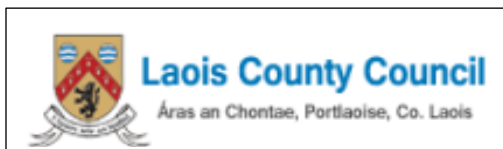


Portarlington Joint Local Area Plan 2025 - 2031



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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

This Portarlington Joint Local Area Plan 2025– 2031 (JLAP) has been prepared by Laois County Council and Offaly County Council in accordance with the requirements and provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The Portarlington Joint Local Area Plan 2025– 2031 is hereafter referred to as ‘the JLAP’.

The JLAP sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Portarlington, in the context of the Laois County Development Plan 2021 – 2027, the Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 and the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy 2019 – 2031. The JLAP has also been 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) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), including:

- Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements (Guidelines for Planning Authorities) 2024,
- National Sustainable Mobility Policy 2022
- Smarter Travel Policy 2009 – 2020 and/or recent updates
- National Cycle Policy Framework 2009 –2020 and/or recent updates
- Government Road Safety Strategy 2021 –2030
- Get Ireland Active –National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland
- Healthy Ireland -A Healthy Weight For Ireland Obesity Policy and Action Plan 2016 –2025
- Every Move Counts, National Physical Activity and Sedantary Behaviour Guidelines for Ireland, March 2024

The JLAP comprises a written statement and accompanying maps and appendices. The written statement shall take precedence over the maps should any discrepancy arise. In the full interpretation of all objectives for Portarlington, it is essential that the Laois County Development Plan 2021 – 2027, the Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 and this JLAP are read together.

Where conflicting objectives arise between the County Development Plans and the JLAP, the objectives of the relevant County Development Plan shall take precedence.

It should be noted that the general development management standards applicable to the plan area are included in the relevant County Development Plans, while policies and objectives that are specific to Portarlington are included in this JLAP.

It is a specific provision of this Plan to ensure that all of the provisions from the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 identified

in the SEA Environmental Report and/or AA Natura Impact Report that accompany this Plan shall be complied with throughout the implementation of this Plan.

1.2 LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Section 19(1)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires that a Local Area Plan be prepared in respect of an area which –

- (i) 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,
- (ii) has a population in excess of 5,000, and
- (iii) is situated within the functional area of a Planning Authority which is a County Council.

Census 2022 indicated that Portarlinton has a total population of 9,288 people. A Local Area Plan is therefore statutorily required for Portarlinton.

Portarlinton lies within the combined functional area of Laois County Council and Offaly County Council. Section 18(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) allows for two or more Local Authorities to co-operate in the preparation of a Joint Local Area Plan in respect of any area that lies within the combined functional areas of the authorities concerned.

Section 20 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) sets out the process for the making of a Local Area Plan as illustrated in the following diagram

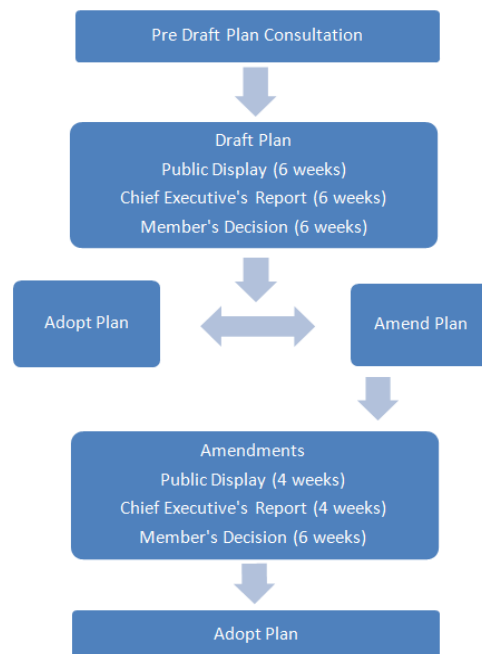


Figure 1: Local Area Plan Process

CHAPTER 2: PLAN COMPOSITION

The JLAP seeks to build on previous successful collaborations of both Laois and Offaly Council's in the preparation and adoption of Joint Local Area Plans for Portarlington. This collaborative approach acknowledges the unitary functioning of the joint urban area in terms of land use planning and the day-to-day activities of the local population, moving beyond a traditional focus on local authority county boundaries. This approach seeks to ensure that the future growth and development of Portarlington is addressed in an integrated and coordinated manner, with strategic sites and regeneration areas to be delivered for the entirety of the urban area taking account of the compact growth and physical, economic, and social development requirements.

The JLAP comprises a written statement and accompanying maps and appendices. The written statement and supporting maps comprise the primary policy document and is set out over seventeen Chapters. Planning policies and objectives unique to the town are set out in each chapter.

Chapter 1	Introduction
Chapter 2	Plan Composition
Chapter 3	Strategic Planning Context
Chapter 4	A Framework for Investment
Chapter 5	Portarlington in Context
Chapter 6	Development Vision and Strategy
Chapter 7	Core Strategy Compliance and Housing
Chapter 8	Town Centre Revitalisation
Chapter 9	Placemaking and Sustainable Communities
Chapter 10	Climate Change
Chapter 11	Economic Development
Chapter 12	Sustainable Travel and Transportation
Chapter 13	Infrastructure, Environmental Services and Flood Risk Management
Chapter 14	Built Heritage
Chapter 15	Biodiversity and Natural Heritage
Chapter 16	Land Use Zoning Objectives
Chapter 17	Implementation and Monitoring

The JLAP is supplemented by local mapping, and the following six appendices:

Appendix 1	Strategic Environmental Assessment and non-technical summary
Appendix 2	Local Transport Plan
Appendix 3	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
Appendix 4	Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Report
Appendix 5	Infrastructure Assessment
Appendix 6	Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030

In accordance with Sections 19 and 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), the above appendices include a number of Environmental Assessments as follows:

2.1 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required in accordance with the SEA Directive (DIR 2001/42/EC). SEA is a formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan, policy or programme. It is iterative and informs the plan-making process of the likely environmental impacts of alternative actions and contributes to the integration of environmental considerations into plan-making.

SEA is mandatory for plans for areas with a population of 5,000 or more and is therefore required for the Portarlington JLAP.

CAAS Limited Environmental Consultants have been appointed by Laois and Offaly County Councils to undertake the SEA as part of the preparation of the JLAP. In this regard, an SEA Environmental Report has been prepared informing the likely environmental impacts of implementing the policies and objectives of the plan and integrating relevant environmental considerations into the plan.

The SEA Environmental Report accompanies this JLAP. This report sets out the likely environmental consequences of decisions regarding the location and type of developments within the plan area, mitigation measures to offset potential adverse effects of the plan and monitoring proposals.

2.2 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

Appropriate Assessment (AA) is required in accordance with Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the EU Habitats Directive (DIR 92/43/EEC). Appropriate Assessment is a focused and detailed impact assessment of the implications of the plan or project, alone and in combination with other plans and projects, on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site in view of its conservation objectives.

CAAS Limited Environmental Consultants have been appointed by Laois and Offaly County Councils to undertake Appropriate Assessment as part of the preparation of the JLAP.

2.3 STRATEGIC FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) is required in accordance with the requirements of 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Assessment Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (DEHLG and OPW 2009) and Circular PL02/2014 (DEHLG, August 2014).

JBA Consulting Engineers & Scientists Ltd. have been appointed by Laois and Offaly County Councils to undertake a SFRA as part of the preparation of the JLAP.

2.4 LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

A Local Transport Plan (LTP) has been prepared to inform the JLAP. This forms a part of the requirement for an evidence-based approach to planning, as set out in the National Planning

Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region.

The LTP places sustainable transport considerations to the forefront of land use planning decisions in the formulation of the JLAP. It examines existing and proposed transport infrastructure for all modes of transport, including walking and cycling, and provides some insight into existing transport patterns and constraints.

Kilgallen & Partners Consulting Engineers have been appointed by Laois and Offaly County Councils to undertake the Local Transport Plan as part of the preparation of the JLAP.

CHAPTER 3: STRATEGIC PLANNING CONTEXT

3.1 SPATIAL PLANNING POLICY

The JLAP sits at the 'local' tier of planning policy and outlines the local spatial planning framework for Portarlington. It is consistent with the objectives of national and regional level planning policies, as well as the Laois County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027. The JLAP is also consistent with the Guidelines issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).



Figure 2: Spatial Planning Hierarchy

3.1.1 Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) sets out the Government's high-level strategic vision for shaping future growth and development in Ireland. The companion document, the National Development Plan (NDP), provides the investment strategy that aligns with the strategic objectives of the NPF. The NPF in conjunction with the NDP is the Government's plan to cater for an additional one million people that will be living in Ireland by 2040; an additional 660,000 people that will be working in Ireland and an additional 550,000 homes that will be needed to accommodate this expected growth.

The NPF seeks to achieve ten strategic outcomes, building around the overarching themes of wellbeing, equality and opportunity. These will ensure a consistent approach between planning objectives under the NPF and investment commitments under the NDP. These

strategic outcomes are underpinned by supporting policies and actions at sectoral, regional and local levels.



Figure 3: NPF National Strategic Outcomes

3.1.2 Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy

Laois and Offaly form part of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) along with ten other counties. This area further comprises three Strategic Planning Areas with counties Laois, Offaly, Westmeath and Longford forming part of the Midland Strategic Planning Area.

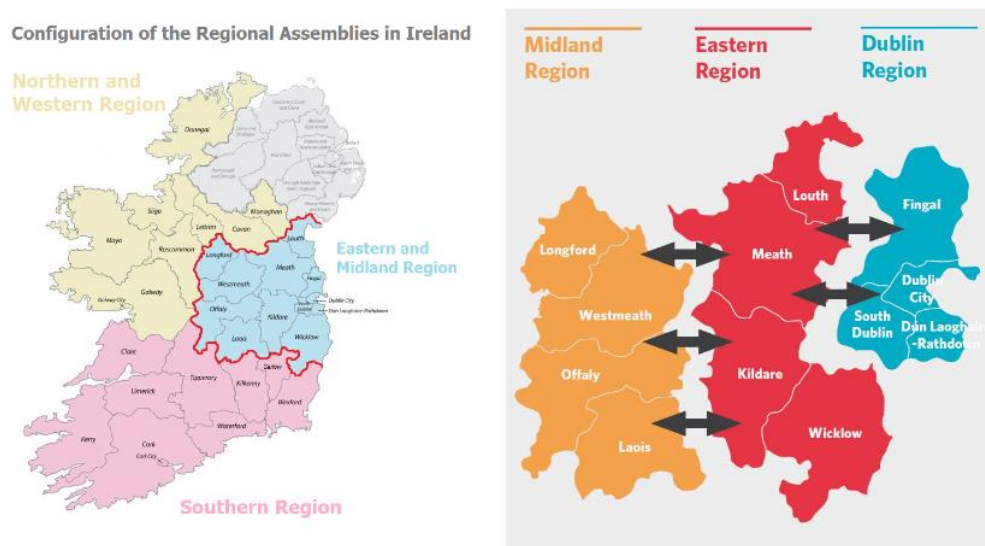


Figure 4: Eastern and Midland Region

EMRA adopted the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) in 2019. This strategy identifies the region's key strategic assets, opportunities and challenges and sets out policy responses to ensure that people's needs – such as access to housing, jobs, ease of travel and overall well-being are met, up to 2030 and beyond. The RSES identifies Portarlington as a **Key Service Centre** within the region.

Similar to the NPF, the RSES contains 16 Regional Strategic Outcomes and a suite of Regional Policy Objectives which are underpinned by the principles of Healthy Placemaking, Climate Action and Economic Opportunity, of which the JLAP is statutorily required to be aligned with.

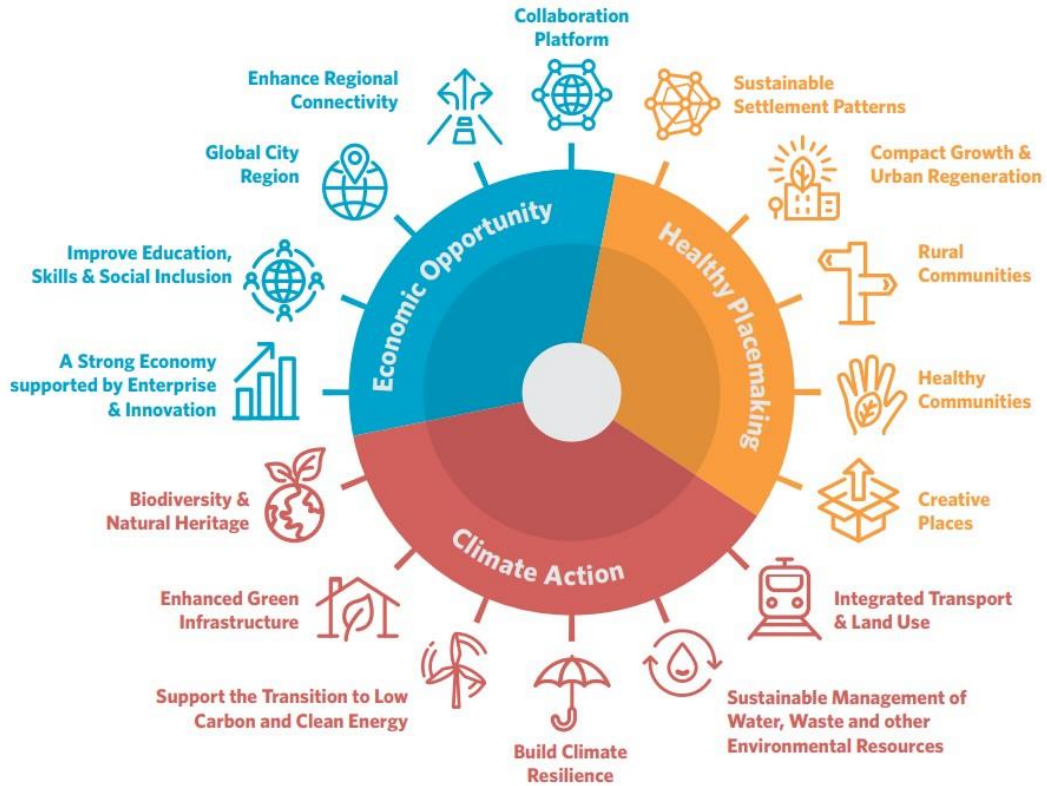


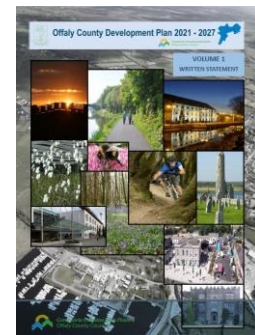
Figure 5: RSES Regional Strategic Outcomes

3.1.3 County Development Plans

In line with the National Planning Framework 2018 (NPF) and the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019 (RSES), the Laois County Development Plan (2021-2027) provides the strategic planning framework for County Laois while the Offaly County Development Plan (2021 – 2027) provides the strategic planning framework for County Offaly.

Portarlington is identified as a Self-sustaining Growth Town within the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027. It is identified as a Self-sustaining Town within the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027.

In guiding new development and investment in Portarlington, the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2021–2027 should be consulted, as appropriate, along with the local planning framework as set out in this JLAP.



3.2 INTEGRATING CLIMATE ACTION INTO THE PORTARLINGTON JLAP

Climate Action is now a key function of local government. Delivering Climate Action 2030 (CCMA, 2021) is the strategy for local authorities to deliver on the Climate Action Charter. It sets out *“to deliver transformative change and measurable climate action across our cities and counties and within our own organisations, through leadership, example and mobilising action at a local level.”*

Laois and Offaly County Councils, in partnership with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), will seek to work alongside communities and businesses to drive the change needed, create pathways for climate action and ensure the continued development of our urban areas and counties as sustainable places to live, work, visit and invest in. Existing structures such as the Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs), Public Participation Networks (PPNs), Local Community Development Companies (LCDCs), Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) and other statutory and non-statutory consultation and engagement can help enable this.

By setting out the strategic spatial framework for the future development of Portarlington, the JLAP supports wider local and central government actions. It ensures maximum co-ordination between the Laois County Development Plan, the Offaly County Development Plan and other climate related policies and programmes, including the Laois Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029 and the Offaly Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029.

One of the cross-cutting principles of this JLAP is to support a transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society, a necessary measure that is supported by the aforementioned legislative and policy framework relating to climate action. The Plan aims to ensure that climate action is at the forefront of all future development within the town, with policies and objectives along with specific projects in each chapter designed to contribute significantly towards addressing climate change and reducing carbon emissions in a meaningful and tangible way.

CHAPTER 4: A FRAMEWORK FOR INVESTMENT

A key function of this JLAP is to provide a framework that will inform and support proposals and bids for funding and investment at regional and national level, particularly in relation to funding streams such as the Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF). In doing this, the JLAP is supported by the Laois Local Economic and Community Plan, the County Laois Local Development Strategy and the Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan.

There are many public national investment/funding programmes. A non-exhaustive summary of these is set out below, noting that that these may change or be updated over the lifetime of the JLAP.

Table 1: Funding Programmes (noting these may change over the lifetime of the JLAP)	
Funding Programme	Purpose of Fund
Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF)	Aims to deliver more compact and sustainable development, as envisaged under Project Ireland 2040. It does this by part-funding regeneration and rejuvenation projects in Ireland's largest urban centres.
Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)	Supports the regeneration and development of rural towns, villages and outlying areas. The purpose is to support job creation in rural areas, address de-population of rural communities and support improvements in towns and villages with a population < 10,000.
Town Centre First Funding	A co-ordinated, whole-of-government policy framework to proactively address the decline in the health of towns across Ireland and support measures to regenerate and revitalise them.
Town and Village Renewal Scheme	To support the economic and social recovery of rural towns with a population of less than 10,000 and focuses on projects that have clear positive impacts on the town in terms of placemaking and town centre regeneration. It also provided specific funding for streetscapes enhancements.
Croí Cónaithe	To attract people to build their own homes and refurbish properties to live in small towns and villages
European Regional Development Fund	To support the Town Centre First approach, address dereliction and vacancy – managed by the Regional Assemblies

Table 1: Funding Programmes (noting these may change over the lifetime of the JLAP)		
Historic Initiative	Towns	To regenerate urban centres through heritage-led regeneration for significant buildings, streetscape conservation and enhancement and public realm work.
Historic Fund	Structures	To conserve and enhance heritage structures and historic buildings in public and private ownership
Built Capital Grant	Heritage	To provide smaller grants for works to historic buildings and repair historic structures
Destination initiative	Towns	To develop the tourism potential of destination towns, and to create a sense of place in towns across Ireland, attracting visitors to the area and helping to provide the necessary infrastructure to support regional growth in tourism.
Local Infrastructure Housing Fund	Activation	To enable the accelerated delivery of housing on key development sites and in urban areas of high demand for housing.
Serviced Sites Fund		To provide key facilitating infrastructure, on public lands, to support the delivery of affordable homes to purchase or rent.
Repair and Leasing Scheme		To provide upfront funding for any works necessary to bring privately owned property up to the required standard and in return the property owner agrees to lease the dwelling to the Local Authority to be used as social housing.
Buy and Renew Scheme		To support Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies in purchasing and renewing housing units in need of repair and makes them available for social housing use.
Sustainable Mobility Investment Programme		To support the roll out of new and improved active travel infrastructure in towns and villages.
Climate Action Fund		To aid and provide financial support to projects to help Ireland achieve its climate and energy targets. At least €500 million in government funding up to 2027 will be provided for specific sectors (such as electricity, transport, heat or agriculture) or specific areas (such as capacity building, innovation or community participation).

Table 1: Funding Programmes (noting these may change over the lifetime of the JLAP)

Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant	To help turn a vacant house or building into a permanent home or a rental property.
Local Authority Purchase and Renovation Loan	Government backed mortgage and loan to allow for the purchase and renovation of derelict and non-habitable homes.

Table 1: Funding Programmes (noting these may change over the lifetime of the JLAP)

4.1 PROGRESS TO DATE

Portarlington has benefited from a number of the above-mentioned funding programmes, and there are also commitments in place for future funding investment in the town. These include:

4.1.1 Rural Regeneration and Development Fund

In April 2021, Laois County Council secured EUR1.1 million under Call 3 of the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund for the '*Heritage Led Regeneration of Portarlington Market House and Square*', with the overall aim to refurbish and reuse the Market House located in the centre of Portarlington.

Works on the Market House project commenced in August 2023. The Market House will be reimagined as the central focus of the town with a range of public and community uses including community meeting space and an event and exhibition space. It is envisaged that this project will regenerate a key focal point within the town, acting as a launching point for further regeneration and redevelopment in the town centre. It is further envisaged that the Market House



will connect the town with visitor attractions in its hinterland including the Derrycastle Lakes and Trails; Emo Court; Corrig Wood and the Barrow walkway.

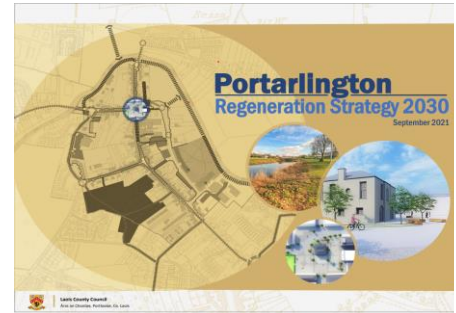
The redevelopment of the Market House is one of the principle projects within the 'Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030'. This Strategy was adopted in September 2021 and focuses on a study area of the town centre comprising the main routes' leading to the 300-year-old Market House and its historic Square setting. The Vision Statement therein is:

'To create a more viable and visually attractive Town Centre in Portarlington for residents, visitors and workers through the appropriate rehabilitation of the Market House and Square and other key buildings, with improvements to connectivity, public realm and amenities'.

Underpinning this vision is the desire to ultimately regenerate the town centre by tackling critical issues such as poor pedestrian environment, dereliction and dysfunctional public spaces. This overall vision also seeks to increase the attractiveness of the area to encourage investment. The 'Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030' therefore not only provides a vision for the development of the town, but also provides a basis for the town to seek support from multiple funding streams as outlined in Table 1.

There are eight principal actions within the Strategy which aim to achieve this:

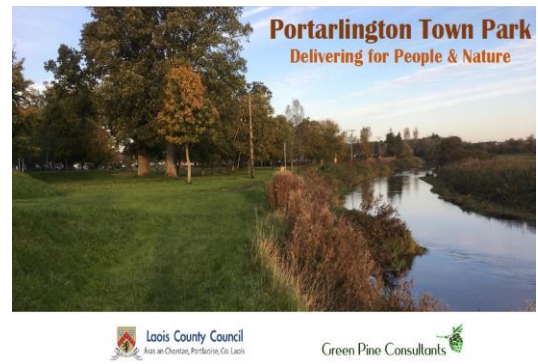
1. Rehabilitation of the Market House
2. Rehabilitation of the Market Square
3. Improve the public realm within the Town Centre
4. Promote Sustainable Access and Mobility
5. Promotion of sustainable uses in the Town Centre
6. Create a Low Carbon Zone
7. Celebration of the Heritage of Portarlington
8. Development of Green / Blue Infrastructure



4.1.2 Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS)

Since 2018, almost €1million has been secured for projects in Portarlington under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme:

- **2022:** €500,000 secured to upgrade the People's Park in Portarlington based on the masterplan that was developed for the park in 2022 and updated in 2024. The upgrade includes the provision of a new central Plaza which will also act as an event space, the provision of an edible garden, and the refurbishment of the playground and natural play features in the park. It is intended to up- grade the park furniture and provide a woodland sculpture trail. The project is currently underway and is being largely funded by the Department of Rural & Community Development, with the balance being funded by Laois County Council.



- **2020:** €22,500 secured for modification and enhancement of the Public Realm in Portarlington, including: Modification of public realm on Main Street and Market Square to accommodate outdoor dining areas; Installation and replacement of street furniture on Main Street; Replacement of old railings along Main Street and the Installation of new bicycle stands at Market Square. The project is complete and was largely funded by the Department of Rural & Community Development, with the balance being funded by Laois County Council.

- **2020:** €100,000 for public realm enhancement works for Kilamalogue urban village. The works proposed include the upgrade of footpaths, urban landscaping, seating and upgrading of existing pedestrian crossing to table top shared surface.
- **2019:** €200,000 secured for public realm works, landscape improvement works and pathway improvements at the People's Park, the Link Road, Market Square & Main Street. The shared vision of Laois County Council, community and voluntary groups (including Portarlington Tidy Towns and the People's Park Management Committee), tourism and business parties was to enhance key public realm spaces in Portarlington and to promote a positive visual impression of the town. Additionally, this project sought to improve accessibility within the town park and to enhance urban biodiversity. The project has resulted in: significant visual improvements to the Main Street, Market Square and Link Road streetscape and enhancements to urban biodiversity.
- **2018:** €100,000 secured for enhancement, increased accessibility and security in People's Park including; installation of park furniture; additional planting, signage and cycle racks; installation of new public lights and CCTV upgrade. The project is complete and was largely funded by the Department of Rural & Community Development, with the balance being funded by Laois County Council.

4.1.3 Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)

Significant funding has been secured by both Laois and Offaly County Councils through the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme for the Derrycastle Lakes & Trails Project:

In 2022, Laois County Council secured €62,444 and Offaly County Council secured €112,191 to provide a walking trail to Derrycastle. The works were completed in 2023 and serve to improve connectivity between Portarlington town and the Derrycastle Lakes.

In 2023, Laois County Council secured €44,280 for the completion of a Feasibility Study for the potential development of



the Derrycastle Amenity Area at a site that is located between the River Barrow and the existing trail head for the Derrycastle walk. This funding will support preparatory work for a potential project that aims to enhance existing outdoor recreation activities and facilities and allow for the development of new activities and facilities such as canoeing/kayaking,

swimming, and fishing in addition to natural play features.

Offaly

- €50,000 to develop a 10-year Derrycastle Development Plan (2022)
- €152,360 for improved footway connections and signage (2019)

In addition to the above, Laois Partnership has secured almost €70,000 for projects in Portarlington since 2018 under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme:

- 2023 – €30,000 secured for upgrade works at Derrycastle Lakes & Trails paths
- 2021 - €19,980 secured to develop the river walk along the River Barrow from the Peoples Park to Spa Bridge
- 2018 - €18,792 secured for upgrade, promotion & signage of the Town walk to Lea Castle

4.1.4 Other

Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund

The aim of this fund is to provide financial support for larger sports facility projects. Laois County Council has secured over €600,000 for improvement works to Portarlington Leisure Centre

The Sports Capital Programme

This Programme aims to foster an integrated and planned approach to developing sports and physical recreation facilities throughout the country. Beneficiaries of funding in Portarlington town include (but are not limited to):

2024

- Portarlington GAA Club - €182,717
- Portarlington Lawn Tennis Club - Replacement of Carpet Posts and nets - €46,119
- Portarlington Rugby Football Club Ltd - LED Pitch Floodlighting and associated works - €118,108

2020

- Portarlington Community Centre - Replacement of Main Sports Hall Roof - €43,089
- Portarlington GAA Club - Sports Hall refurbishment, pitch lights - €113,707
- Portarlington Lawn Tennis Club - Rejuvenation of Tennis courts - €14,470
- Portarlington Rugby Football Club - LED Lighting for training and walking - €20,727
- Portarlington Golf Club - Mower and Leaf Blower - €12,624

2018

- Portarlington Community Centre - Replacement of Main Sports Hall Roof - €32,165
- Portarlington GAA Club - Dressing Room works and equipment - €2,606
- Portarlington Golf Club - Provision of new shower facilities - €9,881

- Portarlington Rugby Football Club - Indoor Training Facility, Equipment - €7,673

The Community Recognition Fund

This fund aims to support the development of community infrastructure and facilities in Laois in recognition of the contribution being made by communities in welcoming and hosting significant numbers of arrivals from Ukraine and other countries. Beneficiaries of funding in Portarlington town include: Portarlington GAA Community Centre; Portarlington Lawn Tennis Club; Portarlington Rugby Club; Port Art Collective; Portarlington Concert Band; Coderdojo Portarlington and Portarlington Leisure Centre.

CHAPTER 5: PORTARLINTON IN CONTEXT

5.1 LOCATION

The town of Portarlinton is situated on the Laois/Offaly County boundaries. It is equidistant from the county towns of Portlaoise and Tullamore. The town has dual administration by both Laois and Offaly County Councils. The majority of the urban area (approximately 75%) is located within County Laois with the remaining proportion in County Offaly. The River Barrow flows through the town in a west-east trajectory.

