settlement Plans/Local Area Plan process. With the designation of the Metropolitan Plan for Galway city and environs which encompasses the settlements of Bearna, Baile Chláir and Oranmore it is considered that the rural areas between these settlements and the administrative boundary of Galway city should be protected from sporadic rural housing. Within the metropolitan area of the county, the Applicant must be from a member of farm family and meet a number of criteria which will be outlined in policy objectives to follow.

In areas outside the metropolitan area, the areas under urban pressure, the Applicant will be required to demonstrate an established a substantiated Rural housing need.

In relation to the urban areas around Gort, Loughrea, Athenry and Tuam it is considered that the principles of proper planning and sustainable development would dictate that the erosion of the urban fringe around these towns should be discouraged. Applicants whose family home is within the Urban Fringe of these towns will be requested to establish a substantiated Rural Housing Need and only this category of persons will be allowed to construct a dwelling in these areas.

4.6.2 Structurally Weak Rural Areas (East and West of GCTPS)

From the analysis carried out in Section 4.6 above, it was determined that the areas west and east of the GCTPS can be categorised as Structurally Weak Rural Areas. This rural area can be categorised as the rural area to the west and east of the GCTPS as illustrated on 4.1. These areas consist mainly of a low population base and have not experienced the same level of growth in population as the areas within the GCTPS/Urban pressure. There are areas that have declined in population, while a number of areas have experienced an increase in population between the 2006 and 2016 Census. There are reduced services and infrastructure available in these areas due to the low population base.

In this rural area type, the key objectives of the Council are:

- To accommodate residential development proposals as they arise subject to satisfactory site suitability and technical considerations;
- To accommodate residential development proposals in accordance with *Chapter 15 Development Management Standards*;
- To maintain and strengthen existing towns and villages and to direct urban generated housing demand into these areas;
- To protect areas located in Landscape Categories 2, 3 and 4

4.6.3 Rural Housing Development Strategy 2022-2028

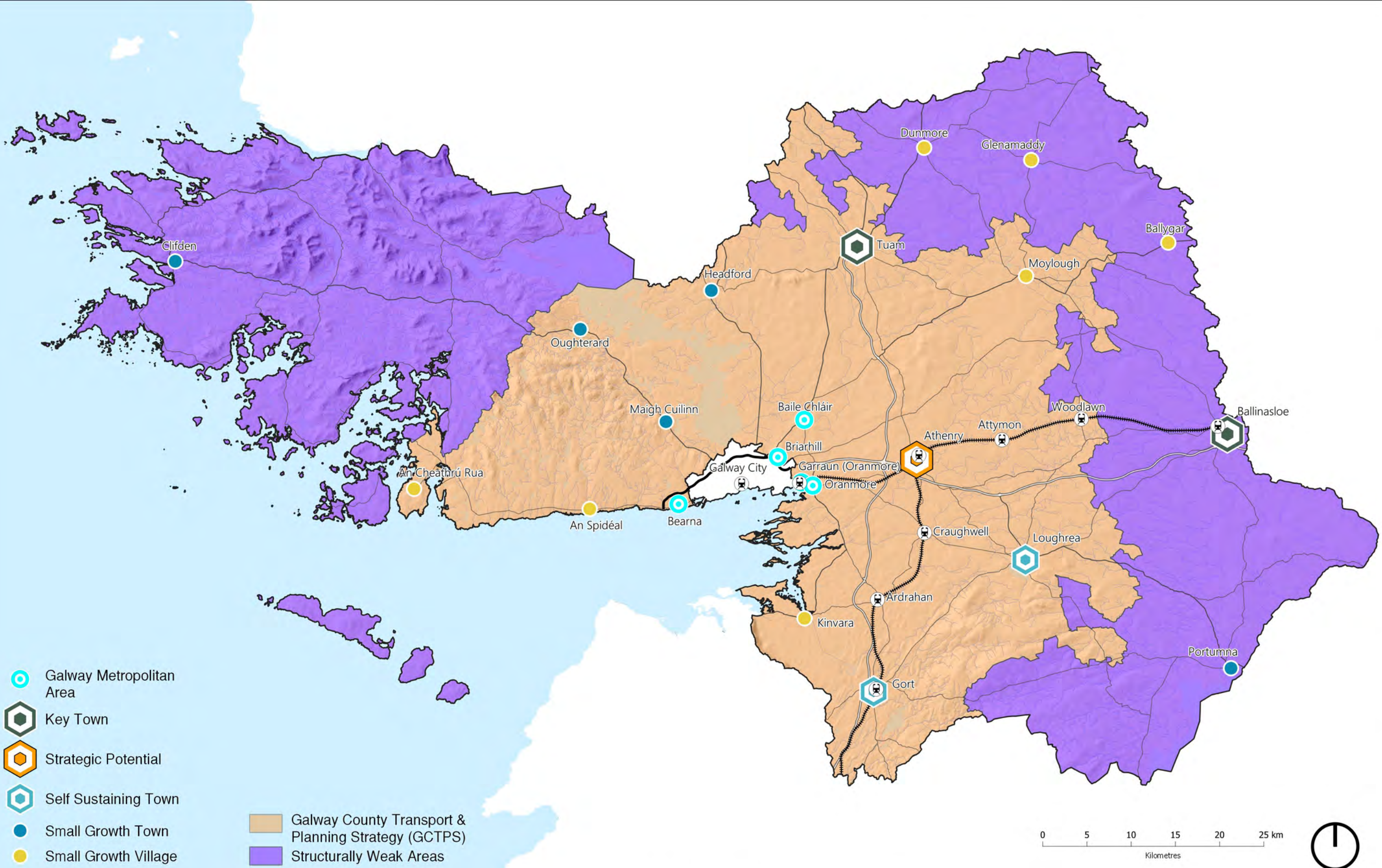
In order to incorporate the requirements of the *NPF* and the *Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines* (2005) it is considered necessary that the following specific policy responses are incorporated into the plan to ensure that the provision of rural housing in the open countryside is managed efficiently and appropriately.







