

Chapter 4 Overall Strategy

4.0 Introduction

In line with the population analysis, targets and strategic goals set out in Chapters 1, 2 and 3, this chapter articulates the Council's key strategies for the plan under three headings, namely:



4.1 Settlement Strategy

The Midlands Regional Planning Guidelines (MRPGs) 2004 prescribes that much of the development, which is to take place in the 'Central Area' of the Midland Region, should be centred on the Midlands 'Gateway', comprising Athlone, **Tullamore** and Mullingar. This ultimately provides that Tullamore will sustain a larger of the population to enable it to compete for development, people, jobs and services at a national and international level.

Its place within the Midlands Linked Gateway and its role as a 'driver' for the Midlands Region defines the over arching strategic role that Tullamore holds. In respect of its position within the hierarchy of settlements in County Offaly, Tullamore is the largest settlement within the County, providing for the majority of employment and sustaining a large portion of population for the County. Tullamore is listed as being Tier 1 (Linked Gateway/County Town) within the Settlement Hierarchy of County Offaly (Offaly County Development Plan 2009-2015). The hierarchy of settlements as defined in the County Development Plan recognises that towns, depending on their size, should attract a level and scale of development which is appropriate to their needs, character and capacity. Tullamore, by virtue of its position as the Tier 1 settlement within County Offaly and its strategic role within the Midlands Region as a 'driver' for development, can provide for further population growth and the attraction of large scale development.

The overall strategy as stemming from the MRPG's and the County Development Plan provides that the bulk of growth for the wider Midlands Region will be channelled into the Midlands linked Gateway of which Tullamore forms part of.

As a planning framework, it is intended that this Plan will promote, encourage, provide and facilitate such growth by instigating the following:

- Setting out a planning framework identifying appropriate land uses on appropriately zoned and serviced lands (limited to lands within the boundary of the Town and Environs area) with a focus on quantity and distribution in order to attract employment and people.
- Enabling the provision of sufficient infrastructural facilities and services to support projected population increase and attraction of employment sources.
- Development, promotion and expansion of employment areas.
- Development of housing to facilitate a growing population.
- Consolidation of existing urban environment and a strong emphasis that development, where possible, occurs in a sequential manner and that it respects the town's built and natural environment.
- Continual identification of development opportunities and areas to expand into as other areas have been developed (sequentially).
- Enhancing, strengthening and consolidating the town centre physically and socially.