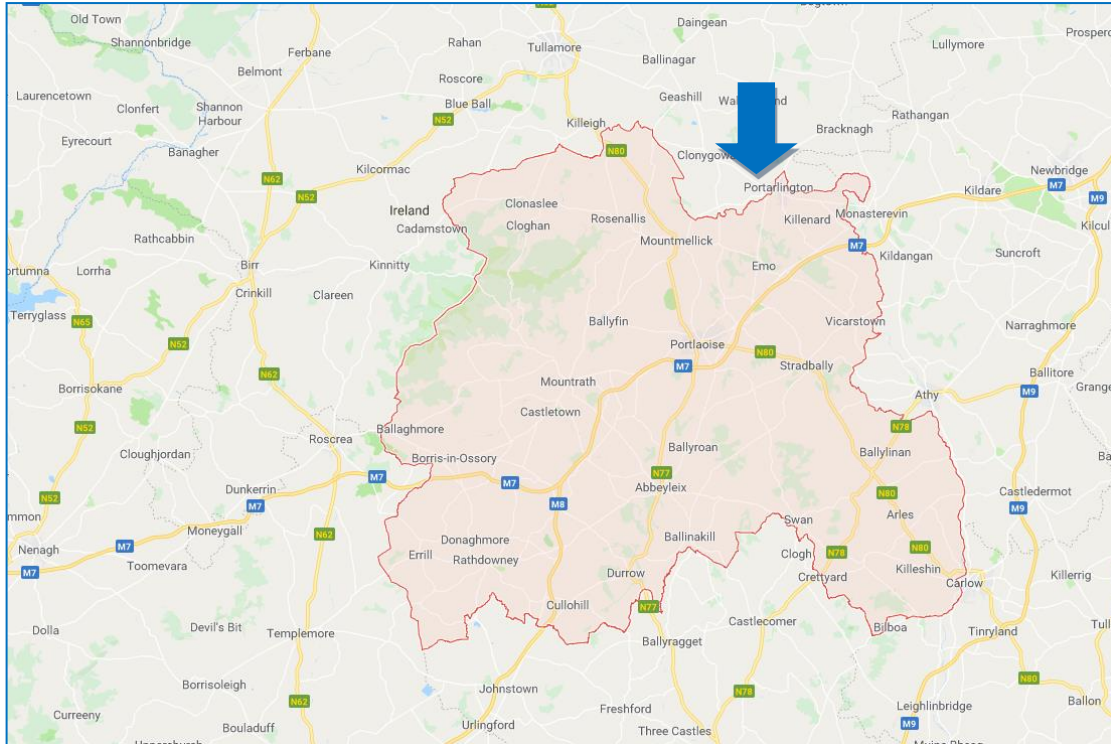


Figure 6: Portarlinton in context

5.2 EXISTING CONTEXT

Portarlinton developed along a linear Main Street, which terminates at Market Square to the north. The development of the town extended over time in a southerly direction towards the railway station.

The Dublin/Cork and Dublin/Galway Railway lines comprise the boundaries to the town to the southwest/west and south. Portarlinton is also constrained by the Barrow River and associated flood plain which forms a loop around much of the town.

The Main Street along Patrick Street, Bracklone Street and also French Church Street comprise the traditional retail core of Portarlinton, accommodating a diverse range of retail services mainly in the control of independent retailers. The town has a mix of convenience and comparison retailing, financial institutions and service providers. Figure 7 below provides a visual of the spatial development of the town over time.



Figure 7: Spatial development of Portarlington

5.3 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

The historical core of the town is focused on a zone of archaeological interest centred around Market Square. The town centre area contains a number of Protected Structures and it is an objective of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 to investigate the designation of an Architectural Conservation Area in the town. The Built Heritage of the town is discussed in further detail in Chapter 14 of this JLAP relating to Built Heritage.

5.4 SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE

5.4.1 Population and Demographic Profile

As highlighted by Table 2 below, the population of Portarlington has increased significantly since the beginning of the millennium. The town of Portarlington now has a population of 9,288 persons (Census 2022). This represents a 10.9% increase in population since Census 2016. This percentage increase in population exceeds that of the state (8%), County Laois (8%) and County Offaly (7%) over the same period.

	Persons 2002	Persons 2006	Persons 2011	Persons 2016	Persons 2022
Portarlington	4,001	6,004	7,788	8,368	9,288

Table 2: Population Growth in Portarlington

As per the below table, the majority of the population of Portarlington live in County Laois.

	Persons within 7 Built-Up Areas in Co. Offaly	Persons within 23 Built-Up Areas in Co. Laois	Total Persons in Portarlington
Portarlington	2,106	7,182	9,288

Table 3: Population Dispersal in Portarlington

The average age of the state population was 37.4 years in 2016 and 38.8 years in 2022. In comparison, the average age of Laois's population was 35.6 years in 2016 and 37.3 years in 2022, while the average age of Offaly's population was 37.2 years in 2016 and 39 years in 2022. In terms of its age profile, Portarlington depicts a similar picture to these trends. This is demonstrated by Figure 8 below.



Figure 8: Portarlington Age profile

Figure 8 also highlights that the population of Portarlington is relatively balanced between both males and females. Overall, Portarlington has a relatively young population with a high proportion of adults of working age and a high proportion of young children. Over half of the population are aged 19 years and younger.

Portarlington benefits from an ethnically diverse population. As per figure 9 below, approximately 17% of its population are non-Irish, and are from the United Kingdom, Poland, India and other parts of the world.

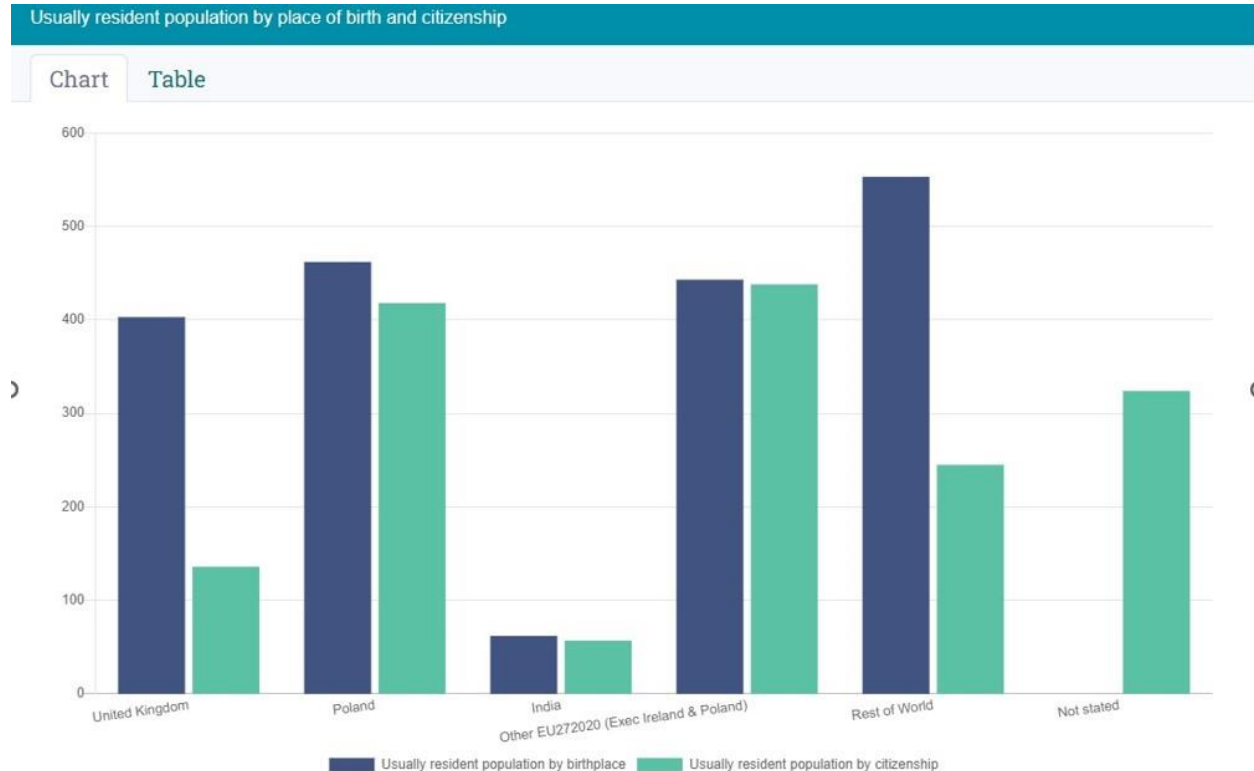


Figure 9: Population by Place of Birth and Citizenship

5.4.2 Employment Profile

According to Census 2022, there were 39,934 people (aged 15 and over) at work in Laois, an increase of 6,393 people (+19%) between 2016 and 2022. In Offaly, there were 35,248 people (aged 15 and over) at work, an increase of 4,961 (+16%) since 2016.

In Portarlington, 3,821 people (aged 15 and over) were at work in April 2022. This represents 41.13% of the overall population of the town.

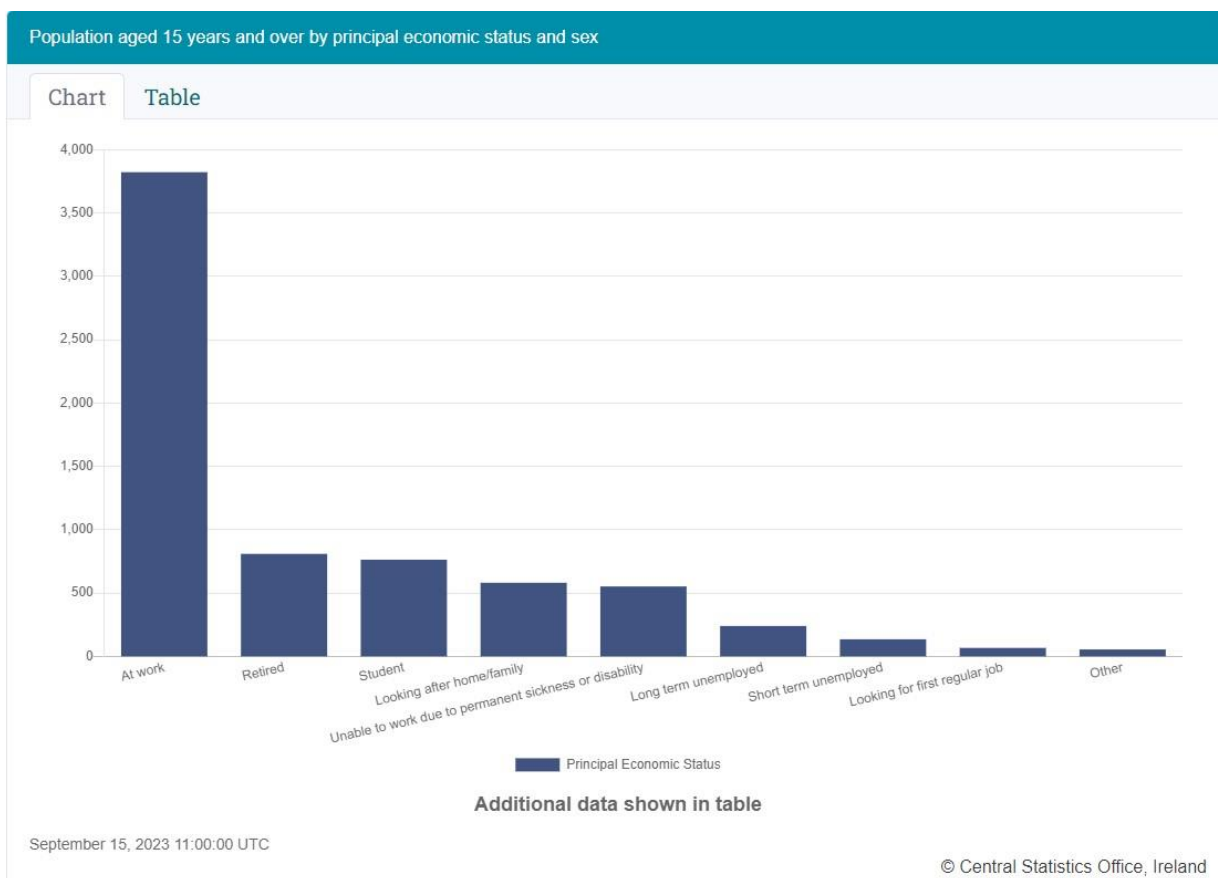


Figure 10: Population Aged 15 Years and Over by Principal Economic Status

Further to this, Census 2022 has revealed that Portarlington has a relatively diverse employment type profile, with significant numbers of people employed in Commerce and Trade and Professional Services.

Jobs ratio is an established measure of the employment “health” of a settlement. It is the relationship between the number of people in the labour force and the number of jobs in any defined area. As indicated in Census 2022, Portarlington has an indicated resident worker population of 3,013 and 1,950 jobs. This corresponds to a jobs to worker ratio of 0.65.

5.4.3 Transport Profile

Portarlington is well serviced in terms of transport infrastructure. It is located approximately 10kms from the M7 and M8 motorway network and is linked to key neighbouring towns by a series of Regional Roads. The town is located on the railway line connecting the south and west of the country to Dublin. There are a number of bus services connecting Portarlington to urban centres. Portarlington is therefore easily accessible to the Greater Dublin Area, Dublin City, the M50, national airports and ports.

The town is relatively compact. However, many residential areas are located peripherally and an under use of active travel modes to education and employment destinations, has resulted in an overreliance on the private vehicle. This is highlighted by Figure 11 below.

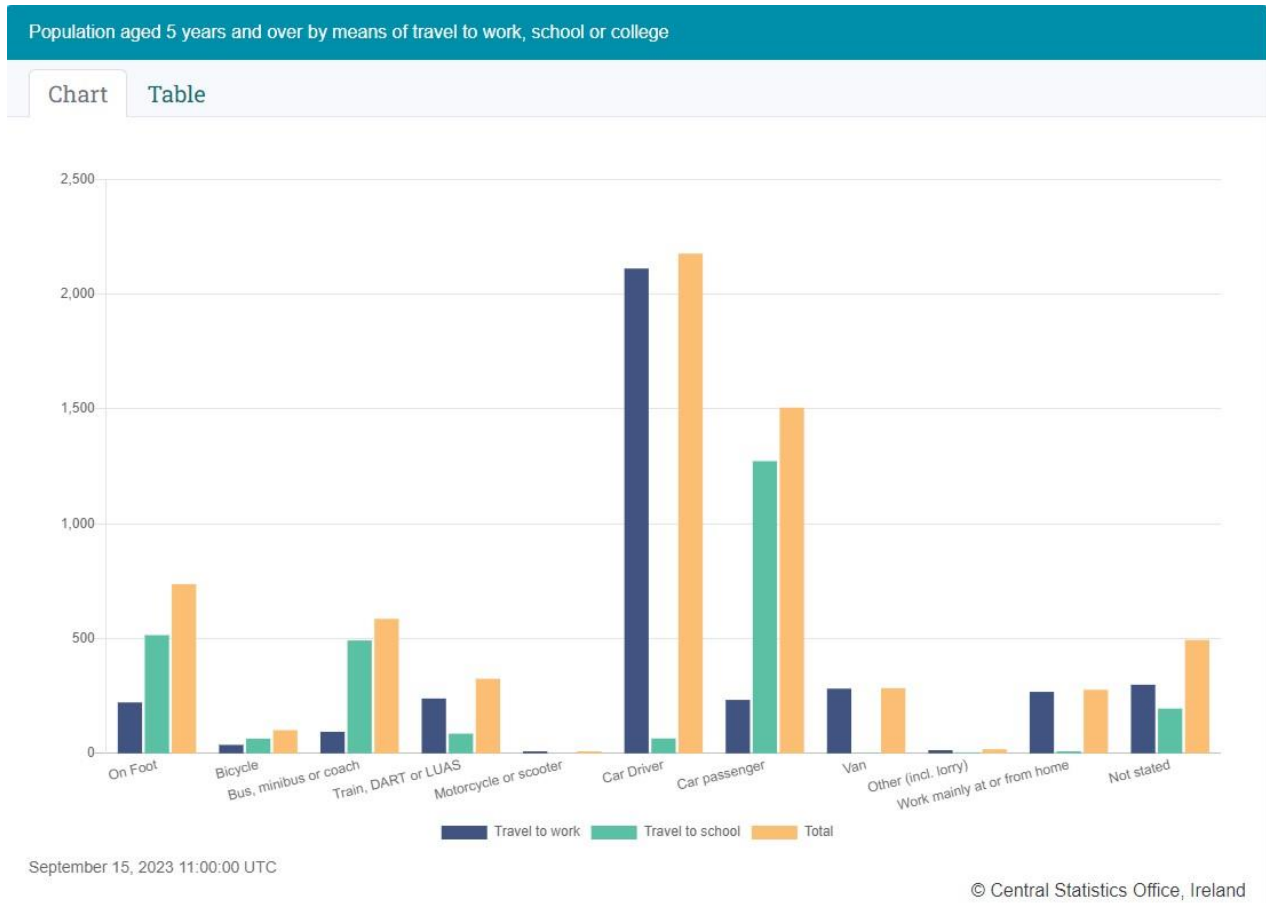


Figure 11: Means of Travel to Work, School or College

5.4.4 Conclusion

Portarlington is one of the most accessible towns within the Midlands by virtue of its location and the presence of a well-connected train station, which has had substantial investment in recent years. As per the above data, the town has experienced significant population growth since the beginning of the millennium. While such population growth has created the critical mass to support the town's own services and industry, this growth has in turn placed an even greater demand on the town and its infrastructure.

These demands have created challenges including continued commuting patterns to larger centres of employment; attracting private sector employment; housing delivery and affordability and poor permeability within town centre.

This JLAP seeks to address these challenges by placing a strong emphasis on positive placemaking, employment generation, the consolidation of the town centre and the provision of housing, community and social services together with the transition to a low carbon town. As a local land use strategy, it will support improvements to quality of life, including issues such as strong inclusive communities, quality and affordable housing, physical infrastructure, pride of place, recreation and open space, sustainable travel, public realm etc.

CHAPTER 6: DEVELOPMENT VISION AND STRATEGY

The Portarlington Joint Local Area Plan is underpinned by a strategic vision which is intended to guide the future growth of the town. The objectives outlined below combine to form a coherent development strategy to 2031 and beyond. These goals cover economic, social and environmental dimensions.

The strategic vision is based on the role of Portarlington as set out in the settlement strategies of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027. The strategic vision is also based on the aspirations of the residents and stakeholders in Portarlington.

Vision Statement: To develop Portarlington as a sustainable low carbon settlement centred on a compact, vibrant town centre utilising locational strengths to attract employment and to promote the unique settlement as an attractive town in which to live, work and play, while ensuring the management of flood risk and the protection of the unique built and natural heritage.

This strategic vision recognises the potential of Portarlington to align with the key growth objectives set out in higher order spatial plans and to take advantage of the strategic location of the town both regionally and nationally.

Portarlington will become a place that residents, workers and visitors alike will enjoy. It will be a place that is inclusive, accessible and sustainable. The town will benefit from the regeneration of central areas which will in turn support local businesses and services.

6.1 KEY PLAN POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

This JLAP is based on a number of objectives which aim to improve the quality of life of the citizens of the town and surrounding hinterland. The development of Portarlington over the lifetime of this plan shall be focused on urban regeneration, employment growth, consolidation of the town centre, sustainability and the provision of community and social services.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

It is an objective of Laois and Offaly County Councils to:

Objective 6.1	Support new development that will enable sustainable housing growth, employment and prosperity for Portarlington as a 'Key Service Centre' in line with the Strategic Objectives of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region (2019), the Laois County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (designated as a Self-Sustaining Growth Town) and the Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (designated as a Self-Sustaining Town).
Objective 6.2	Promote and support positive placemaking and the development of sustainable communities, with an emphasis on active travel and shorter walking and cycling timeframes to social and community facilities, improving permeability in the built environment, and encouraging a reduction in car dependency.
Objective 6.3	Support and facilitate the regeneration and consolidation of the town centre, in line with the objectives of the 'Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030', while emphasising heritage-led regeneration.
Objective 6.4	Work in partnership with community groups for the regeneration and revitalisation of Portarlington, and to actively seek and secure funding and investment under available national and regional investment and funding programmes in line with the development strategy as set out.
Objective 6.5	Support compact residential growth in Portarlington through the sustainable intensification, and consolidation of the town centre and in established residential areas, to meet identified housing targets and requirements.
Objective 6.6	Monitor and manage the delivery of housing in Portarlington, in line with national, regional and county level objectives, through the development strategy in this plan and also through the development management process.
Objective 6.7	Promote and support balanced economic development and employment growth.
Objective 6.8	Protect, conserve and enhance the built, natural and cultural environment, by promoting awareness and high-quality urban design and utilising relevant heritage legislation.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES	
Objective 6.9	Develop and improve flood mitigation measures throughout the town and rural hinterland, in compliance with the Barrow Flood Risk Management Plan (OPW, 2018) and the European Habitats Directive.
Objective 6.10	Enhance climate adaptation and mitigation, and accelerate a transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy in Portarlington.
Objective 6.11	Ensure that Portarlington grows at a sustainable level in line with the Core Strategy Table and deliver consolidation and targeted 'catch up' investment in services, infrastructure, amenities and local employment in order to become more self-sustaining.
Objective 6.12	Development within flood risks areas shall be limited to that appropriate to the level of flood risk, as identified in Map 3 (Land Use Zoning, SAC and Flood Zoning) in accordance with the provisions of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009), as amended. New development within this area is limited to water-compatible uses in Flood Zone A and less vulnerable or water compatible uses in Flood Zone B except where all criteria of the Plan Making and Development Management Justification Tests have been shown to have been satisfied and a detailed SSFRA has been prepared.

CHAPTER 7: CORE STRATEGY COMPLIANCE AND HOUSING

Strategic Aim: To make provision for high quality and accessible housing that meets the needs of a diverse population and facilitates the creation of sustainable communities, with a focus on compact growth, urban regeneration, sustainable travel, and healthy placemaking, in accordance with the Core Strategies contained in the Laois County Development Plan and the Offaly County Development Plan.

7.1 FUNCTION AND POPULATION OF PORTARLINGTON

As set out in the Eastern & Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), Portarlington is a designated **Key Service Centre** within the region. Portarlington is identified as a **Self-sustaining Growth Town** within the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027, and a **Self-sustaining Town** within the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The RSES states that Self-Sustaining Growth Towns and Self-Sustaining Towns are 'settlements that act as regionally important local drivers providing a range of functions for their resident population and their surrounding catchments including housing, local employment, services, retail and leisure opportunities'. Portarlington therefore performs an important retail, residential, service and amenity function for its population and for its local rural hinterlands. It also supports the upper tiers of the urban hierarchy including the larger towns of Portlaoise in County Laois and Tullamore and Birr in Co. Offaly.

Census 2022 has revealed that an upward trajectory in population growth is continuing. County Laois has experienced dramatic population growth in the past two decades, growing by 56% over the twenty-year period between 2002 and 2022. In the same period, County Offaly experienced a 31% increase in population. Census 2022 recorded a population of 9,288 people for the town of Portarlington. Overall, the population of Portarlington has more than doubled between 2002 and 2022. This represents a 132% increase in the population of the town.

	Pop. 2002	Pop. 2006	Pop. 2011	Pop. 2016	Pop. 2022	% Change 2016 - 2022	% Change 2002 - 2022
Co. Laois	58,774	67,059	80,559	84,697	91,877	8%	56%
Co. Offaly	63,663	70,868	76,687	77,868	83,150	7%	31%
Portar- lington	4,001	6,004	7,788	8,368	9,288	10.99%	132%

Table 4: Population statistics between 2002 and 2022

Data for 'Built Up Areas' (BUAs) have been released as part of Census 2022. These BUAs isolate small areas of urban centres across Ireland. There are 30 BUAs in Portarlington (23

no. in Co. Laois and 7 no. in Co. Offaly). These have been isolated and analysed to reveal the population figures pertaining to each side of the County boundary. As per the below table, the majority of the population of Portarlington is in County Laois.

	Persons within 7 Built-Up Areas in Co. Offaly	Persons within 23 Built-Up Areas in Co. Laois	Total Persons in Portarlington
Portarlington	2,106	7,182	9,288

Table 5: Population by Built-Up Areas

7.2 FUTURE POPULATION AND HOUSING TARGETS

Planning Authorities are required to prepare and incorporate a Core Strategy to demonstrate that their respective County Development Plans are consistent with national and regional objectives set out in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES).

The ‘Core Strategy Table’ within the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 [and by extension the RSES] sets out the population projections and household allocations for Portarlington and the other county settlements up to 2027. In County Offaly, the population projections and household allocations for Portarlington are set out in the ‘Core Strategy Table’ within the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027.

These Core Strategy tables provide details of the 2016 population, population projections, the housing allocations for 2021 – 2027 and for 2027 - 2031 for each settlement (in County Laois and in County Offaly) based on the Housing Strategy analysis. These Core Strategy tables also provide details of the number of housing units which must be delivered within the built-up footprint of each settlement and the quantum of land required for the delivery of the housing allocation based on a specific density for each settlement.

7.3 LAOIS COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN CORE STRATEGY AND ESTIMATED RESIDENTIAL LAND CAPACITY

The Core Strategy Table in the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 identifies a projected population increase for Portarlington by 2027 of 1,000 people, and an associated housing allocation of 400 units. This figure of 400 units represents 10% of the projected housing target for County Laois to Portarlington.

Applying the Core Strategy housing unit target figure of 400 units for Portarlington to the JLAP translates into a projected requirement for 368 units to be built over the life of the Plan (See Table 6). As the 2025-2031 JLAP period is 4 years beyond the 2021-2027 period of the current Laois County Development Plan, the overall unit requirement of 368 units has been calculated to take account of:

- The addition of a projected allocation of 268 additional units to cover the additional 4 years. This projected allocation is based on an average per annum calculation (i.e. 400 units / 6 years = circa 67 units per year).
- The subtraction of the estimated number of 300 units constructed since 2021.

Laois County Council – Functional Area	Units
Core Strategy unit allocation to 2027	400
Plus 4-year projected unit allocation to 2031 (67 units x 4 years)	268
Less units constructed since 2021	300
Portarlington total unit target	368

Table 6: Housing Unit Allocation to Portarlington - Laois

The quantum of ‘New Residential’ zoned land in Portarlington is circa 14.52 hectares. This can deliver an estimated 363 units, utilising an indicative density of 25 units per hectare in accordance with Chapter 13 (Table 13.4) of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027.

It is acknowledged that the County Development Plan 2021-2027 identifies a requirement for 13.3 hectares of land in order to accommodate the planned growth of Portarlington and that the proposed quantum of 14.52 hectares is above this requirement. However, each of the land banks zoned for ‘New Residential’ development:

- Are located such as to be consistent with objectives for compact growth and sequential zoning;
- and / or
- Have extant planning permissions in place.

On this basis, the proposed quantum of circa 14.52 hectares is considered to be justified.

7.4 OFFALY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN CORE STRATEGY AND ESTIMATED RESIDENTIAL LAND CAPACITY

The Core Strategy Table of the Offaly County Development Plan indicates a population increase for its functional area in Portarlinton of 207 persons and an associated housing allocation of 140 units, by 2027.

Applying the Core Strategy housing unit target figure of 140 units for Portarlinton to the JLAP translates into a projected requirement for 180 units to be built over the life of the Plan (See Table 7). As the 2025-2031 JLAP period is 4 years beyond the 2021-2027 period of the current Offaly County Development Plan, the overall unit requirement of 180 units has been calculated to take account of:

- The addition of a projected allocation of 92 additional units to cover the additional 4 years. This projected allocation is based on an average per annum calculation (i.e. 140 units / 6 years = circa 23 units per year).
- The subtraction of the estimated number of 52 units constructed since 2021.

Offaly County Council – Functional Area	Units
Core Strategy unit allocation to 2027 (total based on Department spreadsheet)	140
Plus 4-year projected unit allocation to 2031 (23 x 4)	92
Less units constructed since 2021	52
Portarlinton total unit target	180

Table 7: Housing Unit Allocation to Portarlinton - Offaly

The quantum of ‘New Residential’ zoned land in Portarlinton is circa 5.33 hectares. This can deliver an estimated 160 units, utilising an indicative density of 30 units per hectare in accordance with Chapter 13 (Table 13.9.1) of the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027.

7.5 COMPLIANCE WITH CORE STRATEGIES

As per sections 7.3 and 7.4 above, this JLAP must cater for an overall housing demand of 548 units in Portarlinton (368 in Laois and 180 in Offaly).

The quantum of land zoned ‘New Residential’ in Portarlinton has been based on applying estimated densities per hectare. It should be noted that any planning application for residential development on these lands should adhere to the ‘Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ (2024). In addition, the density of development proposals and the number of units permissible will be determined at detailed

design stage based on a full assessment of site characteristics, local conditions, design sensitivities and the overall quality of the scheme, and having regard to the development management standards that are set out in the Laois County Development Plan and the Offaly County Development Plan, and any other relevant Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines.

To ensure continued compliance with the Core Strategies of both County Development Plans, it will be necessary to monitor the number of residential units permitted and developed. This will enable a close alignment between the Core Strategies, the population projections, development activity and all the associated necessary physical, social and community infrastructure in the joint urban area.

7.6 HOUSING STRATEGIES AND HOUSING NEED DEMAND ASSESSMENTS

The preparation of a Housing Strategy is a mandatory requirement under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). Housing Strategies play a key and evidenced-based role in translating NPF and RSES housing policies to the local level. The Housing Needs Demand Assessments (HNDAs) underpin and support the Housing Strategies through the provision of long term-estimates of future housing needs and supply and are a requirement of the NPF under National Policy Objective 37 (NPO 37).

The housing need of Portarlington has been evaluated in:

- The Housing Strategy, including the Housing Need and Demand Assessment adopted as part of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 (Refer to Chapter 4 and Appendix 3).
- The Housing Strategy, including the Housing Need and Demand Assessment which forms part of the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 (Refer to Chapter 2).

Laois County Council and Offaly County Council acknowledge the need to provide an adequate supply of quality housing to meet existing and future demand in Portarlington. Housing will be required to cater for existing and changing population requirements, such as (but not limited to):

- Social and affordable housing;
- Renewal/upgrade and replacement of existing stock;
- Smaller families; and
- An ageing population.

These changing population requirements generate the need for additional housing responses. Laois County Council and Offaly County Council will utilise all available policy avenues to ensure the optimum delivery of residential units to cater for various housing need. In order to align with the NPF, the RSES and the respective County Development Plans, this JLAP has a particular focus on compact growth and the provision of housing within the built-up area. This is in line with the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact

Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2024). As reflected in the provisions of Chapters 8 (Town Centre Revitalisation), 9 (Placemaking and Sustainable Communities) and 12 (Sustainable Travel and Transportation), this JLAP places a strong emphasis on positive placemaking and the creation of sustainable communities. The provision of housing will also focus on the creation of successful, well designed, and sustainable communities where new development successfully integrates with existing communities.

