

Chapter 11 Community, Social and Cultural Development

11.0 Aim

Promote the development of Tullamore as a part of the Midlands Linked Gateway, where people can live and work, with access to a range of community facilities that are a vital component in increasing social inclusion and contribute to the **quality of life** for all.

11.1 Context

11.1.1 Community Facilities

“**Community Services**” potentially covers a very broad range of infrastructure and service provision to meet the needs of residents within the Tullamore area. The Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006 focuses on childcare and educational facilities, which includes services such as pre-schools, Naionrai (Irish language playgroups), day-care services, crèches, playgroups, childminding, after-school groups and primary, secondary and special needs schools. Other community facilities include places of worship, burial grounds, hospital and health centres, facilities for the elderly and persons with disabilities, libraries and community halls.

“**Community Facility**” covers a variety of amenities which are responsive to and meet the needs of individual communities. For the purposes of this plan, the individual sectors in broad terms, which are providers of community facilities include the State, Local Authorities, Community Groups and Private Interest Groups.

11.1.2 At a National Level...

“**Towards 2016**” - The National social partnership agreement proposes a “lifecycle” approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion across key lifecycle stages i.e. children, people of working age, older people and people with disabilities.

The “**National Action Plan for Social Inclusion**” 2007-2016 sets out how the agreements under “**Towards 2016**” will be achieved through targets and interventions.

The **National Development Plan 2007-2013** is committed to assisting in combating social exclusion which is fundamental to the quality of life of all individuals. This includes, for example, the provision of the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme.

11.1.3 County Development Board Strategy

Close **linkages** exist between this Development Plan and the County Development Board Strategy (CBD). A primary function of the CDB strategy is to bring the socio-economic and physical planning processes together. The **land-use** policies of this **plan** must be informed by and **reflect** the **socio-economic** and **cultural** considerations of the **County Development Board Strategy**.

In general, the purpose of this **plan** in relation to community, social and cultural development is to include appropriate policies and objectives which relate to the allocation and reservation of land, development management standards and provision of specific social, community and cultural facilities for Tullamore.

11.1.4 Social Inclusion

Social inclusion refers to the way in which all persons in a community are integrated in an equal manner, reducing barriers to participation e.g. discrimination and/or physical barriers such as accessibility and inadequate transport facilities. In order to combat social exclusion, actions must be taken at both national and local level and be focused on the most disadvantaged areas.

The **Local Anti Poverty Strategy 2008-2010** prepared by the **Offaly County Development Board** in conjunction with Offaly County Council is consistent with the Government’s Social Inclusion Policy as set out in the NDP 2007-2013 and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016. Further, **Offaly County Council’s Annual Internal**

Social Inclusion Plan, which is a cross-departmental plan, highlights how each internal section within the Councils individually seeks to target and contribute to social inclusion within the community.

11.1.5 Offaly Sports Partnership

The **Offaly Sport Partnership** has a remit which involves engaging in inter-agency planning for the efficient and effective development of sport and recreational activities in County Offaly, with the full participation of voluntary clubs and organisations. In particular, to ensure provisions for the youth, older adults and those people who are disadvantaged or marginalised.

11.1.6 Offaly Local Development Company

The Offaly Local Development Company was formed in 2008 as a county wide integrated, cohesive company to existing local development companies Tullamore Wider Options and Offaly Leader. It has the remit to support community based social inclusion and rural development programmes. Offaly Local Authorities are represented on the board and will cooperate with the Offaly Local Development Company in delivering its programmes.

