

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Context

1.1.1 Location of Edenderry

Edenderry is an historic market town that is located at the eastern most part of County Offaly, approximately 31 kilometres to the east of Tullamore. The town is situated close to the source of the River Boyne, which runs to the west and north-west of the town and forms the county boundary between County Offaly and County Kildare. Overlooking the town of Edenderry, Blundell Castle is located on a hill from which the town gets its name; Eadon Doire, meaning brow or hill-top of the oak trees. Today, the oak trees are long since gone, but the ruins of the castle on the hill-top remain. The R402 regional road passes through the town linking Enfield in County Meath to Ballina Cross in County Offaly. The Grand Canal runs in an east-west direction south of the town and a harbour branches from this in a north-easterly direction right into the centre of the town. Dublin Airport less than an hour away. Within 75 minutes drive lie several universities and a population verging on two million people. Enfield railway station and a direct connection to Dublin and Sligo lies 18km away via a recently upgraded road.

1.1.2 Historical Development

In the 16th century, Edenderry was known as Coolestown, after the family of Cooley or Cowley, who had a castle in the town, which later passed to the Blundell family and later again passed to the Marquess of Downshire.

By 1716 there was thriving woollen cloth manufacturing, established by Quakers, which employed around 1,000 people. The Edenderry branch of the Grand Canal was started in 1797. The canal itself was instrumental to the development of Edenderry by facilitating commerce and much of the materials used in constructing the town's fine houses were transported on the canal. By 1911 the town had grown to 2,204 people. Other industries included the factory of Daniel Alesbury who made a variety of woodwork as well as the first car manufactured in Ireland, the Alesbury, in 1907.

The layout of the town dates principally from the turn of the 19th century, the historic Main Street, known as JKL Street and O'Connell Square provides a central spine from which the remainder of the town emanates. The 2nd Marquess of Downshire is responsible for building the layout of much of the historic core of the present town in the 1800s with its pleasant layout, fine town houses, all provided with gardens. The round headed doorways, keystones and carriage archways leading to the rear of long plots are features of the streetscape and all contribute to the character of Edenderry. There is an imposing statue of the Marquis of Downshire (1788-1845) looking down the Church Walk in the Church of Ireland grounds.

In the suburban areas of the town there exists a number of large-scale housing developments, which were constructed at various stages from the 1950s, particularly from when peat-burning power stations were constructed nearby.

1.1.3 Socio-Economic Profile

Edenderry has a population of 7,359 (2016 Census) making it the second largest town in County Offaly after Tullamore. It has experienced growth throughout recent census periods.

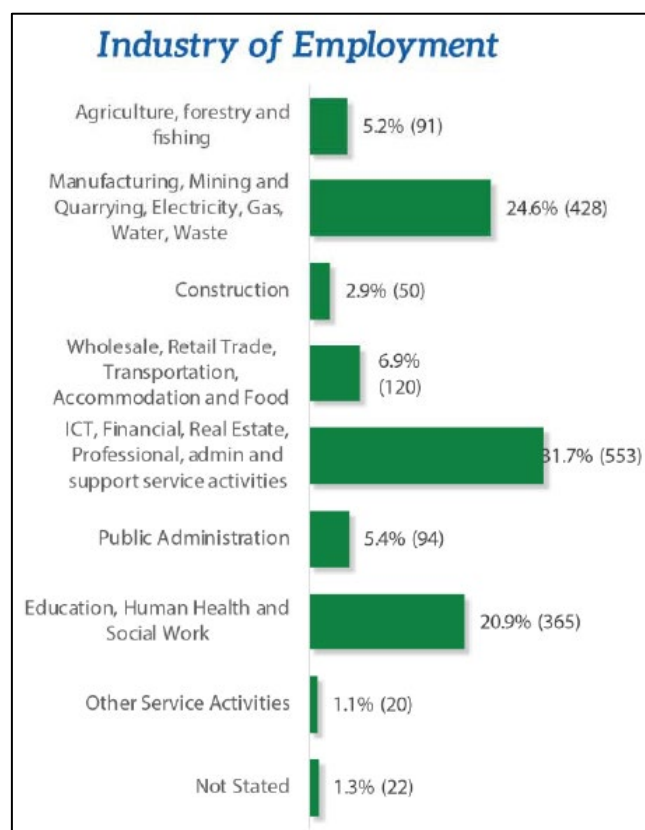
	2006	2011	2016
Population	5,888	6,977	7,359
% Increase	-	18%	5.4%

The population has almost doubled between 1996 (3,826) and 2016 (7,359), much of this is due to the rise in commuters, due to its location only 50km west of Dublin, affordable housing and good schools. Consequently, Edenderry has a younger age profile than the national average with 1 in 3 under the age of twenty.