4.2 Masterplans

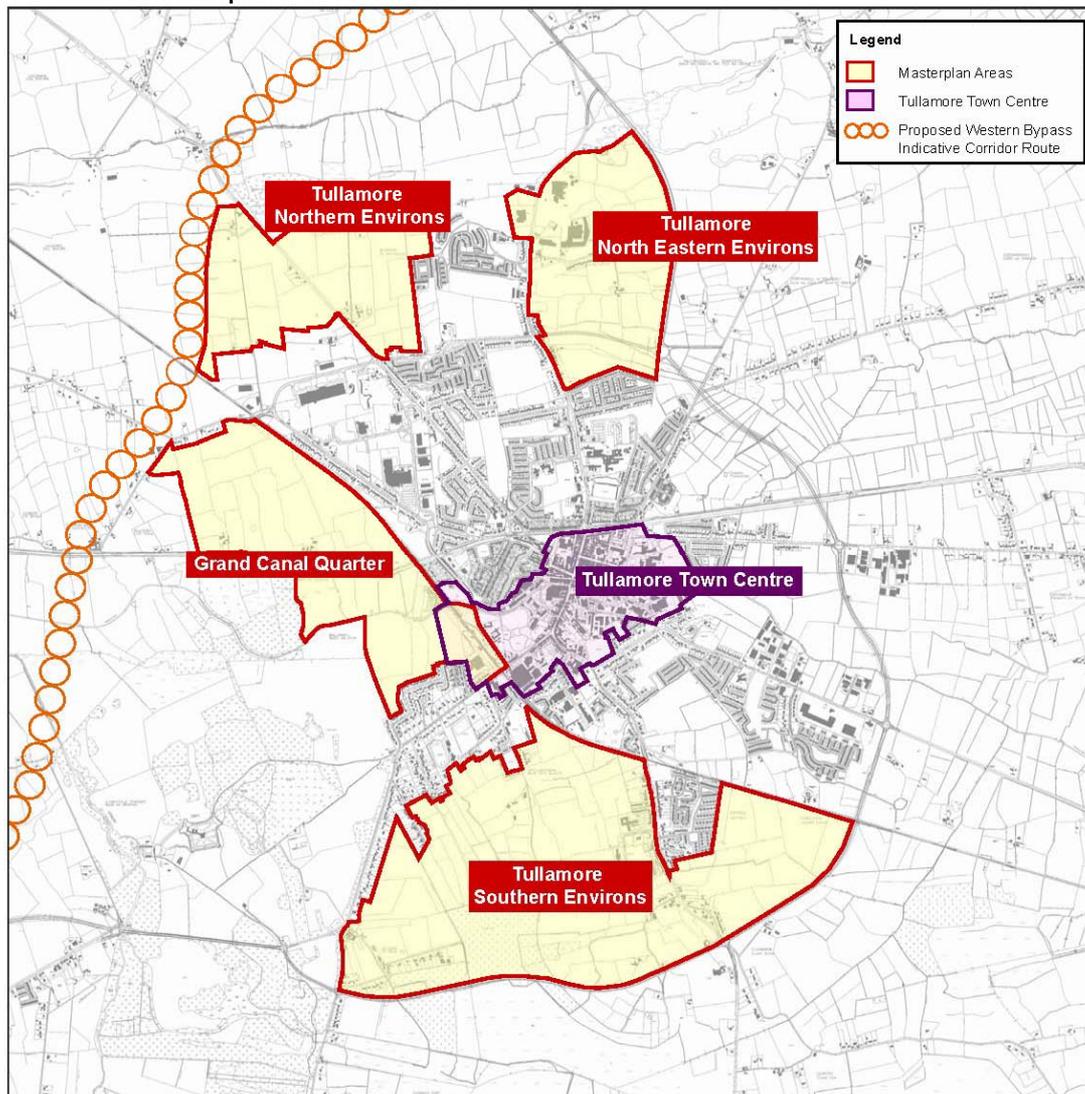
In order for the plan to be implemented to allow for balanced and coherent growth to be achieved in Tullamore, masterplan areas have been prepared for 4 no. key areas which have been identified (refer to Table 4.1) for the following reasons:

- Strategic location within the Town and Environs.
- Their relationship to the existing and planned transportation network.
- These sites provide an opportunity to facilitate the orderly and sequential expansion for Tullamore in accordance with the provisions of the NSS and the MRPG's.
- The identification of strategically different locations will provide for an opportunity to create new communities displaying differing and unique characteristics to their particular location.
- The overall holistic approach to the development of particular areas allows for a coherent and planned approach to the provision of proper infrastructure, services and amenities for new and emerging communities.

Table 4.1: Masterplan areas and location

Masterplan areas	Location	Site Area(s) approx
1. Tullamore Southern Environs	South of town centre	321 ha.
2. Grand Canal Quarter	West of town centre	157 ha.
3. Tullamore Northern Environs	North of town centre	109 ha.
4. Tullamore North Eastern Environs	North-east of town centre	115 ha.

Map 4.1 Location of Masterplan areas in context



The masterplan areas are dealt with in more detail in Chapter 5 but a brief synopsis is given of each area below.

Tullamore Southern Environs

This area lies to the south of the developed town edge and is predominantly based in the Spollenstown area. The southern boundary of these lands is defined by the Tullamore Bypass corridor. The Tullamore Business Park is included in these lands and a huge opportunity exists to provide a variety of employment opportunities on undeveloped lands to further expand the business/technology lands uses already in existence. The Tullamore Bypass offers a valuable connection of superior road infrastructure in the area. This area can also provide for a mix of residential uses, commercial uses serving the residential component, recreational facilities and amenities.

Grand Canal Quarter

This area lies to the west of the developed edge of Tullamore adjacent to the railway station and the defined town centre. This area bounds the grounds of Charleville Demesne. Opportunities exist to link this part of the town with Charleville Demesne whilst also safeguarding its setting by the provision of appropriate buffers. The inclusion of the railway provides a major opportunity to create a transport node, higher density developments in close proximity to the railway and also exploit the location of its proximity to, and inclusion in, part of the town centre area. The Tullamore River flows through this masterplan area and offers a unique opportunity to develop a green corridor linking the town to Charleville Demesne. The canal also traverses these lands offering the opportunity to enhance tourism and amenity. Apart from residential developments and the creation of new communities, given the area of land involved and its strategic location, the potential also exists to attract investment opportunities, educational campus and sites for innovation and/or Research and Development. Amenity areas and recreational facilities can also be provided.