11.2 Strategy

This plan seeks to assist and facilitate in the improvement of existing social, community and cultural facilities, as appropriate within Tullamore and make adequate provisions for the development of new facilities. As highlighted in table 11.1, the **Councils** provide a number of roles in ensuring adequate provision of social, community and cultural facilities as appropriate, namely:

| Table 11.1: Role of the Councils in the Provision of Community/Social and Cultural Facilities |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reservation of lands for community uses within Tullamore. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitation and flexibility in the provision of increased community services within Tullamore as appropriate, including education, health, childcare etc. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applying a collaborative approach in the assessment of planning applications submitted which are required to reflect the scale of its location and carrying capacity in terms of community infrastructure. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plan for the appropriate expansion of Tullamore as per its position within the County settlement hierarchy and Midlands Linked Gateway. |

In particular, suitably located sites will be reserved in existing and new built-up areas where deficiencies exist. In newly developing areas such as the masterplan areas, sites for community facilities e.g. pre-schools, clinics, convenience shops and local resource centres have been identified to meet anticipated needs (refer to Chapter 5). The provision of social facilities including recreational facilities for the youth of the town is essential, and the Councils wish to see the expansion of these types of facilities in Tullamore.

This strategy, for the purposes of this plan, identifies the needs of communities in broad terms. However, a **collaborative approach** by all stakeholders i.e. state, local authority, community groups and the private sector, on the identification and provision of community facilities is required on an on-going basis to ensure that appropriate facilities are provided, when necessary. The Councils play an integral role in facilitating and supporting these identified needs.

11.2.1 Education

11.2.1.1 Councils' Role

Central Government through the Department of Education and Science is responsible for the delivery of educational facilities and services. The **Councils' role** in education provision is in ensuring that **adequate serviceable land is**

available in appropriate locations to meet current and envisaged future requirements within and beyond the period of this plan.

11.2.1.2 The Provision of Schools and the Planning System, a Code of Practice for Planning Authorities, DoES and DoEHLG

The code of practice sets out the best practice approaches that should be followed by the planning Authorities in ensuring that the planning system plays its full part in facilitating the timely and cost-effective roll-out of school facilities by the Department of Education and Science (DoES) and in line with the principals of proper planning and sustainable development.

11.2.1.3 Identification and Suitability Assessment of Sites for Primary Schools, Technical Guidance Document TGD-025, Department of Education and Science, 2007

This document gives guidance in identifying and suitability assessing the size of sites required for primary school developments and primary school extensions.

11.2.1.4 Future Requirements over the Plan Period

There are currently nine primary schools and 3 secondary schools serving Tullamore and its rural hinterland. It is noted from the DoES that the existing schools will be required to cater for the educational needs of the existing population for the medium to longer term. Existing schools sites are identified and protected for education use within the timeframe of this plan. Further to this, the planning framework, set out within each of the masterplan areas (refer to Chapter 5) provides more than adequate lands zoned for public/educational uses to provide for and facilitate changing educational needs with that of an emerging population within the town. The Council will continue to liaise with the DoES on their existing and future needs for school places be they on existing established sites or new greenfield sites.

11.2.2 Other Education

The closest Third Level Technological Institute to Tullamore is the Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT). However, there are a number of post second level courses available within Tullamore which provide additional education and training, further equipping candidates for the workforce. Examples of these include Ormonde Business school, VEC adult education centre and FAS.

Offaly County Council is a partner in Offaly Third level Education Outreach project which is an initiative of Offaly County Development Board led by County Offaly VEC.

The Councils will encourage and facilitate where possible the provision of educational facilities including third level education and training centres that will endeavour to attract people to live and work in Tullamore.

11.2.3 Childcare

11.2.3.1 Councils' Role

The **Councils' role** in relation to childcare facilities is in implementing national guidelines and local policies and in encouraging/supporting adequate measures which are consistent with the size and scale of development proposals. In addition, the Councils have a role in accommodating both an increase in population levels as per Tullamore's role as part of the Midlands Linked Gateway and as administrative town within the County settlement hierarchy and also facilitating individuals in the workforce at optimum locations i.e. within residential estates, town/village centre locations, places of employment (refer to Chapter 5).

11.2.3.2 Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities

Increasing numbers of people in the workforce and changing lifestyles have increased the demand for **childcare** facilities within our communities. The Councils continue to have regard to national guidelines notably *Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities*. At a local level, the Offaly County Childcare Committee (inter-agency) has prepared a Strategic Plan (2007-2010) which outlines the strategic framework for the development of high quality childcare and family support services for all children and families in County Offaly for the period 2007-2010.