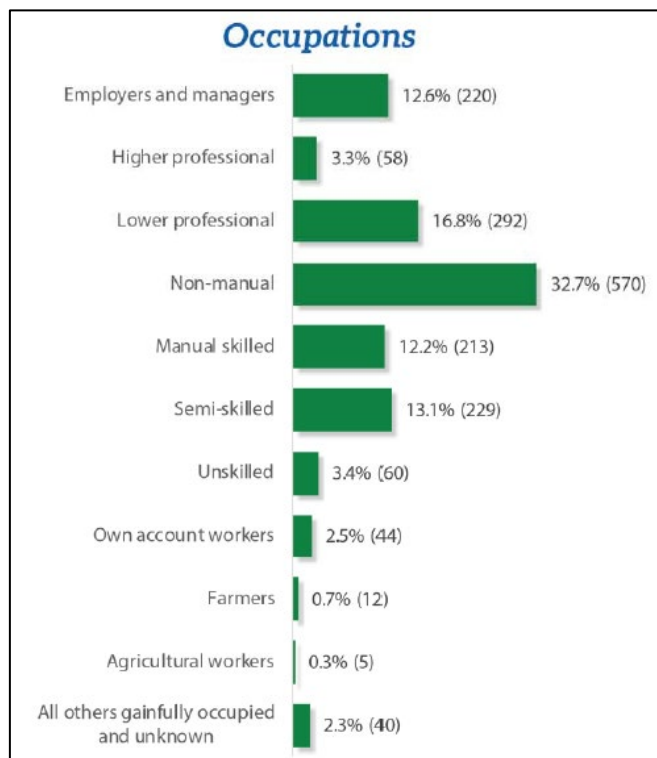
For journey times to work, Edenderry registers the highest number of commuters in Offaly spending times of between 45 minutes and 90+ minutes getting to their destination. The zone of influence for Edenderry drawing these commuters is Dublin Metropolitan Area.

The total jobs in Edenderry in 2016 was 1,743, which represented 8.8% of total jobs (19,782) in County Offaly. Edenderry, with 1,743 local jobs and 2,738 resident workers, results in a low 'jobs to resident worker' ratio of 0.637, which represents a weak economic function.

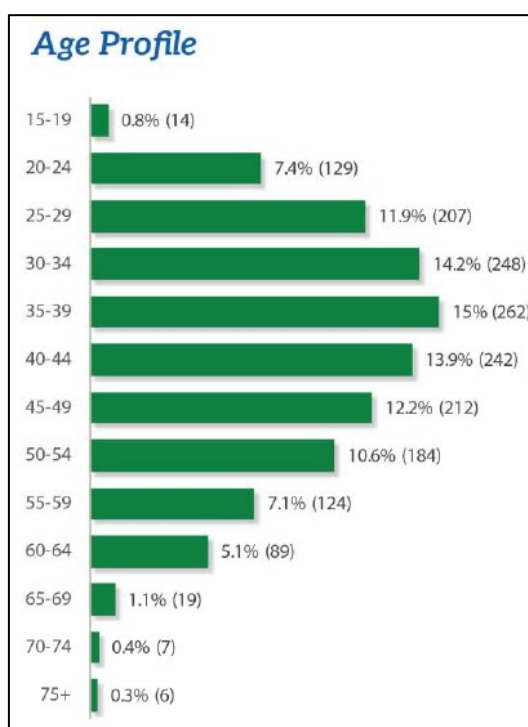
Edenderry serves as an important employment centre for the county, and in particular has a strong ICT, Financial, Real Estate, Professional, Administration and support service activities sector representing 31.7% of Edenderry's Employment. Further analysis of the employment sectors of Edenderry is provided in section 2.1 of Chapter 2 Economic Development Strategy.