Tullamore Northern Environs

These lands are located to the north of Tullamore Town Centre. They are bound to the south by the Axis Business Park. The Tullamore to Clara Road (N80) traverses this masterplan area. The planned western bypass corridor is to the west of the masterplan area. There are existing business park uses within this general area which can be expanded upon and other uses promoted also. The western bypass route has not yet been defined, however access is potentially available from the N80. The proximity of the existing residential areas on Collins Lane offers the potential the link into new residential areas within this masterplan area. Amenities and recreation facilities can be accommodated within this masterplan area.

Tullamore North Eastern Environs

This masterplan area bounds the residential area of Arden Vale to the south and is accessed predominantly from the N52. The N52 is the gateway to Tullamore Town from the M6 and an opportunity exists to create a positive entrance to the town. There is ample opportunity to create new communities within this masterplan area and provide services to cater for the needs of both new and existing established residential areas at this location.

4.3 Environs Area

The environs area of Tullamore which has not been taken in by the masterplan areas or zoned areas on the extremities of the developed area is predominantly in agricultural use. Owing to the proximity of these lands to Tullamore Town, these areas have come under pressure for development which if not managed effectively, would not only detract from the foregoing but would also prove difficult to service due to the lack of infrastructure. Developing these areas ahead of undeveloped zoned lands would undermine the sequential growth of the town and create a fragmented landscape.

4.4 Economic Strategy

The Councils will continue to comply with the principles of the National Spatial Strategy (2002-2020) and the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines and any subsequent reviews, in providing for the competitiveness of the region in accordance with sustainable development.

4.4.1 General

Tullamore meets much of the criteria generally accepted as attractive to investors such as its central location, proximity to ports and airports, satisfactory road and rail infrastructure and a good quality of life. There have been successes in attracting the **healthcare sector** to the town whereby there is a cluster of medicare activity. In addition state departments such as The Health Service Executive (HSE), Department of Education and Skills (DoES), Revenue and Agriculture are located at Clonminch. The installation of the Metropolitan Area Network (MAN) high speed broadband loop around the town contributes to the town's attractiveness to high technological industries and enterprises.

Given Tullamore's role as the administrative centre for County Offaly and its over arching strategic role within the Midlands Region as part of the Midlands Linked Gateway, it is envisaged that the majority of employment opportunities, particularly large scale, will be channelled into the town. There is great **potential for growth in job opportunities** in Tullamore and the framework being established is sufficiently flexible to accommodate the needs of small scale employers right through to large scale multinational employers who wish to locate here. It is the Council's goal to continue to **strengthen and encourage** every sector of employment, in order to encourage economic activity and to bring forward a balanced and sustainable settlement whereby people who live in Tullamore can work in Tullamore.

4.4.2 Methodology

The Council intend to pursue this by creating a framework that will encourage and facilitate employment and economic activity at all possible levels. This will be achieved by a number of different actions:

- **Land Use – Zonings**

By way of zoning the plan makes provision for different land uses to be accommodated in different size sites and in different locations in order to foster choice and variety.

Industry: A number of different sites have been identified in line with the above to accommodate such uses as factories, workshops, warehouses etc.

Business/Technology: The plan identifies a variety of sites that can accommodate a wide cross section of high end technological and office campuses to facilitate the service sector.

Mixed Use: These areas allow a number of different uses to be accommodated in relatively close proximity e.g. shops, housing, offices, entertainment etc. and are especially suited for town/neighbourhood centre type situations where variety and vitality are crucial for a high quality standard of life for employees, visitors and residents.

- **Development Management**

The Councils will adopt a positive and flexible approach to managing development applications related to economic activity.

▪ Initiatives and Promotion

The Councils will encourage, facilitate, promote and investigate all initiatives that bring forward economic activity in the area. While the Councils will, where necessary, act alone in this regard, they will also co-operate with relevant bodies such as the County Enterprise Board (CEB), Offaly Local Development Company and other such agencies.

4.5 Tourism

In addition to the above, tourism is also recognised as a potentially significant sector in the local economy and Tullamore's prime position as the County Town makes it an ideal candidate for promotion as a focal point for tourism within County Offaly. The Councils can encourage and promote, insofar as possible, Tullamore as a tourist destination and it is important that tourism is an issue considered when dealing with the other settlement issues and requires that the following should be adhered to:

- Careful management of the town's built fabric including high quality environmental improvement interventions.
- Effective promotion of the locality as a tourist destination.
- Sensitive implementation of the development plan to make the town a more attractive place.
- Encouraging the development of arts, heritage and leisure facilities.
- Development and further enhancement of the town's role as location for conference/business facilities.
- Links to other tourism assets within the County and Region.

