

Chapter 10 Infrastructure & Environment

10.0 Aim

To continue to provide the necessary infrastructural services to support the development of Birr as a “**Key Service Town**” and driver for South-West Offaly, without compromising the quality of the receiving environment.

10.1 Context

10.1.1 Provision of Infrastructure

10.1.1.1 Water Infrastructure - Offaly County Council’s Assessment of Needs

Offaly County Council’s Assessment of Needs examines how and where the **provision of public water services** (water and wastewater) should be provided and/or improved and in the most cost-efficient manner. Prioritisation of projects and the scheduling of construction works will depend on Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government approval and the availability of resources.

10.1.2 Protection of the Environment

10.1.2.1 Water Framework Directive

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) rationalises and updates existing water legislation and provides for the future management of all waters on the basis of **River Basin Districts**. There are three river basins districts applicable to County Offaly. Birr is located in the **Shannon River Basin District**, which covers 73% of the County.

Offaly County Council, as an established Local Authority is charged with the role referred to as “competent authority” in the implementation of the WFD for the Shannon River Basin District. Under the WFD, the Council is required to ensure that all waters (including surface and ground waters) within the Shannon RBD meet good status up to the deadline date of December 2015¹. The Council will take cognisance of the Shannon River Basin District Management Plan² and its associated programme of measures in order to protect and improve water quality. To this end, the Council will implement the Water Quality Management Plan for the Shannon RBD.

10.1.2.2 Water Services Act 2007

The Water Services Act 2007 provides the legislative context, governing functions, standards, obligations and practice in relation to the planning, management and delivery of water supply and wastewater collection and treatment services. It focuses on ‘management of water “in the pipe”, as distinct from broader water resources issues such as river water quality³ etc.

Other legislative provisions which the Councils’ must comply with include:

- Drinking Water Regulations 2007.
- Waste Water Discharge Regulations 2007.

10.1.2.3 Water Pollution Acts 1977-1999

Relevant discharges to sewers and water courses from agricultural, industrial and other activities are licensed by Offaly County Council under Sections 4 and 16 of the Water Pollution Act 1977. Failure to meet Offaly County Council’s standards in regard to storage, distribution and disposal of all waste are dealt with under the enforcement provisions of the Water Pollution Acts 1977-1999.

10.1.2.4 Air and Air Quality

Offaly County Council is the regulatory authority for the purposes of the Air Pollution Act 1997, which is the principal legal framework for the prevention and control of air pollution and contains limits for monitoring emissions to air.

¹ Note: Good water status refers to good ecological and good chemical status. Good ground water status means good quantitative and chemical status.

² The final Shannon RBD Plan is due to be published in spring 2010, please see <http://www.shannonrbd.com/> for more details.

³ Source: Department of the Taoiseach – No. 30 of 2007, Water Services Act 2007.

10.2 Strategy

10.2.1 Water Services

The **Councils** have a **primary role** in providing and/or facilitating the provision of adequate services at a local scale within its administrative area i.e. wastewater treatment plants, water treatment facilities etc.

10.2.1.1 Water Protection

Birr Water Bodies

The water bodies of relevance to Birr are surface water (rivers and streams) and groundwater. Groundwater is stored in the void spaces in underground layers of rock or gravels. These are known as aquifers. These aquifers are permeable, allowing both the infiltration of water from the soils above them and the yielding of water to surface water.

These water supplies have many functions: including providing drinking water and recreational value to the people of Birr, sustaining biodiversity, flora and fauna and providing for agricultural and industrial/commercial production.

Protection of Groundwater and Aquifers

Aquifer vulnerability refers to the ease with which pollutants of various kinds can enter ground water. Map 10.1 displays the groundwater vulnerability rating for Birr. Developments will be strictly controlled within any Aquifer Protection Zone in Birr (refer to Map 10.2).

Agriculture

Having regard to the European Communities (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2006, S.I. No. 378 of 2006, the Councils will seek the **maximum protection of waters** from diffuse agricultural sources in Birr. The Environment Section of Offaly County Council monitors all agricultural developments to ensure the adequacy of on-farm waste management practices.

Water Conservation

As at early 2010, Phases 1 and 2 of Offaly County Council's Water Conservation project has established management structures and the basis for proper leakage control. Phase 3 of the project which is envisaged to commence in 2010, will involve infrastructural renewal and rehabilitation.

10.2.1.2 Water Provision

Existing Public Water Supply Scheme

The existing Birr public water supply network covers the full Development Plan area. The source of drinking water comes from the Camcor River and abstraction points are at Kinnitty and Springfield Bridge, Birr.