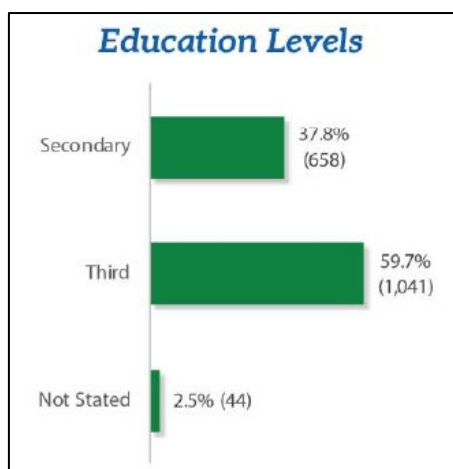
The graph below shows the breakdown of occupations across all sectors of industry in Edenderry as a percentage of the total workforce. 'Non-manual' (32.7%) represents the largest cohort, followed by 'lower professional' at 16.8%.



The age profile of Edenderry is set out below, which demonstrates that the 35-44 age group accounts for 15% of the population. 36.8% of the population is aged 45 or older, which is higher than the national figure of 37.2%.



In terms of educational attainment for those aged 15 years or older, the majority have third level education at 59.7%. Educationally, 13% have at least a bachelor's degree, which is less than half of the 30% national average. This may be partly explained by the strength of construction, trades and manufacturing sectors – where Edenderry has double the national average employed.



1.1.4 Plan Preparation

This Edenderry Local Area Plan (LAP) 2023-2029 has been prepared in accordance with the requirements and provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

This LAP has been prepared as the key strategic planning document, which will guide the overall development of the town in the period to 2029.

The Local Area Plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements and provisions of Sections 18-20 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (the 'Act'). Section 19(1) (b) of the Act requires a local area plan to be made in respect of an area which:

- Is designated as a town in the most recent census of population, other than a town designated as a suburb or environs in that census;
- Has a population in excess of 5,000; and
- Is situated within the functional area of a planning authority, which is a County Council.

Census 2016 recorded a population of 7,359 persons for Edenderry. A Local Area Plan is therefore a mandatory requirement.

This LAP sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Edenderry in the context of Project Ireland 2040, the National Planning Framework, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region and the Offaly County Development Plan (CDP). It is informed by Ministerial Guidelines issued pursuant to Section 28 of the Act together with EU requirements regarding Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA).

1.1.5 Life of the Plan

The Edenderry LAP shall remain in effect for a period of 6 years from when it was made or until such time as the LAP may be extended, revoked or replaced by a new LAP.

1.1.6 The Plan Making Process

The strategic vision for Edenderry has been informed through public consultation with residents and stakeholders.

The Council engaged in an extensive pre-draft public consultation programme as part of the preliminary work stage of the plan preparation process. A Public Consultation Issues Paper set out a summary with background information on a range of key issues to be addressed in the preparation of the LAP. It also framed a number of key questions on each issue to prompt community discussion and help develop and shape their comments and observations. The Public Consultation Issues Paper was placed on display at Council offices, Edenderry library, and on the Edenderry LAP webpage. Notification of the Public Consultation Issues Paper and of a public consultation-drop in session in Edenderry Town Hall was provided in locally circulating newspapers, to PPN groups, Oireachtas members, elected members, and Strategic Policy Committee members. Written submissions were invited from public sector agencies and non-governmental agencies. A workshop was held with Edenderry Municipal District elected members for their input into the draft Edenderry Local Area Plan. Public consultation also takes place on the draft Edenderry LAP and material alterations.



Figure 1.1 Cover Page of Public Consultation Issues Paper

The early engagement of the community and relevant stakeholders in identifying issues, a vision and a strategy for Edenderry Town improved the plan preparation process by providing, at the right stage, the understanding of community needs and aspirations and important aspects of local knowledge.