In addition to the areas identified above (Rural Metropolitan Area, Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Pressure and Structurally Weak Areas), it is considered necessary to include the areas affected by Landscape Sensitivity 2, 3 and 4 and also the areas located within the Gaeltacht. In areas which are classified in the Landscape Sensitivity 2, 3 and 4 an applicant seeking to construct a rural house in the open countryside is required to demonstrate substantiated Rural Housing Need and their Rural Links.



The specific policy objectives for rural housing in the open countryside are as follows:

- Rural Housing Zone1: Rural Metropolitan Area-

- Rural Housing Zone 2: Rural Area Under Strong Urban Pressure-GCTPS
- Rural Housing Zone 3: Structurally Weak Areas
- Rural Housing Zone 4: Landscape Sensitivity 2,3 and 4
- Rural Housing Zone 5: An Gaeltacht

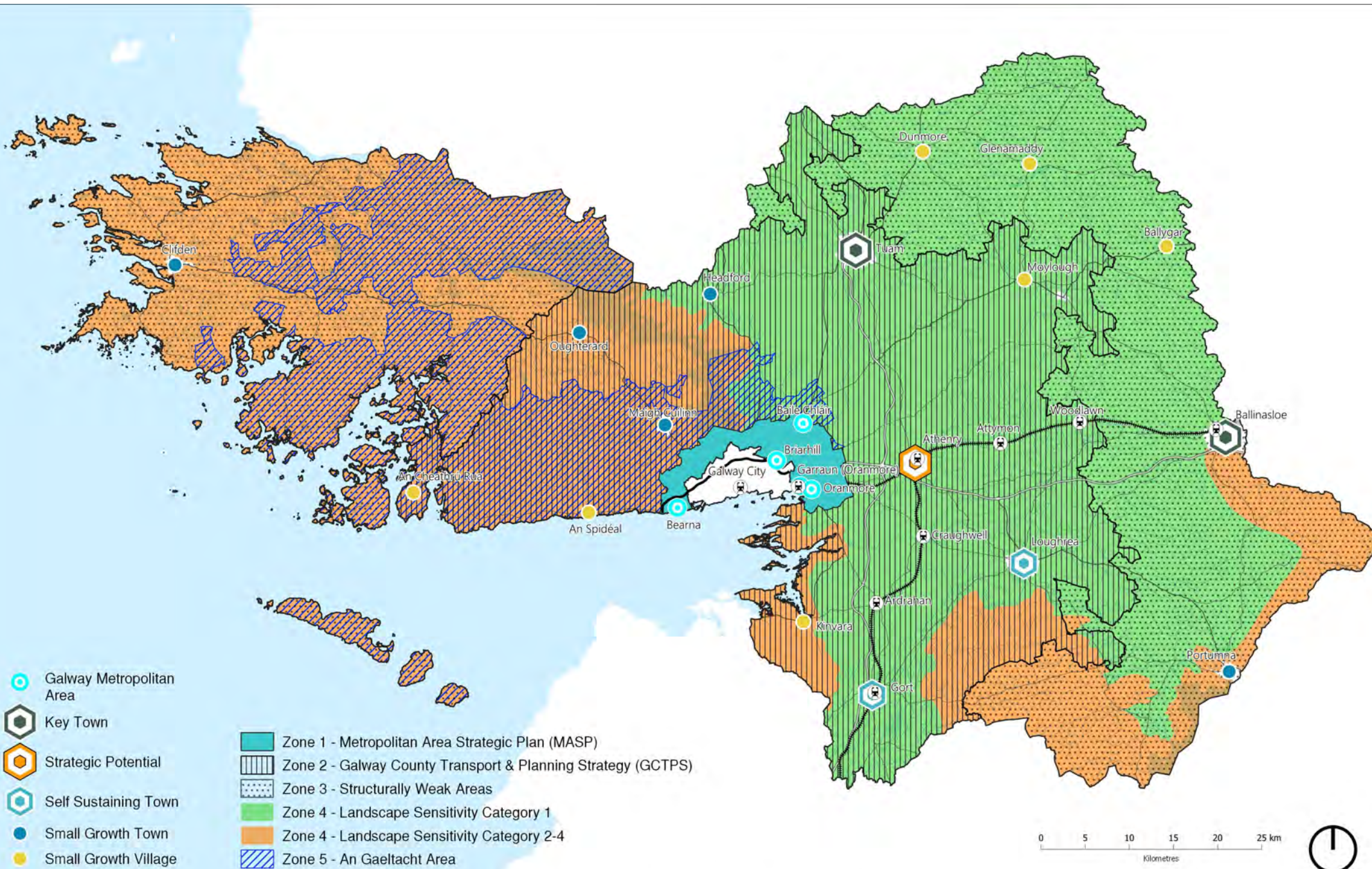


-  Galway Metropolitan Area
-  Key Town
-  Strategic Potential
-  Self-Sustaining Town
-  Small Growth Town
-  Small Growth Village

-  Galway County Transport & Planning Strategy (GCTPS)
-  Structurally Weak Areas

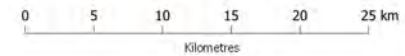


Map 4.1 Rural Area Types



- Galway Metropolitan Area
- Key Town
- Strategic Potential
- Self-Sustaining Town
- Small Growth Town
- Small Growth Village

- Zone 1 - Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP)
- Zone 2 - Galway County Transport & Planning Strategy (GCTPS)
- Zone 3 - Structurally Weak Areas
- Zone 4 - Landscape Sensitivity Category 1
- Zone 4 - Landscape Sensitivity Category 2-4
- Zone 5 - An Gaeltacht Area



Policy Objectives Rural Housing

RH 1 Rural Housing Zone 1(Rural Metropolitan Area)

It is policy objective to facilitate rural housing in this Rural Metropolitan Area subject to the following criteria:

Those applicants with long standing demonstrable economic and/or social Rural Links* to the area through existing and immediate family ties, seeking to develop their first home on the existing family farm holdings. Documentary evidence shall be submitted to the Planning Authority to justify the proposed development and will be assessed on a case by case basis. An Enurement condition shall apply for a period of 7 years, after the date that the house is first occupied by the person or persons to whom the enurement clause applies.