Private Water Source

Within Birr some sites are currently served by a private well. The Councils recognise the need for some developments to connect to a private water source. However, all new developments must connect to the public supply scheme where it is feasible to do so.

Proposed Upgrades to Public Water Supply Scheme

Offaly County Council's Assessment of Needs has identified Birr for inclusion in the Water Services Investment Programme (WSIP) for the period 2007-2014. Birr is also included in a list of the Council's public water supply schemes, which are approved in the WSIP 2007-2009 for improvements/upgrading works (refer to Table 10.1). The assessment of needs for the WSIP 2010-2012 has been submitted. The WSIP 2010-2012 is due to be published early 2010.

10.2.1.3 Wastewater Treatment

Existing Public Wastewater Treatment Scheme

Table 10.2 illustrates the particulars of the existing Birr public wastewater treatment scheme and proposed upgrades.

Private Wastewater Treatment Plants

Some parts of the Birr environs are still served by septic tanks, for example the Roscrea Road. The public wastewater system is not as extensive as the public water supply scheme.

Proposed Upgrades to Public Wastewater Scheme

The upgrading of the Birr Wastewater Scheme has been included under Offaly County Councils Assessment of Needs schemes for inclusion in Water Services Investment Programme (WSIP) for the period 2007-2014. The Birr Wastewater Scheme is also included in the list of wastewater schemes approved in the WSIP 2007-2009 and has been included in the assessment of needs submitted for the WSIP 2010-2012.

Sludge Disposal

Offaly County Council intend to provide a satellite sludge reception centre as part of the Birr Sewerage Scheme upgrade and this will cater for domestic and municipal sludge. This is part of Offaly Sludge Management Plan. The Offaly County Council Sludge

Management Plan 2001 recommends the establishment of a central sludge treatment facility for the County to be located in Tullamore. This plan will provide for the

stabilisation of both municipal and domestic sludge and allow its beneficial reuse.

Table 10.1: Proposed Upgrades to Birr Public Water Supply Scheme

Existing Source	Camcor River
Existing Network/Serves	Birr Urban District Crinkle Village Birr and Crinkle Environs Ballindara Group Scheme
Existing Types of Treatment	Sedimentation Rapid Gravity Filtration
Current Demand	2,100m ³ /d
Current Treatment Capacity	2,270m ³ /d
Current Issues/ Shortfalls	Treatment plant & reservoir are located in a residential area. The elevation of the reservoir is inadequate leading to low pressure supply in some areas
Projected Demand	3,332m ³ /d
Proposed Capacity of Upgraded Treatment Plant	5,258m ³ /d
Proposed Location of Plant and Reservoir	Springfield Bridge, Birr (Plant) Lissduff, Birr (Reservoir)
Proposed Abstraction Points	Springfield Bridge, Birr
Proposed Upgrades	New treatment capacity New reservoir capacity New trunk and distribution mains
Current Status	Preliminary Report submitted to DoEHLG for approval
Operation Date	2012

Table 10.2: Proposed Upgrades to Birr Public Wastewater Scheme

Existing Location of Plant	Townspark (Ballybritt By), Birr
Existing Network/Serves	Birr Urban District Crinkle Part of the Environs e.g. Burkes Hill Killeen in North Tipp. Riverstown in North Tipp.
Existing Types of Treatment	Primary Secondary Tertiary
Current Demand	7,700PE
Current Treatment Capacity	12,000PE
Current Issues/ Shortfalls	No stormwater storage facilities. Collection network requires rehabilitation. Pump stations require upgrading.
Projected Demand	15,000PE – 2020 20,000PE – 2029 25,000PE – Not determined
Proposed Upgrades in Treatment Capacity	15,000PE – Phase 1 20,000PE – Phase 2 25,000PE – Phase 3
Current Status	Preliminary Report is with DoEHLG for approval.
Operation Date	Phase 1 – 2013

10.2.2 Flooding

10.2.2.1 The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities

These guidelines require the planning system at national, regional and local levels to:

- Avoid development in areas at risk of flooding by not permitting development in flood risk areas, particularly floodplains, unless where it is fully justified that there are wider sustainability grounds for appropriate development and unless the flood risk can be managed to an acceptable level without increasing flood risk elsewhere and where possible, reducing flood risk overall:
- Adopt a sequential approach to flood risk management based on avoidance, reduction and then mitigation of flood risk as the overall framework for assessing the location of new development in the development planning processes: and
- Incorporate flood risk assessment into the process of making decisions on planning applications and planning appeals.

