

Chapter 7: Community

Strategic Aim:

Promote Edenderry as a town where people can live and work, with access to a range of community facilities and events that are vital for social inclusion and quality of life for all.

7.1 Introduction

Encouraging vibrant communities in Edenderry must start with offering residents a quality of life that opens new and different opportunities. Building communities should not be focused on only building homes but should be developed for the wider needs of the whole community and strive to cultivate communities that are well balanced, integrated, sustainable and well connected. Community services, facilities and amenities are needed at an early stage within the life of new communities to keep people engaged and invested in their locality. Equally important are the less visible types of support that make people feel at home in an area and create a sense of local identity and belonging. Volunteers, local committees or community development workers, by their passion and mobilization, encourage involvement in shared community activities.



Figure 7.1 Edenderry GAA Grounds, Weavers Fields

7.2 Strategy

This plan seeks to assist and facilitate the improvement of existing social, community and cultural facilities, as appropriate within Edenderry and also make adequate provisions for the development of new facilities within the town. The Council provides a number of roles in ensuring adequate provision of social, community and cultural facilities as appropriate.

Suitably located sites will be reserved in existing and newly built-up areas where deficiencies exist. The provision of adequate social facilities including recreational facilities for all residents of the town

is essential, and the Councils wish to see the expansion of these types of facilities in Edenderry to foster a greater sense of community and belonging.

This strategy, for the purposes of this plan, identifies the needs of the community of Edenderry 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 Council plays an integral role in facilitating and supporting these identified needs.

7.3 Social Infrastructure

7.3.1 Assessment of the Existing Situation and Future Demand

Assessing the existing situation included:

- Establishing a social and demographic profile of the community who live in Edenderry (Chapter 1)
- Identifying existing community infrastructure features under a number of predefined themes including 'Education & Training', 'Childcare Facilities', 'Health Facilities', 'Sports and Recreational Facilities', 'Playgrounds & Open Spaces', 'Community & Resource Centres', 'Places of Worship', 'Arts and Culture', and 'Libraries'.

Below outlines an assessment of the existing infrastructure provision relative to the existing/planned population and best practice provision.

7.3.1.1 Education & Training

The Maynooth University Campus is located approximately 38km from Edenderry Town, Moate Business College is located 53km to the west and Athlone Campus of the Technological University of the Shannon (TUS): Midlands Midwest is located 65km from Edenderry Town.

Edenderry Further Education and Training (FET) Centre and Youthreach Edenderry are located at St. Mary's Road, adjacent to Oaklands Secondary school. Youthreach Edenderry provides full-time education for early school leavers aged between 15-20 years. Edenderry FET Centre offer a wide range of part-time unaccredited and accredited courses at QQI Level 1-5 e.g. Literacy, ESOL, Level 3 Internet & Email Skills, Level 5 Youthwork, Beauty Therapy and Business Administration. Youthreach provide QQI accreditation at Levels 3 and 4 on the National Framework of Qualifications and a wide range of additional courses including: Gaisce, Safe Food, Healthy Food Made Easy, Safe Pass, Manual Handling and First Aid Training.

Building on the international reputation of local trades, the National Construction Training Centre at Mount Lucas lies 14km southwest of Edenderry. Only 26% of the total population within Edenderry (7,359) have completed at least a technical or vocational qualification, against 48% nationally¹, despite a relatively high level of connectivity to third level facilities. This highlights the need for a wider dedicated training facility in the town, perhaps as a branch of the Technological University of the Shannon (TUS): Midlands Midwest.

¹ Based on 2016 CSO Data as 2022 figures not yet available as of December 2022

Education is one of the primary functions of Edenderry. This is borne out by the numbers attending schools and employed in education in the town. There are currently five primary schools and two secondary schools within Edenderry. With regard to capacity, the Department of Education has confirmed that should the 721 person population increase materialise within the lifetime of the plan, additional Primary and Post-Primary education provision may be required in Edenderry to facilitate future population projections. Explicit provision for school development to cater for compact growth should be made in existing built up areas within Edenderry. In the context of extending the capacity of existing schools if required within the Plan period, it is important to consider the current refugee situation within Ireland and the potential need for extra education provision that increasing numbers of refugees may bring in the short to medium term. It may be possible to add some of this level of accommodation onto existing schools. However, this would be dependent on the size and suitability of the existing sites and school agreements.