11.2.3.3 Teenspace National Recreation Policy for Young People (2007)

The Councils will have regard to the Department of Health and Children's policy document entitled '*Teenspace National Recreation Policy for Young People*' (2007). It is recognised that a multi-agency approach is necessary in meeting the needs of the youth within the County and including Tullamore. Such needs include, recreational opportunities, including both formal and informal activities i.e. 'youth cafes', sports facilities and casual areas where young people can integrate with each other etc.

11.2.4 Children's Play Facilities

The Councils recognise the need to maximise opportunities for children's play facilities both within the natural and built environment. The Councils have adopted a **Play Policy** in accordance with national policy – "Ready Steady Play: A National Play Policy" and same is currently being implemented. The County Development Board have prepared (March 2008) a Draft Play Strategy 2008-2010 for Offaly.

A new playground is located in Lloyd Town Park in Tullamore and its success is reflected through a high level of usage. It has a strategic location in a functional open space, designed with appropriate materials, is supervised and overlooked by the people using the park and the footpaths outside the park area. Therefore, the playground's design and location is of an excellent standard and presents a good example for future development of playgrounds in Tullamore and County Offaly.

Plate 11.1: Playground at Lloyd Park.



Source: Andy Mason

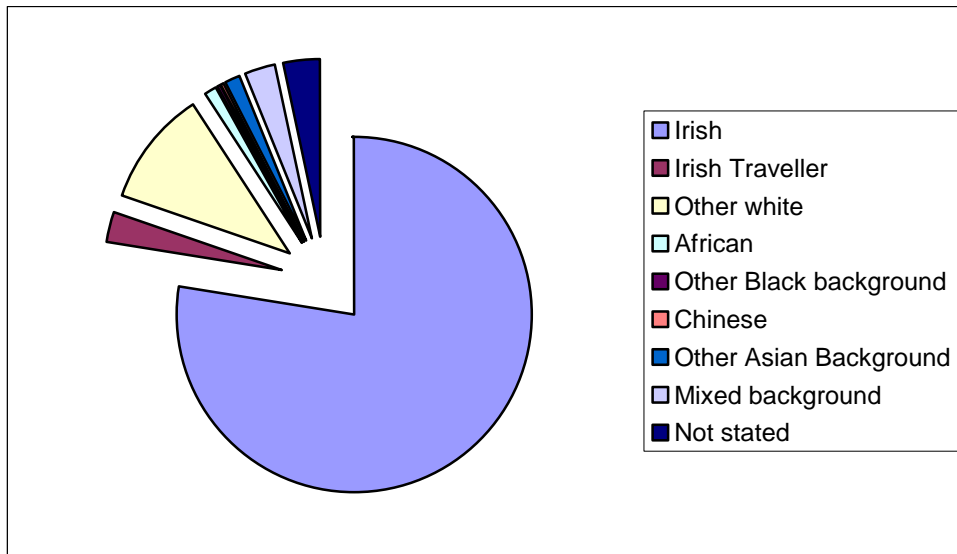
11.2.5 Elderly and Disabled

The Councils will continue to address the needs of the elderly and disabled through the provision of services, amenities and improvement of the Tullamore public realm.

11.2.7 Non-Irish Nationals Living in Tullamore

The Councils recognise the valuable contribution that Irish non-nationals have made to the local economic and social environment of Tullamore over the past 6 years. Non-nationals comprise almost 20% of the total population of Tullamore. The Councils will continue to support and facilitate the location of all new residents to Tullamore. This will be achieved through the provision of services (including land-use zoning), improving the quality of life and continuing to make Tullamore an attractive place to work and visit.

Figure 11.1: Persons classified by ethnic background in Tullamore as a portion of overall population



Source: Census of population 2006

11.2.8 Health Services

11.2.8.1 Councils Role

The Health Services Executive (HSE) is the principle body responsible for the delivery of health and social services. The **Councils have a role** in ensuring that health services are located within accessible areas. The Councils acknowledge that residential care facilities and other health services distributed throughout settlements improve service accessibility and greater integration within the community. Subsequently, the Councils will continue to support and facilitate the location of these services in Tullamore. The Councils will support the Department of Health and Children and Health Services Executive in the provision and development of new facilities. In addition, the Councils will support and co-operate with promoters or operators of private health care facilities.