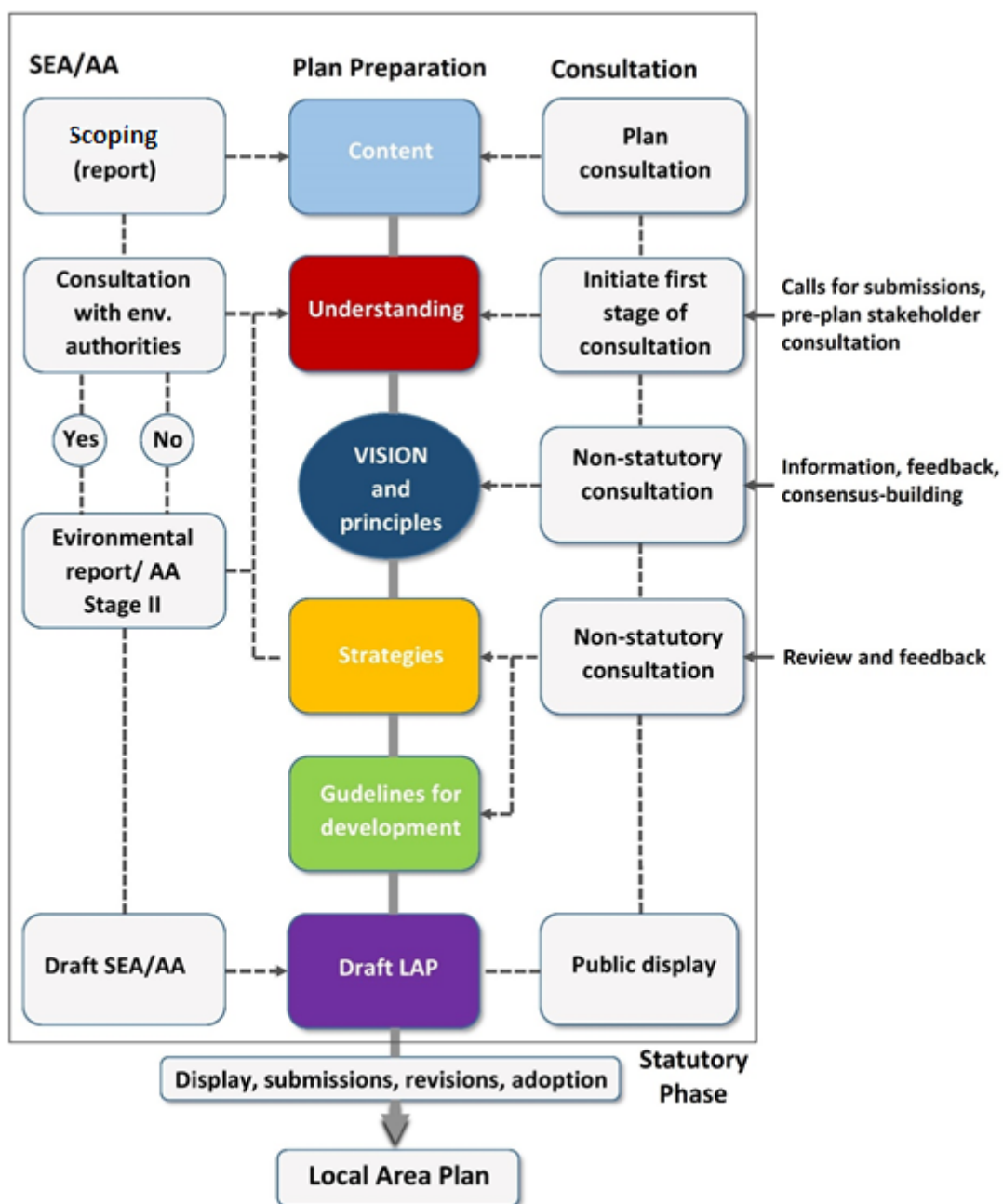


Figure 1.2 Plan Preparation Process

The public consultation process supplemented Offaly County Council’s research and analysis with a more extensive understanding of the main issues of concern affecting the residents and stakeholders in Edenderry. The consultation exercises helped to establish an overarching common vision for the future development of Edenderry.

1.2 Structure and Content of Edenderry Local Area Plan

The LAP consists of a written statement setting out the vision for the town and the policies and specific objectives to guide future development along with a zoning and objectives maps, opportunity sites development briefs and visual representations of the development framework of the town. It also consists of separate Environmental Reports prepared in accordance with EU Directives ensuring that environmental considerations are fully integrated into the plan making process.