10.2.2.2 Areas at Risk of Flooding

It is widely anticipated that climate change (in particular rainfall patterns) may result in more frequent and severe flooding incidents in the future. The **Office of Public Works (OPW)** is the lead agency on flooding for Ireland. It is primarily concerned with delivering an integrated, multi-faceted programme aimed at mitigating flood risk and impacts. This includes the **identifying of areas at flood risk** and **formulating National policies**. The Councils will have regard to "The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2009".

The following flood events have been highlighted on the OPW website (www.floodmaps.ie) for Birr. Information received from www.floodmaps.ie will continue to inform the plan making and decision-making process on an on-going basis:

- Flood Event: N52 Caravan Park, Birr Recurring
- Flood Event: Cappaneale, Birr Recurring

10.2.2.3 Flood Plains

As represented on older Ordnance Survey Ireland Mapping, lands to the west of Birr town were highlighted as liable to flooding from the Little Brosna River. These lands are not zoned within this plan. Where possible and feasible, riparian strips of land within close proximity to the Camcor River and Little Brosna River are zoned green space and kept development free, for not only flood risk issues, but also for recreational and natural heritage issues as discussed in relevant chapters.

10.2.2.4 Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems-SuDs

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDs) are a method of replicating the natural characteristics of rainfall runoff from any site. They provide hydraulic, water quality and environmental benefits. The objective of SuDs drainage designs is to collect and treat the minimised amount of runoff as close to source as possible. Some form of infiltration and/or retention/storage normally achieves this. SuDs techniques comprise a flexible series of options, which allow the drainage designer to select those systems that best suit the circumstances of the site.

The overall objective is to minimise stormwater runoff. Therefore, the area of impermeable surfaces, for example pavement and tarmac, should be minimised by careful attention to site layouts and the specification of pervious surfacing, where practicable.

With regard to the increasingly frequent trend of paving over entire residential gardens to provide off street car parking or hard landscaping under the exempted development provisions of the Planning Acts, the DoEHLG intends (2008) to review the Exempted Development Regulations to ensure that only those complying sustainable drainage principles will be exempted thus limiting the run-off which would otherwise contribute to overwhelming the drainage systems⁴.

The Councils will continue to ensure the sustainable management of surface water discharges from all developments, through the utilisation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDs), in accordance with international best practice.

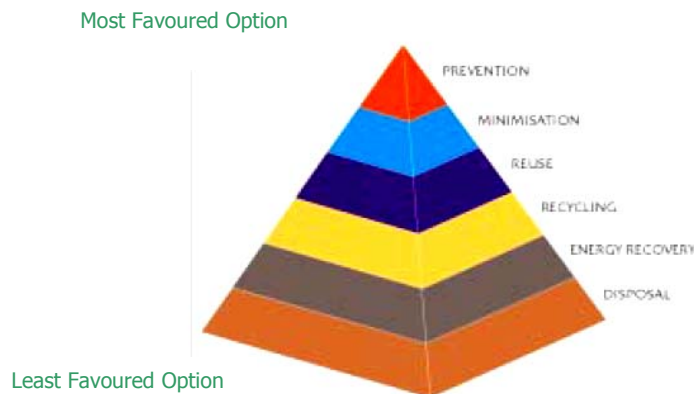
10.2.3 Waste Management

10.2.3.1 Strategic Management – (Midlands Regional Waste Management Plan)

The current Waste Management Plan for the Midlands Region 2005–2010 was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Waste Management Acts 1996 to 2005 and aims to radically alter the approach to managing waste. It is based on the EU waste management hierarchy, which prioritises waste prevention, minimisation, reuse/recycling, disposal with energy recovery ahead of landfill (Refer to Figure 10.1). The Councils are committed to implementing the current **Waste Management Plan for the Midlands Region 2005-2010** (in conjunction with North Tipperary, Laois, Westmeath and Longford County Councils), which takes account of both national and EU policy in this area.

⁴ Source: The Planning System and Flood Risk Management, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009

Figure 10.1



Source: Midlands Waste Management Plan 2005

10.2.3.2 Recycling

As part of the framework for recycling in the County Offaly, there are currently 48 “bring centres” available for public use throughout the County and 4 “civic amenity sites”. There are currently a number of “bring centres” for recyclables available for public use in Birr and this service has been enhanced by the official opening of the new civic amenity site at Syngefield, Birr in 2008. The Councils will encourage the provision of **recycling infrastructure** where it is considered necessary and will assess requirements for recycling facilities on a case by case basis as part of the development management process. If necessary and appropriate, the Councils will require applications for residential developments of 100 units or greater and/or commercial applications to provide recycling infrastructure on-site.

The Councils will have regard to the ‘**Best Practice Guidelines** on the Preparation of Waste Management Plans for Construction and Demolition Waste Projects’, (July 2006). These Guidelines introduce the concept of integrated waste management planning for construction projects above certain thresholds.