RH 2 Rural Housing Zone 2 (Rural Area Under Strong Urban Pressure-GCTPS-Outside Rural Metropolitan Area Zone 1)

It is policy objective to facilitate rural housing in this rural area under strong urban pressure subject to the following criteria:

1(a). Those applicants with long standing demonstrable economic and/or social Rural Links* to the area through existing and immediate family ties seeking to develop their first home on the existing family farm holding. Documentary evidence shall be submitted to the Planning Authority to justify the proposed development and will be assessed on a case by case basis.

OR

1(b). Those applicants who have no family lands but who wish to build their first home within the community in which they have long standing demonstrable economic and or social Rural links* and where they have spent a substantial, continuous part of their lives i.e. have grown up in the area, schooled in the area and have immediate family connections in the area e.g. son or daughter of longstanding residents of the area. Having established a Substantiated Rural Housing Need*, such persons making an application on a site within a 8km radius of their original family home will be accommodated, subject to normal development management criteria. Documentary evidence shall be submitted to the Planning Authority to justify the proposed development and will be assessed on a case by case basis.

OR

1(c). Those applicants who can satisfy to the Planning Authority that they are functionally dependent in relation to demonstrable economic need on the immediate rural areas in which they are seeking to develop a single house as their principal family Residence in the countryside. Documentary evidence shall be submitted to the Planning Authority to justify the proposed development and will be assessed on a case by case basis.