The written statement shall take precedence over the map should any discrepancy arise. In the full interpretation of all objectives for Edenderry, it is essential that both the CDP and the LAP are read together. Where conflicting objectives arise between the CDP and the LAP, the objectives of the relevant CDP shall take precedence.

It should be noted that the general development management standards, zoning matrix/descriptions and general policies and objectives in the CDP applicable to settlements can be applied to the LAP boundary area, while additional policies and objectives that are specific to Edenderry are included in this LAP.

1.2.1 Accompanying Strategies

This Local Area Plan is accompanied by a number of separate assessments / strategies. They have been undertaken in parallel with the preparation of the Plan. An iterative process has been followed whereby each revision of the Plan has been informed by the assessments. They constitute;

- *Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report and Natura Impact Report (NIR)*

AA is a focused and detailed impact assessment of the implications of a plan or project on European Sites designated for habitats or species. AA is required by the EU Habitats Directive as transposed into Irish law through the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). Screening for AA determined that the implementation of this Local Area Plan was likely to have a significant effect on European Sites. Accordingly, a NIR was compiled. The findings of the AA are included in the NIR that accompanies the Plan. That report provides a clear understanding of the likely consequences of the Plan on European Sites. All AA recommendations have been integrated into the Plan. The emerging conclusion of the AA is that the Plan will not affect the integrity of the European Sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects¹.

- *Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)*

SEA is the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing a plan or programme before a decision is made to adopt it, in this case the Local Area Plan. SEA is required by the EU SEA Directive as transposed into Irish law through the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 436 of 2004) as amended. The findings of the SEA are included in the SEA Environmental Report that accompanies the Plan. That report provides a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences of

¹ Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be:

(a) no alternative solution available, (b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the Plan to proceed; and (c) adequate compensatory measures in place.

decisions regarding the adoption and implementation of the Plan. All SEA recommendations have been integrated into the Plan.

- *Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)*

SFRA is an assessment of flood risk and includes mapped boundaries for Flood Risk Zones, taking into account factors including Catchment Flood Risk Management Plan data, site walkovers and flood risk indicators. SFRA is required under 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (Department of Environment and Office of Public Works, 2009) and associated Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government Circular PL2/2014. All SFRA recommendations have been integrated into the Plan.

1.3 Strategic Hierarchy

The content of this LAP aligns with international, European, national, regional and county policy and legislation, in addition to Ministerial Guidelines / policy Directives.

1.3.1 Sustainability Development Goals

Since 2015, Ireland has been a signatory for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as outlined in Figure 1.3 below. These goals provide a comprehensive framework for policy development to the year 2030, which collectively outline a roadmap to end poverty, combat climate change and ensure peaceful, just and equal societies for future generations. The 17 SDGs are integrated – that is, they recognise that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability. Achieving the SDGs requires the partnership of governments, private sector, civil society and citizens alike to make sure we leave a better planet for future generations.