10.2.3.3 Litter Control

The Councils recognise that litter is a major environmental problem, which can significantly detract from the visual amenity of the town. The Councils will continue to work with the Tidy Towns Committee, schools and local residents associations to increase awareness of waste re-cycling and litter control in accordance with the County Offaly Litter Management Plan 2008-2011. The Councils will ensure the removal of unsightly vehicle parts and general refuse in accordance with the Waste Management Acts 1996-2001 and the Litter Pollution Acts 1997-2001.

10.2.3.4 Historic Landfill Sites

In accordance with Section 22 (7)(h) of the Waste Management Act, historic landfill sites have been identified for the purpose of identifying what, if any, remedial measures are required to be carried out at the sites. One of these sites is located in townland of Clonbrone, Birr. The Councils will comply with **statutory requirements** pertaining to the risk assessments for this site and will undertake any subsequent remedial action, which is required to be taken.

10.2.3.5 Enforcement of Waste Legislation

The Environment Section of Offaly County Council is responsible for the enforcement of waste legislation relating to the domestic, commercial and industrial sectors within Birr and will continue to develop and maintain high compliance levels through the work of its Waste Enforcement Team. The Councils prohibits the illegal dumping of wastes and litter within Birr and will continue to actively police this area.

10.2.4 Energy Management – (Climate Change)

It is widely accepted that current levels of greenhouse gas emissions i.e. carbon dioxide and methane are exacerbating global temperature rises. Use of non-renewable fossil fuels is the prime generator of greenhouse gases. There is a shift towards the use of **renewable energy sources** and whilst Birr may seem very small in the context of global

greenhouse gas emissions, the phrase “think globally... act locally” is important. Birr needs to specifically look at continuing to improve the following areas in relation to same:

- Increasing different modes of transport for short trips and public transport for long trips. (Refer to Chapter 8).
- Improving the energy rating in residential homes/businesses/industrial/commercial sectors.

10.2.4.1 Renewable Energy – Policy Context (National Level)

- National Climate Change Strategy (2007-2012) as provided for in the NDP (2007-2013).
- Energy White Paper “Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland” (2007). This sets out the broad energy policy framework for the long-term development of the energy sector, including power generation and energy use in transport and the built environment. The energy paper recognises that energy policy must make substantial contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency improvements, changes in the fuel mix and the increased use of renewable energy.
- National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (submitted to the European Commission (Oct. 2007).
- Draft Regulations on New Energy Plan for New Houses and Apartments built from July 2008.
- Consultation Paper on National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for Ireland 2007-2010.

Local Level

The Midlands Energy Agency was established in November 2007 (which includes the functional area of Offaly) and its role is to promote energy conservation, to raise awareness of energy issues and to develop long-term energy policies for the region.

Energy Efficiency

Energy efficiency is paramount if Ireland is to assist in mitigating its vulnerability to climate change and to volatile fuel prices. The EU Directive on the Energy Performance of Buildings (EPBD), as transposed into Irish legislation in 2006, contains a range of provisions aimed at improving energy performance in residential and non-residential buildings both new build and existing. The incorporation of good design into developments is considered as being the key in achieving optimum energy performance of buildings. As part of the Directive, a **Building Energy Rating** (BER) certificate, which is effectively an energy efficiency label, will be required at the point of sale or rental of a building, or on completion of a new building. The Councils will continue to conform with national policy in this regard.

The Councils will continue to take a positive approach to the acceptance and development of renewable energy facilities, where appropriate. Applications will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Small-Scale Renewable Energy

The classification of small-scale renewable energy sources are in line with the DoEHLG’s exempted development - **Provisions of Micro-Renewables Regulations** (2007). The provision of each of the following for **domestic use** is exempt from planning permission, **subject to certain conditions as set out in the Planning and Development Regulations 2001** (as amended):

- Stand-alone wind turbines.
- Building mounted wind turbines.
- Building mounted solar panels.
- Stand alone solar panels.
- Ground source heat pumps.
- Air source heat pumps.
- Biomass (includes fuel storage tanks/structures).

On building upon the planning exemptions for certain micro-renewable energy technologies in the domestic sector, the DoEHLG published the Planning and Development Regulations 2008 (S.I. No. 235 of 2008) which give effect to new

exempted development provisions in respect of renewable technologies for **industrial buildings, business premises and agricultural holdings**. The Regulations provide exemptions for **wind turbines, met masts, combined heat and power (CHP) plants, solar panels and biomass boiler units**, subject to certain conditions, across each of the sectors. The Regulations came into effect from 2 July 2008.