OR

1(d). Those applicants who lived for substantial periods of their lives in the rural area, then moved away and who now wish to return and build their first house as their permanent residence, in this local area. Documentary evidence shall be submitted to the Planning Authority to illustrate their links to the area in order to justify the proposed development and it will be assessed on a case by case basis.

2. An Enurement condition shall apply for a period of 7 years, after the date that the house is first occupied by the person or persons to whom the enurement clause applies.

*See definitions on Page 81

RH 3 Rural Housing Zone 3 (Structurally Weak Areas)

It is a policy objective of the Council to facilitate the development of individual houses in the open countryside in "Structurally Weak Areas" subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria and the *Development Management Standards* outlined in Chapter 15 and other applicable standards with the exception of those lands contained in Landscape Classifications 2,3 and 4 where objective RH4 applies.

RH 4 Rural Housing Zone 4 (Landscape Classification 2,3 and 4)

Those applicants seeking to construct individual houses in the open countryside in areas located in Landscape Classification 2,3 and 4 are required to demonstrate their demonstrable economic or social Rural Links* and where they have spent a substantial, continuous part of their lives i.e have grown up in the area, schooled in the area and have immediate family connections in the area e.g son or daughter of longstanding residents of the area and require to establish a Substantiated Rural Housing Need*. In addition, an Applicant maybe required to submit a visual impact assessment of their development, where the proposal is in an area identified as "Focal Points/Views" in the Landscape Character Assessment of the County or in Class 3 and Class 4 designated landscape areas. Documentary evidence shall be submitted to the Planning Authority to justify the proposed development and will be assessed on a case by case basis. An Enurement condition shall apply for a period of 7 years, after the date that the house is first occupied by the person or persons to whom the enurement clause applies.

RH 5 Rural Housing Zone 5 (An Ghaeltacht)

It is a policy objective of the Council to facilitate Rural Housing in the open countryside subject to the following criteria:

(a) Those applicants within An Ghaeltacht which are located in Zone 1 (Rural Metropolitan Area) and Zone 2 (The Rural Area Under Strong Urban Pressure-GCTPS) and Zone 4 (Landscape Sensitivity) shall comply with the policy objectives contained in RH 1, RH 2 and RH 4 as appropriate.

(b) It is a policy objective of the Council that consideration will be given to Irish speakers who can prove their competence to speak Irish in accordance with Galway County Council's requirements and who can demonstrate their ability to be a long term asset to the traditional, cultural and language networks of vibrant Gaeltacht communities. This consideration will apply to applicants seeking to provide their principal permanent residence, in landscape designations Class 1 and 2. It will extend into Class 3 areas that are not in prominent scenic locations. This consideration will not apply to applicants seeking to build in Zone 1 (Rural Metropolitan Area).

A Language Enurement of 15 years duration will apply to approved developments in this category

RH 6 Replacement Dwelling

It is a policy objective of the Council that the refurbishment of existing habitable dwelling houses would be encouraged, as a more sustainable option than the demolition and construction of a new dwelling house, unless a conclusive case for demolition based on technical evidence is made for the Planning Authority's consideration on a case by case basis. It will be a requirement that any new dwelling house be designed in accordance with Galway County Council's Design Guidelines for Rural Housing in the countryside. Applicants, who require the demolition of an existing family home shall be accommodated without the requirement to establish a Housing Need and will not be subject to an enurement clause.

RH 7 Renovation of Existing Derelict Dwelling

It is a policy objective of the Council that proposals to renovate, restore or modify existing derelict or semi-derelict dwellings in the County are generally dealt with on their merits on a case by case basis, having regard to the relevant policy objectives of this plan, the specific location and the condition of the structure and the scale of any works required to upgrade the structure to modern standards. The derelict/semi derelict dwelling must be structurally sound and have the capacity to be renovated or extended and have the majority of its original features in place. A structural report will be required to illustrate that the structure can be brought back into habitable use, without compromising the original character of the dwelling. Where the total demolition of the existing dwelling is proposed an Enurement Clause for seven years duration will apply.

RH 8 Substantially Completed Single Dwelling

Where planning permission has elapsed on a previously permitted development that has been substantially completed (external walls and roofs) and the dwelling remains unfinished it will not be a requirement to establish a Rural Housing Need if it were not a condition of the previously granted planning permission.

RH 9 Design Guidelines

It is a policy objective of the Council to have regard to Galway County Council's Design Guidelines for the Single Rural House with specific reference to the following:

- a). It is the policy objective to encourage new dwelling house design that respects the character, pattern and tradition of existing places, materials and built forms and that fit appropriately into the landscape;
- b). It is the policy objective to promote sustainable approaches to dwelling house design and encouraging proposals to be energy efficient in their design and layout;
- c). It is the policy objective to require the appropriate landscaping and screen planting of proposed developments by using predominately indigenous/local species and groupings.