This JLAP places further emphasis on providing quality residential developments in the existing built envelope of the town. The Town Centre presents significant housing opportunities through the redevelopment of brownfield, infill and backland type developments.



Figure 12: Vignoles Gardens off Market Square - Completed and tenanted in 2023

As per Chapter 8 of this JLAP, a number of key opportunity sites have been identified within the town centre. These are in close proximity to public transport infrastructure and are suitable for higher density developments and / or housing solutions to suit a specific need. However, it is acknowledged that these areas are insufficient in size to accommodate the total projected population growth. Therefore, greenfield sites have also been identified which are suitable for new high quality residential developments.

7.7 TIERED APPROACH TO LAND ZONING

The NPF requires this JLAP to adopt a tiered approach to land use zoning to ensure a co-ordination of proposed 'New Residential' land use zonings for undeveloped lands with existing and planned infrastructure and services. In accordance with this requirement an Infrastructure Assessment (IA) has been prepared alongside this JLAP to assess the suitability of lands for future development. The IA, included as Appendix 5, has been carried out utilising a standardised Tier 1 and Tier 2 methodology termed in the NPF as a Tiered Approach to Zoning (TAZ). The TAZ can be summarised as follows:

- **Tier 1 - Serviced Zoned Land:** Comprises zoned lands that can accommodate new development connecting to existing services with service capacity available. The NPF states that these lands will generally be positioned within the existing built-up footprint of a settlement or be contiguous to existing development lands and will be within the footprint of or spatially sequential within the identified settlement.
- **Tier 2 - Serviced Zoned Land:** Comprises zoned lands that are not currently sufficiently serviced to support new development but have the potential to become serviced during the lifetime of the development plan. The NPF states that these lands may be positioned within the existing built-up footprint of a settlement or be contiguous to existing development lands or Tier 1 zoned lands, where required to fulfil the spatially sequential approach to the location of new development within the identified settlement.

7.8 CORE STRATEGY AND HOUSING POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES	
It is the policy of Laois and Offaly County Council to:	
Policy 7.1	Require all new residential developments in Portarlington to be consistent with the Core Strategies of the Laois County Development Plan 2021 - 2027 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027.
Policy 7.2	Promote and encourage compact growth in Portarlington through the sustainable intensification and consolidation of the town centre.
Policy 7.3	Require that an appropriate mix of housing type, tenure, density, and size is provided in all new residential areas and in appropriate brownfield/infill areas to meet the needs of the population of Portarlington, including the needs of older people, people with disabilities, and including social housing, and affordable housing and accommodation for the Travelling community.
Policy 7.4	<p>To require the creation of sustainable, mixed and balanced communities and high-quality residential developments at appropriate locations with adequate amenities and facilities that meet the standards and guidance of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DEHG (2024) - Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2023) - Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DHPLG, 2018) - The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, DTTS and DECLG (2013)

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

	- The development management standards of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027, and any future revisions of the above.
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PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

It is an objective of Laois and Offaly County Council to:

Objective 7.1	Ensure that sufficient zoned land is available at appropriate locations to cater for the envisaged population growth of Portarlinton, as set out in the adopted Core Strategies of Laois and Offaly.
Objective 7.2	Promote and encourage the development of the critical mass of Portarlinton and to enhance its strategic location on the National and Regional Road and rail network.
Objective 7.3	Monitor the scale, type, tenure and location of constructed and permitted developments in Portarlinton to ensure compliance with the adopted Core Strategies of Laois and Offaly and to achieve the delivery of strategic plan-led and coordinated balanced development within the town.
Objective 7.4	To identify, acquire and provide suitable sites, accommodation and facilities for the housing and resettlement of travelling families.
Objective 7.5	To secure the provision of social infrastructure, community and recreational facilities in tandem with residential development.

CHAPTER 8: TOWN CENTRE REVITALISATION

Strategic Aim: To support the sustainable long-term growth of Portarlington, ensuring that the vibrancy and vitality of the town is maintained and enhanced. This will be achieved by regenerating town centre brownfield lands, the development of key opportunity sites, increasing the residential population of the town centre, and providing a high-quality town centre environment focused on enhancing heritage, connectivity and active modes of travel.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The town centre of Portarlington generally comprises the traditional retailing centre of the town. It is the focus for retail/commercial and residential development.

In terms of retail offering, the town centre generally includes Main Street, Bracklone Street, French Church Street and to a lesser extent Spa Street. This area provides a diverse range of retail services mainly small in scale and in the control of local independent operators. More recently, the immediately adjacent Inner Relief Road is also being developed for retail space provision.

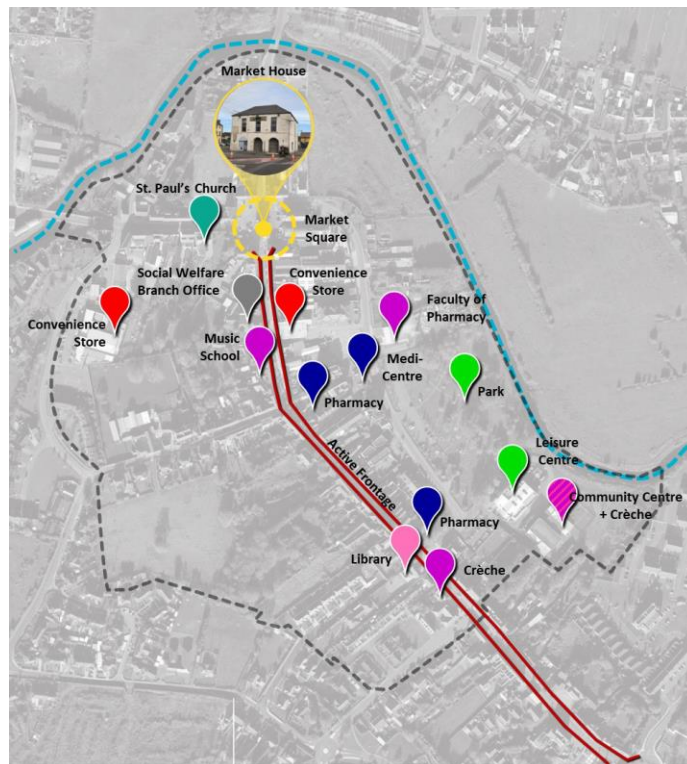


Figure 13: Extract from the Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030

There are a number of educational facilities within the town centre including a music school and a library. The Portarlington Further Education and Training Centre and the Portarlington Primary Care Centre are located close to the town centre. The Peoples Park and playground, the Community Centre and creche and the Leisure Centre provide an amenity hub in close proximity to the Main Street.

8.2 CHALLENGES

Portarlington has experienced rapid population growth. However, a lack of private sector investment in the town centre has contributed to decline. Market pressures have impacted on the town centre with retail and commercial leakage to Portlaoise, Tullamore and beyond.

Recent Geodirectory data on commercial vacancy has recorded Portarlington with a vacancy rate of 13.4% (Q2 2023). Although this represents a year-on-year decrease from 16%, it is nonetheless clear that vacancy rates are an issue that require attention.

Vacancy is further highlighted by a survey carried out by the Housing Department of Laois County Council in February 2024. This survey concentrated on properties within 1km of Portarlington town centre and the results can be summarised as follows:

No. of properties surveyed	68
No. of surveyed properties deemed to be vacant and derelict	3
No. of surveyed properties deemed to be vacant	35
No. of surveyed properties deemed to be occupied	30

Table 8: Survey carried out by Laois County Council (February 2024)

Dereliction and under-utilisation of sites and buildings is also a cause for concern among the Laois and Offaly Local Authorities and the business community.

Notwithstanding these challenges, there is capacity to stem leakage and to revitalise the town through various measures, including Enabling and Supporting Regeneration; Improving Public Realm; Addressing Vacancy; Implementing Statutory Land Activation Provisions; Adhering to respective Retail Strategies; Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Core; and the development of Opportunity Sites.

8.3 LAND ACTIVATION AND STRATEGY FOR VACANCY AND REGENERATION

8.3.1 Enabling and Supporting Regeneration

It is a first principle of Laois and Offaly County Councils to collaborate with, and support landowners in using their vacant property thereby reducing vacancy and dereliction and supporting overall regeneration. There are a number of statutory provisions designed to activate the development of underused or vacant sites.

The Councils will continue to offer support to landowners through their planning, housing and local enterprise services and offer regeneration schemes such as the Croí Cónaithe Scheme, the Repair and Lease Scheme, Buy and Renew Scheme, Rural Regeneration and Development Fund etc.

Indeed, Laois and Offaly County Councils have successfully attracted funding to the town centre from sources including the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF), the

Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS) and the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS). These are discussed in Chapter 4: A Framework for Investment.

A project that is considered to be particularly pertinent to the regeneration of the town centre is the 'Heritage Led Regeneration of Portarlington Market House and Square'. In April 2021, Laois County Council successfully secured EUR1.1 million under Call 3 of the RRDF. This project which will restore the historic focus of Portarlington around the Market House is currently underway. It is envisaged that this project will regenerate a key focal point within the town, acting as a launching point for further regeneration and redevelopment in the town centre. This in turn will allow for civic and commercial development to flow and flourish. It is an objective of this JLAP to build on the success of such funding applications and to act as a framework from which to seek further funding. Both Laois and Offaly County Councils will ensure that the spatial planning frameworks are in place to continue to seek funding for future investment.

The Portarlington Business Association (PBA) was established in March 2021. The main objective of the PBA is to advance community and economic development, including urban and rural regeneration, in Portarlington and its hinterland. Furthermore, the Portarlington Community Development Association (PCDA) is a voluntary group which aims to improve the economic, social and Cultural development of the town. In 2006, the PCDA established the Portarlington Enterprise Centre which is a not-for-profit business with a key focus on fostering business and employment opportunities for the local community. Laois and Offaly County Councils will continue to support these groups.

The Shop Front Improvement & Accessibility Grant Scheme was introduced in Portarlington in 2018 with the intention of improving the appearance of independently owned shops fronting public streets. Since 2018, seventeen applications have been approved by Laois County Council under this scheme.



Furthermore, the Portarlington Façade Enhancement Scheme was introduced in 2021 in accordance with the 'Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030'. The aim of this scheme was to improve the streetscape and public realm of Portarlington Town. The Main Street, French Church Street and Market Square areas were the first phase to be addressed. The scheme has assisted owners of commercial and residential properties to improve and enhance their premises through the painting of the exterior of their properties. The designated area for the scheme was extended in 2022 to include Spa Street, Link Road, and part of Upper Main

Street. Since 2021, fifty-seven applications have been approved by Laois County Council under this scheme. Table 9 below provides examples of properties that have benefited from this scheme.

	BEFORE	AFTER
The Deanery, Main Street		
Park Lane, Portarlington		
No. 1 – 4 Park Avenue, Link Road		

Table 9: Façade Enhancement Scheme on County Laois side of town

	BEFORE	AFTER
Colgan Sports, Patrick St, Kilmalogue		
The Hawthorne Public House, Patrick Street, Kilmalogue		
Residential property, Patrick St, Kilmalogue		

Table 10: Examples of properties on County Offaly side of town which carried out works under the Shopfront Enhancement Grant Scheme

8.3.2 Improved Public Realm

Improvements in the town centre public realm offers opportunities for accessibility, permeability and the creation of stronger nodes to provide an overall better urban experience. In addition to this, the creation of an attractive urban environment is critical to attract new businesses to the town centre. The enhancement of the streetscape and public realm associated with the restoration of the Market House will add to the attractiveness of the town. It is envisaged that this will in turn attract new enterprise, business and tourism and create a feel-good factor for the community of Portarlington.

Further improvements in the town centre public realm, specifically tree planting, pedestrian friendly measures, traditional shop fronts, street furniture and rearrangement of car parking are required to facilitate further opportunities to create an attractive town centre. These will

provide a better town centre experience and attract a diversification of retail users. In addition to this, town centre festivals, events, and markets will be supported and encouraged.

A proactive approach to urban design will be taken. Any redevelopment in the core area should utilise opportunities to facilitate attractive and vibrant environments designed at a human scale, with enhanced pedestrian permeability, visually engaging, secure and inviting public realms that promote and encourage passive and active recreation.

8.3.3 Address Vacancy

Promoting Town Centre living will contribute to a more sustainable urban core where there are facilities, services, amenities and where they are generally proximate to employment. This in turn brings a renewed sense of vitality and viability. It can also encourage new business to meet a renewed local demand which in turn has positive impacts on vacancy levels. There is scope in the town centre to better use existing vacant space, particularly at upper floor level. Laois and Offaly County Councils will work with owners to support the occupation of upper floors and address vacancy.

Laois County Council have introduced a Business Incentive Scheme to encourage the use of vacant commercial premises within a number of towns over a three-year period. This includes Portarlington. The intent of the scheme is to provide a grant incentive for new businesses to occupy premises that have been vacant for a period exceeding six months and to encourage diversity of retail opportunities within a designated area.

The Vacant Commercial Property Incentive Scheme was introduced in Portarlington in 2023 and aims to encourage the use of vacant commercial premises. This scheme incentivises new businesses to occupy vacant premises by lowering entry costs in the form of a range of grants and mentoring opportunities.

The scheme includes a potential package of 11 different financial and mentoring opportunities for businesses from Laois County Council's Business Support Unit, Laois Local Enterprise Office, Laois Chamber Alliance, Offaly Local Enterprise Office and the Portarlington Business Association.

8.3.4 Statutory Land Activation Provisions

The Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT): The Finance Act 2021 introduced the RZLT. It is applicable to lands zoned and serviced for residential development and for mixed-use including residential development. Laois and Offaly County Councils will seek to support and assist landowners, whose land are subject to the RZLT, in the development of their lands.

Derelict Sites Legislation: Laois and Offaly Councils maintain a register of derelict sites and dangerous structures in line with the Derelict Sites Act 1990 and the Local Government Sanitary Services Act 1964. Laois and Offaly County Councils will engage with landowners of derelict sites and seek to utilise active land management measures in order to incentivise development of these sites.

8.3.5 Retail Strategy

The retail planning policy context for the JLAP is informed by [a] the Guidelines for Planning Authorities: Retail Planning (2012), [b] the retail hierarchy identified in the RSES; [c] the Laois County Retail Strategy which comprises Appendix 4 of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and [d] section 7.1 'Retail and Town Centre Strategy' of the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027.

Portarlington is a designated Self-sustaining Growth Town within the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027. It is designated as a Level 3 Key Service Centre in the retail hierarchy that is set out in the Laois County Retail Strategy 2021-2027. The listed action within the Retail Strategy for Portarlington is to 'Encourage retail development commensurate with existing and anticipated growth, with particular emphasis on traditional core'.

Portarlington is as a designated Self-sustaining Town within the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027. Chapter 7 of this CDP sets out the Retail Hierarchy. In relation to Portarlington, it states that 'appropriate levels of convenience and comparison floor space will be encouraged....and supported where it is required to serve the existing and projected population catchment, subject to consideration of the impact on retail core areas and existing retail developments'.

The Retail Planning Guidelines for Local Authorities (DECLG, 2012) state that the order of priority for the sequential approach is to locate retail development in the town centre and only to allow retail development in edge-of-centre or out-of-centre locations where all other options have been exhausted. Portarlington town centre is therefore the focus and preferred location for retail development during the Plan period. The Main Street should be retained as the centre of commercial activity that delivers a range of services and functions. It is essential in terms of the sustainable development of the town going forward that leakage to the periphery is prevented. Laois and Offaly County Councils, in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines for Local Authorities (DECLG, 2012) will continue to support the vitality and viability of the town centre, applying a 'town centre first approach' and 'sequential test' for development.

8.3.6 Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Core

Portarlington's built heritage is a key and distinctive asset which can be used to promote a positive image of the town. The built heritage is a unique resource and represents an irreplaceable expression of the richness and diversity of the town's past. The vernacular architecture makes a strong contribution to the character of the town. The historic core of the town is further addressed in Chapter 14 Built Heritage.

8.3.7 Town Centre Opportunity Sites

Underused and poorly consolidated sites provide opportunities for residential and town centre development, allowing people to live, work and socialise in the town. This in turn creates an opportunity for increased town centre vibrancy and for a reduced reliance on the private car for short journeys.

A number of potential town centre opportunity sites have been identified for re-development. Such redevelopment would contribute to the renewal, enhancement and regeneration of the particular areas of the town in which they are located. These areas have been identified for various reasons including dereliction and under utilisation of land.

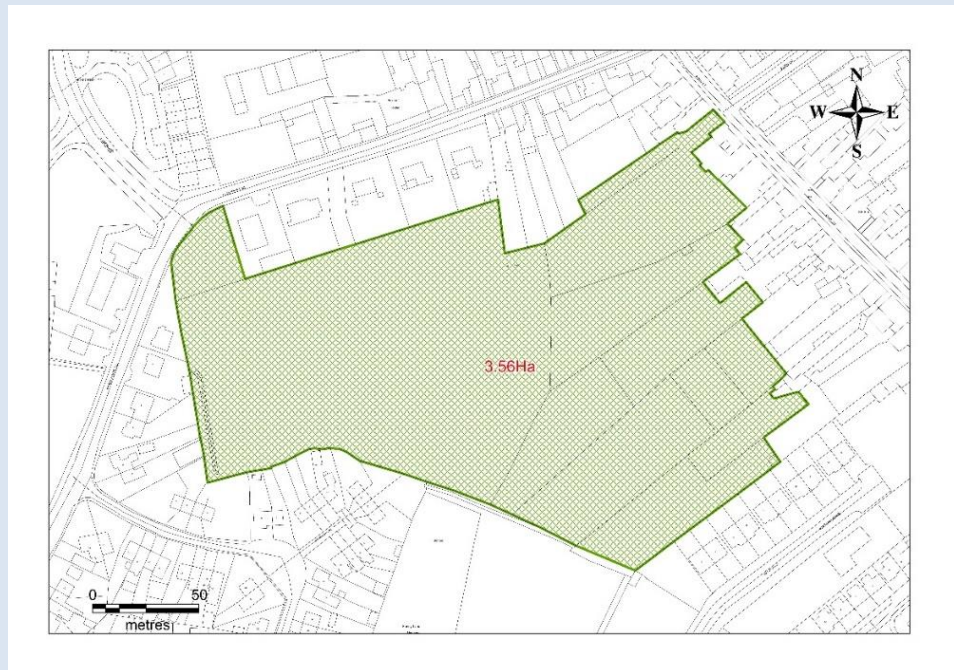
The site areas and / or boundaries are indefinite and can be modified to include adjacent lands as appropriate. Some of the sites may be owned by different parties and would require an element of site assembly for a coherent development strategy to progress. This approach to re-development will be encouraged over a piecemeal approach.

Town Centre Opportunity Sites

Site No. 1 Lands off Foxcroft Street, Co. Laois

Site no. 1 is a 3.56ha. greenfield site in a prime town centre location. The site has a vehicular access from Foxcroft Street and a potential pedestrian access from Main Street. It is a fully serviced site. A portion of the land is located within a Flood Zone. The adjoining lands contain a number of Protected Structures.

The lands surrounding the site are mainly in residential use. There is a primary school to the immediate south of the site fronting Sandy Lane and there are commercial / retail uses fronting Main Street.



Zoning: Town Centre

Key Planning Criteria:

- Opportunity to create a sustainable, high quality mixed-use development. Any development of the land will be required to be informed by the environmental constraints of the site and the associated following assessments, where pertinent:
 - Accord with the principal actions identified in the Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030.
 - Aim to achieve a density in accordance with the Core Strategy Policy Objective CS24, Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements (Guidelines for Planning Authorities), or any subsequent amendments to the guidelines, Sustainable Urban Housing Design

	<p>Standards for New Apartments (2022)’ and ‘Urban Development and Building Heights (2018)’.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support positive placemaking and have a distinct sense of place, as an extension of the town centre. - Provide a sustainable mix of uses that complement the Town. - Demonstrate clear pedestrian and cycle routes within, to and from the site linking the site to Main Street, Foxcroft Street and Sandy Lane. - Address the backland nature of the site using innovative urban design typologies. - Consider and address the scale of surrounding buildings and amenity of neighbouring occupiers. - Ensure that the height, scale and massing of development in responds positively to and enhance the established pattern of surrounding development (including streets and spaces) - Ensure that materials and finishes should be of high quality, respond to the local palette of materials and finishes and be highly durable. - Consider and address the site edges and interfaces with adjoining lands. - Provide high quality, welcoming public realm and landscape treatment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Any development of the land will be required to prepare: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Masterplan - A Design Statement, which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outlines how the development meets the Development Plan Objectives, and the objectives of any Local Area Plan or masterplan affecting the site ▪ Includes photographs of the site and its surroundings in addition to other illustrations such as photomontages, perspectives, sketches ▪ Demonstrates how the proposed development complies with the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURs), 2013 (as updated in 2019 and 2023) and the complementary publication The Treatment of Transition Zones to Towns and Villages on National Roads by Transport Infrastructure Ireland in relation to street network, movement and place, permeability and legibility. - An Architectural Impact Statement which assesses the impact of the proposed development on the surrounding
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	<p>character, including any protected structures, or buildings of historical importance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- A Landscape Assessment which Includes detailed proposals for Green Infrastructure (GI) and high quality public open space and ensures the provision of open space is designed in from the earliest stage of scheme layout design- An Archaeological Impact Assessment- A Flood Risk Assessment- A Visual Impact Assessment- A Road Safety Audit- A Traffic Impact Assessment- An Accessibility Audit- Appropriate Assessment under the European Habitats Directive where required
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**Site No. 2
Arlington
House, Co.
Laois**

Site no. 2 contains Arlington House. It is a 0.08 ha. brownfield site in a prominent town centre location. The site has a frontage onto French Church Street and onto the Link Road. It is a fully serviced site. A portion of the land is located within a Flood Zone. The site contains a Protected Structure. It is located within an archaeological zone of potential.

The River Barrow is located immediately west of the site. There are residential properties to the south-west of the site. Other lands surrounding the site are mainly in commercial use.



Zoning: Town Centre

Key Planning Criteria:

- Opportunity to create a sustainable development that contributes to and strengthens the rich heritage of Portarlington.
- Any development of the site will be required to:
 - Accord with the principal actions identified in the Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030.
 - Support positive placemaking.
 - Provide a sustainable development proposal that complements existing uses in the Town.
 - Provide a sensitive design solution that respects the special features of the heritage asset on site.

- | | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Consider and address the amenity of neighbouring residential occupiers.- Consider and address the site edges and interfaces with adjoining lands.▪ Any development of the land should be informed by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- A Design Statement- An Architectural Impact Statement- An Archaeological Impact Assessment- A Flood Risk Assessment- A Visual Impact Assessment- A Road Safety Audit- A Traffic Impact Assessment- An Accessibility Audit- Appropriate Assessment under the European Habitats Directive where required |
|--|---|

**Site No. 3
Lands to the
rear of Main
Street, Co.
Laois**

Site no. 3 is a 0.24ha. brownfield site in a prime town centre location. The site comprises land to the rear of properties that front Main Street and has a frontage onto the Link Road. It is a fully serviced site. It is located in an archaeological zone of potential.

There are a mix of land uses in the immediate surrounding area. The People's Park is to the southeast of the site.



Zoning: Town Centre

Key Planning Criteria:

- Opportunity to create a sustainable development that contributes to and strengthens the vitality of the town.
- Any development of the site will be required to:
 - Accord with the principal actions identified in the Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030.
 - Support positive placemaking.
 - Provide a sustainable development proposal that complements existing uses in the Town.
 - Provide a sensitive design solution that respects the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

- | | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Consider and address the site edges and interfaces with adjoining lands, with a particular emphasis on the Link Road frontage.▪ Any development of the land should be informed by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- A Flood Risk Assessment- A Design Statement- An Archaeological Impact Assessment- A Visual Impact Assessment- A Road Safety Audit- A Traffic Impact Assessment- An Accessibility Audit- Appropriate Assessment under the European Habitats Directive where required |
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**Site No. 4
Health
Centre site,
Co. Laois**

Site no. 4 contains a disused single storey health centre building. It is a 0.04ha. brownfield site in a town centre location. The site has a frontage onto French Church Street and onto the access road serving the Waterfront Apartments. It is a fully serviced site and it is located within an archaeological zone of potential.

There are residential properties to the north of the site. Other lands surrounding the site are mainly in commercial use.



Zoning: Town Centre

Key Planning Criteria:

- Opportunity to create a sustainable development that contributes to and strengthens the vitality of the town.
- Any development of the site will be required to:
 - Accord with the principal actions identified in the Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030.
 - Support positive placemaking.
 - Provide a sustainable development proposal that complements existing uses in the Town.
 - Provide a sensitive design solution that respects the amenity of neighbouring residential occupiers.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Consider and address the site edges and interfaces with adjoining lands.▪ Any development of the land should be informed by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- A Flood Risk Assessment- A Design Statement- An Archaeological Impact Assessment- A Visual Impact Assessment- A Road Safety Audit- A Traffic Impact Assessment- An Accessibility Audit- Appropriate Assessment under the European Habitats Directive where required
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**Site No. 5
Kilmalogue
Crossroads,
Co. Offaly**

Site of 2.7 hectares comprising two separate parcels of land northeast and southwest of Kilmalogue Crossroads in close proximity to Portarlington town centre.

The northeastern parcel of land comprises old convent buildings and backlands, while the southwestern parcel comprises a neighbourhood convenience retail unit and a terrace of dwellings along the R420 in addition to a terrace of dwellings and semi-detached dwellings along the R420.



Zoning: Neighbourhood Centre

Key Planning Criteria:

1. Opportunity to provide a key landmark/gate way building and high-quality mixed-use development.
2. Demonstrate a compact urban form, good urban design and healthy place making.
3. Provide for appropriate permeability within, to and from the site, with an emphasis on town centre walking and cycling links as shown in map above.
4. Show consideration of retaining and integrating existing important natural and man-made features.
5. Be consistent with Ministerial Guidelines for example,

	<p>‘Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2024)’, ‘Sustainable Urban Housing Design Standards for New Apartments (2022)’ and ‘Urban Development and Building Heights (2018)’.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Achieve an overall site density in the range of 30-50 residential units per hectare as part of a sensitive design solution that respects the amenity of neighbouring residential occupiers and supports positive placemaking. 7. Be informed by an Appropriate Assessment under the European Habitats Directive where required. 8. Any development of the site will be required to prepare individual masterplans and Design Statements for any development to the northeastern and south western parts of the opportunity site which address the following principles: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Be of high quality in terms of building form, layout, materials and public realm. b) Outlines how the development meets the Development Plan Objectives, and the objectives of any Local Area Plan or masterplan affecting the site. c) Includes photographs of the site and its surroundings in addition to other illustrations such as photomontages, perspectives, sketches. d) Ensures the scale of the proposed development is reflective of the settlement tier and character of the existing built environment. e) Outlines detailed proposals for Green Infrastructure (GI) and high quality public open space and ensures the provision of open space is designed in from the earliest stage of scheme layout design. f) Shows how the proposed development complies with the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURs), 2013 (as updated in 2019 and 2023) and the complementary publication The Treatment of Transition Zones to Towns and Villages on National Roads by Transport Infrastructure Ireland in relation to street network, movement and place, permeability and legibility.
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Table 11: Town Centre Opportunity Sites

8.4 TOWN CENTRE REVITALISATION POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES	
It is the policy of Laois and Offaly County Council to:	
Policy 8.1	Encourage the redevelopment and reuse of vacant buildings and underused sites and support the redevelopment of Town Centre ‘Opportunity Sites’.
Policy 8.2	Require new development proposals to be in accordance with the objectives set out in the Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030.
Policy 8.3	Encourage retail development into the existing town centre in line with the objectives of the “Retail Planning - Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2012” and any updated versions. Proposals which would undermine the vitality and viability of the town centre will not be permitted.
Policy 8.4	Encourage the maintenance of original shopfronts, and the provision of traditional shopfronts where replacements are required.
Policy 8.5	Prohibit internally illuminated fascias and projecting box signs. Concealed strip or flood lighting of fascias and traditional hand painted signs lit by spotlight may be an acceptable alternative.
Policy 8.6	Ensure all new developments have adequate refuse storage facilities on site.
Policy 8.7	Encourage new development which enhances the setting of Portarlington town centre, including its architectural and historical heritage and character. Require and support high quality urban design, compact growth, connectivity and active travel actions as opportunities arise.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

It is the objective of Laois and Offaly County Council to:

Objective 8.1	Improve the quality, vitality and vibrancy of the town centre through the delivery of the vision that is set out in the Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030
Objective 8.2	Build on successful funding applications and provide a framework from which further funding will be sought.
Objective 8.3	Actively engage with local communities, landowners, developers, and other agencies to secure resources for the enhancement, renewal, and regeneration of the town centre.
Objective 8.4	Promote the town centre as the priority location for commercial, civic, social, and cultural development.
Objective 8.5	Promote the consolidation of the town centre with a focus on the regeneration of underutilised/vacant buildings and strategic sites and the establishment of a mix of uses to encourage greater vibrancy outside of business hours.
Objective 8.6	Encourage the full utilisation of buildings and sites, in particular use of upper floors and backlands where appropriate, with due cognisance of quality of urban design, integration, and connections.
Objective 8.7	Require that development proposals facilitate a connected network of streets and spaces which prioritise pedestrians and cyclists and provides for the possibility of connections to future development on adjacent lands.
Objective 8.8	Prepare masterplans for the northeastern and southwestern parts of the Kilmalogue Crossroads Town Centre Opportunity site.

CHAPTER 9: PLACEMAKING AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Strategic Aim: To facilitate the development of sustainable and inclusive communities in Portarlington that respond to the needs of the current and future population of the town with the provision, expansion and enhancement of key facilities, services and amenities.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Local authorities are appropriately positioned to engage with stakeholders and respond to active placemaking with appropriate policies, public interventions, and targeted investment opportunities.