10.2.4.2 Non-Renewables

Non-renewable energy refers to energy that can be used only once e.g. burning of fossil fuels. Over 90% of Ireland's total energy demand is met from imported fossil fuels, with oil accounting for around 56% of the country's total primary energy supply (2007). Most non-renewable sources of energy produce greenhouse gases when they are used. Non-renewable energy sources include gas, oil, peat etc. It is an objective of the Councils to encourage and enable Bord Gáis Éireann to provide a gas supply to Birr. Notwithstanding the above, it is the general aim of this plan through related policies and objectives to reduce the dependency on non-renewables.

10.2.4.3 Electricity

The Councils acknowledge the need to utilise electricity for domestic and commercial use within Birr. The supply of electricity throughout Birr is an important factor in the provision and location of new development.

The capacity at Birr station has been doubled to 2x10MVA. The demand for energy has come mainly from large commercial/industrial and residential development. The ESB continues to take into account requests for significant commercial load increases in Birr. The Councils continue to work alongside key energy providers in facilitating the provision of electricity, where feasible.

10.2.5 Communications Infrastructure

10.2.5.1 Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures, Guidelines 1996

The aim of these guidelines is to provide relevant technical information in relation to these installations and to offer general guidance on planning issues so that the environmental impact is minimised and a consistent approach is adopted by the various Planning Authorities in the preparation of their development plans and in the operation of development control. The guidelines are also intended to be of assistance to operators and to the general public.

10.2.5.2 Importance of Telecommunications to Birr

Birr is to be developed as an e-commerce centre of excellence, building upon the success of the Shannon Development Technological Centre. The provision of **telecommunications** services, including its associated availability, price and quality is a measure which attracts industrial and commercial development, whilst also enhancing social interaction and improving personal and household security. The Councils acknowledge that the provision of broadband infrastructure is paramount to the future growth of Birr.

Telecommunications Equipment

The siting of antennae and support structures, whilst supporting and encouraging development, must not compromise environmental concerns or areas of particular visual amenity which merit protection. It is general policy that telecommunications infrastructural services should be located underground and that existing overhead cables and associated equipment should progressively be located underground to safeguard visual amenity.

However, some telecommunications services, such as mobile telephony, may require the provision of overground masts and antennae/ satellite dishes. The same may also be true of television receptors and masts. While it is the policy of the Councils to permit such masts and their antennae, the design, siting and visual amenity of satellite dishes and equipment is of paramount importance.

In order to avoid the proliferation of masts, the Councils will encourage owners and operators to facilitate the co-location of antennae on existing support structures and masts.

Broadband

Broadband is central to the continued development of Birr as a knowledge-based economy. Broadband infrastructure can consist of fibre cables, wireless, DSL, satellite or other technologies.

Metropolitan Area Network

Shannon Broadband is currently providing for the provision of vital broadband services in the Shannon Region. The laying of networks of fibre optic cable around eight towns in the region has been completed. The Broadband network in Birr is currently undergoing testing prior to commissioning. The network is aimed at serving public institutes, commercial, industrial and home users.

Other

The Councils will co-operate with initiatives by the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and public and private agencies, where appropriate in improving the provision of high-quality broadband throughout Birr.

10.2.6 Fire Service

It is an objective of the Councils' to ensure that an efficient and adequate level of fire and rescue cover is available at all times for Birr. The Councils' will continue with its programme for the development **and improvement of the Fire Service**.

10.2.7 Major Accidents Directive

The EU Council Directive 96/82/EEC (known as the Seveso II Directive) provides for **the prevention of major accidents** that involve dangerous substances and the limitation of their consequences for individuals and the environment. It applies to establishments where dangerous substances are produced, used, handled or stored. This EU directive seeks to ensure the safety of people and the environment in relation to major industrial accidents involving dangerous substances.

The European Communities (Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations (S.I. No 476 of 2000) are the main regulations that give effect to this Directive in Irish law. The National Authority for Occupational Safety Health i.e. the Health and Safety Authority-HSA, has been designated as the central competent authority for enforcement of these regulations.

There are currently no designated Seveso sites in Birr (as of 2010). Should new Seveso sites be identified in Birr, the **Health and Safety Authority (HSA)**, as the designated authority for Seveso sites, will notify the Councils. The Councils will continue to work in co-operation with the HSA when dealing with applications relating to Seveso sites and land use plans in vicinity of such sites.

10.2.7.1 Major Accidents Directive and Development

Where proposals are being considered for the following:

- New establishments at risk of causing major accidents.
- The expansion of existing establishments designated under the directive.
- Other developments proposed near to existing establishments.