RH 10 Vacant/Unfinished Housing

Applicants for rural housing on lands other than family lands shall be encouraged to consider the option to avail of existing or permitted housing in areas where there are high levels of such stock available. A statement relating to same should be submitted as part of the application indicating that an examination of such stock was carried out and clear reasons for the unsuitability of any developments considered.

RH 11 Waste Water Treatment provision

Provide for sustainable rural housing in the county in accordance with the EPA Code of Practice: Wastewater Treatment Systems for Single Houses (2009).

RH 12 Adaptation of Existing Housing Stock

Facilitate the provision of accommodation for older people and dependent relatives in the existing family home subject to compliance with the following criteria:

- Be attached to the existing dwelling;
- Be linked internally with the existing dwelling;
- Not have a separate access provided to the front elevation of the dwelling;
- Be of appropriate size and length;
- Be capable of being served by adequate foul drainage facilities.

RH 13 Rural Housing Capacity

Residential Development on landholdings in Zones 1, 2 4 and 5, will be limited where there is a history of development through the sale or development of sites, notwithstanding an applicant's compliance with the local need criteria.

RH 14 Linear Development

Discourage the extension of linear development (defined as five or more houses alongside 250 meters of road frontage). The Council will assess whether a given proposal will exacerbate such linear development, having regard to the site context.

RH 15 Backland Development in the open countryside

In all areas subject to the other provision of Rural Housing policy objectives considerations will be given to family members including nieces and nephews of the land owners and will not be restricted to only one immediate family member on family lands as backland development. Backland development will not be restricted to only where this pattern of development already exists.

This is subject to the following:

- Where no alternative lands are available on the family holding;
- Where there is an existing/historical pattern of backland/cluster residential development within the rural area;
- The proposed development shall not have a negative impact on third parties/neighbouring property owners;
- Viable sites with sufficient independent percolation areas will be required in order to meet technical guidelines;
- Access shall in normal circumstances be by means of the existing entrance;
- The site must be capable of satisfying all other criteria such as separation distance.

RH 16 Direct Access to National Road

Residential development along National Roads will be restricted outside the 50-60kmp speed zones in accordance with the *DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Road Guidelines (2012)*. Consideration shall be given to the need of farm families to live on the family holding on a limited basis and a functional need to live at this location must be demonstrated. Documentary evidence shall be submitted to the Planning Authority to justify the proposed development and will be assessed on a case by case basis. Where there is an existing access, the combined use of same must be considered and shown to be technically unsuitable before any new access can be considered. Access via local roads shall always be the preferred access and in all cases, it must be demonstrated that this is not possible. An Enurement condition will be attached to grants of planning permission for the above.

RH 17 Direct Access onto Restricted Regional Roads

Proposed access onto any restricted Regional Road outside the 50-60kmp speed zones shall be restricted to members of the farm family on the family holding and must be accompanied by a justification for the proposed access including an assessment of the scope for sharing an access and/or achieving access onto an alternative minor road which will be the preferred option. An Enurement condition will be attached to grants of planning permission for the above.

RH 18 Log Cabins and Pods

The construction of log cabins and pods or wooden structures will be permitted in locations where they can be integrated into the existing landscape or where an application can demonstrate that an appropriate landscape will be designed around the structure.

RH 19 Lands in Family Ownership

Where applicants can supply land registry or folio details that demonstrate that the lands on which they are seeking to build their first home, as their permanent residence, in the area have been in family ownership for a period of 20 years or more, their eligibility will be considered. Where this has been established to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority, additional intrinsic links will not have to be demonstrated.

Definitions applied above:

***Rural Links:**

For the purpose of the above is defined as a person who has strong demonstrable economic or social links to the rural area and wishes to build a dwelling generally within an 8km radius of where the applicant has lived for a substantial continuous part of their life.

***Substantiated Rural Housing Need:**

Is defined as supportive evidence for a person to live in this particular area and who does not or has not ever owned a house/received planning permission for a single rural house or built a house (except in exceptional circumstances) in the area concerned and has a strong demonstrable economic or social need for a dwelling for their own permanent occupation. In addition, the applicants will also have to demonstrate their rural links as outlined above.