The **Tullamore Midland Regional Hospital**, the head offices for the **HSE** and the **Health Board Executive** are all located in Tullamore. The Council recognises the importance of the specialised and general services provided by the hospital to Tullamore town, its hinterland and a wider catchment area and will co-operate with the HSE to secure any further expansion of this service which may be warranted to further re-enforce Tullamore's role in Healthcare and its developing niche in this sector.

Plate 11.2: Entrance to the Tullamore Midland Regional Hospital



Source: Andy Mason

11.2.9 Sport/Recreation/Open Space

11.2.9.1 Councils' Role

The **Councils have a role** in protecting existing sport/recreation and open space areas and ensuring that adequate land is zoned for development to accommodate sporting and recreational facilities i.e. both active and passive.

11.2.9.2 Sporting and Leisure

Angling, athletics, basketball, boxing, camogie, canoeing, community games, cycling, GAA, golf, pitch and putt, gyms, gymnastics, hockey, karate, rugby, rowing, girl guides, scouts, soccer, swimming facilities, tennis, squash, walking are among the extensive range of sports facilities, clubs and events offered in the Tullamore and Environs area. The Councils will try to safeguard existing leisure, recreational and sporting facilities including those operated privately and publicly. The relocation of existing recreational and sporting facilities from the Tullamore and Environs area to more rural or remote locations outside of the town will be resisted. Developers will be encouraged to provide new facilities for community use, especially in mixed use or high density schemes. New proposals should be in suitably accessible locations central to a wide catchment, should be compatible with neighbouring developments and in addition will be subject to other policies of the plan relating to open space provision. The Councils will carefully scrutinise any enlargement, extension, development of recreational and leisure facilities or places of entertainment and protecting the amenity of existing local residents will be priority and will liaise with Offaly Local Sports Partnerships regarding the assessment of meeting local sports needs.

Plates 11.3 and 11.4: Spectators at O'Connor Park and Canoeing on the Grand Canal.



Source: Andy Mason

11.2.10 Libraries

County Offaly's network of public libraries provides an important community, information, cultural and outreach facility role within the County. Its County headquarters is situated in Tullamore in O'Connor Square.

The completion of the Tullamore central library project, which includes a modern library HQ, local studies department and branch library with meeting rooms and multi-functional spaces at O'Connor Square will create a major resource for Tullamore town and the overall County.

11.2.11 Arts and Culture

Offaly County Council has adopted and published a County Arts Plan for the period 2007 to 2011. This plan details areas of strategic arts development for example: existing and new infrastructure, public art development, capacity and audience building strategies as well as initiatives in music, drama, literature, film and dance development.

Both Council's recognise the value and contribution that cultural activity brings to the quality of life and its importance in fostering pride and cultural identity. The Council's will facilitate the regular identification of needs in relation to cultural activity in the town and will encourage and support appropriate and necessary cultural activities. The Council will work with other agencies and stakeholders, including artists to ensure that effective and efficient planning and provision of cultural activities where possible.

The Council acknowledges that the provision of an Arts Centre in Tullamore would be a valuable contribution for the people of Tullamore and surrounding areas, workers and visitors to the town.

11.2.12 Places of Worship

The Councils recognise the valuable contribution that places of worship have in the community and will endeavour to accommodate and facilitate their provision and/or extension, where appropriate.

11.2.13 Burial Grounds

The Councils have a role in ensuring that adequate land is reserved to accommodate such a use in accordance with future needs within Tullamore. The Councils have a responsibility in the provision of burial grounds including as necessary, the acquisition of lands and the undertaking of any necessary works on these lands. The burial ground serving Tullamore is located at Clonminch and lands have been appropriately allocated for future cemetery extension.