The Councils will require that applicants must demonstrate that the following considerations are taken into account:

- Prevention of major accidents involving dangerous substances.
- Public health and safeguarding of public health.
- Protection of the environment.

In addition, the Councils will also take these considerations into account when assessing developments, as listed above.

10.3 Policy

Water Services General Policies

BTEP 10-01 It is the Councils' policy to ensure that the provision of water and wastewater treatment facilities is undertaken in accordance with EU policies and Directives, relevant national legislation and national/regional policies.

BTEP 10-02 It is the Councils' policy to **enable infrastructure and service delivery in the context of the National Development Plan**, subject to available finance.

BTEP 10-03 It is the Councils' policy to provide and maintain adequate water supply, drainage and wastewater services for Birr, as resources permit.

BTEP 10-04 It is the Councils' policy to ensure that the capacity of water supplies and wastewater facilities must be appropriate prior to the acceptance of a development proposal. The Councils may, where it is deemed appropriate, require developers to provide water services mains with capacities in excess of those required by the development being served, if required, and it is in the interests of long term development of the area.

Water Supply Policies

BTEP 10-05 It is the Councils' policy to provide public water supply for Birr, in accordance with Birr's position within the County Settlement Hierarchy and Offaly County Council's **Assessment of Needs 2007-2014** where feasible and where approved by the DoEHLG.

BTEP 10-06 It is the Councils' policy **to require developments to connect** to public water supplies where adequate, or where proposals for upgrading works are put forward, as appropriate.

Water Conservation

BTEP 10-07 It is the Councils' policy to continue to facilitate, encourage and comply with **best practice methods** in water conservation within Birr.

Wastewater Treatment Policies

BTEP 10-08 It is the Councils' policy to make provision for **improved and additional wastewater services on a planned basis**, related to present and future needs of housing, industry and commerce, in accordance with Birr's position within the County Settlement Hierarchy and Offaly County Council's **Assessment of Needs 2007-2014** where feasible and where approved by the DoEHLG.

BTEP 10-09 It is the Councils' policy to control impacts of wastewater produced in the most environmental, sustainable and cost-effective manner.

BTEP 10-10 It is the Councils' policy to require/implement **appropriate buffer zones** surrounding wastewater treatment plants in Birr.

BTEP 10-11 It is the Councils' policy to have regard to and conform with policies and objectives contained in the Offaly County Council's **Sludge Management Plan 2001**.

Surface Water Disposal Policies

BTEP 10-12 It is the Councils' policy to limit and manage the permitted stormwater run-off from all new developments. The maximum permitted surface water outflow from any new development is to be restricted to that of a Greenfield site before any development takes place, unless otherwise agreed by the Planning Authority. It is therefore the Councils'

Policy to require all proposed new developments within Birr to provide 'Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems' (SuDs) as part of their development proposals.

Flooding

BTEP 10-13 It is the Councils' policy to ensure that development proposed is not itself subject to an inappropriate risk of flooding and/or that it does not increase flood risk or flood damage at other locations.

BTEP 10-14 It is the Councils' policy to have regard to any mapping of flood patterns, in particular those carried out by the Office of Public Works and www.floodmaps.ie.

Development Contributions

BTEP 10-15 It is the Councils' policy, where a development is facilitated by public services which have been or will be provided, to require contributions towards the cost of providing such services, as provided by the Planning and Development Act 2000-2007. Contributions shall be levied at the rate prevailing at that time.

Environment

BTEP 10-16 It is the Councils' policy to implement relevant EU and Irish Legislation pertaining to the environment.

BTEP 10-17 It is the Councils' policy to comply with the provisions of the EU Water Framework Directive in order to fulfil obligations relating to water quality for the Shannon River Basin District and therefore to implement the provisions of the Shannon River Basin Management Plan. To this end, the Councils will continue to co-operate with other statutory authorities/agencies and stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of existing water quality monitoring and management plans and also implementation of the Shannon River Basin District Management Plan.

BTEP 10-18 It is the Councils' policy to protect groundwater sources and to protect drinking water supplies by means of Aquifer Protection Zones. Developments will be strictly controlled within any Aquifer Protection Zone in Birr (refer to map 10.2)

BTEP 10-19 It is the Councils' policy to ensure that agricultural developments are designed and constructed in a manner that will ensure that watercourses and sources of potable water are protected from the threat of pollution.

BTEP 10-20 It is the Councils' policy to maintain good air quality in Birr.

BTEP 10-21 It is the Councils' policy that planning permission will not normally be granted for new developments or extensions of existing industrial, commercial, leisure, or other uses that produce significant and unacceptable levels of noise and/or vibration at site boundaries or within adjacent sensitive areas, especially residential areas.