The two post primary schools within the town serve a wider catchment than Edenderry town itself and there are 12 primary schools within this wider catchment. Both schools are on relatively confined sites with limited opportunities for additional classroom extension. Analysis of the enrolment figures at primary school suggests that additional class room space will be required at post-primary level in the near future. The Council has sought and will continue to seek to work with the Department of Education to identify and develop sites for the development of these schools. The zoning map accompanying this written statement makes adequate provision for public/community and educational zoned lands in Edenderry. A consequence to the proximity of the two post-primary schools and five primary schools to each other is traffic congestion at certain times of the day primarily associated with these schools. The council will seek to address these during the plan period (refer to accompanying Local Transport Plan).

	School Name	Enrolment 2021-2022 (Source: schooldays.ie)
Primary	Scoil Bhríde	568
	Monasteroris National School	62
	St. Mary's	380
	St. Patrick's	188
	Gaelscoil Éadan Doire	100
Post-Primary	St. Mary's	927
	Oaklands	821

Table 7.1 Profile of existing schools in Edenderry

The e-hive co-working hub was officially opened in Edenderry in November 2019, having been made possible by the Town and Village Renewal Scheme funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development. The e-hive co-working hub provides a high quality space to support enterprise in Edenderry with the potential to foster innovation. The state of the art e-hive digital co-working space is located in the landmark Edenderry Town Hall, built as a Market House in 1826. The high quality contemporary design in a historic building matches the best co-working facilities

internationally. The Town Hall sits in the town square, which benefited from a public renewal project also funded through the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, creating a civic space that has enabled the rebirth of the Edenderry Festival within the town and furthering the community infrastructure within the town.

The Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Offaly provides Outreach Services to new and established businesses in Edenderry. These include: business clinics, mentoring and enterprise related training and networking events.

7.3.1.2 Childcare

Childcare facilities are well distributed spatially within the Edenderry Plan area with 5 facilities, predominantly located close to or within existing residential developments. Childcare facilities in Edenderry comprise private crèches and pre-schools providing sessional services and local home child minding. All future proposed childcare facilities shall be provided in accordance with the Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG) 2001 or subsequent editions.

7.3.1.3 Healthcare Facilities

Edenderry provides varied healthcare facilities and services for residents of the town and wider catchments including aged care, GP's, dental care and social care. Ofalia House located on St. Mary's Road is a public community residential nursing unit with a maximum occupancy of 28 and serves the wider North Offaly Area. Within the same location, the Health Services Executive (HSE) Health Centre provides a number of services including Public Health Care nurses, dental facilities and services, physiology services, social workers and a psychiatric unit.

Edenderry also has the benefit of voluntary services such as the Edenderry Parish North Offaly Development Company who provide essential social services such as visitations service and maintenance. These services are provided through funding applied from Offaly County Council as well as the HSE. Voluntary services include the Edenderry Meals on Wheels, and the Kare Centre.

Offaly County Council recognise the significant need for Health and Social services that are required by people in, not only the Edenderry plan area but also the wider catchment that Edenderry serves. To ensure a continuation and expansion of these facilities and services (as appropriate), the Council will seek to promote, encourage, facilitate and provide where possible, the relevant facilities, and services as considered necessary in this area. A need for additional older persons' residential facilities are required for the town of Edenderry also.

7.3.1.4 Sport & Recreation

Edenderry is served well by sports clubs and facilities from snooker to swimming, GAA, soccer clubs, athletics, golf, rugby, martial arts, cycling, triathlon club, two boxing clubs, an angling club, a pitch and putt club, a skateboard committee and canoeing. Music and language clubs are also available. The clubs add weight to the community infrastructure, supported by various voluntary and charitable groups (e.g. Women's Shed, Tidy Towns, Disability Group). Many work out of parish halls and the community cabin on the edge of Blundell Park. There is currently a need for more flexible and accessible indoor space, especially in a more centralised, interconnected and accessible location.