11.2.15 Implementation

The successful **implementation** of the Councils' Social/Community/Cultural policies is by way of a collaborative approach by Tullamore Town Council and Offaly County Council, other statutory bodies, private developers, the community and voluntary sector.

11.3 Policy

Community - General

TTEP 11-01 The Councils recognise the importance of community facilities in the welfare and development of society. It is the Councils' policy to assist, where feasible, in **social, community and cultural development** within Tullamore and to encourage and facilitate the provision and extension of community facilities to serve individual communities throughout Tullamore and to co-operate with any bodies which wish to expand the provision of social facilities in Tullamore. The Councils shall encourage the provision and extension of community and sporting facilities to serve individual communities throughout the town. Social development initiatives at a community level will be encouraged and assisted where possible by the Councils. Consideration will be given on an individual basis to the provision of support for community projects and/or making available sites for same.

TTEP 11-02 It is the Councils' policy to support and facilitate the **County Development Board** in its key objectives of strengthening the community sector in Tullamore and developing a long-term strategy of social investment at community level.

TTEP 11-03 It is the Councils' policy to **identify suitable sites** for community facilities within Tullamore (refer to Chapter 5: Masterplans), particularly in newly developing areas.

TTEP 11-04 It is the Councils' policy that proposals for **new developments** will be encouraged to provide new facilities (including play facilities) for community use. Proposals should be in suitable locations and be compatible with adjoining developments. Such proposals will be subject to other policies of this Development Plan, in particular those concerning open space provision.

Further, it is the Councils' policy to encourage the provision of **multi-functional** buildings, which are **adaptable** to accommodating a range of community facilities, where appropriate. (This is particularly apparent in the case of new housing estates, whereby a crèche facility can be designed to be re-developed in subsequent years, for an alternative community facility or where buildings within existing schools can be used for wider community uses outside of school hours). Further, it is the Councils' policy that the multi-use of public spaces will be encouraged.

Childcare

TTEP 11-05 It is the Councils' policy to encourage the provision of childcare facilities in residential areas, employment areas, retail centres and other areas as appropriate, when development proposals are put forward for consideration.

TTEP 11-06 It is the Councils' policy to assist the County Childcare Committee in identifying priority areas within Tullamore for the provision of **childcare** facilities.

Elderly

TTEP 11-07 It is the Councils' policy to facilitate the development of facilities and new homes for the elderly within the plan area. The provision of new residential homes within open countryside locations of the environs areas of Tullamore will be considered only in such cases where it is clearly demonstrated that due to the nature of the services to be provided, a rural location is necessary and that no suitable alternative sites are available within zoned lands.

Recreation, Open Space and Amenity Facilities

TTEP 11-08 It is the Councils' policy to **preserve the landuse of existing public and private recreation areas** to prevent to loss of existing leisure facilities, including sports clubs, grounds, built leisure facilities and areas of public and private open space through redevelopment to other uses. In exceptional circumstances, a change of use may be sought, but must demonstrate that alternative recreational provisions are provided in the same area or in a suitable alternative location **within the plan area**. Further, it is the Councils' policy to identify, where possible and appropriate, new open space, amenity sites, recreational facilities/areas and existing sites in areas of future extension within Tullamore. (refer to Chapter 5: Masterplans). It is Council's policy to co-operate with sporting organisations who wish to expand or develop facilities.

TTEP 11-09 It is the Councils' policy to encourage and facilitate the provision of **community and recreational infrastructure** as an integral component of proposed new residential schemes and in particular, the provision of playgrounds for children.

TTEP 11-10 It is the Councils' policy to seek opportunities to improve the quality and capacity of existing leisure facilities and where appropriate, the Councils will use their powers under the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006 to require development levies to achieve the enhancement of existing facilities and the creation of new facilities.

Education Facilities

TTEP 11-11 It is the Councils' policy to liaise with, co-operate with and to facilitate the Department of Education and Science and relevant school authorities in the provision of education facilities, as appropriate. This includes the identification and reservation of **sufficient land** to meet the need for **expansion** of existing schools and/or provision of new schools for Tullamore and its catchment area and the requirements of the relevant education authority.