Figure 1.3 United Nations Sustainability Development Goals

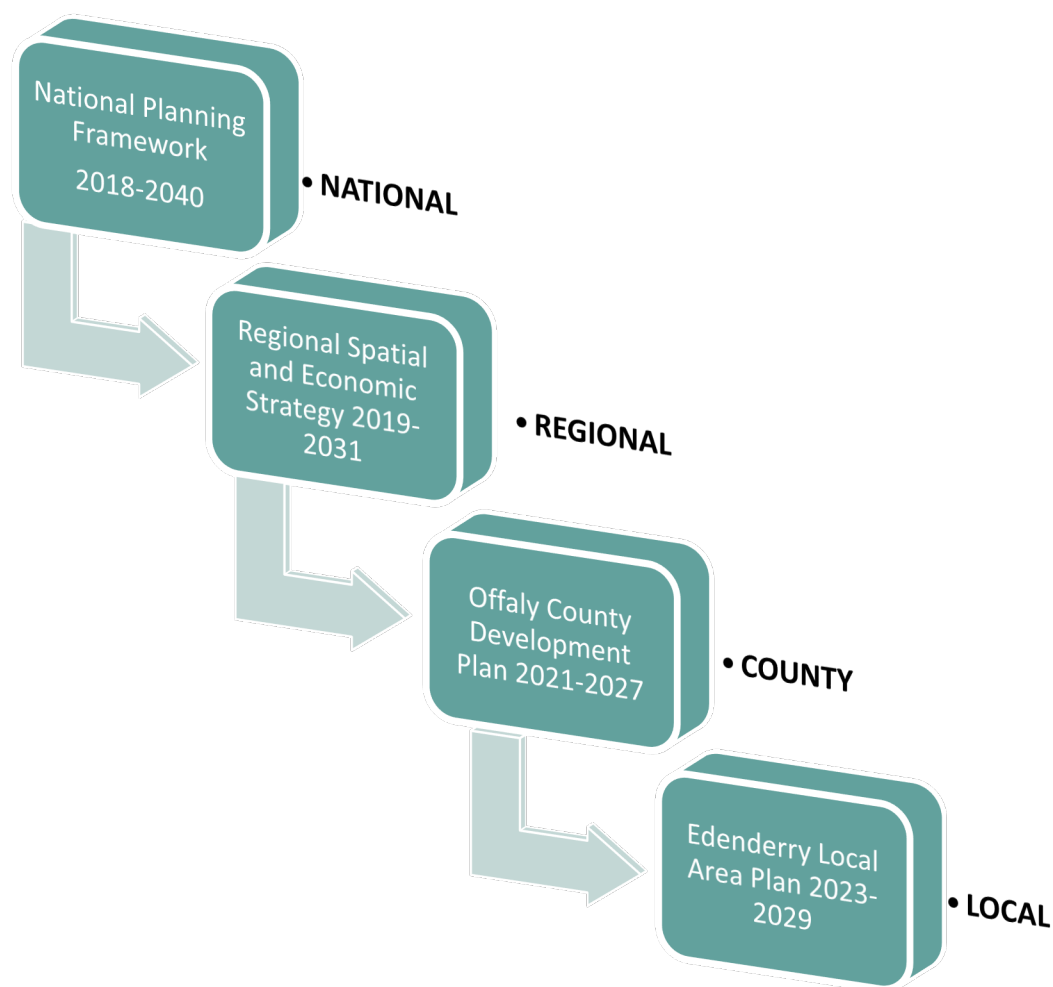


Figure 1.4 Hierarchy of Strategic Plans

1.3.2 Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) was adopted as part of Project Ireland 2040 in February 2018. The NPF sets out a high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth of Ireland and provides 10 National Strategic Outcomes for realising the vision of the plan. The NPF sits at the highest tier of planning in Ireland, and all regional, county and local planning policy should be consistent with the principles contained within it. Whilst Edenderry is not referred to directly in the NPF, it is noted that the NPF recognises the important role towns like Edenderry fulfil as local drivers for their surrounding areas through accommodating local housing and employment growth and that the natural and built heritage of a town, can add distinctiveness to its ‘sense of place’ which is becoming an important factor in attracting foreign direct investment and individual talent to Ireland.

1.3.3 Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031

The Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031 is a strategic plan and investment framework to shape the future development of the region to 2031 and beyond. The aim of the strategy is to create a sustainable and competitive region that supports the health and well-being of its people and places, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunities for everyone. The three key principles of the RSES are focused on: Healthy Place-making, Climate Action and Economic Opportunity. Each of these principles are supported by 16 Regional Strategic

Outcomes (RSO's) that promote compact growth and urban regeneration, integrated sustainable transport options, a promotion of enhanced green infrastructure and protection of local biodiversity and heritage. Edenderry Town is mentioned within the Retail hierarchy, classified as a 'Level 3 Town and/or District Centres & Sub-County Town Centres (Key Service Centre)'.



Figure 1.5 Edenderry within the Eastern and Midland Region

1.3.4 Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 is a land use plan and overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the county over a 6-year period. The Plan is informed by Project Ireland 2040 and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region. Within the Core Strategy, Edenderry is listed as a 'Self-Sustaining Town', with the following function over the lifetime of the Plan;

‘These towns support the regional driver role of Tullamore, and act as important local drivers providing a range of functions for their resident population and their surrounding catchments including housing, employment, services, retail and leisure opportunities. These towns have experienced rapid population growth with high levels of commuter focused residential expansion without equivalent increase in jobs and services. They require consolidation and targeted ‘catch up’ investment in services, infrastructure, suitable transport options, amenities and local employment whilst balancing housing delivery and focusing on consolidation to become more self-sustaining’.