There are a large number and range of sporting clubs, activities and facilities located within Edenderry. The clubs and societies managing and promoting sporting activities in Edenderry have varied individual requirements for playing pitches (indoor and outdoor), club houses, halls, ancillary structures as well

as ancillary car parking. Many of the existing sporting activities and facilities are located within the boundary of Edenderry Town in proximity to other services and are facilitated by footpaths, lighting and car parking. Offaly County Council will seek to promote and encourage all ranges of sporting activities in Edenderry that not only contribute to the town but to its wider hinterland also. Offaly County Council will encourage sporting clubs to expand or re-develop existing facilities and to maximise the usage of existing lands given over to the sporting activities associated with those clubs. Should a demonstrable need arise to re-locate clubs and their associated facilities, the Council would encourage their re-location to lands within the town boundary of Edenderry, within walking distance of residential areas and along well lit roads with footpaths.



Figure 7.2 Astro and Ball Wall, Gaelic Park Edenderry

A Pitch and Putt Club is located at the southern end of Blundell Park with linkages to the surrounding residential areas and the wider parklands.

The existing swimming pool in Edenderry is located on the grounds of the GAA club to the north of the town. The upgrade, refurbishment or appropriate relocation of this facility within the town is supported.

The Council encourages the multi-use and multifunction of existing community facilities and that newly designed community use buildings in Edenderry should demonstrate a wider degree of flexibility for other users also.

7.3.1.5 Blundell Park

Planning approval for the re-development of Blundell Park was secured in 2015. Proposals included the provision of the following:

- A range of activities including playgrounds for various age groups;
- Tailored landscaping within the park;
- Improved connections between the park and surrounding residential areas and town centre;
- Pedestrian walkways throughout the park;
- Provision of 33 no. residential units, providing passive surveillance of park.

Significant progress has been made during the life of the Edenderry Local Area Plan 2017-2023 with the completion of the pitch and putt course, Skate Park, improved connections and the residential units overlooking the park.



Figure 7.3 Edenderry Pitch and Putt



Figure 7.4 Edenderry Skate Park

7.3.1.6 Playground

The existing playground at Granary Court in the town centre was delivered under the Joint Playground Policy 2009-2013, in conjunction with Edenderry Community Playground Committee and OLDC. Continued effort and support is needed to integrate the playground fully and to maximise its use. The full re-development of Blundell Park amenities in close proximity to the existing playground and its proposed connections to the town centre will have benefits to the current playground in terms of surveillance and usage.



Figure 7.5 Edenderry Playground, Granary Court

7.3.1.7 Youth

Young people play a huge role in the town of Edenderry and youth needs are an integral part of this plan. Offaly County Council and Offaly Comhairle na nÓg are pleased to engage with all youth in Edenderry to enhance facilities and services for young people in the town.

The Acorn Project is a justice diversion project that was established in 1999 in order to provide programmes for 'at risk' young people.

The Acorn Project is a Youth Work Ireland Midlands project and works directly with targeted groups and individuals in the community of Edenderry and surrounding areas.

Throughout the years the project has been dedicated to providing a quality service and in making sure that the community of Edenderry has access to a range of services. With this aim in mind, the provision of an Astro turf in 2009 and Edenderry Youth Café in 2012, was made a reality.

The project aims to respond to the needs of the community in terms of services required, training and education and youth programmes (leading to QQI awards from levels 1 through to 5 and also non-accredited lifelong learning courses).

7.3.1.8 Libraries

Edenderry Town Library is located in the heart of the town on JKL Street. The Offaly Libraries Interim Development Plan 2022-2023, *Creating Collaborative Communities* states that a new community library and arts space is proposed for Edenderry. It is a goal of Offaly County Council to progress the development of a new modern Community Library in Edenderry in line with the National Library Capital Programme.