Prioritising placemaking and the development of sustainable communities in Portarlington is central to safeguarding and improving the quality of life of all residents in the town. This aim is reflected in the strategic objectives of this JLAP. There is a requirement to respond to the demographic and societal changes occurring in the town to ensure that support for new and improved community, recreational and amenity services and facilities are provided for.

Portarlington has many strengths including: a rich built and natural heritage, strong community and business associations, excellent amenities and community facilities and a favourable geographical location. However, Portarlington also has many challenges in terms of vacancy, dereliction & under-utilisation of buildings/ sites; continued commuting patterns to larger centres of employment; attracting private sector employment; housing delivery and affordability and poor permeability within the town centre.

This JLAP seeks to address these challenges by placing a strong emphasis on placemaking and the creation of sustainable communities. As a local land use strategy, it will support improvements to quality of life, including issues such as strong inclusive communities, quality and affordable housing, physical infrastructure, pride of place, recreation and open space, sustainable travel, public realm etc.

9.2 THE 10-MINUTE SETTLEMENT CONCEPT

The idea of the '10-minute settlement' is a central starting point to placemaking and to building inclusive and sustainable communities. As per the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, it is one of sixteen guiding principles to the integration of land use and transport. The '10-minute settlement' concept focuses on reducing car dependency by seeking to have all community facilities, services, and amenities accessible within a 10-minute walk or cycle from homes or by public transport.

It focuses on creating sustainable and connected communities, by understanding how our neighbourhoods work so that we can map out how a more compact and permeable urban form can provide high quality and safe links to public transport, shops, services, green spaces, cafes, doctors, childcare and to other neighbourhoods, reducing the need to travel.

The '10-minute settlement' concept cuts across various policies and objectives that are set out in each chapter of this JLAP. This is highlighted by figure 14.



Figure 14: '10-minute settlement' concept

Figure 15 below indicates a straight line 5-, 10- and 15-minute radii for walking outwards from Market Square, which is key focal point for Portarlington. This matter is discussed in greater detail in Chapter: 12 Sustainable Travel and Transportation and in Appendix 2: The Local Transport Plan.



Figure 15: 5-,10- and 15-minute walking radii from Market Square

9.3 SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Building strong, inclusive communities is an integral part of achieving sustainable development objectives and the principle of healthy placemaking. Apart from housing and employment opportunities, sustainable communities require the provision of and access to a myriad of social infrastructure in the areas of education, childcare, health and community support services, recreational and leisure facilities and a good-quality built environment. They underpin and enhance quality of life and provide a vital platform for community and social interaction which many people rely on for overall wellbeing.

9.3.1 Social and Community Facilities

Social and community facilities have a broad remit that encompasses a variety of services and amenities in areas such as education, healthcare, childcare, sports and recreation, and a good-quality built environment. In many cases these facilities are run and managed by local communities in a voluntary capacity, providing vital services to the young, the elderly, people with disabilities, migrants etc. They underpin and enhance quality of life and provide a vital platform for community and social interaction which many people rely on for personal health and wellbeing. Some of the key social and community facilities in Portarlington include: the Library; the Community Centre; the People's Park; and the Leisure Centre.

Laois County Council and Offaly County Council, along with their respective Public Participation Networks (PPNs), recognise the essential contribution facilities such as those listed above make to the quality of life in Portarlington, and their value to community development is acknowledged.

Both Councils are committed over the lifetime of this JLAP and subject to resources, to supporting and providing a range of shared, inclusive, and accessible social and community facilities that respond to the various needs and expectations of the current and future population of Portarlington.

At the same time, this JLAP acknowledges that there are challenges facing Portarlington in meeting these needs and expectations. These challenges relate to placemaking, consolidating and connecting existing and new residential areas and deficiencies in social and community facilities.

The delivery of new and improved social and community facilities will not be achieved through policy alone but will require sustained measures and targeted investment over the long term. Public intervention must also foster pride of place and calls for imaginative solutions, such as support for repurposing existing underutilised urban spaces and buildings.

9.3.2 Education and Training Facilities

The development of high-quality educational and training facilities strengthens the fabric of communities and enables opportunities. Equally, the level of education in an area can be a determining factor for some businesses when assessing new locations for their operations and can therefore also make a positive contribution to the commercial and business life of an urban centre.

Laois County Council and Offaly County Council have a role in facilitating the provision of these facilities, primarily through the formulation of supporting policies and objectives, and the zoning of lands for educational uses to meet the needs of new and existing communities in line with the pace of development.

There are three primary schools and one secondary school in Portarlington. The Laois County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 designates Portarlington as a ‘Self Sustaining Growth Town’ and provides a population increase of 1,000 persons for Portarlington from 2016 to 2027 and a further increase of 230 persons to 2031. The Offaly County Development Plan 2021- 2027 designates Portarlington as a ‘Self Sustaining Growth Town’ and provides a population increase of 207 persons for Portarlington from 2016 to 2027.



Figure 16: St. Patrick's National School

The Department of Education has advised that if this projected population increase materialises, a requirement for additional education provision at both primary and post-primary level may emerge over the lifetime of the plan. The provision of adequate and suitable school

accommodation, including the development of new schools and the expansion or alteration of existing ones may therefore be required.

This JLAP has identified the existing schools in the JLAP area and has applied land use zonings to enable their expansion. Further to this, the requirement for additional primary and secondary educational facilities will be monitored during the lifetime of the JLAP.

The Portarlington Further Education and Training Centre is located on Bracklone Street. It offers a wide range of programmes, which provide numerous developmental pathways into further/higher education and employment. These include full-time and part-time programmes. The Centre operates under the auspices of Co. Laois Vocational Education Committee and in accordance with the regulations of the Department of Education and Skills.

9.3.3 Childcare Facilities

The 2022 Census revealed that the pre-school population of Portarlington (age 0-4 years) represented 6.4% of the total population of the town, while the primary school going population of Portarlington (age 5 – 14) represented 17.9% of the total population. The provision of quality affordable childcare places is therefore critical for Portarlington, both developmentally for children and as a support for people to participate more fully in society, particularly in accessing employment, education, and social networks.

Childcare facilities are well distributed throughout the town and predominantly comprise privately owned facilities and some community owned facilities. According to the directories held by the Laois and Offaly County Childcare Committees, there are a total of 10 childcare facilities in Portarlington (eight in Laois and two in Offaly).

Laois and Offaly County Council's will encourage and support the provision of high-quality new and expanded childcare facilities to support new and existing communities in Portarlington.

9.3.4 Healthcare Facilities

Public healthcare facilities in Portarlington are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive (HSE Laois/Offaly). The Primary Care Centre at Kilnacourt House on Bracklone Street is central to the provision of public services. The Primary Care Centre is the central entry point to community health and delivers health and social care services.

In addition to HSE public facilities and services, the healthcare needs of the town are met by GP medical/family practices (3), Oakdale Nursing Home, dentists, pharmacies, and other related facilities and services.

Laois County Council and Offaly County Council recognise the significant importance of all of these healthcare facilities and services to Portarlington and the surrounding hinterland, and that general practices in particular are experiencing significant pressure in the provision of healthcare. Both Councils will therefore continue to support the development and expansion of healthcare facilities and services subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria.

9.3.5 Sports, Recreation and Play

Portarlington has a wide range of sports, recreation and play facilities. These facilities are provided through a mix of public, private and community organisations.

The built and natural environment of Portarlington, including its public roads and footpaths, open spaces, the Peoples Park, Derrycastle Lake and Walkways, Carrick Wood and the River Barrow support an array of sports, recreation and play activities such as walking, jogging, cycling. These are supplemented by leisure facilities, such as the Leisure Centre, the Community Centre, gyms, and a children's play centre.

Sports and recreation clubs in Portarlington cater for GAA, soccer, rugby, tennis, swimming, basketball, athletics and Taekwondo amongst others. Some of the key sporting clubs and facilities include: Portarlington GAA Club, Gracefield GAA Club, Portarlington Rugby Club, Portarlington Tennis Club, Kestrels Basketball Club, Arlington AFC Soccer Club and the Portarlington Angling Club.

Laois and Offaly Sports Partnerships are at the forefront of the development and promotion of these sporting and recreational activities. They work with clubs, schools, and community groups to ensure that structures are in place to enable participation for all community members. A review of the Laois Sports and Recreation Strategy 2018-2022 is currently underway.

Some of the key recreational and play facilities serving Portarlington include:

- The People's Park Portarlington: Officially opened in 2000. It is a 3-hectare open space situated between the Link Road and the River Barrow. The park is designed predominantly for passive recreation with pathways, trees and grass. Recent additional features include a playground, a 9 Hole Disc Golf course, tree trail and orienteering course. A major feature of the People's Park is the access to the River Barrow which facilitates access along the riverbank by way of a walkway. €500,000 was secured under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme to upgrade the People's Park based on the masterplan that was developed for the park in 2022 and updated in 2024. The upgrade includes the provision of a new central Plaza and the refurbishment of the playground and natural play features in the park. The project is currently underway and is being largely funded by the Department of Rural & Community Development, with the balance being funded by Laois County Council.



Figure 17: The People's Park Portarlington Concept Plan

- Portarlington Leisure Centre: Officially opened as a swimming pool in 1974. Following extensive refurbishment works, the facility transformed to a Leisure Centre in 2007.

The Leisure Centre focuses on improving health and wellbeing offering a range of services such as swimming lessons for children and adults, aqua fit, gym classes, summer camps and two all-weather football pitches.



Figure 18: Portarlington Leisure Centre

- Portarlington Community Centre: Officially opened in 2004. It offers a full range of activities for children and adults. The main hall is suitable for Basketball, Volleyball, Soccer, Badminton, Athletics, Exercise Classes, Shows, Drama Plays.
- Derrycastle Lake and Walkways: Located approximately 2km from Portarlington town centre. It is an important local amenity, providing both passive and active recreational opportunities to visitors through its extensive walking trails, lakes, sandy beaches, woodlands and cutaway

bogs. This is discussed in further detail in Chapter 15 Biodiversity and Natural Heritage.

9.3.6 Arts and Culture

The arts and culture are an important part of any town. They strengthen a sense and pride of place, promote community engagement and social interaction, and enable people to express their creativity. The important role of Portarlington Library is recognised in terms of facilitating and promoting arts and culture in the town.

However, the Port Art Collective is at the core of the arts and cultural offering in Portarlington. It is an independent group that aims to promote the talented local creatives of Portarlington. It is responsible for many festivals and events in the town, such as Culture Nights, the Brigid's Day Festival 2024 and the Samhain Fullmoon Gathering 2023.

A pilot programme, titled Bríd Faoin Speir, has been developed to promote the arts and encourage more arts-based outdoor performances. It was facilitated by Laois County Council Arts Office and the award-winning multidisciplinary Port Art Collective artist group.



9.4 INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Prioritising placemaking and the development of sustainable communities in Portarlington is central to safeguarding and improving the quality of life of all residents in the town. In doing so, consideration must be given to the specific design and planning needs of key cohorts of the local population. This includes young people, older people, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and the Irish Traveller community. Census 2022 population data for Portarlington revealed the following in regard to these groups:

- People aged 18 and under accounted for 31.8% of the population.
- 10.1% of the population were 65 and over.
- 24.5% of the population had a self-declared disability.
- Approximately 17% of its population are non-Irish, and are from the United Kingdom, Poland, India and other parts of the world.

- Irish Travellers constituted 1.4% of the population.

The following is important to note in terms of inclusive communities:

- Portarlington has recently witnessed the arrival of refugees from Ukraine who are fleeing the war and seeking protection in Ireland. Laois and Offaly County Councils and voluntary services have a key role to play in responding to this unprecedented crisis by supporting the integration of Ukrainians in local communities and ensuring they have access to key community facilities and services.
- Laois County Council have adopted the Laois Age Friendly County Strategy 2023-2027. The strategy provides a framework plan to make Laois a great place in which everyone, regardless of age, is valued and respected. It provides the structure for cross-sector cooperation which is essential to improve the quality of life for older people in Laois.
- The HSE Midlands have launched a directory of services with information to assist older people in Laois/Offaly live well at home. The directory provides information and contact details for services available to keep older people well at home, as well as information of who to contact when they need health or social care services.
- The Portarlington Women's Shed started in May 2022 at the Further Education Centre. It is an age-friendly, intergenerational group that brings women together in a safe, supportive environment, in order for them to learn, teach, share, build friendships, gain new skills & feel empowered. The Portarlington Women's Shed currently has 85 members.
- The Portarlington Men's Shed is situated in the old fire station on the corner of Portlaoise Road and Foxcroft Street. It is an important part of community infrastructure offering men an opportunity to meet in a supportive, collaborative space, improving health and wellbeing, and contributing to the community.
- The Laois Traveller Action Group (LTAG) play an active role in Portarlington. In particular:
 - LTAG have established a Men's Shed in Ballymorris which affords the community with an opportunity to work on various projects including woodwork and gardening.
 - LTAG offers courses such as cookery, hair and beauty, crafts, woodwork, manual handling and horticulture under the Community Development, Men's & Women's Programme.
 - LTAG provides an afterschool service for children under 12 in the Tir Na nOg building on the Ballymorris Road.
 - LTAG has established a new residents association with the Traveller families living in Woodlands Park. The establishment of this Resident's Association and associated training has been funded by Laois County Council.

9.5 KEY PLACEMAKING SITES

As per Chapter 8: Town Centre Revitalisation, a number of town centre opportunity sites have been identified for re-development. Such redevelopment would contribute to the renewal, enhancement and regeneration of the particular areas of the town in which they are located. These areas have been identified for various reasons including dereliction and under utilisation of land.

In addition to these town centre opportunity sites, a Key Placemaking Site has also been identified for development. In accordance with the '10-minute settlement' concept, this site provides an opportunity for sustainable and connected communities given its proximity to the town centre.

Key Placemaking Sites

Site No. 1 Landholding off Sandy Lane, Co. Laois

Site no. 1 is a 1.92ha. greenfield site. The site has a frontage onto Sandy Lane and Castlelea View. A portion of the land is located within Flood Zone A and B.

The lands surrounding the site are mainly in residential use. There is a primary school to the immediate north of the site fronting Sandy Lane and Capital Oil Local Fuels are located to the immediate east of the site.



Zoning: Residential 2 (New Proposed Residential)

Key Planning Criteria:

- Opportunity to create a sustainable, mixed and balanced community in a high-quality residential development.
- Any development of the land will be required to:
 - Accord with the principal actions identified in the Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030.
 - Support positive placemaking and have a distinct sense of place.
 - Provide a sustainable mix of housing type and tenure.
 - Demonstrate clear pedestrian and cycle routes within the site and linking the site to surrounding areas.
 - Consider and address the scale of surrounding buildings and amenity of neighbouring occupiers.
 - Consider and address the site edges and interfaces with adjoining lands.
 - Provide high quality, welcoming public realm, open space and landscape treatment.
 - Consider and address road safety issues along Sandy Lane.
 - Consider and address flood risk issues on and adjacent to the site.
- Any development of the land should be informed by:
 - A Design Statement
 - An Archaeological Impact Assessment
 - A Flood Risk Assessment
 - A Visual Impact Assessment
 - A Road Safety Audit
 - A Traffic Impact Assessment
 - An Accessibility Audit

**Site No. 2
Market
House and
Market
Square, Co.
Laois**

Site no. 2 comprises Market House, Market Square and the surrounding lands, as identified in the 'Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030'. This Strategy was adopted in September 2021 and focuses on a study area of the town centre comprising the main routes' leading to the 300-year-old Market House and its historic Square setting.



Zoning: Town Centre

Key Planning Criteria:

- Support and facilitate the objectives of the 'Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030'. The Vision Statement therein is:

'To create a more viable and visually attractive Town Centre in Portarlington for residents, visitors and workers through the appropriate rehabilitation of the Market House and Square and other key buildings, with improvements to connectivity, public realm and amenities'.

- Any development of the land will be required to accord with the eight principal actions identified in the Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030:, as follows:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rehabilitation of the Market House - Rehabilitation of the Market Square - Improve the public realm within the Town Centre - Promote Sustainable Access and Mobility - Promotion of sustainable uses in the Town Centre - Create a Low Carbon Zone - Celebration of the Heritage of Portarlington - Development of Green / Blue Infrastructure
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Table 12: Key Placemaking Sites

9.6 PLACEMAKING AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES	
It is the policy of Laois and Offaly County Council to:	
Policy 9.1	Protect and enhance the connected networks of existing green spaces in Portarlington to serve the growing needs of local communities.
Policy 9.2	Support and facilitate the development and expansion of educational facilities in Portarlington, including the protection of existing school sites for educational use, and where appropriate the land buffers adjoining them.
Policy 9.3	Encourage and support the provision and expansion of childcare facilities to support new and existing communities in Portarlington.
Policy 9.4	Promote and support the role and continued expression of arts and culture in Portarlington, and to facilitate and encourage the use of public spaces in in the town for arts and cultural festivals and events.
Policy 9.5	Support local community and sports groups in developing and improving sports facilities at appropriate locations in Portarlington.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

It is the objective of Laois and Offaly County Council to:

Objective 9.1	Promote and support the development of connected communities and the '10-minute settlement' concept, with an emphasis on active travel and shorter walking and cycling timeframes to social and community facilities, improving permeability in the built environment, and encouraging a reduction in car dependency.
Objective 9.2	Support the role and work of community agencies, groups, and organisations in the delivery of new and improved community facilities and services in Portarlington for young people, older people, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, refugees and protected persons, and the Traveller Community.
Objective 9.3	Facilitate the provision and enhancement of social and community infrastructure in appropriate locations.
Objective 9.4	Facilitate the implementation of the Laois Age Friendly County Strategy 2023-2027 and Offaly Age Friendly Strategy 2024 – 2029.
Objective 9.5	Facilitate the implementation of the Local Economic and Community Plans for County Laois and County Offaly.
Objective 9.6	Ensure that the people of Portarlington have the opportunities and the facilities to engage in sport, leisure and physical activity in a way that is consistent with good health and well-being.
Objective 9.7	Support and facilitate the objectives of the Portarlington Town Park Masterplan
Objective 9.8	<p>Support and facilitate the objectives of the Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030 to provide sustainable transport measures, including those referred in the following principal actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote sustainable access and mobility • Create a Low Carbon Zone • Development of Green / Blue Infrastructure

CHAPTER 10: CLIMATE ACTION

Strategic Aim: To tackle the challenge of climate change in Portarlington, focusing on the role of spatial planning in contributing to the transition to a low-carbon and climate resilient future, through targeted climate change mitigation and adaptation measures aimed at reducing greenhouse gases and increasing energy efficiency and conservation

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Our climate is changing. We are experiencing warmer temperatures in line with global trends. As a result of higher average temperatures, we are also experiencing more intense weather events including droughts, storms, heavy rainfall, and stronger winds resulting in higher vulnerability and risk to the impacts of climate change within the local authority area. To tackle climate change, the level of greenhouse gases entering and already in our atmosphere need to be reduced and removed. In addition, we must further increase our resilience to current and future climate change impacts.

Climate action policy in Ireland reflects the ambition of the EU to confront the challenges of climate change. The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 enshrines the National Climate Objective to pursue and achieve, by no later than the end of 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy. The Amendment Act frames Ireland's legally binding climate ambition to deliver a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of 51% by 2030. This will place the country on a trajectory to achieving climate neutrality by no later than the end of 2050.

The spatial planning framework provides a means through which climate action measures can be integrated and implemented at a local level to support a transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society. In particular, development plans (including this JLAP) provide an opportunity to address land-use, with a particular focus on the development of key opportunity sites, compact growth, sustainable mobility, town centre regeneration, and the protection and enhancement of biodiversity. This is in accordance with a range of cross-cutting national and regional climate action policy objectives included in the NPF and the RSES, and those included in the respective County Development Plans for Laois County Council and Offaly County Council.



Figure 19: Key components for positive climate change

10.2 LOCAL AUTHORITY CLIMATE ACTION PLANS

In accordance with the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, Laois County Council and Offaly County Council are required to prepare climate action plans for their respective administrative areas. The Laois County Council Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029 and the Offaly County Council Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029 set out how the respective Local Authority's aim to achieve their role within the National Climate Objective over the next 5 years and beyond toward 2050. The purpose of each Climate Action Plan is to:

- To deliver on national obligations to achieve the National Climate Objective of becoming a Climate Resilient, Biodiversity Rich, Environmentally Sustainable and Carbon Neutral Economy by no later than the end of 2050.
- To deliver and promote evidence-based and integrated climate action by way of **adaptation** and **mitigation** measures, centered around a strong understanding of the role and remit of the local authority on climate action.

The adopted Climate Action Plans will therefore act as key instruments to strengthen the links between national and international climate policy and the delivery of effective climate action at local level. They play a significant role in reinforcing the commitment by local government to lead on place-based climate action.

10.3 SPATIAL PLANNING AND CLIMATE ACTION

The following sections of this chapter outline areas in which spatial planning can be utilised to support climate action.

10.3.1 Integration of land use planning and sustainable mobility

The National Climate Action Plan 2023 identifies that the transport sector in Ireland has been the fastest growing source of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) over the past three decades, showing a 112% increase between 1990 and 2021. There is therefore significant potential in this sector to tackle climate change and reduce GHG emissions through measures which:

- Aim to reduce or avoid the need for travel through enhanced spatial planning;
- Encourage modal shift to more sustainable modes of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport; and,
- Utilise new technologies including electric vehicles, biofuels, and e-bikes.

A Local Transport Plan (LTP) has been prepared alongside this JLAP, which will assist in ensuring that sustainable transport considerations inform land use planning decisions. The LTP is included as Appendix 2 and is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 12: Sustainable Travel and Transportation.

10.3.2 Compact Growth and Regeneration

One of the key objectives of the NPF and the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2024) relates to the need for sustainable and compact growth. These sustainable development patterns are needed to reduce car-generated trips to places of employment, education, business and social activities, thereby creating more possibilities for active and sustainable travel modes.

The policies, objectives and land use decisions contained in this JLAP support the compact growth objective. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 9: Placemaking and Sustainable Communities. In particular, this chapter refers to the '10 minute' settlement concept which focuses on reducing car dependency by seeking to have all community facilities, services, and amenities accessible within a 10-minute walk or cycle from homes or by public transport.

The policies and objectives in this JLAP also support initiatives for urban regeneration and provide a focus for measures and projects in Portarlington which are aimed at:

- Optimising the use/reuse of the existing built environment,
- The development of brownfield and infill sites,
- The reduction in greenfield land consumption and inefficient infrastructure provision.

Alongside urban regeneration, this JLAP acknowledges that heritage-led regeneration can also have a positive role in addressing the challenge of climate change. In this regard, it is an objective of this JLAP to support and facilitate the implementation of the 'Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030'. Three of the eight principal actions therein are:

1. Promote Sustainable Access and Mobility
2. Promotion of sustainable uses in the Town Centre
3. Create a Low Carbon Zone

The Strategy therefore acknowledges the key role of heritage-led regeneration in addressing the climate change challenge.

It is envisaged that compact growth and regeneration measures will encourage less reliance on private cars; facilitate easier access to public transport; create more possibilities for walking and cycling, and ultimately lead to reduced carbon heavy travel patterns.

10.3.3 Nature-based Solutions for the management of surface water and rainwater run-off

a) Green Infrastructure

Nature-based solutions and green infrastructure give recognition to the role of the natural environment in moderating and adapting to the effects of climate change. In urban areas, green infrastructure can:

- Act as a carbon sink to absorb and thereby avoid increases in emissions;
- Create diverse habitats with associated positive impacts for biodiversity and ecosystem services;
- Manage high temperatures by providing evaporative cooling and shading;
- Contribute to flood prevention and storage capacity, reducing and slowing down peak flows and alleviating flooding; and,
- Address flood risk by reducing the rate and volume of water entering drains.

As detailed in Chapter 15: Biodiversity and Natural Heritage, Portarlington and its hinterland has a rich green infrastructure. It includes the River Barrow which provides a nature corridor extending through the centre of the town; the People's Park; the woodland area at the rear of Kilnacourt House (Formerly Odlums Wood); Carrick Woods and the Derrycastle Lakes and Trails recreation area. This important resource not only contributes to the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors to the town but is also essential to the success of climate mitigation and adaptation measures in Portarlington.

b) Flood Risk Management

Laois County Council and Offaly County Council recognise that climate change will have a significant impact on flooding, flood risk and flood risk management in Portarlington. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) prepared to inform this JLAP addresses climate change at both the plan making and development management stages. The SFRA acknowledges that with climate change, the frequency, pattern, and severity of flooding is expected to change and become more damaging. The strategic land-use planning decisions taken within this JLAP have therefore been fully informed by the findings of the SFRA.

In addition to this, a Flood Relief Scheme is currently being progressed as part of the Government's National Development Plan 2018 - 2027.

Laois County Council is the lead local authority for the delivery of the project under a Section 85 agreement with Offaly County Council. In August 2020, Consultant Joint Venture Binnies / Nicholas O'Dwyer was appointed to develop a detailed project level engineering assessment for Portarlington that is socially, environmentally, economically, and technically acceptable.

The preferred option has been identified and work is ongoing to complete environmental surveys required to inform the planning documentation for the project. It is expected that the project will be submitted for planning in quarter 4 of 2024.

c) **Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)**

Climate change impacts in Portarlington will present challenges for urban drainage, particularly in relation to more frequent rainfall events and incidences of urban (pluvial) flooding. The implementation of SuDS can contribute to offsetting the impacts of climate change and increasing climate resilience. SuDS provide areas within the built environment where the natural processes of rainwater interception, storage and infiltration can take place, offering a more sustainable approach to the management of urban storm water runoff than impermeable surfaces, and conventional underground pipe and storage-based solutions. Unlike conventional drainage systems, SuDS systems can also contribute to green infrastructure, providing additional benefits for recreation and biodiversity. This JLAP supports the positive role SuDS can make for climate change mitigation and adaptation. All new developments (including amendments / extensions to existing developments) will be required to incorporate SuDS as part of the development/design proposals.

Urban wetlands reliably store carbon and also act as an effective barrier to the unavoidable impacts of climate change, acting as large sponges that absorb flood waters, helping cool urban areas in addition to enhancing biodiversity. Wetlands can also be used in the treatment of polluted water which otherwise may contaminate a local watercourse. This JLAP recognises the role of wetlands in climate mitigation and adaptation and supports the development of an urban wetlands on floodplains.

10.3.4 Energy Efficiency

a) **Energy Efficiency and Conservation**

Generating energy through renewable energy sources must be complemented by efforts to reduce energy demand and waste. The implementation of energy efficiency and conservation measures will be vital if Portarlington is to achieve a carbon neutral future. Improving the energy efficiency of homes and public buildings is a critical climate priority and a major focus of the funding provided in the National Development Plan 2018-2031. This will deliver wider benefits than just a reduction in greenhouse gas. An energy efficient home is a home that is warmer, more comfortable, and much cheaper to heat. This leads to improved health outcomes, higher disposable incomes and reduced poverty, as well as the creation of new employment.

Separately, energy conservation is more reliant on human behaviour that results in the use of less energy, which can be supported by increasing public awareness and promoting the use of smart electricity metres, monitoring, and heating controls etc.

b) Renewable Energy

Renewable energy is that which is derived from natural sources that are not depleted when used and which are alternatives to fossil fuels. The main sources of renewable energy are the wind, the sun (solar energy), water (hydropower), heat below the surface of the earth (geothermal energy) and biomass (wood, biodegradable waste and energy crops). There is potential for the production of renewable energy from these sources in Portarlington, subject to compliance with proper planning and environmental considerations. These technologies are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3 of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and in Chapter 3 of the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027.

c) Low Carbon District Heating

District Heating is a method of delivering thermal energy in the form of hot water through a network of highly insulated pipelines. District heating systems have the ability to distribute heat from many different sources, including heat sources that are typically seen as a by-product and usually go to waste, like the waste heat from electricity production, industry and data centres. This JLAP recognises the potential of District Heating Systems, where technically feasible and cost effective, to provide heating and hot water to houses and businesses at appropriate locations, where feasible, to assist in meeting renewable heat targets and reduce Irelands GHG emissions, reducing our dependency on fossil fuels and our carbon emissions as well as providing better air quality. It is envisaged that such local renewable energy systems will become a feature of towns such as Portarlington with support under the national Climate Action Plan. The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland provides supports/funding to communities in mapping their energy demands and potential energy resources in an 'Energy Master Plan'.

d) Public Lighting

Public lighting is widely accepted to be a significant user of energy and a generator of CO² emissions. As part of the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Targets, Laois and Offaly Councils support the upgrading and retrofitting of non-LED Local Authority lighting in Portarlington to high efficiency LED lighting to contribute to meeting statutory energy efficiency targets, significantly reducing emissions and achieving cost savings with energy and maintenance efficiencies.