4.7 Rural Development

As outlined in section 4.1 a national strategic outcome of the NPF is ‘Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities’. Rural areas play a key role in defining our identity, in driving our economy and our high-quality environment and are part of the county’s strategic development during the plan period. In addition to the natural resources and food sector as traditional pillars of the rural economy, improved connectivity facilitating home working and digital hubs, broadband and rural economic development opportunities offer the potential to ensure our rural area develops in a sustainable and orderly manner as a living and working community. In accordance with the economic strategy outlined in Chapter 5 for the overall county, employment related development within the rural area should in general, be directed to lands within our settlement plans and local area plans which cater for local investment and small-scale industry. However, there are certain industries that are suitable within the rural area outside of designated settlements. These industries include for example agriculture, horticulture, forestry, tourism and rural resources-based enterprise. These should be supported where appropriate.

Policy Objectives Rural Development

RD 1 Rural Enterprise Potential

To facilitate the development of the rural economy through supporting a sustainable and economically efficient agriculture and food industry, together with forestry, fishing and aquaculture, energy and extractive industries, the bio-economy and diversification into alternative on-farm and off-farm activities, while at the same time noting the importance of maintaining and protecting the natural landscape and built heritage which are vital to rural tourism.

RD 2 Smart Economy

To support and develop a diverse base of smart economic specialisms as dynamic drivers in our rural economy, including innovation and diversification in agriculture.

RD 3 Assimilation of Buildings

To ensure that all buildings are appropriately sited and sympathetic to their surroundings in terms of scale, design, materials and colour. The grouping of buildings will be encouraged in the interests of visual amenity. In general, the removal of hedgerows to accommodate agricultural buildings will not be permitted.

RD 4 Remote Working

To support remote working in the rural area, at an appropriate scale, for enterprise/businesses that do not require visiting members of the public, subject to normal planning considerations.

4.8 Agriculture

Agriculture is by far the biggest influence in rural development in Galway. Although the economic character of rural areas is no longer synonymous with agriculture, the sector remains the single most important contributor to the economic and social viability of rural areas.

Agricultural practices are continually changing and modernising. The increasing scale of farming, together with increasing use of chemicals, and new methods of production mean that there is pressure on the environment, in particular through soil contamination, ground and surface water pollution⁶ and impacts on natural and built heritage. Agricultural methods also have the potential to both add to and mitigate climate change. The Council will facilitate and encourage best practice in terms of new agricultural development.

The traditional form of agricultural buildings, farm layouts and field pattern are a valuable part of the character of our rural areas and are worthy of protection. While the Council acknowledges that new farm buildings must be functional and efficient, they will also be required to be sympathetic to their surroundings and should be sited and designed to assimilate with the rural landscape.

Policy Objectives Agriculture Development

AD 1 Sustainable Agriculture Practices

To facilitate the development of sustainable agricultural practices and facilities within the county, subject to complying with best practice guidance, normal planning and environmental criteria and the development management standards in *Chapter 15 Development Management Standards*.

AD 2 Agricultural Lands

To protect good quality agricultural lands from development which could be accommodated elsewhere and that would undermine the future agricultural productivity of the lands or irreversibly harm the commercial viability of existing or adjoining agricultural land.

AD 3 Modernisation of Agriculture Buildings

To facilitate the modernisation of agriculture and to encourage best practice in the design and construction of new agricultural buildings and installations to protect the environment, natural and built heritage and residential amenity.

AD 4 Agriculture Waste

To ensure agricultural waste is managed and disposed of in a safe, efficient and sustainable manner having regard to the environment and in full compliance with the European Communities Good Agricultural Practice for the Protection of Waters Regulations (2014) and relevant best practice guidelines.

4.9 Agri-Diversification

The agri-food sector is one of Ireland's most important indigenous industries and is vitally important to the economy of the county. Food production, on all scales, is continuously growing and is particularly important in rural areas where a strong speciality/artisan food sector has emerged. National level strategies such as Food Wise 2025 emphasise the importance of this sector and its potential for enhanced growth. The agri-food industry, and in particular local food production, has an important role to play in ensuring sustainability and resilience. Local food production can provide both local employment and a better product for the consumer. Artisan food and beverage production is also playing an increasingly important role in the economy of the county, particularly in rural areas.

It is Council policy to facilitate the development of the rural economy through supporting sustainability and economic efficiency in agriculture and diversification into alternative on-farm and off-farm activities such as the food and drinks sector, forestry, horticulture, crafts, agri-business, fishing, aquaculture, waste management, rural tourism, renewable energy and the bio-economy, while at the same time noting the importance of maintaining and protecting the natural landscape and built heritage which are vital to rural tourism.