Apart from the educational and social benefits, a successful library can transform a town centre area through an increase in footfall and complement night-time uses of a town centre. Public libraries provide positive outcomes for people and communities – far exceeding the traditional perception of libraries as places from which to borrow books. In line with Offaly Libraries mission statement, they contribute to and promote physical and mental wellbeing, social inclusion and community cohesion 'by providing free and equitable access to quality information, resources, education, creativity and culture'. A new modern public library in Edenderry town and area will provide enhanced access to quality services for the community, offering flexible spaces for meeting, learning and cultural engagement and expanded digital services and access using smart technology. Edenderry Community Library will connect people to their communities by serving as a civic, information, learning and digital centre.

Funding has been secured through the Rural Regeneration Fund 2021 for the following:

1. Acquisition costs of the site 33/34 JKL Street Site (A)
2. Demolition and site clearance works on 33/34 JKL Street site (Old Tesco Site) (A)
3. Funding for Architect-Led Design Team Consultancy services for a new community library at 33/34 JKL Street site (A)
4. Purchase of OPW site (B) and Fairgreen site (C)

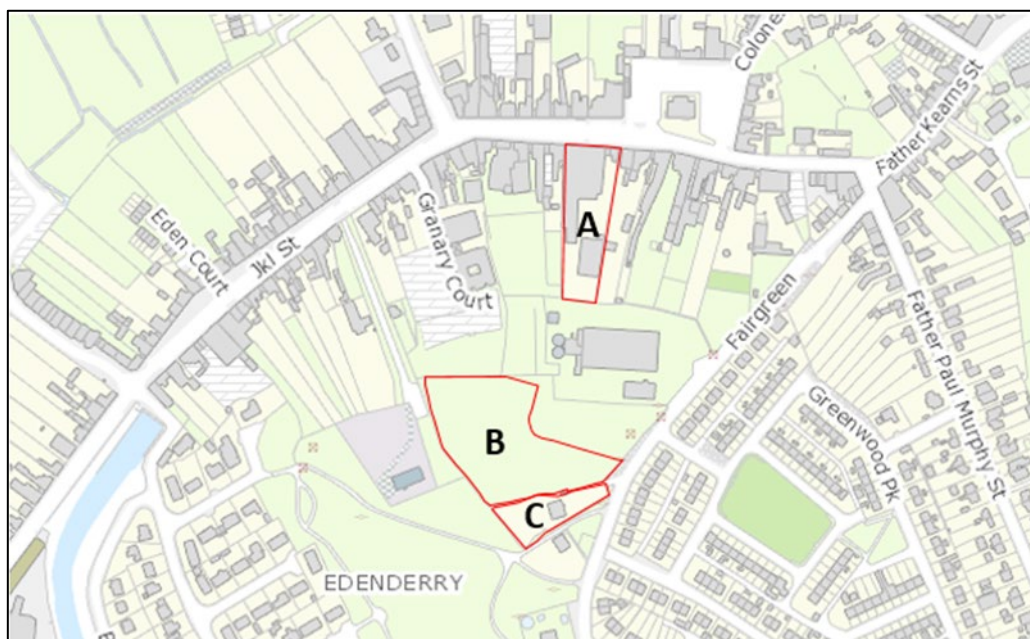


Figure 7.6 Blundell Park Master Plan Sites

Once complete, the proposed works will revitalise Edenderry through the demolition and site clearance of the Old Tesco site, creating a town centre asset to provide a state of the art community library while also reviving and opening up access to the Blundell Master Plan area, optimizing opportunities for private development and future development of community/leisure/cultural facilities, green urban spaces and recreational amenities within the heart of Edenderry.

7.3.1.9 Arts and Culture

Offaly County Council has adopted and published the County Offaly Arts Strategy for the period 2018-2022. The vision statement of the Plan notes the importance of the arts being *‘embedded and integrated into the way of life of the people of County Offaly; accessible to and experienced by all citizens, as well as attracting visitors to the county.’*

Arts and Culture (which include creative industries) are very important to local economies for many reasons including:

- Providing direct economic benefits by creating jobs, attracting investment and stimulating the local economy.
- Enhance quality of life.
- Complementary to community development and cohesion.
- Enrich local amenities and offer and
- Attract new people.