10.4 CLIMATE ACTION AS A CROSS-CUTTING THEME

It is clear from section 10.3 above that Climate Action is a cross cutting theme, with every chapter of this JLAP contributing to overall efforts to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Table 13 below briefly summarises how each chapter of this JLAP contributes to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Table 13: Contribution of each chapter to climate action

CHAPTER HEADING	CONTRIBUTION TO CLIMATE ACTION
Chapter 6: Development Vision and Strategy	Supports sustainable low carbon compact growth while ensuring the management of flood risk and the protection of the unique built and natural heritage.
Chapter 7: Core Strategy Compliance and Housing	Supports compact growth, including measures that encourage the reuse and refurbishment of underutilised, vacant, and derelict buildings, and the development of opportunity sites within the built-up area of Portarlington.
Chapter 8: Town Centre Revitalisation	Promotes active land management to make the most efficient use of lands in town centre locations, including consolidation of the town centre and compact growth. Supports the implementation of the 'Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030'.
Chapter 9: Placemaking and Sustainable Communities	Supports the '10 minute' settlement concept in terms of connected communities, with an emphasis on reducing car dependency, active travel, and shorter walking and cycling times to amenities and community facilities in the built environment.
Chapter 10: Climate Change	Outlines the role of spatial planning in addressing the climate change challenge, and the manner in which it can be utilised to support climate action in Portarlington.
Chapter 11: Economic Development	Supports sustainable employment generation and economic development in appropriate locations
Chapter 12: Sustainable Travel and Transportation	Supports the transition of Portarlington to a low-carbon and climate resilient town through the promotion of sustainable development patterns, sustainable and active travel, and sustainable energy use.
Chapter 13: Infrastructure, Environmental Services and	Facilitates future growth in line with the capacity and availability of supporting infrastructure and environmental services, and in line with appropriate flood risk management measures

Table 13: Contribution of each chapter to climate action

Flood Risk Management	
Chapter 14: Built Heritage	Seeks to protect, conserve and manage the built heritage of Portarlinton, and to promote the appropriate development and use of heritage assets to ensure that they contribute to the sustainable development and heritage-led regeneration of the town for future generations
Chapter 15: Biodiversity and Natural Heritage	To protect and enhance the natural heritage and biodiversity of Portarlinton to ensure that it contributes to the sustainable future of the town.
Chapter 16: Implementation and Monitoring	Aims to manage and deliver new development in Portarlinton in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development.

Table 13: Contribution of each chapter to climate action**10.5 CLIMATE ACTION POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES**

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES	
It is the policy of Laois and Offaly County Council to:	
Policy 10.1	Support the implementation of International and National objectives on climate action including the Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP24) and any subsequent updates, the National Adaption Framework, Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 (and any amending legislation) and both the Laois Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029 and the Offaly Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029 (and any updated Plans).
Policy 10.2	Support the transition of Portarlinton to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050, by way of reducing greenhouse gases, increasing renewable energy, and improving energy efficiency and conservation.
Policy 10.3	Secure climate resilience and a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in Portarlinton by actively implementing policies which support integrated land use planning and sustainable travel, and maximise such opportunities through development location, form, layout, and design.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES	
Policy 10.4	Support the effective and efficient use of land in Portarlinton, prioritising compact growth through the development and regeneration of vacant and underutilised brownfield/infill land and buildings within the existing built-up footprint of the town.
Policy 10.5	Secure climate resilience and a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in Portarlinton through support for urban regeneration projects and interventions, including the implementation of the 'Portarlinton Regeneration Strategy 2030'.
Policy 10.6	Require that all development proposals in Portarlinton integrate SUDS, and nature-based solutions to SUDS, as part of an overall sustainable urban drainage and urban greening approach, unless they are demonstrated to be operationally unfeasible to the satisfaction of the Council.
Policy 10.7	Require the use of renewable energy technologies in residential, commercial and community developments.
Policy 10.8	Support and facilitate the installation of lower carbon and low carbon heating options including district heating systems as a decarbonising technology in new developments in Portarlinton, subject to compliance with proper planning and environmental considerations.
Policy 10.9	Support construction of green routes/cycleways/pedestrian routes throughout the town.
Policy 10.10	Support the provision of electricity charging infrastructure for electrical vehicles throughout the town, both on street and in new developments, in accordance with car parking standards and best practice.
Policy 10.11	In conjunction with the appropriate prescribed bodies, to investigate the feasibility of providing a Wetland taking into account the environmental sensitivities of the site and Inland Fisheries Guidance document, Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment.
Policy 10.12	Support and facilitate the ambitions of the National Residential Retrofit Plan, in particular, the development of the electrification of heating
Policy 10.13	Support the potential of district heating, including district heating delivered from waste heat, where available, technically feasible and cost effective.
Policy 10.14	Ensure that surface water management in new developments, and the design of nature-based solutions, in line with Policy 13.4, reflect the following guidance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nature Based Management of Urban Rainwater and Urban Water Discharges, A National Strategy (May 2024)

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Implementation of Urban Nature Based Solutions -Guidance Document for Planners, Developers and Developer Agents” LAWPRO (November 2024)
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PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

It is the objective of Laois and Offaly County Council to:

Objective 10.1	Support, in conjunction with key stakeholders, the implementation of the Climate Action Plans for County Laois and County Offaly, and to facilitate their role as a driver in the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change adaptation in Portarlington, and the translation of national climate policy to local and community levels in the town.
Objective 10.2	Leverage all available funding streams which will support and deliver urban regeneration outcomes in Portarlington which seek to secure climate resilience and a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the town.
Objective 10.3	Undertake a feasibility exercise on and the use of heat mapping in support of the CAP24, RPO 7.38 of the EMRA RSES, CAEP-49 and 50 of the OCDP, NSO 9 of the NPF and the National Heat Study.

CHAPTER 11: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Strategic Aim: To support sustainable employment generation and economic development in appropriate locations in Portarlington, by leveraging its strategic location, accessibility, and Key Service Centre designation to build a competitive economy.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

The National Planning Framework (NPF) identifies a strong economy supported by enterprise, innovation, and skills as one of ten National Strategic Outcomes or goals which can be achieved by building regional economic drivers and leveraging the potential of places. In line with this national policy, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midlands Region (EMRA) has designated Portarlington as a Key Service Centre within the region. Meanwhile, Portarlington is identified as a Self-sustaining Growth Town within the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027, and a Self-sustaining Town within the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027.

A sound local economy is fundamental to fostering sustainable communities and a good quality of life. Portarlington is an expanding town with an excellent geographical location, a skilled workforce, good infrastructure and strong community and business associations. The town therefore has a strong capacity to promote inward investment, to create more local employment and to create growth in enterprise and employment. Both Laois County Council and Offaly County Council are committed to facilitating the creation of employment within the town and this plan provides an appropriate framework through the provision of adequately zoned lands and policies and objectives which support economic development.

11.2 LOCAL ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK

The Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 set out the strategic context for the economic development of the respective Counties. These County Development Plans together with this JLAP sets out a local spatial planning framework to enable economic development in Portarlington.

This local spatial planning framework is further supported by the Local Economic and Community Plans (LECP's) for County Laois and County Offaly. The purpose of an LECP, as provided for in the Local Government Reform Act 2014, is to set out the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of a County over a six-year period. The Laois Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2023-2028 and Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2023-2028 should therefore be read in tandem with this chapter. The LECP's are consistent with the provisions of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the provisions of this JLAP. When applied together, these plans will form a complete planning and economic framework to help support and attract new investment and development to Portarlington.

11.3 LOCAL BUSINESS STAKEHOLDERS

The Local Enterprise Offices (LEO's) have been fully integrated into both the Local Authorities of Laois and Offaly. In addition to the LEO enterprise functions, the LEO's deliver the economic functions of the respective Councils and have a lead role in implementing the economic dimensions of the LECPs and delivering local and regional initiatives within the Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan. The LEOs provide a range of services for persons seeking to set up or grow a business. The LEOs work with a range of stakeholders to support employment opportunities including the Department of Trade, Enterprise and Employment, the Industrial Development Agency (IDA), Enterprise Ireland, local and regional development agencies, existing businesses and individuals.

The Laois Partnership Company was formed in 2008 to offer one unified structure for the delivery of economic, social and cultural services to small businesses, community groups and individuals in County Laois. It delivers a range of programmes which aim to make Laois a better place to live in by enhancing community life, combating disadvantage and social exclusion and supporting enterprise development. Initiatives include: The Rural Development Programme (LEADER); Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP), DEASP funded Job Club; Community Employment Scheme; Tus Programme; Rural Social Scheme; Services to the Elderly Programme (LSTEP); National Childcare Schemes; Back to Education initiative.

The Laois Chamber Alliance is an amalgamation of the Laois Chamber of Commerce and Laois Tourism. It was launched in September 2019 and works on the ongoing development of local businesses. The Laois Chamber Alliance delivers many benefits to its members and the business community including networking and business support.

The Portarlington Business Association (PBA) was established in March 2021. The main objective of the PBA is to advance community and economic development, including urban and rural regeneration, in Portarlington and its hinterland.

The Portarlington Community Development Association (PCDA) is a voluntary group which aims to improve the economic, social and Cultural development of the town. The PCDA works in partnership with the community, voluntary and statutory agencies for the benefit of the community. In 2006, the PCDA established the Portarlington Enterprise Centre which is a not-for-profit business with a key focus on fostering business and employment opportunities for the local community. The Portarlington Enterprise Centre provides a range of facilities including office and light industrial units, hot-desking facilities, makerspace, meeting/ training rooms, business mentoring, access to high speed broadband, training, advice and supports.

Laois and Offaly County Councils will continue to support the above-mentioned groups.

11.4 ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Portarlington has many positive economic attributes including an excellent geographical location, a skilled workforce, good infrastructure and strong community and business associations. At the same time, the town, like other comparable towns of its size, faces challenges such as vacancy, reduced town centre vitality, underutilisation of land and buildings, and retail

competitiveness. This JLAP seeks to address these challenges by way of the appropriate zoning of lands; designated serviced business and industrial parks and supporting established businesses by way of meaningful policies and objectives.

11.4.1 Zoned Lands

This JLAP recognises that key to the economic development of Portarlinton will be the ability for it to maximise its existing economic assets and overcome those challenges that could inhibit economic growth. It is also recognised that one of the key enablers in attracting new investment and employment to Portarlinton will be the availability of appropriately zoned lands. In this regard, Laois County Council and Offaly County Council will aim to ensure that sufficient land is zoned to accommodate and support a diverse economic base.

The Infrastructural Assessment (IA) accompanying the JLAP has informed the zoning of lands for economic development. The IA ensures that all land zoned for development can be serviced within the lifetime of the JLAP. While employment related uses can be facilitated on a number of land use zonings, there will be a specific focus in the JLAP on lands zoned Town Centre, Enterprise and Employment, General Business and Industrial and Warehousing.

Notwithstanding the Town Centre First approach, it is acknowledged that there are many economic land uses that may not be appropriate in a town centre location for reasons relating to their size, nature of the activity or access / road network requirements. Therefore, the land use zonings have also been carefully considered to ensure that they are compatible with the wider area and take cognisance of ensuring the delivery of consolidated and compact growth.

The land use zonings support economic development and will ensure that Portarlinton has the ability to maintain, increase and diversify its employment base, and at the same time ensuring that it is well positioned to capitalise on and accommodate unexpected economic development opportunities that may arise during the plan period.

A total of c. 18.99 ha. of land is zoned for Enterprise and Employment use in this JLAP, along with c. 43.67 ha. that is zoned for Industrial and Warehousing use and c. 3.74 ha. that is zoned for General Business use. These figures combined amount to c. 66.4 hectares of land that supports economic development. These lands, in conjunction with other zonings such as Town Centre, are considered adequate to serve the needs of a wide range of enterprise and employment opportunities over the lifetime of the JLAP and beyond.

Zone Type	Site Location	Total Site Area [Hectares]	Approx. Area Developed [Hectares]	Approx. Area Undeveloped [Hectares]
Enterprise & Employment	Edenderry Road, Portarlington, Co. Laois	7.98	1.54	6.44
Enterprise & Employment	Portarlington Business Park, Canal Road, Portarlington, Co. Laois	3.94	3.18	0.76
Enterprise & Employment	Canal Road/Station Road, Portarlington, Co. Laois	7.07	2.66	4.41
General Business	Lea Road, Portarlington, Co. Laois	3.26	3.26	0
General Business	Station Road, Portarlington, Co. Laois	0.48	0.15	0.33
Industrial & Warehousing	Ballymorris Road, Portarlington, Co. Laois	0.41	0.41	0
Industrial & Warehousing	Lea Road (south), Portarlington, Co. Laois	27.91	11.71	16.2
Industrial & Warehousing	Lea Road (north), Portarlington, Co. Laois			
Industrial & Warehousing	Bog Road, Portarlington, Co. Laois	15.35	6.8	8.55
	Total	66.4	29.71	36.69

Table 13a: Breakdown of the developed and available and undeveloped employment zoned lands and their locations

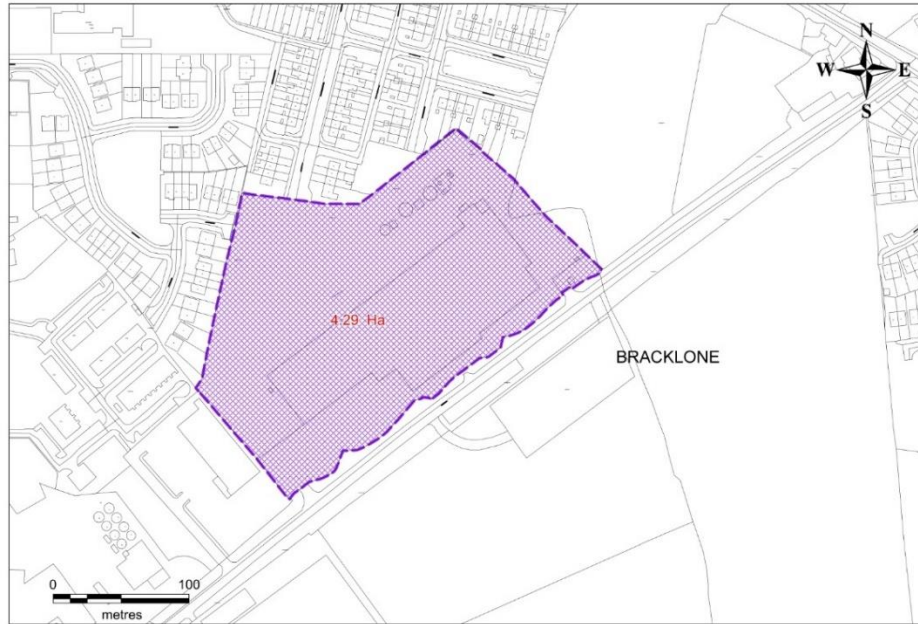
11.4.2 Serviced Business and Industrial Parks (Employment Land)

The Laois County Development Plan 2021-27 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 recognises that Portarlington is one of the primary locations for strategic employment within Co. Laois and Co. Offaly. Therefore, the zoned lands that are referred to in section 11.4.1 above include a number of strategic employment locations in the form of serviced business and industrial parks. Laois and Offaly County Councils will seek to consolidate and strengthen these existing strategic employment lands.

Serviced Business and Industrial Parks (Employment Lands)

CANAL ROAD BUSINESS PARK (FORMER AVON SITE), CO. LAOIS

Map



Background

A Part 8 proposal has been approved for the completion of site development works to provide serviced sites on land adjoining the Canal Road. These development works include roads, footpaths, public lighting and underground services (water, wastewater, public lighting ducting/cabling, telecoms, gas etc.).

Access

Adjoins the Canal Road. New vehicular access required. Footpath access to the Town Centre in situ. In close proximity to the train station.

Services

Works required, as above.

Existing Uses

No existing uses

Consolidation and Expansion

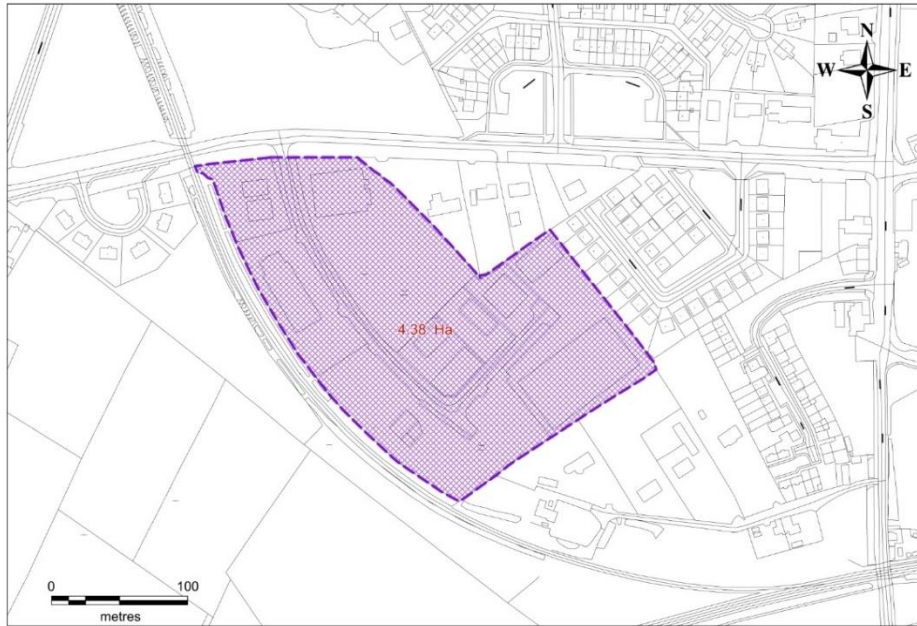
These above-mentioned development works will enable the disposal of serviced sites to support enterprise and employment in Portarlington.

Development Guidance

Zoned for Enterprise and Employment use

PORTARLINGTON BUSINESS PARK, CO. LAOIS

Map



Access

Existing and well-defined access onto the Canal Road. Footpath access to the Town Centre. In close proximity to the train station.

Services

Serviced

Existing uses include

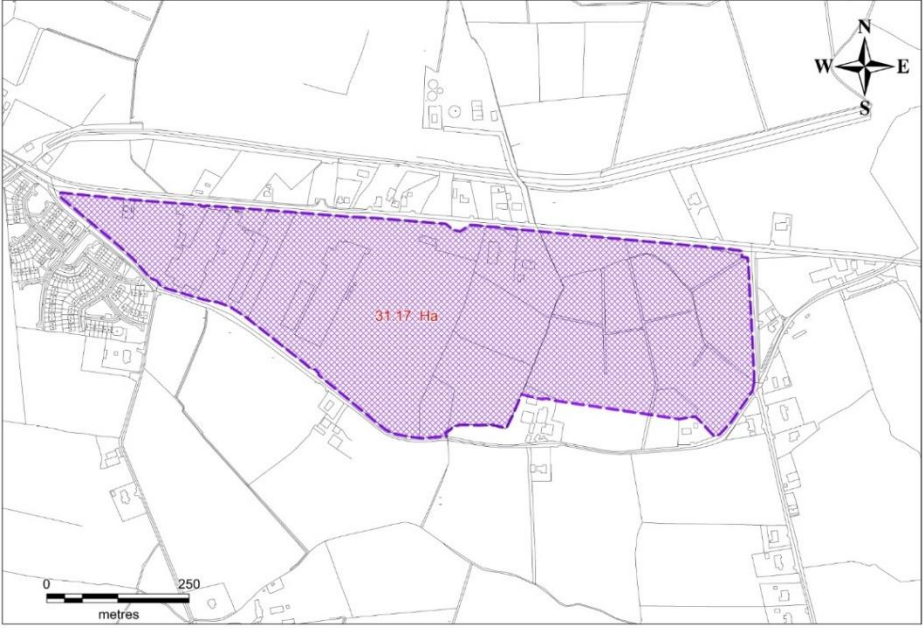
Portarlington Enterprise Centre; Camsaw Distributors; One Stop Fulfillment; The Beer Gals; Midland Outdoor Equipment; Willow and Green; CERTA Lubricants; RS Autos

Consolidation and Expansion

High level of occupation with limited room for new occupation

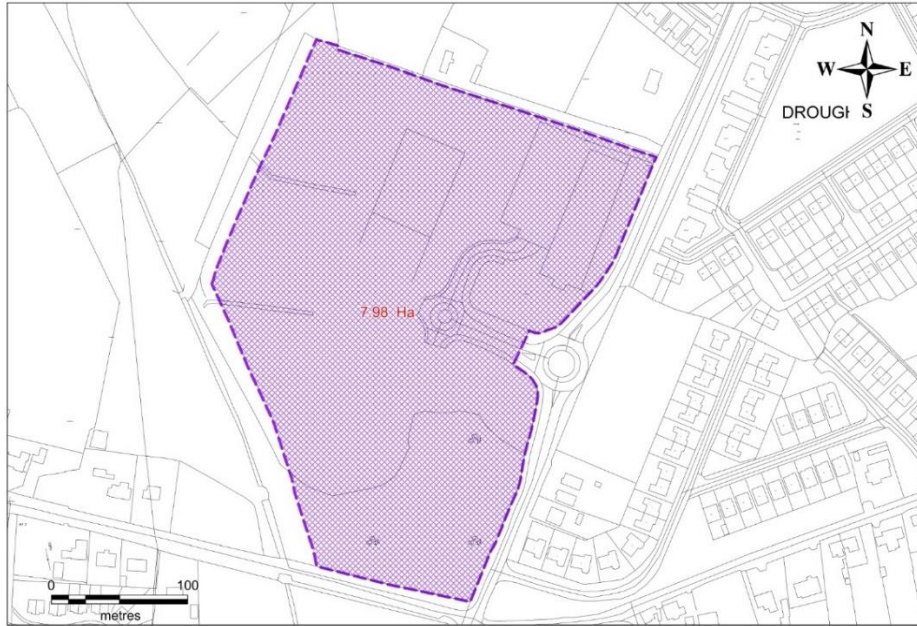
Development Guidance

Zoned for Enterprise and Employment use

LEA ROAD BUSINESS PARK, CO. LAOIS	
Map	
Access	Existing and well-defined access points onto the Dublin Road. Footpath access to the Town Centre. In close proximity to the train station.
Services	Serviced
Existing uses include:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tech Eir; Midland Veterinary; Solas Garden Centre on the western side (zoned for General Business use). ▪ Jamestown Manufacturing is on the eastern side (zoned for Industrial and Warehouse use).
Consolidation and Expansion	Good level of occupation.
Development Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The western side is zoned for General Business use. ▪ The eastern side is zoned for Industrial and Warehouse use.

EDENDERRY ROAD BUSINESS PARK, CO. LAOIS

Map



Access

Existing and well-defined access point onto the Edenderry Road. Footpath access to the Town Centre.

Services

Serviced

Existing Uses

McMahons Builders Providers

Consolidation and Expansion

Low level of occupation

Development Guidance

Zoned for Enterprise and Employment use

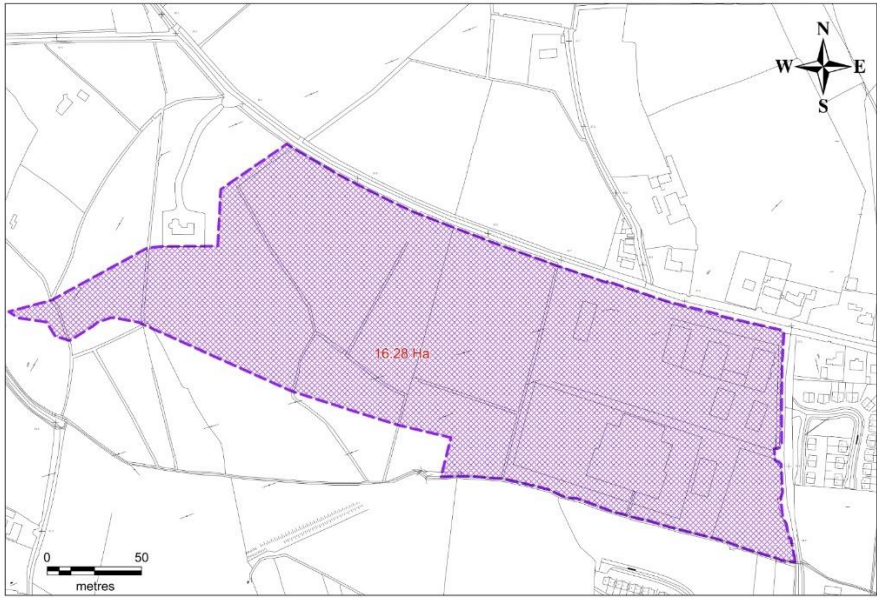
INDUSTRIAL ESTATE BOTLEY LANE, CO. OFFALY	
Map	
Access	Existing and well-defined access onto Botley Lane. Footpath access to the Town Centre.
Services	Serviced
Existing Uses	Mix of warehousing, engineering and industrial uses
Consolidation and Expansion	Very good level of occupation, almost at capacity
Development Guidance	Refer to Chapter 13 Development Management Standards of Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027. Note: DMS 71 and 74 apply to Industrial and Warehousing Developments.

Table 14: Serviced Business and Industrial Parks (Employment Lands)

11.4.3 Supporting Established Employment Bases

The creation of sufficient employment opportunities in Portarlington is fundamental to building a sustainable community and to reducing the rate of outward commuting from the town.

In the past, Portarlington had a number of large companies which provided a strong employment base for the town. In particular, the Avon Arlington factory, which opened in the late 1970s, employed up to 1,200 people at the height of success. It formally closed in April 2000. Furthermore, Odlums were a significant employer in Portarlington in the past. Today, they employ approximately 35 people.

Today, notable employers in Portarlington include (but not limited to):

- Jamestown Manufacturing
- Camsaw Distributers
- Polar Ice
- Fastway Couriers
- Tech Eir
- Odlums
- Fletchers Hardware
- McMahons Builders Providers
- Centrally located supermarkets including Supervalu, Lidl, Aldi
- Portarlington Leisure Centre
- Schools (St. Patricks Boys School, Sandy Lane National School, Presentation Primary School, Colaiste Iosagain)
- Portarlington Primary Care Centre
- Portarlington Further Education Centre

This JLAP places a firm emphasis on supporting existing businesses and entrepreneurial development. In this respect, Laois and Offaly County Councils will support local enterprise and employment generating opportunities, facilitate the upskilling and training of the labour force and support the provision of key hard and soft infrastructure.

In addition to this, it is recognised that building strong communities, improving the physical environments particularly the town centre and developing a strong identity for the town can do much to attract new businesses and investment. In this regard, Chapter 8: Town Centre Revitalisation identifies various measures to revitalise the town centre including Enabling and Supporting Regeneration; Improving Public Realm; Addressing Vacancy; Implementing Statutory Land Activation Provisions; Adhering to respective Retail Strategy's; Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Core; and the development of Opportunity Sites.

11.5 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES	
It is the policy of Laois and Offaly County Council to:	
Policy 11.1	Support economic development by maximising the efficiency of zoned lands and by advocating for and facilitating the provision, upgrade, or refurbishment of necessary supporting physical infrastructure.
Policy 11.2	Ensure that lands zoned for employment generating uses in Portarlington are kept free from inappropriate development that would prejudice future economic growth and activity.
Policy 11.3	Encourage and support the re-use of vacant buildings for new employment generating developments.
Policy 11.4	Seek to address vacancy, dereliction, and the underutilisation of land and buildings in the town centre by supporting an appropriate mix of other alternative uses such as enterprise and business start-ups, offices, tourism and culture, hospitality, residential etc., subject to compliance with proper planning and environmental considerations.
Policy 11.5	Support employment generating uses on land zoned Town Centre as a key driver of urban regeneration.
Policy 11.6	Support the continued operation and reasonable development of existing non-conforming uses provided that such uses do not: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Result in a loss of amenity to adjoining properties. ▪ Cause an adverse impact on the environment. ▪ Cause an adverse impact on the visual amenity or character of the area. ▪ Inhibit the development of adjoining land in conformance with the land's zoning objective.
Policy 11.7	Encourage appropriate development, works and supporting infrastructure that would contribute to a high quality and attractive built and social environment in Portarlington to attract and sustain new business, residents and visitors.
Policy 11.8	Encourage the establishment and expansion of services and facilities in the town at appropriate locations to facilitate the business needs of employment and enterprise developments and potential tourism needs like conference facilities, hotels, accommodation, eateries and other similar services.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

It is the objective of Laois and Offaly County Council to:

Objective 11.1	Maximise the economic development potential of Portarlington by capitalising on its economic assets, including its Key Service Centre designation and its excellent geographical location, and by promoting and marketing the area for significant economic investment and employment growth.
Objective 11.2	Support sustainable employment and enterprise in Portarlington through the identification of appropriately located and adequately serviced lands for business/employment, industrial and commercial developments; investment in support infrastructure and the creation of a high-quality environment to encourage economic investment.
Objective 11.3	Engage with IDA Ireland and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in seeking to develop and attract potential economic opportunities into suitably zoned employment lands in Portarlington.
Objective 11.4	Promote and support the role of local stakeholders including the Portarlington Community Development Association, the Portarlington Business Association, the Laois Partnership Company, the Laois Chamber Alliance and the Local Enterprise Offices in Laois and Offaly in driving the development of local enterprise and job creation in Portarlington.
Objective 11.5	Identify infrastructural and service deficits experienced by existing businesses, and work towards addressing these deficits.

CHAPTER 12. SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION

Strategic Aim: To promote and develop a sustainable, integrated and universally accessible transport system for Portarlington that prioritises walking, cycling, and public transport, in addition to the provision of an appropriate level of road infrastructure, road capacity and associated traffic management

12.1 INTRODUCTION

[This chapter should be read in conjunction with the Local Transport Plan in Appendix 2].

A well performing transport network underpins the economic, spatial, social, and environmental success of urban areas, and contributes to a more climate resilient urban environment. The prioritisation of integrated transport and land use together with investment in active travel networks is therefore essential in order to build on the strategic location of Portarlington town and its existing assets. This in turn will improve people's travel choices and support safe, sustainable, and healthy lifestyles.

12.2 PORTARLINGTON TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE IN CONTEXT

The town of Portarlington is a well-connected town in terms of its location and its physical access to regional and national road networks and its access to national rail services. It is served by three Regional Roads, the R419, R420 and R423. These facilitate access to the N80 National Secondary Road and to other major national road links such as the M7, M8 and M9 motorways via Portlaoise to the south, and the M6 via Tullamore to the north-west. These links provide access to the east, south and west of Ireland, including Rosslare, the Greater Dublin Area, Dublin Port and Dublin Airport.