This LAP will work towards balancing the development of Edenderry through the support for ‘catch up’ investments in social and physical infrastructure. This plan is working towards an anticipated population growth of 721 persons in line with the provisions of the Core Strategy objectives of the County Development Plan. Under the Core Strategy for the county contained in Chapter 2 of the County Development Plan, Edenderry is allocated a requirement for 10 ha for new residential development over the lifetime of the Plan. The 10 ha of ‘New Residential’ zoned land has been identified within the existing built-up footprint of Edenderry. The development strategy of this plan is based around the projected population growth.

1.4 Other Relevant Plans and Studies

In addition to national, regional and county strategic plans listed above, this Local Area Plan has been prepared having regard to other documents listed below.

The following Edenderry specific non-statutory plans and studies were taken into account in the preparation of this LAP;

Edenderry Local Transport Plan (LTP)

The purpose of the LTP is to place the integration of land use and transport planning at the centre of the plan-making process for Edenderry. The LTP examined the existing and proposed transport infrastructure and service provision across all modes of transport including sustainable means such as active modes (walking and cycling) in the town. It provides an understanding of the existing constraints and modal share and it also identifies the interventions required within the Plan area and in the wider context, to effectively accommodate the anticipated increase in demand and ensure the optimal transportation interventions can be planned in order to drive a shift towards sustainable movement.

Blundell Masterplan

A masterplan was prepared for the Blundell area of Edenderry in 2018. The masterplan sets out a vision that has positive implications for the shape and quality of the town centre through opening up backlands, reconnecting the town to its park and providing new places to live and work in the heart of the town. It provides for a new street connection, pedestrian linkages, mixed uses including housing, offices, community centre, primary care centre, library and arts space. In terms of Blundell Castle and the Park, it proposes the restoration of the castle, transformation of its setting and the rejuvenation and activation of the park.

The LAP was also prepared taking account of the following documents at a county, regional and national level.

County level:

- Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027
- Offaly Digital Strategy 2020-2022
- Uisce Éireann Treatment Capacity Register and 10-year Water Supply Capacity Register, 2022
- Offaly Heritage Plan 2023-2027
- Offaly Libraries Interim Development Plan 2022-2023
- Offaly Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2027

Forthcoming documents:

- Local Economic and Community Plan 2022-2027
- Offaly Tourism Strategy 2023 – 2027
- Age Friendly Strategy for County Offaly 2022-2027
- Offaly Digital Strategy 2023-2025

Regional level:

- Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 Midlands, Government of Ireland; An initiative of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, 2022
- Midland Regional Food and Drink Strategy 2021-2024, by Midlands Ireland

Forthcoming document:

- Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027 by Fáilte Ireland

National level:

- Documents and Section 28 Guidelines as listed in Chapter 1 of Offaly CDP
- Town Centre First, A Policy Approach for Irish Towns, DRCD, 2022
- Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland, DHLGH, 2021
- Housing Options for Our Aging Population – Government Policy Statement, 2019
- Age Friendly Principles and Guidelines for the Planning Authority, Age Friendly Ireland, June 2021
- Nature-based Solutions to the Management of Rainwater and Surface Water Runoff in Urban Areas; Water Sensitive Urban Design Best Practice Interim Guidance Document, DHLGH, 2022
- Local Area Plans - Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DECLG, 2013
- Manual for Local Area Plans, DECLG, 2013
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, update 2020.
- Building for Everyone; A Universal Design Approach, Booklet 9 Planning and Policy, by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design
- National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027

- Ten Universal Design Features to include in a Lifetime Adaptable and Age Friendly Home, by Age Friendly Ireland, 2021
- Climate Action and the Local Authority Development Plan (OPR Case Study Paper CSP05), 2022
- The Need for UN SDGs, Baseline Data and Vacancy Targets in Local Area Plans (LAPs) for Historic Town Centres, A Report by the CTCHC Programme, The Heritage Council, 2022.
- National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland, Dept. of Transport, 2022
- National Sustainable Mobility Policy, Dept. of Transport, 2022
- Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy 2022-2025
- Climate Action Plan 2022, Securing Our Future, Government of Ireland, 2022