Although Edenderry hosts a number of arts and cultural events including the Edenderry Festival and Hullabaloo! Offaly’s Children’s Arts Festival, cultural celebration in Edenderry is largely untapped and has the potential to offer a range of opportunities to the town including the promotion of a strong identity. Opportunities include:

- Developing upon the story of the past and the strong cultural heritage of the town.
- Developing cultural tourism.
- Identify and promote distinctive cultural products.
- Develop unique Edenderry branding.
- Develop and market cultural events and festivals.

Offaly County Council Arts Office is developing an Arts Infrastructure Strategy, with a focus on a coordinated approach to Place-Making through Arts Infrastructure. Of relevance to the Council are the potential synergies that can be co-ordinated between the primary infrastructural hubs throughout the county and how these can work together for the making of Creative and Cultural Places for artists and audiences across the county. The Arts Infrastructure Strategy will explore the potentials that will enhance, add value and provide multiple benefits through connectivity and complimentary programming, across the county and in collaboration with existing and new arts infrastructure. Edenderry would benefit from a cultural strategy drawing together all available opportunities that can be developed and evolved further at community level. This plan will support and promote the arts in Edenderry Town, which will be supported by funding from the Arts Council and others through programs such as the Creative Places Award. The Creative Places Award is a three-year developmental award that will aim to facilitate the emergence of a strong cultural identity for the area and support sustainable networks and opportunities for cultural engagement and participation.

While Edenderry does not currently have a purpose built Arts building, there is an active Arts community in the town. The need for a cultural/ arts space for the community, which would also encapsulate the history / heritage of the area, was highlighted as part of the consultation process of this local area plan. The Arts space is envisaged to form part of the new library when complete, allowing for a range of indoor and outdoor activities associated with arts and culture in the town. The Council supports the expansion of Arts facilities and in particular supports the provision of a permanent, locally produced public art works at suitable locations within the town.

7.3.1.10 Places of Worship

A total of three faith facilities are located in Edenderry comprising St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Castropetre Church of Ireland and the Edenderry Quaker Meeting House at Father Kearns Street.

7.3.1.11 Existing Community Facilities within Edenderry

Edenderry currently has a reasonable level of community facilities across a range of uses such as public open space, places of worship, sports facilities, childcare facilities and education and training. It is an objective of this Local Area Plan to improve on existing facilities including the provision of a new library and community facility at the heart of the town. The existing facilities within the town are illustrated in Figure 7.7 below.