BTEP 10-22 It is the Councils' policy to ensure the provision of quality cost effective waste infrastructure and services, which reflect and meet the needs of the community and to ensure that the "polluter pays principle" is adhered to in all waste management activities.

BTEP 10-23 It is the Councils' policy to secure the Waste Hierarchy objectives of the Waste Management Plan for the Midlands Region, insofar as it relates to Birr, and therefore enforce the provisions of the Waste Management Acts 1996-2001.

BTEP 10-24 It is the Councils' policy to co-operate with the EPA in regard to licensing arrangements for Scheduled Industries in Birr in accordance with the provisions of the Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992.

BTEP 10-25 It is the Councils' policy to support National and E.U. Directives for waste reduction and waste disposal, including the re-cycling and re-use of waste. It will be policy to encourage the expansion of recycling activities in the town in accordance with approved procedures.

BTEP 10-26 It is the Councils' policy that all proposed residential development applications of 100 units or greater will be assessed and, if necessary, required to provide a set of bring banks for recyclables material to the specifications and design required by Offaly County Council. A similar policy will also apply to commercial developments such as shopping centres where large volumes of people congregate. Such developments shall, where considered necessary, be required to provide a set of bring banks as part of their car park layout.

BTEP 10-27 It is the Councils' Policy to require Waste Management Plans to be prepared for Construction and Demolition Projects of a particular scale in accordance with Best Practice Guidelines issued by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in July 2006. It is Councils' policy to require developers of projects with significant potential for the generation of construction and demolition waste to prepare a Project Construction and Demolition Waste Management Plan where the project exceeds any of the following thresholds:

1. New residential developments of 10 houses or more.
2. New residential developments other than (1) above, including institutional, educational, health and other public facilities, with an aggregate floor area in excess of 1,250m².
3. Demolition/renovation/refurbishment projects generating in excess of 100m³ in volume of construction and demolition waste.
4. Civil engineering projects in excess of 500m³ of waste, excluding waste materials used for development works on the site.

BTEP 10-28 It is the Councils' policy that where proposals are being considered for the following:

- New establishments at risk of causing major accidents,
- The expansion and/or modification of existing establishments designated under the directive; and
- Other developments proposed near to existing establishments.

The Councils will require that applicants must demonstrate that the following considerations are taken into account:

- Prevention of major accidents involving dangerous substances;
- public health and safeguarding of public health, and
- the protection of the environment.

Energy Management

BTEP 10-29 It is the Councils' Policy to minimise emissions to the air of greenhouse gases in order to contribute to a reduction and avoidance of human induced climate change in accordance with the Kyoto agreement. The Councils support and are committed to the National Climate Change Strategy, and to facilitate measures that seek to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. In this regard, the Councils will support any initiatives taken to provide for more sustainable forms of energy use.

BTEP 10-30 It is the Councils' policy to support national and international initiatives for limiting emissions of greenhouse gases and encouraging the development of renewable energy sources.

BTEP 10-31 It is the Councils' policy to facilitate the continual development of renewable energy sources having regard to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area concerned, having particular regard to **amenities**, **landscape sensitivities** and the **protection of habitats and heritage**, where such proposals comply with policy contained in this Development Plan, in the interests of proper planning and sustainable development.

BTEP 10-32 It is the Councils' policy to promote **energy conservation and efficiency measures** and **facilitate innovative building design** that promotes energy efficiency and use of renewable energy sources in accordance with national policy and guidelines.

BTEP 10-33 It is the Councils' policy to promote, encourage and facilitate the provision of **micro-renewable energy**.

BTEP 10-34 It is the Councils' policy to support the development of renewable energy in Birr environs, where it is considered appropriate. Such development will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Telecommunications Infrastructure

BTEP 10-35 The Councils recognise the national and local importance of a high quality telecommunications service. It is the Councils' policy to achieve a balance between facilitating the provision of telecommunications services in the interests of social and economic progress, sustaining residential amenities and environmental quality. The Councils will have regard to the Department of the Environment Guidelines on Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures in assessing development proposals.

BTEP 10-36 It is the Councils' policy to avoid an unnecessary proliferation of masts. It is the Councils' policy to encourage owners and operators to facilitate the co-location of antennae on existing support structures and masts. In particular, It is the Councils' policy to **avoid a proliferation of communication masts, aerials etc.**

BTEP 10-37 The Councils acknowledge the importance of telecommunications within Birr, however design, siting and visual impact are of paramount importance, especially in a designated heritage town. It is the Councils' policy to restrict the provision of overground masts and antennae within the following areas in particular:

- Designated Areas of High Amenity.
- Areas adjoining or within the curtilage of protected structures or within ACA's.
- On or within the setting of archaeological sites, structures and zones.