In terms of public transport, Portarlington is a focal point of the Irish railway network, being situated on the junction for services to the west (Galway, Mayo), the south (Cork, Limerick, Tralee) and the east (Dublin, Kildare). Portarlington Train Station provides regular daily services to major urban areas in Ireland including Cork, Killarney, Limerick and Dublin. There are also a number of bus services connecting Portarlington to Kildare, Monasterevin, Portlaoise, Tullamore and Dublin.

Notwithstanding these excellent public transport services, an over reliance on the private car for both short local journeys and longer journeys in the region is apparent in Portarlington. Traffic congestion remains an issue in the town centre and requires attention. There are only two bridge crossings of the River Barrow in Portarlington; Spa Bridge and Barrow Bridge. This particular geographical situation exacerbates the traffic congestion in the town, which in turn impacts negatively on livability, the attractiveness of the town, the quality and type of activities that can be accommodated in the town centre and the safety of pedestrians and cyclists.

12.3 INTEGRATED LAND USE AND TRANSPORT PLANNING

The achievement of a comprehensive and meaningful transition towards a model of sustainable travel and transportation in Portarlington is a critical component to realising the future strategic

vision for the town. Sustainable integrated communities can only be achieved by providing communities with a realistic and convenient alternative to the private car. Furthermore, other strategic development policy such as the successful regeneration of the town centre could be jeopardised without the delivery of sustainable travel options.

A key approach to support a shift towards sustainable, healthy, and low carbon urban areas is the formulation of land use policies which prioritise development that is within realistic walking and cycling distances from key employment, service, educational, and recreational areas. In this regard, Laois and Offaly County Councils both acknowledge the importance of the fundamental link between land use and transport planning to reduce car-based travel and to promote more sustainable and active travel modes.

Whilst many of the options proposed in the LTP focus on the provision of active travel infrastructure, Laois County Council and Offaly County Council recognise that given the character of the area and its rural hinterland, there remains a need for many people to use private vehicles for travel purposes. Laois County Council and Offaly County Council are therefore committed to road network measures included within the LTP, which ensure the safe and efficient operation of the road network for the movement of people and goods.

The identification of transport infrastructure proposals in this Plan and associated Local Transport Plan, including locations and any associated mapping, that is not already permitted or provided for by existing plans/programmes/etc. is non-binding and indicative.

New transport infrastructure will be considered subject to environmental constraints, including those related to habitats and potential impacts (e.g. disturbance from lighting). This will include minimising river crossings, avoiding sensitive habitats, not increasing barriers to flood waters and sustainable design and construction techniques.

Proposals would need to be subject to a Corridor and Route Selection Process, as relevant and as per Objective TRANS 15 of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and Chapter 8.6.4 “Corridor & Route Selection Process” of the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027.

Proposed interventions will be required to demonstrate that they are consistent with all relevant legislative requirements.

12.4 LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

The importance of planning for sustainable travel is reflected in the recent formation of new dedicated Active Travel Teams by Laois and Offaly County Councils. In conjunction with their respective Municipal District Offices and central Roads Departments, and in consultation with the NTA, the Active Travel Teams are involved in the design, procurement, supervision, and construction of schemes which include the provision of new walking and cycling routes, widened footpaths, and new pedestrian crossings.

The respective Active Travel teams of Laois and Offaly County Councils have been central to the preparation of the Local Transport Plan (LTP), which forms Appendix 2 of this JLAP. This forms a part of the requirement for an evidence-based approach to planning, as set out in the National

Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region.

The LTP is intended to underpin the future development of Portarlington and to ensure that the assessment of transport demand and its associated impact plays a central role in informing future development. The LTP also sets a framework for future investment in transport infrastructure within Portarlington. This JLAP will therefore seek to maximise, where feasible and subject to funding, the opportunities identified in the LTP, capitalising on the space available in the town to create a transformed public realm, and expand high-quality pedestrian, cycling and public transport links.

The LTP for Portarlington proposes eleven Guiding Principles, all relating to quality of life for residents and visitors. From this, there are eight objectives proposed within the LTP. These objectives combine to form an integrated transport strategy for Portarlington that promotes positive outcomes from a movement and place perspective.

OBJECTIVES	
Permeability	Improve permeability between neighbourhoods, thus enhancing attractiveness and promoting connectivity.
Active Travel	Improve active travel routes, walking and cycling connections and increase the levels of physical activity.
Public Transport	Encourage the use of public transport and reduce the environmental impact of transportation.
Integration of Land Use and Transport	Integrate existing and future land use and transport networks.
Parking	Utilise existing on-street parking zones along certain streets to improve the public realm, support travel by sustainable mode and provide other functions such as wider footpaths, cycle parking, outdoor dining areas, new trees/planting etc.
Safety	Improve and enhance safety for all, especially for vulnerable road users.
Traffic Management	Identify and implement interventions to reduce through traffic.
Feasibility and Value for Money	The achievement of these objectives will have the desired effect of increasing the share of trips made by sustainable modes of transport such as walking, cycling, and public transport.

Table 15: Local Transport Plan Objectives

Having regard to the above objectives together with the stated identified transport gaps in Portarlington and existing heavy reliance on travel by car, the LTP recognises that a modal shift to sustainable transport options is a priority in the town over the plan period 2025-2031. The LTP therefore sets out the following targets:

Modal Share Targets (Work Trips)				
	Walking	Cycling	Public Transport	Car
2022 Baseline	5.83%	0.97%	8.74%	69.34%
Mode Share Target	20%	15%	20%	45%
% Change	+14.17%	+14.03%	+11.26%	-24.34%

Modal Share Targets (School, College or Childcare Trips)				
	Walking	Cycling	Public Transport	Car
2022 Baseline	19.04%	2.37%	21.37%	49.69%
Mode Share Target	25%	10%	25%	40%
% Change	+5.96%	+7.63%	+3.63	-9.69%

Table 16: Modal Shift Targets as per the Local Transport Plan

Further to this, a suite of measures has been developed for each transport mode (Pedestrian; Cycle; Permeability; Public Transport; Car Parking) in Table 5-1 to Table 5-5 of the LTP. This will inform the transport implementation and priority plan for Portarlinton.

A further summary table of some of the Localised and Strategic Measures are outlined below. This is a non-exhaustive list of works for which funding will be sought by Laois and Offaly County Councils over the lifetime of the JLAP.

Measures	Options
Pedestrian, Cycle & Permeability	Carry out survey to determine defective footpaths and/or gaps in the existing infrastructure and design a priority list for repair/infill works in conjunction with the relevant stakeholders.
	Improve existing footpaths and provide safe crossing points at all junctions.
	Provide controlled pedestrian crossings at key crossing points.
	Provide off-line Amenity Active Travel link from Lea Road with potential to link to Portarlington RFC and Arlington AFC.
Public Transport	Improve bus links between town and Portarlington Railway Station.
	Engage with bus services providers and other stakeholders to rationalise bus stop locations.
Road Network	Traffic Management Scheme TR2 – one way traffic eastbound only along Sandy Lane.
	Traffic Management Scheme TR1 – one way traffic southbound only along Spa Street from junction with Local Road as far as Market Square.
	Traffic Management Scheme TR3 – one way traffic eastbound only along Bracklone Street as far as Canal Road.
	Provide inner relief road connecting the R420 at Shanderry to the local road at Kilmalogue. (R2)
	Provide Southern Transport Corridor from the R420 at Shanderry to the local road at Ballymorris.
Car Parking	Conduct a car parking analysis of the town, the outputs of which will comprise a comprehensive parking plan for the town centre.
	Implement changes to eliminate unauthorised parking on footpaths to provide safer passage for vulnerable road users.

Table 17: Summary of Localised Measures

Measures	Options	Timeline
Public Transport	Engage with the National Transport Authority, Iarnród Éireann and other stakeholders regarding the feasibility of developing an integrated Public Transport Hub at Portarlington Train Station.	Short Term
Pedestrian, Cycle & Permeability	Provide Active Travel from Main Street to Kilnacourt Wood and Station Road Roundabout. (AT4)	Short Term
	Provide Active Travel from Canal Road East to Station Road including junction of Canal Road and Lea Road. (AT6)	Short Term
	Provide Active Travel on Canal Road West. (AT7)	Short Term
	Provide Active Travel from Ballymorris Road to Crowe Lane to Main Street. (AT8 / AT9)	Short Term
	Provide Active Travel along Sandy Lane (AT10).	Short Term
Road Network	Traffic Management Scheme TR2 – one way traffic eastbound only along Sandy Lane.	Medium Term
	Traffic Management Scheme TR1 – one way traffic southbound only along Spa Street from junction with Local Road as far as Market Square.	Medium Term
	Traffic Management Scheme TR3 – one way traffic eastbound only along Bracklone Street as far as Canal Road.	Medium Term
Pedestrian, Cycle & Permeability	Provide Active Travel from Kilmalogue/Bog Road Junction to Coláiste Íosagáin and continuing along R423 Road to Na Cluainte Estate. (AT2-Phase 1)	Medium to Long Term
	Provide Active Travel from Botley Lane/French Church Street Junction along Patrick Street to Kilmalogue/Bog Road Junction. (AT2 – Phase 2)	Medium to Long Term
	Provide Active Travel on Bog Road from Coláiste Íosagáin to White Heart Lane serving New Residential and Community Use Lands. (AT2 – Phase 3)	Medium to Long Term
	Provide Active Travel on Marian Hill Road/ Droughill Road serving new Residential lands at Droughill. (AT14)	Medium to Long Term
	Provide Active Travel link on Bog Road (L7178) west of its junction with Botley Lane. (AT12)	Medium to Long Term
	Provide Active Travel from R419 Portlaoise Road at Ballymorris to French Church Street. (AT11)	Medium to Long Term
Road Network	Provide inner relief road connecting the R420 at Shanderry to the local road at Kilmalogue. (R2).	Long Term
	Provide Southern Transport Corridor from the R420 at Shanderry to the local road at Ballymorris.	Long Term
Pedestrian, Cycle & Permeability	Provide Active Travel between French Church Street and Market Square. (AT1)	Long Term
	Provide Active Travel between along Botley Lane from its junction with French Church Street. (AT1)	Long Term
	Provide Active Travel on Station Road (including Railway Mews, which connects Portarlington Station to Station Road) and junction of Canal Road and Station Road. (AT4)	Long Term
	Provide Active Travel link to serve the 'employment lands on the R420 Regional Road (Lea Road). (AT13)	Long Term
	Within the Southern Transport Corridor from the R420 at Shanderry to the local road at Ballymorris, provide Greenway to include new pedestrian / cyclist bridge across River Barrow catering for all active travel modes and vulnerable road users, upgrade of Riverside Estate and upgrade of crossings from Riverside Estate to Coláiste Íosagáin.	Long Term

Table 18: Summary of Strategic Measures

12.5 IMPLEMENTATION

The LTP contains a range of transport solutions to support the sustainable compact growth of Portarlinton, as set out in the Strategic Vision of this JLAP. The measures within the LTP seeks to provide existing and future residents of Portarlinton with a range of sustainable travel choices.

- The pedestrian, cycle, and permeability measures aim to increase the attractiveness and reduce the journey times of active travel modes.
- The public transport measures aim to improve the catchment and use of public transport along with improving existing facilities.
- The road network and car parking strategies aim to rationalise vehicular movements and street space in the town core.

The overall suite of measures developed for each transport mode were assessed using a Multi Criteria Assessment, with criteria tailored specifically to each individual mode. The outcome of this assessment is presented in Table 5-1 to Table 5-5 and will inform the Implementation and Priority Plan, which can be ranked in accordance with the average scores identified in the Tables.

The higher average scores could be considered to represent shorter term measures, with the lower scores representing longer term measures. When implemented, these combined measures will contribute to a considerable increase in trips made using sustainable transport, with Portarlinton playing its part in meeting the Climate Action Plan and National Sustainable Mobility Policy targets.

12.6 SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES	
It is the policy of Laois and Offaly County Council to:	
Policy 12.1	Actively support an integrated approach to land use and transport planning in Portarlinton that promotes a shift towards a sustainable, healthy, and low carbon town with a reduced need for car-based travel, and through the prioritisation of development that is within reasonable walking and cycling distances from key employment, service, educational, and recreational areas, and key public transport nodes.
Policy 12.2	Ensure the design of all streets and roads in Portarlinton town complies with the principles, approaches and standards in the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS 2013- 2024 and any subsequent updates to this Design Manual.
Policy 12.3	Support the role of the Councils' Active Travel Teams in the promotion and delivery of sustainable and active travel infrastructure and options in

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES	
	Portarlington, including the provision of new and enhanced walking and cycling routes, widened footpaths, and pedestrian crossings.
Policy 12.4	Progress the delivery of the appropriate measures and interventions as outlined in the Portarlington Local Transport Plan (LTP) on a phased basis and subject to the availability of funding, in order to support the shift towards sustainable travel and transport throughout the joint urban area and to accommodate anticipated transport demand due to planned population growth.
Policy 12.5	Support and promote enhanced connectivity where appropriate for pedestrians and cyclists in Portarlington in order to improve accessibility throughout the town, employment areas, residential areas, local schools and other educational facilities, recreational facilities, and public transport nodes.
Policy 12.6	Ensure that all development where appropriate within Portarlington provides for connectivity (pedestrian, cyclist and vehicular) to adjacent lands in accordance with the National Transport Authority's Permeability Best Practice Guide (2015) and any subsequent update to this Guide.
Policy 12.7	Ensure all new development proposals are permeable for walking and cycling and seek the retrospective implementation of walking and cycling connections and facilities in existing neighbourhood, where feasible and appropriate, in order to support and encourage a shift to sustainable travel modes.
Policy 12.8	Ensure that pedestrian and cycling infrastructure is based on principles of Universal Design, and that all footpaths in Portarlington are accessible to all members of the community, including people with disabilities, the elderly, and people with young children.
Policy 12.9	Provide adequate and secure bicycle parking facilities in accordance with the standards set out in the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 and relevant Section 28 Guidelines.
Policy 12.10	Apply the policies, objectives and standards for parking as set out in the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 and relevant Section 28 Guidelines, in considering applications for planning permission in Portarlington.
Policy 12.11	Promote and support the provision of appropriate infrastructure in Portarlington to accommodate electric vehicles, as per the standards set out in the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 and any relevant Section 28 Guidelines.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES	
Policy 12.12	Provide and improve pedestrian linkages, cycle networks and permeability routes throughout new and established developments in Portarlington, including retrofit connectivity between established housing areas.
Policy 12.13	Reserve all lands for future relief roads free of development in conjunction with the requirements of the Road Authorities of Laois County Council and Offaly County Council.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES	
It is the objective of Laois and Offaly County Council to:	
Objective 12.1	Support the implementation of the objectives of the Local Transport Plan (or any review thereof).
Objective 12.2	Actively seek funding for investment in active travel and public transport in line with the provisions of the Local Transport Plan (or any review thereof).
Objective 12.3	Collaborate with the NTA and Irish Rail to consider how the rail service, infrastructure and facilities can be better tailored to the needs of the community.
Objective 12.4	Collaborate with the NTA, national and local bus service providers to consider how the bus service and associated infrastructure and facilities can be better tailored to the needs of the community.
Objective 12.5	Improve bus links and active travel links between Portarlington town centre and the Railway Station.
Objective 12.6	Investigate the possibility of developing a public transport hub at the Portarlington Railway Station.
Objective 12.7	Implement traffic management scheme in accordance with the provisions of the Local Transport Plan (or any review thereof).
Objective 12.8	Investigate the feasibility, including compliance with NPF National Strategic Outcome No. 4 “Sustainable Mobility”, of providing future relief roads as indicated on the Objectives Map taking into account environmental sensitivities identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of the Laois County Development Plan and the Offaly County Development Plan. The development of any relief road proposal shall be

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES	
	subject to the requirements of the EIA, Habitats, Water Framework and Flood Directives where relevant and appropriate.
Objective 12.9	Support the development of Active Travel routes in line with the provisions of the Local Transport Plan (or any review thereof).
Objective 12.10	Achieve the modal shift target as set out in the Local Transport Plan (or any review thereof), through collaboration with the community and transport sectors over the lifetime of this JLAP.
Objective 12.11	Seek opportunities to improve permeability in existing developed areas in accordance with NTA's Permeability Best Practice Guide, and where the opportunity exists.
Objective 12.12	Require new development proposals to incorporate pedestrian and cycle routes to increase permeability for walking and cycling within the wider area.
Objective 12.13	Improve active travel links between Portarlinton town centre and Portarlinton Rugby Club.
Objective 12.14	Conduct a carparking analysis of Portarlinton town centre to enable a comprehensive parking plan for the town centre.
Objective 12.15	Carry out a survey to determine defective footpaths and / or gaps in the existing infrastructure and develop a priority list for repair / infill works in conjunction with the relevant stakeholders.
Objective 12.16	Support and facilitate the delivery of the preferred road infrastructure improvements identified in the Local Transport Plan (LTP) and Figure 6.8, with associated benefits for sustainable travel and transport and multi-modal solutions.

CHAPTER 13. INFRASTRUCTURE, ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES AND FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

Strategic Aim: To facilitate future growth in Portarlinton in line with the capacity and availability of supporting infrastructure and environmental services, and in line with appropriate flood risk management measures and nature-based solutions, ensuring such growth occurs in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

The availability of high-quality infrastructure and environmental services will enhance the economic competitiveness and livability of Portarlinton. Infrastructure for energy, broadband and WIFI, public water supply, wastewater, surface water drainage, together with services such as waste management, must be planned for to ensure that there is adequate capacity to cater for the land use zonings and level of development provided for in this JLAP. In this regard and in accordance with the National Planning Framework (NPF), an Infrastructure Assessment has been prepared as an appendix to this JLAP to ensure that informed decisions are made regarding planned growth and that this growth is in line with the capacity and delivery of the necessary supporting infrastructure (See Appendix 5).

13.2 ENERGY DEMAND AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

As a town of over 9,000 persons, Portarlinton has significant energy demands for heating, electricity and transport. It is served by a high-capacity electricity system and gas network.

In line with the objectives of the national Climate Action Plan (DECC, 2023, 2024), Laois and Offaly County Councils and their stakeholders will support the transition to renewable energy for heating and transport and will encourage and support the transition to renewable energy generated locally in tandem with the energy efficiency upgrading of built fabric throughout the town. This is also discussed in Chapter 10 Climate Change.

These measures would contribute to delivering the 80% renewable energy targets as set out in EirGrid's Shaping our Electricity Future Roadmap (Version 1.1) by 2030.

13.3 BROADBAND AND WIFI IN PUBLIC SPACES

Within the settlement 2,707 households currently have broadband internet services. Free public Wifi is now available in Portarlinton under the WiFi4EU project. This is a European initiative which was launched by Laois County Council in September 2021. It promotes free connectivity within public spaces. The project is funded through the EU, to promote access to Wifi connectivity in public spaces in municipalities throughout Europe, with matching funding provided by the Department of Rural and Community Development for Wifi installation. Free WIFI is designed to enhance the public realm in the town and encourage more people to visit and do business into the town centre. In Portarlinton, there are Wifi access points on the Fire Station building, the Leisure Centre building and buildings on the Main Street including the library. These access points give a range of coverage of approximately 50m.

13.4 WATER AND WASTEWATER

The provision of water supply and wastewater/foul drainage infrastructure in Ireland is the responsibility of Uisce Éireann since 1st January 2014. This responsibility involves the delivery of strategic water and wastewater projects and infrastructural improvements within Counties Laois and Offaly. Future development will be in line with Uisce Éireann's Capital Investment Plan, subject to the availability of funding, along with environmental and financial sustainability criteria. Laois and Offaly County Councils will continue to support Uisce Éireann in identifying services that are required to support planned development in Portarlington in line with national and regional level policies.

13.4.1 Public Water Supply

Portarlington is supplied by water treatment plants at: La Bergerie (producing approximately 1,400 m³/day of water), Doolough (producing approximately 450 m³/day of water) and Ballymorris Treatment Plant.

Uisce Éireann have indicated that there are some constraints in the water network and that a project is currently being planned to address this issue. In terms of water supply, Uisce Éireann have indicated that capacity constraints exist and that connection applications will be assessed on an individual basis considering their specific load requirements. A Level of Service (LoS) improvement will therefore be required to meet 2032 population targets. Improvement proposals will include leakage reduction and/or capital investment and are required to maintain/improve levels of service as demand increases. Uisce Éireann have indicated that these proposals will be developed & prioritised through the National Water Resources Plan and investment planning process.

13.4.2 Public Wastewater System

The Portarlington Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) is located off the Lea Road and provides treatment for the sewerage effluent generated by Portarlington, Ballybrittas and Killenard. The WWTP has a current treatment capacity of 13,000 population equivalent (pe). The Uisce Éireann wastewater capacity register indicates that capacity exists in the wastewater treatment plant for the projected population growth in Portarlington.

Laois and Offaly County Council's will require new developments to be served by existing wastewater treatment facilities, where possible.

Uisce Éireann have indicated that there are issues with storm water overflows from the combined sewer system in Portarlington and that there is a Drainage Area Plan underway that will investigate these issues. In the interim, to allow some phased development to go ahead, it will be necessary to remove storm water from the system. In this regard, Uisce Éireann have advised that the upgrading of "Swimming Pool" pumping station is likely to be required. Given that the upgrades may take several years to complete, the promotion of storm water separation and widespread adoption of blue-green infrastructure in the town, would take pressure off the combined sewer network, contribute to climate resilience and in addition generate capacity for compact growth.

13.5 SUSTAINABLE SURFACE WATER MANAGEMENT

Uisce Eireann together with Laois and Offaly County Councils are responsible for the on-going maintenance and monitoring of sustainable drainage systems and will seek to maintain drainage having consideration to Water Sensitive Urban Design and application of a nature-based Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) approach. By incorporating SuDS in new developments, the surface water regime of a pre-development 'greenfield' situation can be replicated as closely as possible, conveying water more slowly to the drainage system and to watercourses. The use of SuDS can vary, but primarily includes measures such as infiltration trenches /soakaways, filter drains, and the use of permeable surface finishes, to swales, green roofs, detention basins, and stormwater wetlands.

Laois and Offaly County Councils will require new development in Portarlington to provide separate foul and surface water drainage systems and to incorporate water sensitive urban design and nature-based SUDS. The provisions of '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, 2001), Nature Based Management of Urban Rainwater and Urban Water Discharges, A National Strategy (May 2024), DHLGG and any review thereof, will apply.

13.6 CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

The closest landfill site to Portarlington is at Kyletalesha. There is a Recycling Centre located on the Lea Road which is operated by Bord na Mona Recycling under a contract with Laois County Council. There are two Bring Banks located in Portarlington; one at the SuperValu carpark and one at the carpark of the former St Michael's school. There are two private clothes/textile receptacles in Portarlington; one at the Maxol Station at the Kilnacourt Roundabout, and one at the Community Centre. Private waste collectors in the town provide a collection service and enable householders to recycle as much as possible.

It is a key objective of the Council to support the sustainable management of waste and the reduction in the production of waste in Portarlington in line with the National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy (Government of Ireland, 2022) and associated guidance across the delivery of its services and in the management of new development.

13.7 FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

Portarlington has a history of serious flooding with major events occurring as recently as January 2020, and others in November 2017 and 2008.

As part of the Government's National Development Plan 2018-2027, almost €1 billion has been committed to the investment into flood relief measures across the country. Following on from this commitment, a steering group was established between the Office of Public Works (OPW) and Laois County Council to progress a flood relief scheme to alleviate the risk of flooding for the community of Portarlington. Laois County Council is the lead Local Authority for the delivery of the project under a Section 85 agreement with Offaly County Council

In August 2020, Consultant Joint Venture Binnies / Nicholas O'Dwyer was appointed to develop a detailed project level engineering assessment for Portarlington that is socially, environmentally, economically, and technically acceptable. Design on the Portarlington Flood Relief Scheme is progressing. The preferred option has been identified and work is ongoing to complete environmental surveys required to inform the planning documentation for the project.

It is expected that the proposed flood relief scheme will provide flood protection for Portarlington for a 1 in 100-year flood event, and 72 properties that are currently at risk of flooding will be protected.

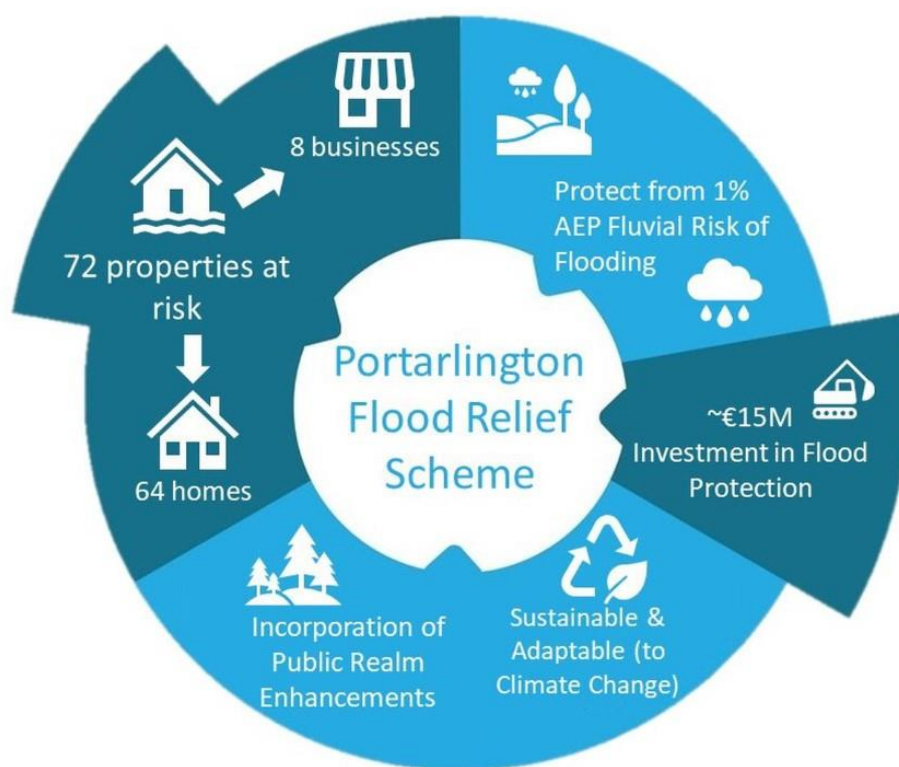


Figure 20: Portarlington Flood Relief Scheme

Furthermore, a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has been undertaken alongside the preparation of this JLAP. This is required by 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Office of Public Works, 2009) and Circular PL 2/2014 (Department of Environment, Community and Local Government).

The SFRA focused on land use zoning as well as flood risk management policy and has considered available, and emerging information on flood risk indicators, including the OPW's Flood Hazard and Risk Mapping and any flood defences. In line, with the requirements of the Flood Risk Guidelines, Flood Zones A and B have been identified for Portarlington and are outlined on Map 3.

Areas that are located in flood risk areas are generally not zoned for uses that are vulnerable to flooding. In cases where a site is zoned for use in an area at flood risk, a 'Justification Test' was carried out as part of the SFRA (Appendix 3).

13.8 INFRASTRUCTURE, ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES AND FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES	
It is the policy of Laois and Offaly County Council to:	
Policy 13.1	Require that new developments connect to the public water and wastewater networks in Portarlington where public mains are available, and subject to connection agreements with Uisce Éireann and compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria.
Policy 13.2	Protect both ground and surface water resources and to work with Uisce Éireann to develop and implement Water Safety Plans to protect sources of public water supply and their contributing catchments.
Policy 13.3	Preserve free from development the wayleaves of all public sewers and all public water mains.
Policy 13.4	Minimise flood risk arising from pluvial (surface water) flooding in Portarlington by promoting the use of natural flood risk management measures including the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and nature-based solutions.
Policy 13.5	Require the submission of a Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA), by a suitably qualified and indemnified professional, in areas at risk of flooding in Portarlington. The assessment shall be prepared in accordance with the Planning System and Flood Risk Management: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG and OPW, 2009) and Circular PL2/2014 (and any future revisions or updates to these Guidelines).
Policy 13.6	Require the incorporation of sustainable waste management measures within developments, including the provision of adequately sized facilities for the storage, separation, and collection of waste and recyclable materials.
Policy 13.7	Require the use of renewable energy technologies in residential, commercial and community developments.
Policy 13.8	Facilitate, promote and encourage the expansion and improvement of telecommunications, broadband (including the rollout of 5g), electricity and gas networks infrastructure.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES	
Policy 13.9	Support the undergrounding of all electricity, telephone and television cables in the town.
Policy 13.10	Support the mitigation measures outlined in Part 3 of the Justification Tests that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Within Flood Zones A and B, highly vulnerable development is limited to extensions, rebuilds and changes of use until the Flood Relief Scheme is completed; and b) Within Flood Zones A and B, bedrooms must be located in the upstairs of two story buildings when extending existing properties;
Policy 13.11	Require that all construction projects are carried out in accordance with EPA's Best practice guidelines for the preparation of resource & waste management plans for construction & demolition projects (2021), and any subsequent amendments.
Policy 13.12	Ensure that surface water management in new developments, and the design of nature-based solutions, in line with Policy 13.4, reflect the following guidance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature Based Management of Urban Rainwater and Urban Water Discharges, A National Strategy (May 2024) • "Implementation of Urban Nature Based Solutions -Guidance Document for Planners, Developers and Developer Agents" LAWPRO (November 2024)
Policy 13.13	Development within flood risks areas shall be limited to that appropriate to the level of flood risk, as identified in Map 3 (Land use Zoning, SAC and Flood Zoning) in accordance with the provisions of the Planning system and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009), as amended. New development within this area is limited to water compatible uses in Flood Zone A and less vulnerable or water compatible uses in Flood Zone B except where all criteria of the Plan Making and Development Management Justification Tests have been shown to have been satisfied and a detailed SSFRA has been provided.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES	
It is the objective of Laois and Offaly County Council to:	
Objective 13.1	Support Uisce Éireann in the provision of a sufficient quantity and quality of water to serve the needs of the existing and future population of Portarlington over the period of the Plan and in accordance with the Core Strategies of Laois and Offaly County Councils, and to promote the sustainable management of the water supply for the town.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES	
Objective 13.2	Support the investment and provision of public water supply infrastructure by Uisce Éireann, including any maintenance works and planned upgrades to water treatment plants and the associated public mains water network serving the town, including the safeguarding of existing infrastructure.
Objective 13.3	Support wastewater treatment infrastructure investment and provision by Uisce Éireann in Portarlington, including any maintenance works and planned upgrades of the Wastewater Treatment Plant and the associated wastewater network serving the town, including the safeguarding of existing infrastructure.
Objective 13.4	Manage flood risk in Portarlington in conjunction with the Office of Public Works (OPW) and in accordance with the requirements of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009), Circular PL02/2014, and any future revisions or updates to these Guidelines.
Objective 13.5	Promote and support sustainable forms of waste management by households, communities, and businesses, including waste prevention, minimisation, reuse, recycling, and recovery.
Objective 13.6	Secure high-quality digital connectivity in Portarlington in line with the National Broad Band Plan and enable digital technology.
Objective 13.7	Ensure that developments, individually as a result of the proposed development, or cumulatively, in combination with other developments, will not adversely impact on the status of waterbodies in accordance with the European Water Framework Directive and Ireland's "Water Action Plan 2024: River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2022-2027" (DHLGH, 2024).