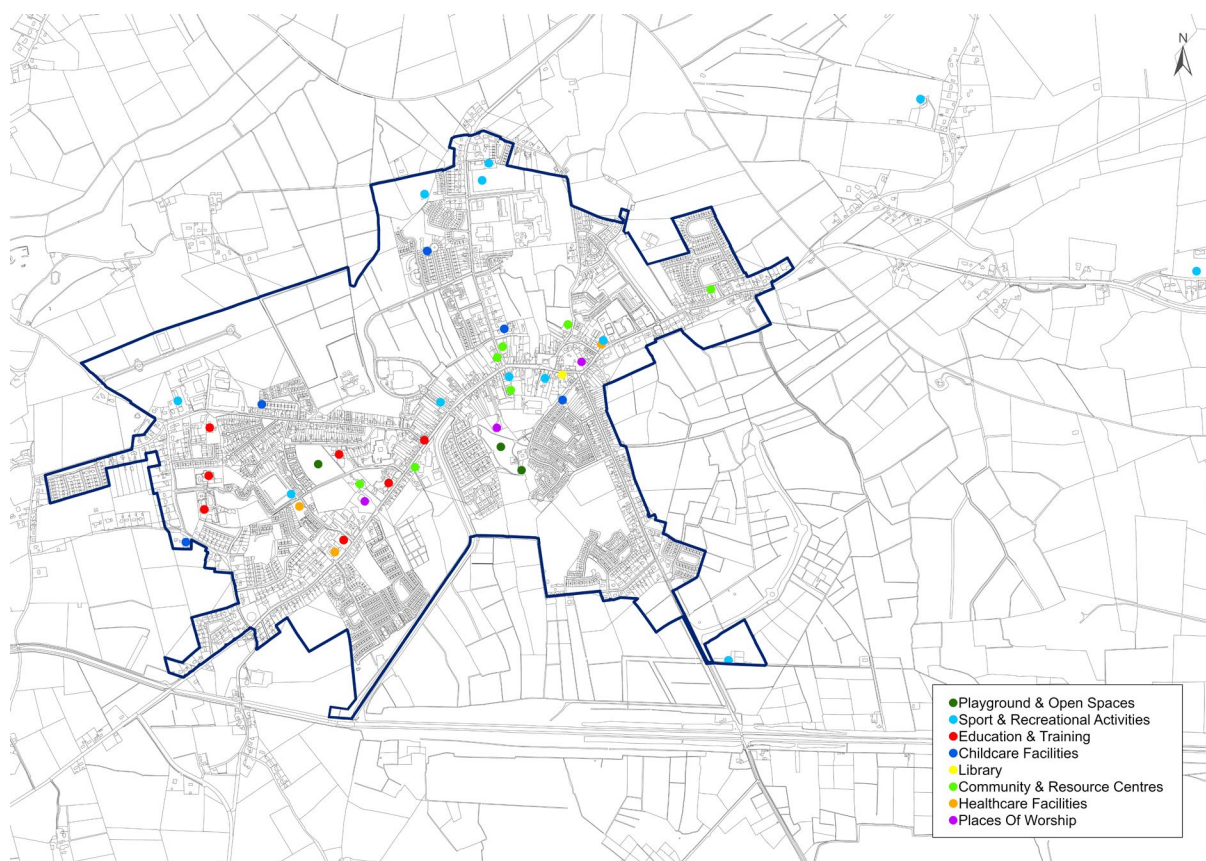


Figure 7.7 Existing Social and Community Infrastructure Edenderry

Table 7.2 provides a breakdown of the requirements for social infrastructure under relevant themes that are required to provide for the future needs and demands of the projected population.

Table 7.2 Assessment of Future Demand & Requirements

Theme	Land Use	Potential Location	What is required	Delivery Mechanism
Education & Training				
Primary & Post-Primary School Extension	Educational	Dependent on the size and suitability of the existing sites and school agreements. Incomplete hotel site identified for expansion of Oaklands College.	To consider the current refugee situation within Ireland and the potential need for extra education provision that increasing numbers of refugees may bring in the short to medium term, particularly when combined with projected population increases. It may be possible to add some of this level of accommodation onto existing schools but new sites should be identified.	Department of Education
Primary & Post-Primary School New school	Educational	-	Projected population increases will require new Primary or Post-primary school sites for expansion within Plan Period	-
New Training/Third Level Facilities	Educational	-	While no further training facilities are required over the period of the plan appropriate applications would be considered.	Developer / Offaly County Council / Other
Childcare				

20 childcare spaces required per 75 new residential units	Childcare	Adjacent to / within new residential developments over 75 residential units	Additional childcare spaces required per 75 new residential units	Private developer-led alongside new development
Health				
Primary Care Centre	Health	The HSE Board has approved a potential site at Blundell Park, to the rear of the former Tesco Site on JKL Street.	A new Primary Care Centre	Developer / Offaly County Council / HSE / Other
Community & Resource				
New Library and Arts/Community Facility	Community	Former Tesco site at JKL Street with access through to Blundell Park.	Design and planning application for new public library building and community facility required. Appropriate planning applications for new community buildings in other locations will be considered by the Council.	Developer / Offaly County Council / Other
Arts & Culture				
Arts/Community Facility	Community	Former Tesco site at JKL Street with access through to Blundell Park	Design and planning application for new public library and arts space building and community facility required.	Developer / Offaly County Council / Other
Places of Worship				
No critical infrastructure required	Faith	-	While no further Places of Worship are required over the period of the plan, appropriate applications would be considered.	Developer / Other
Sports				
No critical infrastructure required	Sports	-	While no further sports facilities have been identified as being required over the period of the plan, appropriate applications would be considered.	Developer / Other
Equipped/Designated Play Space				
Equipped/Designated play spaces	Community	Within new residential developments	Designated play spaces will be encouraged within new residential developments	Developer / Offaly County Council / Other

7.4 Best Practice Measures in the Provision of Community Services and Infrastructure

In addition to the above specific community and social infrastructure requirements, the Council recommends the following principles in the provision of social infrastructure consistent with best practice and the sustainable and effective use of resources:

Co-Location

Co-location and clustering of complementary community services, thus facilitating coordination, climate action, convenience and access for service users.