TTEP 11-12 It is Council policy to encourage and facilitate where possible, the provision of educational facilities including third level education and training centres in the town.

Libraries

TTEP 11-13 It is the Councils' policy to ensure that the Tullamore branch of the County Library Service is strongly positioned to support: the knowledge society, social inclusion, e-Government, life-long learning initiatives, local studies, archive-services, children's services, services to rural communities, the housebound and homes for the elderly.

Arts and Culture

TTEP 11-14 It is Councils' policy, having regard to Tullamore's Gateway status and projected population growth, to facilitate the development of a dedicated multi-purpose Arts Centre in the town, as resources permit.

TTEP 11-15 It is the Councils' policy to implement the Arts Plan 2007-2011 and the development of successive County arts plans in relation to Tullamore.

TTEP 11-16 It is the Councils' policy to maximise the **per cent for art scheme** in relation to major capital projects which provides opportunities for artists of all disciplines to create work to exist in the public realm. **Public capital**

projects, for example: housing developments, roads, water and waste water treatment schemes, as well as hospitals, schools and libraries have a percentage of the total capital costs allocated for the creation of a work of art. It is the Councils' policy to reflect a commitment to, and recognition of, the diversities of the scheme in line with national guidelines.

Community Healthcare

TTEP 11-17 It is the Councils' policy to promote and facilitate the improvement of health services in Tullamore, where necessary, and in particular to encourage the integration of health services and facilities with new and existing community facilities, where feasible.

TTEP 11-18 It is the Councils' policy to look favourably upon **primary care centres** which comprise/provide access to a range of healthcare services including General Practitioners, nurses/midwives, health care assistants, home help assistants, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, social workers and administrative personnel, as appropriate. However, the provision of **individual healthcare facilities** will also be considered, as appropriate.

TTEP 11-19 It is the Councils' policy to co-operate with the Health Services Executive (HSE) in the provision and location of health, community and social facilities. Also to co-operate with other groups who may wish to provide social services in the town.

Burial Grounds

TTEP 11-20 It is the Councils' policy to protect the cultural heritage of historical burial grounds within Tullamore and to encourage their management and maintenance in accordance with conservation principles.

11.4 Objectives¹

Community –General

TTEO 11-01 To encourage and facilitate the development of community centres in Tullamore at appropriate locations and to encourage the multi-use of existing facilities such as crèches and school buildings for wider community uses at times when they are not in use.

Education

TTEO 11-02 To facilitate the provision and location of new education facilities within the existing plan area. Where out of town locations are presented, these will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. It will be an objective to extend existing education facilities, where appropriate and possible. Additional lands have been reserved for the provision of school extensions and for new schools, if required within the plan area.

Childcare

TTEO 11-03 To facilitate the implementation of the **Offaly County Childcare Committee Strategic Plan 2007-2010**.

Open Spaces/Amenity

TTEO 11-04 To **develop open spaces** which will encourage a range of recreational and amenity activities that will cater for both active and passive needs.

Sports and Recreation

TTEO 11-05 To support and facilitate **local community groups/sporting organisations** in the development of sport and recreational facilities, in particular through land-use zoning, where appropriate.

¹ 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.

Burial Grounds

TTEO 11-06 To provide or assist in the provision of burial grounds and extensions to existing burial grounds, by 1) reservation of land at suitable locations, 2) provision of local authority burial grounds, where feasible. Regard will be afforded to the heritage value of cemeteries and access to and information on the history, ecology, archaeology and genealogy of the sites will be promoted.

Library Facilities

TTEO 11-07 To improve current library provisions, and in particular the development of the Tullamore Central Library Project, which includes a modern library HQ, local studies department and branch library with meeting rooms and multi-functional spaces at O'Connor Square, Tullamore.

Play Facilities

TTEO 11-08 To develop a partnership approach in funding and developing play in Tullamore, in accordance with the Councils current Play Policy/ Play Strategy.

Arts Facilities

TTEO 11-09 To facilitate the development of a dedicated multi-purpose Arts Centre at a suitable location within the town.