CHAPTER 14. BUILT HERITAGE

Strategic Aim: To protect, conserve and manage the built heritage of Portarlington, and to promote the appropriate development and use of Heritage assets to ensure that they contribute to the sustainable development and heritage-led regeneration of the town for future generations.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

The rich built heritage of Portarlington is an important and distinctive asset for the town. It includes 18th and 19th century two, three and four storey town houses, walled gardens and burgages, vernacular structures, industrial heritage, Huguenot artefacts, ecclesiastical architecture and a considerable amount of features of interest including stone walls and street furniture. The character and distinctiveness of Portarlington's built heritage contribute to a sense of place and serves as a physical expression of past generations. This heritage can also have a positive role in shaping the future of Portarlington, including opportunities for increased economic vitality, tourism, urban regeneration, placemaking, climate resilience, and for engendering civic pride. It is therefore crucially important that there is an understanding and appreciation of the social and economic value and benefits that conserving the built heritage of Portarlington can bring.

14.2 HERITAGE-LED REGENERATION

Heritage-led regeneration focuses on investing in the targeted restoration and reuse of built heritage assets in ways that can drive positive and ambitious change in town centres, whilst responding to the way that people live, work and shop. It is also about bringing the history of places to the fore, involving communities in heritage projects, and improving places with the aim of attracting new business, visitors, and residents.

The crucial role of heritage-led regeneration in the town centre is reflected in the 'Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030'. This Strategy focuses on the study area comprising the main routes' leading to the 300-year-old Market House and its historic square setting. The Vision Statement therein is:

'To create a more viable and visually attractive Town Centre in Portarlington for residents, visitors and workers through the appropriate rehabilitation of the Market House and Square and other key buildings, with improvements to connectivity, public realm and amenities'.

There are eight principal actions within the Strategy which aim to achieve this:

1. Rehabilitation of the Market House
2. Rehabilitation of the Market Square
3. Improve the public realm within the Town Centre
4. Promote Sustainable Access and Mobility
5. Promotion of sustainable uses in the Town Centre
6. Create a Low Carbon Zone
7. Celebration of the Heritage of Portarlington

8. Development of Green / Blue Infrastructure

The development of the Market House is one of the principal projects within the 'Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030'. Works on the Market House project commenced in August 2023. The Market House will be reimagined as the central focus of the town with a range of public and community uses including community meeting space and an event and exhibition space. It is envisaged that this project will regenerate a key focal point within the town, acting as a launching point for further regeneration and redevelopment in the town centre. It is further envisaged that the Market House will act as a trailhead to connect the town with visitor attractions in its hinterland including the Derrycastle Lakes and Trails; Emo Court; Corrig Wood; and the Barrow walkway.

14.3 RECORD OF PROTECTED STRUCTURES

A protected structure is a structure or part of a structure that Laois County Council or Offaly County Council consider to be of special interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social, or technical point of view. The placing of a structure on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) seeks to ensure that the character special interest of the structure is conserved and protected, and that any changes or alterations to it are carried out in such a way as to retain and enhance this character and special interest. Works to a protected structure, which would materially affect the character of the structure, require planning permission.

The RPS is set out under the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027. There are approximately 96 no. Protected Structures within the development boundary of Portarlington.

14.4 ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION AREA

An Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) represents a complimentary statutory provision to the Record of Protected Structures. An ACA can include a place, area, group of structures or townscape which is either of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social, or technical interest in its own right, or which contributes to the appreciation of protected structures. This could include, for example, a terrace of houses, buildings surrounding a square, or any group of buildings which together give a special character to an area.

ACAs can serve to preserve and reinforce aspects of the built environment in an urban area that contribute to its heritage and distinctiveness, such as urban grain, scale, building heights and lines. The preservation and maintenance of key building features and materials such as shop fronts, chimney stacks, sash windows and building finishes such as slate roofing and lime renders, are also important elements in the conservation of the special character of ACAs. It is important that change within ACAs is carefully managed by preserving what makes the ACA special, encouraging the refurbishment and reuse of buildings that are vacant or in poor condition, allowing for alterations and extensions where appropriate, and enabling redevelopment where it will contribute positively to the special character of the area.

It is a policy objective of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 to investigate the designation of Architectural Conservation Area's (ACA's) at appropriate locations, including Portarlington.

14.5 VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE

Alongside buildings and structures listed as protected structures or located in ACAs, can be more restrained and sometimes less obvious vernacular architecture that makes an equally important contribution to the built fabric and character of the townscape of Portarlington. This type of architecture was typically concerned with fulfilling more ordinary and functional purposes and uses, such as dwellings, outhouses, street furniture, and shopfronts. However, in the present day it can represent a valuable physical reminder of traditional building forms and types, and local building skills and materials.

Laois County Council and Offaly County Council will encourage the retention, protection, and reuse of vernacular architecture in the town, rather than its demolition, replacement, or dereliction.

14.6 ARCHAEOLOGY

The National Monuments Act 1930 (as amended) provides for the legal protection of archaeological heritage from unauthorised damage or interference. The Act's most widely applying provision is the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), which consists of a statutory audit of all known sites and features of historical and archaeological importance. All sites identified in the RMP are protected under Section 12 of the Act. The RMP can be accessed through the Archaeological Survey of Ireland database, including an historic environment viewer, at www.archaeology.ie.

There are various entries to the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994 within and around Portarlington.

A zone of archaeological significance is also situated within the town centre. It relates to a zone or area in which significant archaeology has been found and where there is a high likelihood of further such findings. The Zone of Archaeological Potential for Portarlington is identified on the Objectives Map accompanying this JLAP.

Development proposals located within the Zone of Archaeological Potential and/or close to known archaeological monuments/sites, including development sites that are extensive in area, will be required as part of the planning application process, or by condition of a permission, to carry out archaeological assessment, monitoring, testing or excavation within the area either prior to the planning decision or prior to any development proceeding on site. Laois and Offaly County Councils will consult with the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage and other statutory consultees when considering planning applications in their respective administrative areas that relate to development proposals.

14.7 LEA CASTLE

Lea Castle is a medieval castle on the banks of the River Barrow on the western side of Portarlington. The castle is of significant historical and architectural importance. Unfortunately, the castle has been disappearing into the landscape. In 2014, the Portarlington Arts and Heritage committee successfully applied for funding from the Heritage Council and €8000 was granted for the creation of a conservation report with a view to saving this castle from further destruction. A further €6000 was granted in 2015.

The Conservation Report seeks to promote and protect the archaeological and natural heritage of Lea Castle. Some initial works identified in the report which aim to facilitate the long-term conservation of the structure have been carried out. The project has potential for tourism development and the uncovering of the rich history of the site and local area. A walk along the River Barrow from Portarlington to the Castle is part of the long-term proposals for the site.

The Lea Castle Conservation Group has been involved in promoting and protecting the archaeological and natural heritage of Lea Castle and its environs for over 10 years. The Group applied to the Heritage Council through Laois County Council to carry out the Lea Graveyard Accessibility Project 2021, which saw resurfacing of a laneway in Lea townland, Portarlington, Co. Laois. The objective of the project was to enhance accessibility to the medieval church and graveyard at Loughmansland Glebe, Portarlington. Works were carried out in April and May 2021. The resurfacing and compaction of engineered stone along the laneway has increased accessibility for visitors to the site and added to the upkeep and amenity value of the area.

14.8 BUILT HERITAGE POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES	
It is the policy of Laois and Offaly County Council to:	
Policy 14.1	Protect, conserve and enhance the character, setting and special interest of the built heritage of Portarlington, including all Protected Structures and their curtilage, Recorded Monuments and Places in accordance with best conservation practice.
Policy 14.2	Protect and conserve important heritage items such as, gates, street furniture, post boxes and other significant historic features of interest in Portarlington and support the re-introduction of traditional features on Protected Structures where there is evidence that such features (e.g. window styles, finishes etc.) previously existed.
Policy 14.3	Ensure that development proposals do not obscure views, principal elevations or the character and setting of Protected Structures.
Policy 14.4	Prevent inappropriate alterations to protected structures, and to prohibit the demolition of any protected structure unless the relevant local authority is satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist. The demolition of a protected

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES	
	structure with the retention of its façade will likewise not generally be permitted.
Policy 14.5	Positively consider proposals to improve, alter, extend or change the use of Protected Structures so as to render them viable for modern use, subject to suitable design, siting, materials and construction methods and subject to consultation with suitably qualified Conservation Architect(s).
Policy 14.6	Promote and encourage heritage-led regeneration in Portarlington, and tackle dereliction and vacancy so as to improve the quality of life and the interesting and attractive uniqueness of the town.
Policy 14.7	Resist and discourage the demolition of vernacular architecture in Portarlington, and where appropriate promote the sympathetic renewal, maintenance, adaptation, and re-use of historic building stock, and encourage the retention and repair of original fabric such as windows, doors, wall renders, roof coverings, shopfronts, and other significant features, whether protected or not.
Policy 14.8	Secure the preservation (either in situ or by record) of all archaeological monuments in Portarlington included in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) and their settings, and of all sites and features of significant archaeological or historical interest, including potential and previously unknown sites or features, in consultation with the National Monuments Service in the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Policy 14.9	Safeguard the archaeological heritage located within Portarlington and avoid negative impacts on sites, monuments, features, or objects of significant historical or archaeological interest.
Policy 14.10	Ensure the setting and character of Lea Castle is safeguarded and enhanced in the assessment of new development proposals and enhance connectivity and access as opportunities arise.
Policy 14.11	Departures from development management standards to facilitate the continued use of historic buildings will be considered where an adequate level of residential amenity and appropriate design can be provided to the Planning Authority's satisfaction.
Policy 14.12	In cases where preservation by record is required, information and interpretation of the historic archaeology in and around the site should be part of the design considerations for the site. This can be achieved by street naming, and landscape and public realm design.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

It is the objective of Laois and Offaly County Council to:

Objective 14.1	Support and facilitate heritage-led regeneration in Portarlington in line with the objectives of the 'Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030'.
Objective 14.2	Designate an Architectural Conservation Area in Portarlington to ensure the protection of all those buildings, spaces, archaeological sites, trees, street furniture, views and other aspects which form an essential part of the traditional core of the town.
Objective 14.3	Conserve, protect and enhance the built and archaeological heritage of Portarlington, including all Protected Structures and attendant grounds, Recorded Monuments and Places in accordance with best conservation practice.

CHAPTER 15. BIODIVERSITY AND NATURAL HERITAGE

Strategic Aim: To protect and enhance the natural heritage and biodiversity of Portarlington, thereby ensuring it makes a significant and positive contribution to the public realm and to the health, well-being and recreational needs of residents, and to ensure increased connectivity along the green infrastructure network in Portarlington and its hinterland.

15.1 INTRODUCTION

Natural heritage applies to all elements of the natural environment, including native plants and animals and the landscapes and habitats they occupy. These elements of the natural environment are also commonly referred to as biodiversity, a separate term which gives recognition to the variety of living things in a particular habitat or landscape, and to the inter-connectivity and interdependencies that can exist between them. Conserving and enhancing natural heritage and biodiversity is an integral part of good environmental management and sustainable development.

Although an urban settlement, Portarlington and its hinterland supports significant natural heritage spaces and corridors, some valuable examples of which include the River Barrow, the People's Park, the woodland area at the rear of Kilnacourt House (formerly Odlums Wood), Carrick Wood and the Derrycastle Lakes and Trails recreation area.

Protecting and enhancing this natural heritage can make a significant contribution to the health and well-being of residents in the town, at the same time as providing opportunities for economic growth, tourism, and recreation. Equally, the interconnected network of natural heritage features in the town, as a form of green infrastructure, can deliver a range of key ecosystem services that can contribute towards the protection of biodiversity, sustainable urban drainage, flood management, and climate action.

15.2 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

In a broad sense, Green Infrastructure is a term used to group and describe those elements of the natural environment which can deliver eco-system services and protect natural heritage. The growing use of the term green infrastructure has placed a particular focus on the multi-functional role of the natural environment, which can when of a high quality simultaneously support wildlife corridors, sustain air and water quality, contribute to sustainable drainage, flood protection and climate resilience, and provide vital amenity and recreational spaces for communities.

The green infrastructure network in Portarlington provides connectivity of habitat for a range of species. In addition to ecological benefits, this green infrastructure provides a focal point for active and passive recreation, which contributes to the quality of life for the local community. The benefits include:

- The creation of a community spirit and sense of place
- Encouraging physical activity, health and fitness
- Access to nature and the environment
- The creation of a pleasant environment to attract business and inward investment
- Climate Change adaption.

As below, there are a number of important green spaces in and around Portarlington and this JLAP seeks to ensure increased connectivity between them to form high quality green infrastructure. **See Map 4: Green Infrastructure.**

15.2.1 River Barrow and associated riparian habitat (River Barrow and River Nore Special SAC)

The river Barrow runs through Portarlington and forms the county boundary between Laois and Offaly in certain parts. The River Barrow forms part of the River Barrow and River Nore Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (Site Code: 002162), which runs west to east through the town centre.

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), also known as ‘European Sites’, are legally protected under the EU Habitats Directive (92/42/EEC) and are selected for the conservation of Annex I habitats and Annex II species. All such designated areas, including SACs, collectively form part of what is known as the Natura 2000 network of sites across Europe.



Figure 21: River Barrow

The River Barrow, which forms part of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, is a significant natural heritage site which contributes greatly to the character of the town and provides Portarlington with rich habitats of European conservation importance. It is an objective of this JLAP to investigate the feasibility of a recreational pedestrian/ cycle route along the River Barrow.

The provision of a river crossing in the southwest of the town and a walkway along the River Barrow, (as shown on the objectives map), will provide many benefits including connectivity, increased access to nature and the environment and increased participation in active travel. This JLAP objective is supported by Laois County Council and Offaly County Council.

In addition to this, Laois County Council has secured €44,280 for the completion of a Feasibility Study for the potential development of an Amenity Area at a site that is located between the River Barrow and the existing trail head for the Derryounce walk (as shown on the objectives map). This project, known as the Derryounce Amenity Area, aims to enhance existing outdoor

recreation activities and facilities and allow for the development of new activities and facilities. It is envisaged that this will involve the installation of an enhanced footpath/cycle trail through the site, a public realm/seating area along the riverbank and bankside facilities (walkway/ramp) to support canoeing/kayaking, swimming, and fishing in addition to natural play features. Additionally, any future funding application is likely to include restructured carparking facilities and EV charging points on the Kilmalogue Road. It is an objective of this JLAP to support the provision of a Derryounce Amenity Area on this site. It is also an objective of this JLAP to support the provision of a walkway / cycleway to enable safe crossing of the Spa Street bridge and to enable access from the Derryounce Amenity Area onto any future recreational pedestrian/ cycle route along the River Barrow.

15.2.2 The People's Park

The People's Park officially opened in 2000. It is a 3-hectare park situated between the Link Road and the River Barrow. The park is designed predominantly for passive recreation with pathways, trees and grass. The playground installed in 2005, is nestled in the centre of the park with a fenced off playground for younger kids adjacent to this area. New additional features include a 9 Hole Disc Golf course, tree trail and orienteering course. A major feature of the People's Park is the access to the River Barrow which facilitates access along the riverbank by way of a walkway. It is an objective of this JLAP to support and facilitate the objectives of the Portarlinton Town Park Masterplan. It is a further objective of this JLAP to support and facilitate future extensions to the People's Park.

15.2.3 Carrick Wood

Carrick Wood is a beautiful broadleaf woodland of just 32 hectares with a picnic area and forest walk. There is a folly, known locally as the Spire, set on a high point within the wood.

15.2.4 The Derryounce Lakes and Trails recreation area.

Derryounce Lakes and Trails, located approximately 2.5km from the Portarlinton town centre, is an important local amenity, providing both passive and active recreational opportunities to visitors through its extensive walking trails, lakes, sandy beaches, woodlands and cutaway bogs.



Figure 22: Derrycastle Lakes and Trails recreation area.

Derrycastle has significant potential to become a national and regional ‘regenerative tourism’ destination. Regenerative tourism prioritises the central role of the destination (‘the place’) within the tourism model, aiming to generate a net positive impact for all stakeholders involved – including the environment, local communities, the tourism sector, and visitors. This approach advocates for a form of tourism that contributes more to a destination than it extracts promoting ecological restoration, biodiversity and climate change adaptation.

This JLAP recognises the importance of developing high quality linkages connecting Derrycastle to Portarlington town and the River Barrow via existing trails, in addition to clear informative and way finding signage. Accordingly, the objectives map identifies a potential pedestrian/cycle route from Derrycastle Lakes and Trails through the town and along the River Barrow to the People’s Park.

Derrycastle is well positioned to develop into an important node in the Midlands Cycling Destination (MCD) providing extensive cycling routes through its lands linking with other greenway, blueway and MCD routes along with long term necessary facilities for cyclists and visitors alike. This potential is highlighted on figure 22 below.

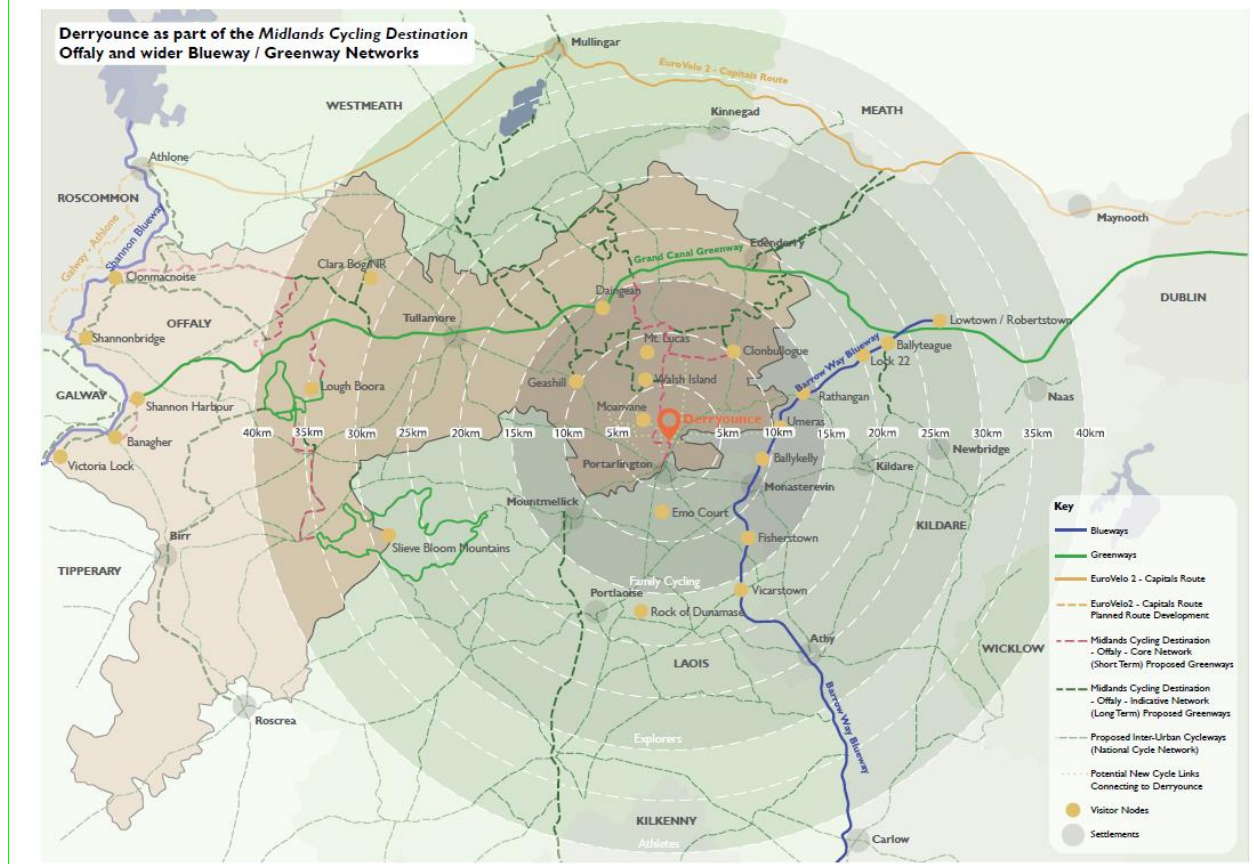


Figure 23: Midlands Cycling Destination

This JLAP supports the preparation and implementation of a 10-year plan for Derryounce and in the context of biodiversity and the built heritage. It is particularly supportive of:

- The potential for Derryounce to act as a future network greenway connecting Mount Luas Wind Farm and the Grand Canal Greenway to the north, the Barrow Blueway through Portarlington to the south and the Umeras peatland bog project through Derrylea Bog; and;
- The provision of an on-site visitor centre and associated infrastructure, positioning Derryounce as a trailhead for the Midlands Cycling Destination.

15.2.5 Other

In addition to the above-named elements of Portarlington's green infrastructure network, there are other parts of the town which are capable of supporting connectivity and enhanced biodiversity within the green network. These include trees, hedgerows, public open spaces within housing estates etc. These together with a wide diversity of species, habitats, ecosystems and landscapes make up the biodiversity of Portarlington and are discussed in detail in The Portarlington Local Biodiversity Action Plan which was published by Laois County Council in 2015.

Laois County Council and Offaly County Council will seek to safeguard these areas and increase

their extent and ecological function where opportunities arise.

15.3 TREES

Laois and Offaly County Councils recognise the benefits of trees in humanising spaces, enhancing the environment and minimising the impacts of climate change. Trees have many benefits including providing cleaner air; providing natural flood defences; masking noise; creating and promoting a general sense of well-being. In urban settings trees or groups of trees can contribute significantly to the local landscape or townscape and to the successful integration of new buildings into the landscape. The planting of new trees and the retention of mature trees can contribute to amenity, enhance developments provide important habitats. Laois County Council and Offaly County Council will seek to safeguard mature trees.

15.4 POCKET PARKS, COMMUNITY GARDENS AND ALLOTMENTS

Pocket parks, community gardens and allotments utilise small spaces efficiently. They bring biodiversity into urban areas, provide high-quality recreational spaces and bring improvements to the quality of life for all. Laois and Offaly County Councils consider that the potential exists for the provision of pocket parks, community gardens and allotments in Portarlington.

15.5 POLLINATION ZONES/BIODIVERSITY ZONES

Laois and Offaly County Councils support pollinator friendly planting and wildlife strips or Biodiversity Zones to enhance biodiversity in Portarlington. In particular, these could be provided at approaches to the town, roundabouts, peripheral open space areas in residential areas and along main roads, in accordance with the recommendations of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.

15.6 BIODIVERSITY AND NATURAL HERITAGE POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES	
It is the policy of Laois and Offaly County Council to:	
Policy 15.1	Prohibit any development that would be harmful to or that would result in a significant deterioration of habitats and/or disturbance of species in any Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC), Natural Heritage Area (NHA) and Proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA).
Policy 15.2	Promote and support (a) the development of Derrycastle Lakes and Trails as an important local amenity and key tourism asset and (b) the implementation of the recommendations of the 10-year plan for Derrycastle.
Policy 15.3	Protect, enhance and further develop the Green Infrastructure network in Portarlington, with a particular emphasis on connecting the recreational areas of Derrycastle Lakes and Trails, the River Barrow and the People's Park; and strengthen green infrastructure linkages to the wider regional network.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES	
Policy 15.4	Protect, manage, and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape, and environment of Portarlington in recognition of its importance as a natural resource that can contribute towards sustainable urban drainage, flood management, and climate action.
Policy 15.6	Support the conservation and enhancement of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, and to protect the SAC from any plans and projects that are likely to have a significant effect on the coherence or integrity of the designated site, in accordance with relevant EU environmental directives and applicable national legislation, policies, plans and guidelines.
Policy 15.7	To resist unnecessary removal of existing natural features, such as hedgerows and stands of trees in any new development proposals. Where possible, such features should be integrated into the design of schemes as one of the key onsite environmental considerations.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES	
It is the objective of Laois and Offaly County Council to:	
Objective 15.1	Investigate the feasibility of providing a bridge crossing and walkway over the River Barrow in the indicative location to the south west of the town, as shown in the Map 2: Objectives, taking into account environmental sensitivities identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of the Laois County Development Plan and the Offaly County Development Plan. The development of any bridge crossing and walkway proposal shall be subject to the requirements of the EIA, Habitats, Water Framework and Flood Directives where relevant and appropriate.
Objective 15.2	Support and facilitate the objectives of the Portarlington Town Park Masterplan
Objective 15.3	Support and facilitate the recommendations of the Derrycastle 10-year Development Plan
Objective 15.4	Seek to integrate, where possible, existing green infrastructure into new development proposals to strengthen connectivity
Objective 15.5	Support the development of a visitor centre and associated visitor facilities at Derrycastle and its potential to be trailhead for the Midlands Cycling Destination.
Objective 15.6	Provide high quality directional and way finding signage for green infrastructure within Portarlington and its hinterlands.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES	
Objective 15.7	Enhance and develop essential infrastructure to support the growth of Derrycastle as a visitor attraction.
Objective 15.8	Seek to preserve and protect trees that have a particular local amenity, conservation or landscape value and require the planting of new native tree species in all new developments.
Objective 15.9	Promote a network of paths and cycle tracks to enhance accessibility to the Green Infrastructure network, while ensuring that the design and operation of the routes respond to the ecological protection needs of each site.
Objective 15.10	Promote, protect, and enhance sustainable and appropriate access to natural heritage in Portarlington and recognise the important role of natural heritage in the area, in terms of enhancing the image of the town and contributing to quality of life and wellbeing, economic growth, tourism and recreation.
Objective 15.11	Protect and preserve landscape features which significantly contribute to green infrastructure in Portarlington, including trees, hedgerows, woodlands, wetlands, watercourses, and other habitats.
Objective 15.12	Support the provision of proposed Green Infrastructure projects outlined in Map 4: Green Infrastructure.
Objective 15.13	Support and facilitate the objectives of a Derrycastle Amenity Area.
Objective 15.14	Support and facilitate the provision of a walkway / cycleway to enable safe crossing of the Spa Street bridge and to enable access from the Derrycastle Amenity Area onto any future walkway of the banks of the River Barrow.
Objective 15.15	Investigate the feasibility of a recreational pedestrian/ cycle route along the River Barrow.
Objective 15.16	Support and facilitate any future extensions to the People's Park.
Objective 15.17	Ensure the appropriate management of leisure activities in and adjacent to the River Barrow in order to ensure there is no impact on the distribution, populations or breeding grounds of the Qualifying Interests of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC.

CHAPTER 16. LAND USE ZONING OBJECTIVES

Strategic Aim: To manage and deliver new development in Portarlington to ensure that it occurs in an orderly and efficient manner and in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development, and to implement the objectives of this Joint Local Area Plan and to monitor their implementation in a timely manner

16.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 6 *Development Vision and Strategy* of this JLAP sets out a vision for the future development of Portarlington. It seeks:

‘To develop Portarlington as a sustainable low carbon settlement centred on a compact, vibrant town centre utilising locational strengths to attract employment and to promote the unique settlement as an attractive town in which to live, work and play, while ensuring the management of flood risk and the protection of the unique built and natural heritage’.

In order to achieve this stated vision, it is important that the policies and objectives of this JLAP, which are specific to Portarlington, are effectively progressed and delivered over the time period of the JLAP (2025-2031). It is important to note that the overarching county level policies and objectives of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 will also apply. Furthermore, the development management standards for Portarlington will be as per the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and chapter 13 of the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027. Where conflict arises between this JLAP and these County Development Plans, the provisions of the respective County Development Plan will take precedence.

16.2 STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK - LAND USE ZONING

The purpose of zoning is to indicate to property owners and the general public the types of development that the Planning Authority considers most appropriate in each land use category. Zoning is designed to reduce conflicting uses within areas, to protect resources and, in association with phasing, to ensure that land suitable for development is used to the best advantage of the community as a whole.

The Land Use Zoning Map shows the land use zoning objectives for Portarlington. It should be read in conjunction with both sets of Land Use Zoning Objectives and Land Use Zoning Matrices that are set out below.