BTEP 10-38 It is the Councils' policy to facilitate the provision of broadband Telecommunications in Birr, in conjunction with the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and any relevant bodies.

10.4 Objectives⁵

General

BTEO 10-01 To provide infrastructural services to meet present and future demand and to facilitate the orderly expansion of the town.

Water Supplies Objectives

BTEO 10-02 To provide and/or facilitate the provision and/or upgrading of water supplies in accordance with Birr's position within the County Settlement Hierarchy and Offaly County Council's **Assessment of Needs 2007-2014** where feasible and where approved by the DoEHLG, subject to adequate resources being available and to implement Stage 2 of Birr Water Supply Improvement Scheme i.e. development of new sources of water supply.

Wastewater Services Objectives

BTEO 10-03 To provide and/or facilitate the **refurbishment and or upgrading of wastewater treatment schemes**, in accordance with Birr's position within the County Settlement Hierarchy and Offaly County Council's **Assessment of Needs 2007-2014** where feasible and where approved by the DoEHLG and any other measures where an immediate need arises, subject to adequate resources being available.

Surface Water Disposal Objectives

BTEO 10-04 To make provisions for the extension and improvement of **surface water disposal infrastructure**.

Environment

BTEO 10-05 To protect and preserve the quality of surface water, ground water and drinking water in Birr through the relevant legislative provisions.

BTEO 10-06 To protect Aquifer Protection Zones from contamination.

BTEO 10-07 To continue to work with the EPA, and the Shannon River Basin District Authority in relation to implementing the various Water Quality Management Plans for the Shannon River Basin District.

BTEO 10-08 To continue its programme of monitoring water quality in the Shannon River Basin District and ensure that the objectives under the Water Framework Directive 2000 are met in conjunction with the EPA.

BTEO 10-09 To ensure that all agricultural activities adhere to any legislation on water quality e.g. Phosphorus Regulations, Water Framework Directive and Nitrates Directive.

BTEO 10-10 To implement the relevant provisions of Water Pollution Legislation.

BTEO 10-11 To protect Birr's waters from pollution, particularly by over-enrichment by nutrients, especially nitrates and phosphorous.

BTEO 10-12 To issue and monitor, where appropriate, effluent licences for discharges to sewers and waterbodies.

BTEO 10-13 The Councils support National and E.U. Directives for waste reduction and waste disposal, including the recycling and re-use of waste. It will be policy to encourage the expansion of recycling activities in the town in accordance with approved procedures and to continue to expand environmental awareness initiatives designed to create increased public awareness of waste prevention, minimisation and reuse. Particular emphasis should be placed on the commercial and industrial sector.

⁵ The order of listing of objectives is not intended to indicate priorities. Subject to the availability of resources, it is the Councils' aim to monitor and accomplish the objectives listed in this section within the period of the plan.

BTEO 10-14 To implement the provisions of the Waste Management Hierarchy and the current Waste Management Plan for the Midlands Region. As a result, developments in Birr will be expected to take account of the provisions of the Waste Management Plan for the Midlands Region and adhere to those elements of it that relate to waste prevention and minimisation, waste recycling facilities, and the capacity for source segregation.

BTEO 10-15 To implement the legislative provisions in relation to historic landfill sites in Birr and to undertake risk assessments where required and any subsequent remedial measures where necessary.

BTEO 10-16 To use statutory powers to prohibit the illegal deposit and disposal of waste materials, refuse and litter, and to authorise and regulate, waste disposal within the county in an environmentally sustainable manner.

BTEO 10-17 To ensure that an efficient and adequate level of fire and rescue cover is available at all times. The Councils will continue with the programme for the development and improvement of the Fire Service.

Energy Management

BTEO 10-18 To facilitate the promotion and construction of **energy efficient** developments in Birr.

BTEO 10-19 To support the further **extension of the gas grid** into County Offaly to serve existing and envisaged future residential development and commercial and industrial activity. It is an objective of the Councils to encourage and enable Bord Gáis Eireann to provide a gas supply to Birr.

BTEO 10-20 To support and facilitate the provision of **high-voltage electricity infrastructure** to cater for natural growth, new and existing large customers. Further, it is an objective of the Councils' to ensure, insofar as is possible, that the necessary infrastructure is in place to support the existing and future economy of Birr, to support economic development and to attract investment.

BTEO 10-21 The control, having regard to the provisions of the Major Accidents Directive and any regulations, under the enactment, giving effect to that Directive, of

- Siting of new establishments;
- modification of existing establishments, and
- development in the vicinity of such establishments, for the purposes of reducing the risk or limiting the consequences of, a major accident.