Policy Objective Agri-Diversification

AGD 1 Agri-Diversification

It is Council policy objective to favourably consider proposals for on-farm based diversification, which are complementary to the agricultural operation on the farm such as:

- (a) Specialist farming practices, for example, flower growing, equine facilities, poultry, mushroom growing, and specialised animal breeding;
- (b) Farm enterprises such as processing, co-ops, farm supply stores and agri-business;
- (c) The production of organic and specialty foods to meet the increase in demand for such products; and
- (d) The conversion of redundant farm buildings of vernacular importance for appropriate owner-run enterprises such as agri-tourism, as a way of supporting a viable rural community, subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

4.10 Horticulture

In recent years there has been growth in the demand for fresh local produce. The importance of the horticultural industry to Galway's rural economy is recognised. Further development in horticulture and in value added food and agricultural production in the county could provide opportunities for growth. Local Country Markets are also making an important contribution to the food sector and local economy with markets held throughout the county on a weekly basis.

Policy Objectives Horticulture

HO 1 Horticulture Enterprises

To facilitate the establishment of new horticulture enterprises and the expansion of existing enterprises in rural areas subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria and the Development Management Standards contained in *Chapter 15*.

HO 2 Horticulture Developments

To ensure that applications for horticulture related development include adequate measures to mitigate impacts on soil water contamination, adopt sustainable practices in terms of soil and peat use and use of pesticides and insecticides and adopt sustainable practices for the sustainable management of water from roofs by incorporating sustainable drainage systems and retention areas within the developments.

4.11 Forestry

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DoAFM) published a forest policy in 2014, 'Forests, Products and People - Ireland's Forest Policy - A Renewed Vision' sets out Government policy in relation to this sector of the rural economy. Forests and woodlands provide important social (recreational and amenity value), economic (supporting rural employment and rural diversity) and environmental benefits (climate change management and carbon sequestration, biodiversity and as a source of renewable/alternative energy sources).

Forestry is encouraged in appropriate areas, where it will not significantly impact upon designated habitats, archaeology, interfering with high amenity areas, protected views or scenic routes, be obtrusive in the landscape or present a risk to sensitive ecosystems or water quality.

Policy Objectives Forestry

F 1 National Policy

To support National policy in relation to forestry in order to develop an internationally competitive and sustainable forest sector that provides a full range of economic, environmental and social benefits to society, subject to normal planning criteria.

F 2 Sustainable Development

To encourage the development of a well-managed sustainable forestry sector, which is compatible with the protection of the environment including the avoidance of likely significant effects on European sites (SACs and SPAs) and is planted, managed and harvested in accordance with the Forest Service Guidelines for Landscape, Forest Harvesting and Environmental, Archaeology, Biodiversity and Water Quality.

F 3 Native Woodlands

To ensure that existing native woodlands are protected and enhanced and, where appropriate, encourage the conversion of coniferous forest to native woodlands with a focus on opportunities for habitat linkage and wider eco-services.

F 4 Forestry Development

To encourage forestry and forestry related development, as a means of diversifying from traditional agriculture activity with a preference for native species.

F5 Deforestation

To promote the avoidance of deforestation or commercial afforestation within European sites unless directly relating to the management of the site for its qualifying interests.

F6 Afforestation

The development of afforestation shall not take place within 100m of residential units.

4.12 Equine Industry

There are several equine based industries situated within the county. The importance and significance of local breeds such as the Conamara Pony and the Irish Draught Horse are known throughout the world with their association with the county. Regular horse sales and shows are held throughout the year. There are several equestrian schools and facilities throughout the county for related leisure and sporting activities. There are considerable number of people employed both directly and indirectly in the equine industry which is an important economic contributor in the county.

Policy Objective Equine Industry

EQ1 Equine Industry

To support and promote the equine industry in the county as an economic and employment provider and in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

4.13 Commercial Developments in Rural Areas

Rural businesses and enterprises are an important source of local employment in the County. Many examples of fine rural businesses exist throughout the county. This includes agricultural, equine, engineering/manufacturing, recreational, tourism, energy/renewable energy, and rural resource-based enterprises. Whilst the plan supports such enterprises and the diversification of the rural economy, it is also recognised that a balance is required between supporting rural based enterprises and projects and protecting the local environment.

In the first instance, new employment related developments are directed to settlements where services are available, and lands have been identified for employment uses.

It is also recognised that there are instances where a development can be more readily accommodated or is more appropriate to a rural area. This can be due to a locational specific, or resourced based development, or a development of regional or national importance.

In relation to the expansion of an existing rural enterprise, consideration will be given to the scale of the existing and proposed development, the capacity of local infrastructure to accommodate the expansion, and the compatibility of the development with the surrounding area.