Forthcoming documents:

- Places for People – National Policy on Architecture (stated in Town Centre First Policy)
- A National Strategy for People with a Disability (stated in Town Centre First Policy)
- National health check model (stated in Town Centre First Policy)

1.5 Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR)

The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018 provided for the establishment of an Independent Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR). Under the provisions of the Act, the OPR has assumed the Minister's evaluation and assessment function of all statutory land use plans including local area plans. The OPR provides statutory observations on all draft statutory plans to ensure consistency with relevant national and regional policies. All observations received from the OPR have been taken into consideration.

1.6 Strategic Vision and Aims for Edenderry

It is recognised that the town would benefit from a renewed focus, a focus that seeks to enhance the quality of life of everybody in Edenderry. The plans sets out a long-term vision for Edenderry and an approach to fulfilling its vision in the short-term plan period. Offaly County Council, key stakeholders, local communities and individuals alike must all work together to achieve the following strategic vision.

This LAP is underpinned by the strategic vision statement: to guide the future growth of Edenderry in a sustainable manner, in a way that reflects the inherent character of the area and identifies the potential of utilising its existing assets as the base for improving the quality of life and resilience of both the present and future residents of the town.

The following strategic aims in conjunction with each other will assist in delivering the strategic vision for Edenderry.

Strategic Aim 1: Economic Development

To successfully fulfil Edenderry's role as a self-sustaining town by embracing the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient model of development while seeking to utilise and invest in the town's existing economic, social and environmental assets to generate sustainable economic development and job creation, thereby enhancing its status as the main business, service, employment, social, cultural, tourism and recreational hub for everyone in east Offaly and ensuring it is an attractive place to live, work and visit.

Strategic Aim 2: Town Centre and Regeneration

To sensitively and sustainably enhance Edenderry's historic town centre through the provision of healthy place-making. To facilitate a competitive and healthy retail environment and to support the future vitality, diversity and viability of Edenderry town centre. Reinforce Edenderry town centre as the heart of the town, by avoiding undesirable and inefficient sprawl, achieving critical mass and consolidating new development within the built-up footprint of the town, through targeting a significant proportion of future development on infill/brownfield/under-utilised sites, and extending out sequentially subject to available infrastructure. These aims will improve the attractiveness and functionality of Edenderry as a place in which to live, work and visit while also functioning as the business, service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community.

Strategic Aim 3: Built Heritage

To protect, conserve and manage Edenderry's buildings, areas, structures, sites and features of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest, by promoting the understanding, enhancement and appropriate development of these assets in order to instigate a regeneration of the town.

Strategic Aim 4: Residential

Deliver high quality housing in terms of design, scale, mix, tenure, sequence and density to reasonable match the requirements of the different categories of households which shall be constructed on the principles of universal design, life-long adaptability and energy efficiency, and developed in a manner which promotes compact growth and healthy place-making and is in line with the Core Strategy in the County Development Plan.

Strategic Aim 5: Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

Protect and enhance Edenderry's natural assets of clean water, biodiversity, landscape, green infrastructure, natural heritage and agricultural land, while maintaining ecosystem services and improving resilience to climate change.

Strategic Aim 6: Community

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.

Strategic Aim 7: Climate Action

Enhance climate adaptation and mitigation, and accelerate a transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy in Edenderry.

Strategic Aim 8: Critical Infrastructure

Promote facilitate the timely provision of infrastructure and utilities that will support sustainable socioeconomic growth and protect the quality of the environment of the town in a low carbon manner.

Strategic Aim 9: Planning and Infrastructural Assessment

To phase new development to ensure that it occurs in a sequential and efficient manner and in tandem with the delivery of supporting physical and social infrastructure.

Strategic Aim 10: Land Use Zoning Objectives

To adhere to the land use zoning objectives contained in this Plan in the interests of orderly development and eliminating potential conflicts between incompatible land uses.

Strategic Aim 11: Implementation and Monitoring

To implement in conjunction with key stakeholders, the objectives of this Local Area Plan, with a particular focus on the key strategic objectives, and to monitor same.