Multi-purpose and Multi-function

Facilities and spaces should offer flexible and diverse space and uses over a range of times during the day and night to maximise efficiency, utilisation and adaptability of physical assets.

Place-making and Community Identity

Promotion and encouragement of community facilities that create a sense of place and that have a civic quality, and level of amenity that can foster community ownership, and offer a focus to support community engagement in Birr.

Age-Friendly Town

The creation of an age friendly town means that key destinations within the town should all be easily accessible by foot, particularly within the commercial core. Social and community facilities should be within walking distance of the town centre, key services and public transportation, while also being integrated into a universally accessible and age friendly public realm.

Partnership

Encourage delivery of infrastructure services and facilities through partnerships between different bodies for maximum efficiency and co-ordination.

Inclusivity

Access to sport will be encouraged for all irrespective of age, ability, ethnicity, socio-economic background or gender. The growth of female participation in the future will be a key indicator of inclusivity in sport in Edenderry Town.

7.5 Community Policies

It is Council Policy to:

CP-01 Assist, encourage and facilitate the provision and extension of community facilities to serve the specific community needs of all individuals in Edenderry in liaison with community based groups, public bodies, government departments, state agencies and other interested parties.

CP-02 Support and facilitate improvements to existing primary and post-primary schools if necessary to facilitate increased population including the influx of refugees in the short-medium term.

CP-03 Support and co-operate with promoters or operators of public and private health care facilities by facilitating appropriate health care facilities in suitable locations in Edenderry.

CP-04 Support and facilitate the provision of children's play facilities in Edenderry within existing and proposed green spaces, for children of all ages while also having regard to those with special needs.

CP-05 Support community-led and cultural projects, which enhance the social and economic well-being of residents of the town and improve the quality of the environment of the town.

CP-06 Support and facilitate the provision of a new library, community and arts facility within the town.

CP-07 Support and promote the provision of a new swimming pool and other social infrastructure in Edenderry for example, a cinema, bowling alley and community / sports hall.

CP-08 Support and facilitate the provision of a dedicated branch of an established Third Level facility in Edenderry if required and appropriate during the lifetime of the plan.

CP-09 Continue to work with the DoES, LOETB, and other training providers in assisting with the delivery of educational requirements in Edenderry during the lifetime of the Edenderry LAP.

7.6 Community Objectives

It is an objective of this Council to:

CO-01 Require the provision of appropriately located and purpose-built early learning and childcare facilities to meet the pro-rata childcare needs of new housing development and places of employment such as industrial / business parks during the plan period.

CO-02 Support the continued re-development of Blundell Park.

CO-03 Have regard to the guidance and recommendations of ‘The Provision of Schools and the Planning System - A Code of Practice for Planning Authorities, the Department of Education and Skills (DoES) and DoECLG’, July 2008, as well as other national guidance, as appropriate for the provision of schools by ensuring that suitable lands are zoned for educational uses within the boundary of Edenderry during the lifetime of the plan.

CO-04 Progress the development of a new modern Community Library and facility at JKL Street Edenderry in line with the National Library Capital Programme and Offaly Libraries Interim Development Plan 2022-2023 and to provide enhanced access to services for the public, including, flexible spaces for meeting and learning, expanded digital services and access during unstaffed times using smart technology and use as a multi-purpose space for creative artists in the visual, performing and digital arts.

CO-05 Facilitate the development of a cultural strategy that seeks to capitalize on cultural opportunities in the town that can be developed and promoted for the local economic benefit of the town and to contribute positively to the local community and ensure activity during the day and into the evening.