In terms of the strategic planning framework for Portarlington, each of the below Land Use Zoning Objectives and Land Use Zoning Matrices within this JLAP are consistent with the objectives of the Land Use Zoning Objectives and Land Use Zoning Matrix of the respective Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027.

16.3 Table 19: Land Use Zoning Objectives – Laois

LAND USE ZONING	OBJECTIVE	PURPOSE
Town Centre	<i>To protect and enhance the special physical and social character of the existing town centre and to provide for and improve retailing and commercial activities.</i>	<p>The purpose of this zoning is to enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre through the development of under-utilised land and brownfield sites and by encouraging a mix of uses to make the town centre an attractive place to visit, shop and live in. The character of the town centre shall be protected and enhanced.</p> <p>The Council will encourage the full use of buildings and backlands; in particular, the full use of upper floors in buildings.</p>
Residential 1	<i>To protect and enhance the amenity of developed residential communities.</i>	<p>This zone is intended primarily for established housing development but may include a range of other uses particularly those that have the potential to improve the amenity of residential communities such as schools, crèches, small shops, doctor's surgeries, playing fields etc.</p> <p>It is an objective on land zoned for Residential 1 to protect the established residential amenity and enhance with associated open space, community uses and where an acceptable standard of amenity can be maintained, a limited range of other uses that support the overall residential function of the area. Within this zoning category the improved quality of existing residential areas will be the Council's priority.</p>
Residential 2	<i>To provide for new residential development, residential services and community facilities.</i>	<p>This zone is intended primarily for housing development but may include a range of other uses particularly those that have the potential to foster placemaking and the development of new residential communities such as schools, crèches,</p>

LAND USE ZONING	OBJECTIVE	PURPOSE
		<p>small shops, doctor's surgeries, playing fields etc.</p> <p>It is an objective on land zoned for residential 2 to promote development mainly for housing, associated open space, community uses and where an acceptable standard of amenity can be maintained, a limited range of other uses that support the overall residential function of the area.</p> <p>Within this zoning category the improved quality of residential areas and the servicing of orderly development will be the Council's priority. New housing and infill developments should be of sensitive design, which are complementary to their surroundings. Piecemeal development cannot take place if conflicts with the possible future development of the reserved development areas of the town. Adequate undeveloped lands have been zoned in the Plan for residential use to meet the requirements for both public and private house building over the Plan period.</p>
Strategic Reserve	<i>To provide lands for future development in line with national and regional targets over the next Plan period 2032 - 2038</i>	Regarding lands included in the Strategic Reserve land bank, it is important to highlight that the inclusion of such lands will not in any way infer a prior commitment on the part of Laois County Council regarding their future zoning during the review of the subsequent development plan for the plan period 2032 - 2038. Such a decision will be considered within the framework of national and regional population targets applicable at that time and the proper planning and sustainable development of the County.

LAND USE ZONING	OBJECTIVE	PURPOSE
Community, Educational and Institutional	<i>To protect and provide for local neighbourhood, community, ecclesiastical, recreational and educational facilities.</i>	The purpose of this zoning is to protect and improve existing community, educational and institutional facilities and to safeguard their future provision. The land use will provide for local civic, religious, community, educational and other facilities ancillary to neighbourhood uses and services.
Tourism	<i>To provide for and improve tourist amenities in the county.</i>	The areas included in this zoning objective are intended to meet the tourism needs of the town.
Open Space and Amenity	<i>To preserve, provide for and improve active and passive recreational public and private open space.</i>	The areas included in this zoning objective cover both private and public open space and are dispersed throughout the town. The Council will not normally permit development that would result in a loss of open space.
Industrial and Warehousing	<i>To provide for and improve industrial and warehousing development, primarily for low intensity employment uses, such as industry, distribution, warehousing, storage and logistics.</i>	<p>The purpose of the zoning is to provide for heavy industry associated with environmental emissions, including noise and odour and with intensive or hazardous processing and also provide for warehousing, light industry, technology related office development and general office development that exceed 400 square metres.</p> <p>Other uses, ancillary or similar to industry and warehousing will be considered on the merits of each planning application and may be acceptable in this zone. Where employment is a high generator of traffic, the location of new employment at appropriate scale, density, type and location will be encouraged to reduce the demand for travel. The layout of new employment sites shall have regard for alternative sustainable modes of transport. Proposed site layout should emphasize the necessary connections to</p>

LAND USE ZONING	OBJECTIVE	PURPOSE
		<p>the wider local and strategic public transport, walking and cycling networks. Residential or retail uses (including retail warehousing) will not be acceptable in this zone.</p> <p>Where any industrial/warehousing land adjoins other land uses, Laois County Council will require that a buffer zone is provided for and landscaped in accordance with the Development Management Standards of this Plan.</p>
General Business	<i>To provide for and improve commercial activities.</i>	<p>The purpose of this zone is to provide for commercial activities and acknowledge existing/permitted retailing. Any specific development proposal must have due regard to the location of the site within the wider town context and be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.</p>
Enterprise and Employment	<i>To provide lands for enterprise and employment use, more specifically low input and emission manufacturing, campus-style offices, storage uses, wholesaling and distribution, commercial services with high space and parking requirements that may not be suitable for town centre locations.</i>	<p>The purpose of this zone is to provide for activities which will generate employment and encourage enterprise. Warehousing, commercial, enterprise and ancillary services should be provided in high quality landscaped campus style environments, incorporating a range of amenities.</p> <p>The uses in this zone are likely to generate a considerable amount of traffic by both employees and service traffic. Sites should therefore have good vehicular and public transport access. The implementation of Mobility Management Plans will be required for such developments as they provide important means of managing accessibility to these sites.</p>

LAND USE ZONING	OBJECTIVE	PURPOSE
Transport and Utilities	<i>To provide for the needs of all transport users and other utility providers.</i>	Car parks and commercial development associated with the provision of public transport services are considered appropriate in this zoning. This zoning also provides for and preserves land in the ownership of the Council or other bodies charged with the provision of services such as electricity, telecommunications, water, wastewater etc. to the town.
Neighbourhood Centre	To serve the needs of new/existing residential areas.	<p>Neighbourhood Centres are intended to serve the immediate needs of the local working and residential population and complement, rather than compete with the established town centre. A mix of appropriate retail, community and recreational development will be permitted. Only limited residential development will be considered in new developments sufficient to ensure the satisfactory working of the neighbourhood centre.</p> <p>The retail element will be controlled so as not to negatively impact on the existing town centre. The largest size of a new convenience store shall be restricted to no more than 300sq.m in a Neighbourhood Centre.</p>

16.4 Table 20a: Land Use Zoning Matrix – Laois (a)

ACCEPTABILITY	
Y WILL NORMALLY BE ACCEPTABLE	A use which will normally be acceptable is one which the Local Authority accepts in principle in the relevant zone. However, it is still subject to the normal planning process including policies and objectives outlined in the Joint Local Area Plan.
O OPEN FOR CONSIDERATION	Land uses that are listed as ‘open for consideration’ may be acceptable to the Planning Authority subject to detailed assessment against the principles of proper planning and sustainable development, and the relevant policies, objectives and standards set out in this Plan. Such uses may only be permitted where they do not materially conflict with other aspects of the Joint Local Area Plan.
N WILL NOT NORMALLY BE ACCEPTABLE	Development which is classified as not normally being acceptable in a particular zone is one which will not be entertained by the Local Authority except in exceptional circumstances. This may be due to its perceived effect on existing and permitted uses, its incompatibility with the policies and objectives contained in this Plan or the fact that it may be inconsistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The expansion of established and approved uses not conforming to land use zoning objectives will be considered on their merits.

16.5 Table 20b: Land Use Zoning Matrix – Laois (b)

Land Use	Village / Town Centre	Mixed Use	Residential 1	Residential 2	Enterprise & Employment	General Business	Neighbourhood Centre	Com/Education/ institutional	Open Space	Tourism	Horticulture	Industrial	Transport and Utilities
Apartment	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	O	N	N	N	N	N
Car Park	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
Animal Housing	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	O
Café	Y	Y	O	O	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	O	O	N
Caravan Camping	N	N	O	O	N	N	N	O	N	Y	N	N	O
Cemetery	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	O
Cinema, Dancehall, Disco	O	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Community Hall	O	O	Y	Y	O	O	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N
Craft Industry	Y	N	O	O	Y	O	O	O	N	Y	Y	Y	N
Crèche/ Playschool	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	O	Y	O	N	Y	O	O	N
Cultural Uses/ Library	Y	Y	O	O	O	O	Y	O	N	Y	N	N	O
Dwelling	O	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	O	N	Y	N	N	N
Funeral Home	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N
Garages, Panel Beating, Car Repairs	N	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N
Garden Centre	O	N	N	N	O	O	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N
Guest House/ Hostel/ Hotel	Y	Y	O	O	O	O	N	O	N	Y	N	N	N

Land Use	Village / Town Centre	Mixed Use	Residential 1	Residential 2	Enterprise & Employment	General Business	Neighbourhood Centre	Com/Education/ institutional	Open Space	Tourism	Horticulture	Industrial	Transport and Utilities
Halting Site	N	N	O	O	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N
Health Centre	Y	Y	O	O	O	O	Y	O	N	N	N	N	N
Heavy Commercial Vehicle Parks	N	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
Hot Food Takeaway	O	O	N	N	N	N	O	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Industry	N	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
Industry (Light)	O	N	N	N	Y	O	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
Medical and Related Consultants	Y	Y	O	O	O	O	O	O	N	N	N	N	N
Motor Sales	O	N	N	N	Y	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Nursing Home/ Sheltered Housing	O	Y	O	O	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	O	N
Offices < 100 sq m	Y	Y	O	O	Y	Y	O	O	N	N	Y	Y	N
Offices > 100 sq m	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	O	O	N	N	N	O	N
Park Playground	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	Y	Y	Y	O	O	N
Petrol Station	Y	Y	N	N	O	Y	N	N	N	N	N	O	N
Place of Worship	Y	O	O	O	N	N	O	Y	N	O	N	N	N

Land Use	Village / Town Centre	Mixed Use	Residential 1	Residential 2	Enterprise & Employment	General Business	Neighbourhood Centre	Com/Education/ institutional	Open Space	Tourism	Horticulture	Industrial	Transport and Utilities
Playing Fields	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	O	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Pub	Y	O	N	N	N	O	O	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Recreational Building (Commercial)	O	Y	O	O	O	O	O	O	N	Y	N	N	N
Recreational Building (Community)	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	O	Y	Y	O	Y	O	N	O
Restaurant	Y	Y	O	O	O	O	Y	O	N	O	O	O	N
Retail Warehouse	Y	O	N	N	O	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
School/ Educational Facilities	Y	O	O	O	N	N	O	O	N	N	O	N	N
Scrap Yard	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	O	N
Retail < 100s qm (Comparison)	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	O	O	N	N
Retail > 100 sqm (Comparison)	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
Retail < 100 sqm (Convenience)	Y	Y	O	O	O	Y	Y	N	N	O	O	N	N

Land Use	Village / Town Centre	Mixed Use	Residential 1	Residential 2	Enterprise & Employment	General Business	Neighbourhood Centre	Com/Education/ institutional	Open Space	Tourism	Horticulture	Industrial	Transport and Utilities
Retail > 100 sqm (Convenience)	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
Sport/Leisure Complex	Y	Y	O	O	Y	O	O	O	N	Y	O	N	N
Utility structures/ Infrastructure (roads / car parking)	Y	Y	O	O	Y	O	O	O	O	O	Y	Y	Y
Warehouse (Wholesale)	N	N	N	N	Y	O	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
Workshops	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N

16.6 Table 21: Land Use Zoning Objectives – Offaly (a)

Offaly County Council Land Use Zoning	Objective
Town Centre / Mixed Use	Objective: Provide for, protect and strengthen the vitality and viability of the town, through consolidating development, encouraging a mix of uses and maximising the use of land, to ensure the efficient use of infrastructure and services.
Existing Residential	Objective: Protect and enhance the amenity and character of developed residential communities.
New Proposed Residential	Objective: Provide for new residential development and other services incidental to residential development.
Strategic Residential Reserve	Objective: Provide lands for development at some time in the future but it will not be considered for development purposes during the current plan period.
Community Services/Facilities	Objective: Provide necessary community, social, health, public administration and educational services and facilities.
Open Space, Amenity and Recreation	Objective: Protect and improve the provision, attractiveness, accessibility and amenity value of public open space, amenity and recreation.
Industrial & Warehousing	Objective: Provide for industrial and warehousing development in suitable and accessible locations primarily for low intensity employment uses, such as industry, distribution, warehousing, storage and logistics
Neighbourhood Centre	Objective: Provide neighbourhood centre facilities.
Enterprise & Employment	Objective: Provide for enterprise and employment development.

16.7 Table 21: Land Use Zoning Objectives – Offaly (b)

ACCEPTABILITY	
<div data-bbox="282 386 305 420">√</div> PERMITTED IN PRINCIPLE	The subject use is generally acceptable subject to the normal planning process, compliance with the relevant policies and objectives, standards and requirements as set out in the County Development Plan, and in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. (Note: A proposal which is indicated as being ‘Permitted in Principle’ within the zoning matrix does not imply ‘automatic approval’ as each proposal for development is considered on its individual merits).
<div data-bbox="282 741 305 774">O</div> OPEN FOR CONSIDERATION	The subject use may be permitted where the Local Authority is satisfied that it is in compliance with the zoning objective and other relevant policies and objectives, standards and requirements as set out in the County Development Plan and will not conflict with the permitted, existing or adjoining land uses, in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
<div data-bbox="282 1014 305 1047">X</div> NOT NORMALLY PERMITTED	The subject use is generally incompatible with the written zoning objective and will not be favourably considered by the Local Authority, except in exceptional circumstances and in such instances, the development may represent a material contravention to the plan.

16.8 Table 22: Land Use Zoning Matrix – Offaly (a)

	Town Centre / Mixed Use	Residential - Existing	Residential - New	Residential – Strategic Reserve	Enterprise and Employment	Industrial and Warehousing	Business / Technology Park	Community Services/Facilities	Open Space, Amenity & Recreation	Neighbourhood Centre
Abattoir	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X
Advertisement Structures	√	X	X	X	√	√	√	X	X	O
Agri. Business	O	X	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	X
Agricultural Structures	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Amusement Arcade	O	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X
Apartments	√	√	O	X	O	X	X	X	X	O
Aerodrome/ Airfield	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
B&B/ Guesthouse	√	√	√	X	O	X	X	X	X	X
Bank/ Financial Institution	√	X	X	X	O	X	O	X	X	O
Batching Plant (asphalt/ concrete)	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X
Betting Office	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O
Boarding Kennels	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X
Bring Banks/ Civic Amenity	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	O	X	O
Caravan Park / Campervan Park / Camp Site/ Glamping (Tourism)	O	O	O	X	O	X	X	X	X	X
Car Parking	√	O	O	X	√	√	√	O	X	O
Cash and Carry Wholesale Outlet	O	X	X	X	√	O	X	X	X	X
Cemetery	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X
Chemist/ Pharmacy	√	O	O	X	O	X	X	O	X	√
Childcare Facilities – Crèche, Nursery and Playschool	√	√	√	X	√	O	√	√	X	O
Cinema/ Theatre	√	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X
Community Facility (hall, centre or recreational use)	O	O	O	X	O	X	X	√	X	√
Composting Facility	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X
Conference Centre	√	X	X	X	O	X	√	X	X	X

	Town Centre / Mixed Use	Residential - Existing	Residential - New	Residential – Strategic Reserve	Enterprise and Employment	Industrial and Warehousing	Business / Technology Park	Community Services/Facilities	Open Space, Amenity & Recreation	Neighbourhood Centre
Craft Industry	√	O	O	X	O	√	O	O	X	O
Dance Hall/ Disco/ Night Club	O	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X
Data Centre	X	X	X	X	O	O	O	X	X	X
Dentist/ Doctor Surgery	√	O	O	X	O	X	X	O	X	O
Dog Grooming	√	O	O	X	√	X	X	X	X	O
Drive Through Restaurant	O	X	X	X	O	X	O	X	X	X
Education/ Enterprise Centre	O	O	O	X	√	O	O	√	X	O
Extractive Industry	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Function Room	O	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	O
Funeral Home	O	X	X	X	√	X	X	O	X	X
Fuel Depot	X	X	X	O	O	√	X	X	X	X
Garden Centre	O	X	X	X	√	O	X	X	X	X
Golf Course/ Pitch and Putt	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	√	√	X
Go-Kart Track	X	X	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	X
Hairdressing Salon, Beauticians and Nail Bars	√	O	O	X	O	X	X	X	X	O
Heavy Vehicle Depot	X	X	X	X	O	√	X	X	X	X
Helicopter Pad	X	X	X	X	O	O	O	X	X	X
Home Based Economic Activities	√	O	O	X	O	X	X	X	X	O
Hospital	O	X	X	X	O	X	O	√	X	X
Hostel	O	O	O	X	O	X	X	X	X	X
Hotel	√	X	X	X	O	X	O	X	X	X
Industry – Heavy	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X
Industry – Light	X	X	X	X	O	√	O	X	X	X
Landfill	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Launderette/ Dry Cleaners	√	O	O	X	O	X	X	X	X	O
Leisure Centre/ Gym	√	O	O	X	O	X	O	O	O	X

	Town Centre / Mixed Use	Residential - Existing	Residential - New	Residential – Strategic Reserve	Enterprise and Employment	Industrial and Warehousing	Business / Technology Park	Community Services/Facilities	Open Space, Amenity & Recreation	Neighbourhood Centre
Library	√	O	O	X	O	X	O	√	X	O
Licenced Premises (Public House)	√	O	O	X	O	X	X	X	X	O
Mart/ Co-operative	O	X	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	X
Materials Recovery Facility/ Composting/ Waste Transfer Station/Waste Recycling Centre	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X
Motor Sales/ Service	O	X	X	X	√	√	X	X	X	X
Municipal Waste Incinerator	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X
Nursing Home/ Retirement Village	√	O	√	X	X	X	X	O	X	X
Office	√	O	O	X	√	√	√	O	X	X
Open Space (Public)	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	O
Plant/ Tool Hire	O	X	X	X	O	√	X	X	X	X
Playground	√	√	√	X	O	X	O	√	√	O
Playing Pitches/ Sports Club	O	√	√	X	X	X	X	√	√	X
Primary Care Centre, Health Centre and Clinics	√	O	O	X	O	X	X	O	X	O
Research and Development	O	X	X	X	O	O	√	X	X	X
Residential Care	O	O	O	X	O	X	X	O	X	X
Residential – Multiple (two or more units)	√	√	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	O
Residential – Single	√	√	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Restaurant/ Café	√	X	X	X	O	O	O	O	X	O
Retail Warehousing	O	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X
Science and Technology Enterprise	O	X	X	X	O	O	√	X	X	X
School/ Third Level Education	O	O	√	X	O	X	O	√	X	X
Scrap Yard	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X

	Town Centre / Mixed Use	Residential - Existing	Residential - New	Residential – Strategic Reserve	Enterprise and Employment	Industrial and Warehousing	Business / Technology Park	Community Services/Facilities	Open Space, Amenity & Recreation	Neighbourhood Centre
Self-Catering	√	√	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Service Station	O	X	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	X
Shop (200m ² or less)	√	√	√	X	√	O	O	X	X	√
Shop (above 200m ²)	√	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	O
Take Away	O	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	O
Training Centre	O	X	X	X	√	O	√	O	X	X
Traveller Accommodation	O	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Utility Structures	O	O	O	X	O	O	O	O	X	X
Veterinary Surgery	O	O	O	X	√	O	X	X	X	X
Warehousing	X	X	X	X	O	√	X	X	X	X
Water-based Recreational Activities	O	X	X	X	O	X	X	O	O	X
Waste to Energy Facilities	X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O	X	X
Workshops	X	X	X	X	O	√	X	O	X	X

16.9 ACCEPTABILITY OF A USE

The Land Use Zoning Matrices set out above provide an indication of the acceptability or otherwise of particular uses in the individual land use zones.

The guidance provided is not intended to replace the normal planning process. Therefore, an indication that a use ‘Will Normally Be Acceptable’ / ‘Permitted in Principle’ in a particular zoning category should in no way be taken to imply a grant of permission, or that a planning application may necessarily be successful.

Individual planning applications are a matter for Laois County Council and Offaly County Council to decide upon for their administrative areas, taking into consideration the wider policies and objectives that pertain to statutory land use planning, including Development Management standards, ministerial guidelines, and the merits of individual development proposals.

16.10 USES NOT LISTED

The above land use zoning matrices are intended to provide general guidance to potential developers and are not exhaustive lists. It is therefore recognised that there may be scenarios where there are proposals for uses that are not listed. Where this arises, such proposals will be considered on their individual merits, with reference to the most appropriate use of a similar nature that is listed, and taking account of surrounding land uses, the compatibility of the

use/development in the area in which it is proposed to locate, compliance with the relevant policy, objectives, standards and requirements as set out in this JLAP, and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

16.11 NON-CONFORMING USES

‘Non-conforming uses’ are established uses that do not conform to the zoning objectives of this JLAP. Generally, Laois County Council and Offaly County Councils will consider reasonable intensification of extensions to and improvement of premises that accommodate non-conforming uses, provided that it would not be injurious to the amenities of the area and would not prejudice the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

16.12 DESIGNATIONS (OFFALY)

Constrained Land Uses (Offaly)

Flood risk areas are represented by a ‘Constrained Land Use’ designation (shown in Map 3: Land Use Zoning, SAC and Flood Zoning). This designation generally limits new development, but will facilitate existing development uses within these areas that may require small scale development such as small extensions. Development proposals within these areas shall be accompanied by a site specific flood risk assessment, carried out in accordance with The Planning System and Flood Risk Assessment Guidelines and Circular PL 2/2014 (or as updated), which shall assess the risks of flooding associated with the proposed development.

Proposals shall only be considered favourably where it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that they would not have adverse impacts or impede access to a watercourse, floodplain or flood protection and management facilities, or increase the risk of flooding to other locations and be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The nature and design of structural and non-structural flood risk management measures required for development in such areas will also be required to be demonstrated, to ensure that flood hazard and risk will not be increased. Measures proposed shall follow best practice in the management of health and safety for users and residents of the development.

Table 23: Land Use Zoning Objectives – Offaly (c)

<p>Land Use Zoning Objective – Constrained Land Uses</p> <p>It is an objective of the Council to:</p> <p>Facilitate the appropriate management and sustainable use of flood risk areas designated as ‘Constrained Land Use’ in the zoning map in accordance with the provisions of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009), as amended, in consultation with the OPW. New development within this area is limited to water-compatible uses in Flood Zone A and less vulnerable or water compatible uses in Flood Zone B except where all criteria of the Plan Making and Development Management Justification Tests have been shown to have been satisfied and a detailed SSFRA has been provided.</p>
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CHAPTER 17. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

17.1 INTRODUCTION

Laois County Council and Offaly County Council are committed to the continuous process of implementing and monitoring the policies and objectives contained in this JLAP and will occupy a leadership role in progressing same.

Many policies and objectives in the JLAP relate to development management processes, which can be implemented through established internal procedures in Laois County Council and Offaly County Council. The intention of other policies and objectives in the JLAP can be wide-ranging, and for this reason their successful implementation can necessitate a collaborative approach with a range of agencies and stakeholders, including local communities, governmental and non-governmental bodies and agencies, and adjoining local authorities.

It should also be noted that there are policies and objectives aimed at supporting an intended outcome, rather than being the direct means of delivering the outcome. In this regard, the implementation of policies and objectives in the JLAP, including the desired planning outcomes, can be subject to external factors such as the availability of resources, political support, and economic circumstances in terms of funding in both County Councils and the availability of capital from other sources.

The Planning Departments of Laois County Council and Offaly County Council are primarily responsible for implementing and monitoring the JLAP for their administrative areas through their forward planning and development management functions. However, the cross-functional content of the JLAP is such that it also coordinates the policies and objectives of the Councils' other internal departments, such as their Transportation Departments, Environment Departments, Housing Departments, Community Departments, and Local Enterprise Offices. In addition, the scope of certain objectives in the JLAP can be such that external bodies such as Uisce Éireann, the Environmental Protection Agency, the OPW, or Transport Infrastructure Ireland, can be responsible for their implementation.

In the preparation of this JLAP every effort has been made, as far as is practicable, to formulate policies and objectives that are specific, measurable, achievable, and realistic. The policies and objectives in the JLAP have all also been formulated with the aim of fulfilling the Vision for Portarlington included in Chapter 6, including the cross-cutting themes which underpin the JLAP and the Strategic Objectives, as set out in Chapter (See also Table 24 below). The Strategic Objectives in the JLAP are themselves broadly aligned with the:

- National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF;
- Regional Strategic Outcomes of the Eastern and Midlands Region;
- Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027, and Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027; and
- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES (as per Chapter 6)

It is an objective of Laois and Offaly County Councils to:

Objective 6.1	Support new development that will enable sustainable housing growth, employment and prosperity for Portarlington as a 'Key Service Centre' in line with the Strategic Objectives of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region (2019), the Laois County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (designated as a Self-Sustaining Growth Town) and the Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (designated as a Self-Sustaining Town).
Objective 6.2	Promote and support positive placemaking and the development of sustainable communities, with an emphasis on active travel and shorter walking and cycling timeframes to social and community facilities, improving permeability in the built environment, and encouraging a reduction in car dependency.
Objective 6.3	Support and facilitate the regeneration and consolidation of the town centre, in line with the objectives of the 'Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030', while emphasising heritage-led regeneration.
Objective 6.4	Work in partnership with community groups for the regeneration and revitalisation of Portarlington, and to actively seek and secure funding and investment under available national and regional investment and funding programmes in line with the development strategy as set out.
Objective 6.5	Support compact residential growth in Portarlington through the sustainable intensification, and consolidation of the town centre and in established residential areas, to meet identified housing targets and requirements.
Objective 6.6	Monitor and manage the delivery of housing in Portarlington, in line with national, regional and county level objectives, through the development strategy in this plan and also through the development management process.
Objective 6.7	Promote and support balanced economic development and employment growth.
Objective 6.8	Protect, conserve and enhance the built, natural and cultural environment, by promoting awareness and high-quality urban design and utilising relevant heritage legislation.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES (as per Chapter 6)	
Objective 6.9	Develop and improve flood mitigation measures throughout the town and rural hinterland, in compliance with the Barrow Flood Risk Management Plan (OPW, 2018) and the European Habitats Directive.
Objective 6.10	Enhance climate adaptation and mitigation, and accelerate a transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy in Portarlington.
Objective 6.11	Ensure that Portarlington grows at a sustainable level in line with the Core Strategy Table and deliver consolidation and targeted 'catch up' investment in services, infrastructure, amenities and local employment in order to become more self-sustaining.
Objective 6.12	Development within flood risks areas shall be limited to that appropriate to the level of flood risk, as identified in Map 3 (Land Use Zoning, SAC and Flood Zoning) in accordance with the provisions of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009), as amended. New development within this area is limited to water-compatible uses in Flood Zone A and less vulnerable or water compatible uses in Flood Zone B except where all criteria of the Plan Making and Development Management Justification Tests have been shown to have been satisfied and a detailed SSFRA has been prepared.

Table 24: Strategic Objectives

17.2 IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of the JLAP will be achieved in a number of different ways, including:

- The application of the policies, objectives, standards, and related provisions in the assessment of planning applications for permissions, including local authority development. In view of the cross-cutting and multi-faceted scope of many of the policies and objectives in the JLAP, they will contribute to the achievement of multiple Strategic Objectives in the Plan, which are themselves interconnected.
- The integration of the strategies, policies, and objectives of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Offaly County Development Plan with the JLAP.
- Investment in infrastructure and environmental services that underpin the policies and objectives of the JLAP. The Strategic Objectives in the Plan, and the Core Strategies in the County Development Plans, establish the priorities for the provision and improvement of infrastructure and environmental services by Laois County Council and Offaly County Council, and by other agencies, subject to the availability of funding.

- The ongoing monitoring of the strategies, policies, and objectives in the JLAP as appropriate.
- Identifying the need for any adjustments to strategies, policies, and objectives over the lifetime of the JLAP, as appropriate, and in future reviews.

17.3 FUNDING

The fulfilment of policies and objectives in the JLAP, including strategies or projects, will be dependent on capital funding from the Government and other state agencies. The funds of Laois County Council and Offaly County Council are allocated and adopted under the annual budgets for each local authority. Other sources of funding that will assist in the implementation of policies and objectives in the JLAP are detailed in Table 1 of this JLAP.

17.5 DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Development contributions for the provision of infrastructure and services such as roads, footpaths, surface water drainage, amenity and open space provision, will be applied as appropriate to development proposals granted planning permission. The details and basis for the determination of the contributions are set out in the respective Development Contributions Schemes for Laois County Council and Offaly County Council, which are adopted in accordance with Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

17.6 ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

Article 10 of the SEA Directive requires monitoring of the significant environmental effects of the implementation of this JLAP in order to identify, at an early stage, unforeseen adverse effects and to enable appropriate remedial action to be undertaken. While the ongoing implementation of the policies and objectives of the JLAP and the monitoring processes detailed above incorporates some monitoring of environment related objectives, the full and comprehensive monitoring and evaluation assessment, required to be undertaken under Article 10 of the SEA Directive, is set out in the Strategic Environmental Assessment included in Appendix I.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES	
It is the policy of Laois and Offaly County Council to:	
Policy 17.1	Implement in conjunction with key stakeholders, the policies and objectives of this Local Area Plan and to review the success or otherwise of the implementation of policies and objectives with reference to Section 10.3 of the Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2022), Sections 6.2 and 6.5 of Local Area Plans Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2013), Chapter 14 of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and Chapter 14 of the Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027.