Policy Objective Commercial Developments in Rural Area

CD 1 Rural Enterprises

Consider and support the establishment of small scale rural orientated enterprises in unserved rural areas outside of town or village settings which can be accommodated in existing farm buildings or can be established on a brownfield site, subject to satisfying the following criteria:

- (a) Compatibility and general suitability to an unserved rural area (primary consideration will be given to agriculture, renewable and marine resources, forestry, tourism, recreation or food production related enterprise activities and services);
- (b) Scale of development (assimilate appropriately into a rural setting);
- (c) Nature of development (raw materials sourced locally);
- (d) Consideration of social and environmental impacts (enterprise must not have a significant adverse impact on the environment or rural amenity);
- (e) The enterprise must not constitute a road safety hazard or have a major adverse impact on the road network, road capacity and traffic levels;
- (f) Residential amenity (enterprise must not have a significant adverse impact on residential amenity).

4.14 Mineral Extraction and Quarries

Extractive industries by their nature are resource based and result in the removal of soil and rock. Quarrying and other extractive industries are recognised as important to the local rural economic development of the County in terms of generating employment and providing raw material to the construction industry. The geology of the County produces aggregate resources in terms of sand, limestone and gravel, which are currently exploited at quarries throughout the County and the Council recognises this resource as a significant economic asset. Extractive industries can also give rise to detrimental environmental and residential amenity effects including increased traffic, dust, noise, water pollution, visual intrusion and the effects on local road networks may also be significant.

The Council will facilitate harnessing the potential of the area's natural resources while ensuring that the environment and rural and residential amenities are appropriately protected. The Council having regard to the substantial number existing number of quarries within the county have a preference for the continued sustainable extraction of these quarries over the development of new greenfield sites. In considering development applications relating to existing or proposed quarries, the Council will take full account of the following DECLG guidelines *Quarries and Ancillary Activities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2004* (including any updated/superseding document) and have regard to the protection of residential and natural amenities, the prevention of pollution and the safeguarding of aquifers and groundwater. The development of new quarries will be strictly controlled in areas of high landscape value, in areas of significant archaeological potential, on European Sites, Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs), Nature Reserves or other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna and development shall also have regard to the requirements of the EU guidance document *Undertaking Non-Energy Extractive Activities in Accordance with Natura 2000 Requirements*.

Policy Objectives Mineral Extraction and Quarries

MEQ 1 Aggregate Resources

Ensure adequate supplies of aggregate resources to meet future growth needs within County Galway and the wider region and to facilitate the exploitation of such resources where there is a proven need and market opportunity for such minerals or aggregates, and ensure that this exploitation of resources does not adversely affect the environment or adjoining existing land uses.

MEQ 2 Protection of the Environment

The Council shall require the following in relation to the management of authorised aggregate extraction -

(a) All quarries shall comply with the requirements of the *EU Habitats Directive*, the *Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010* and by the guidance as contained within the *DoEHLG Quarries and Ancillary Facilities Guidelines 2004*, the EPA Guidelines *'Environmental Management in the Extractive Industry: Non Scheduled Minerals 2006* (including any updated/superseding documents) and to DM Standard 19 of this Development Plan;

(b) Require development proposals on or in the proximity of quarry sites, to carry out appropriate investigations into the nature and extent of old quarries (where applicable). Such proposals shall also investigate the nature and extent of soil and groundwater contamination and the risks associated with site development works together with appropriate mitigation;

(c) Require Development Proposals to assess the potential impact of extraction in areas where geomorphological interest, groundwater and important aquifers, important archaeological features and Natural Heritage Areas are located;

d) Have regard to the *Landscape Character Assessment of the County* and its recommendations;

(e) Ensure that any quarry activity has minimal adverse impact on the road network and that the full cost of road improvements, including during operations and at time of closure, which are necessary to facilitate those industries are borne by the industry itself.

(f) Ensure that the extraction of minerals or aggregates does not adversely impact on residential or environmental amenity;

(g) Protect all known un-worked deposits from development that might limit their scope for extraction.

MEQ 3 Sustainable Management of Exhausted Quarries

Encourage the use of quarries and pits for sustainable management of post recovery stage construction and demolition waste, as an alternative to using agricultural land, subject to normal planning and environmental considerations.

MEQ 4 Landscaping Plans

Ensure that all extractions shall be subjected to landscaping requirements and that worked out quarries should be rehabilitated to a use agreed with the Planning Authority which could include recreational, biodiversity, amenity or other end-of-life uses. The use of these rehabilitated sites shall be limited to inert waste and sites shall be authorised under the appropriate waste regulations.