Tourism is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 9.

4.6 Housing

4.6.1 Aim

To ensure that suitable accommodation is available for each household within Tullamore through:

- Facilitating the provision of appropriate private developments and
- Provision of social and affordable housing, where feasible and in accordance with Tullamore's position within the County Settlement Hierarchy.

4.6.2 Overview

The Councils recognise the major role housing plays in shaping the social, economic and physical character of Tullamore and further recognise the housing needs of all sectors of the population within the plan area. The housing market in Tullamore has experienced increases in both the demand and supply side in recent years.

This section establishes the context of housing as applicable to Tullamore in terms of:

- The Councils' established Multi-Annual Social and Affordable Housing Plan which determines the Councils' own housing activities.
- Traveller Accommodation Programme for County Offaly (relative to Tullamore).
- The Councils' settlement and landuse strategy (as highlighted within this chapter).
- The Councils' Housing Strategy 2008-2015.

4.6.3 Legislative/Policy Context

The Planning and Development Acts 2000-2009 require each Local Authority to adopt a Housing Strategy for their administrative area. Offaly County Council's Housing Strategy 2008-2015 has been developed jointly by the three Local Authorities in County Offaly, namely Offaly County Council, Tullamore Town Council and Birr Town Council.

Further, The Housing Acts 1966-2004 and the 2007 statement on Housing Policy '*Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities*' have, as their core objective, that every household should have a dwelling suitable to its needs, located in an acceptable environment at an affordable price and in as far as possible, at the tenure of choice. '*Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities*' has been endorsed and embraced by the social partners in *Towards 2016*. The document proposes a broader approach to housing than has been the case, by delivering additional and enhanced

quality housing options in a more strategic way with a major focus on building sustainable communities so as to contribute positively to the overall social and economic well-being of an area.

The Councils seek to meet individual accommodation needs in a manner that facilitates and empowers personal choice and autonomy in a rapidly changing and dynamic environment.

4.7 Offaly County Housing Strategy 2008-2015

Offaly County Council's Housing Strategy 2008-2015, in having regard to national policies and guidelines on residential development, provides an estimate of existing and future need and supply of housing for the county, including the need for social and affordable housing and the need to ensure balanced development throughout Offaly. This is in accordance with 'Part V' of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2009 and the County's settlement hierarchy. The Housing Strategy recognises that the success of the overall strategy lies with the Midland Linked Gateway achieving the critical mass to strengthen and promote its own development and that interaction is required between the linked Gateway and the network of other settlements within the County. In addition, the Housing Strategy acknowledges that Tullamore must achieve balanced growth to serve the need of the entire County at an appropriate scale. Tullamore, within its identified role as part of the Midlands linked Gateway will continue to be the focal point and 'driver' of development within the County and the Region. There are two critical points to achieving this, which are echoed throughout the Housing Strategy and these can be summarised as follows:

- Ensure that Tullamore can support the required level of growth to underpin its role as part of the Midlands Linked Gateway and driver of development within the County and Region as a whole.
- Put in place, maintain and continually plan for appropriate measures (including the provision of appropriate levels of zoning for residential use) which will facilitate its development and provision of its required critical mass, coupled with services to 'drive' development within the County and Region.

The Councils' Housing Strategy highlights **three core challenges and priorities** as applicable to future housing development in Offaly and Tullamore. These include the need to:

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|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fully support and promote population growth and development of Tullamore as part of the Midlands Linked Gateway, in order for Tullamore and all of County Offaly to attract people, jobs and services to compete on a National and International stage. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conserve, enhance and strengthen the town and village structure within the county. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Re-balance growth patterns in accordance with the county's settlement hierarchy. |

As an integral part of the development plans in County Offaly, the housing strategy is central to achieving these strategic priorities providing a framework to guide future development of the county.

4.7.1 Summary of Main Provisions in Addressing Housing Needs as applicable to the Role of the Councils

Table 4.2

'Part V' Main Provisions set out in Housing Strategy 2008-2015	
▪	20% of all lands zoned for residential use, or a mixture of residential and other uses, to be reserved for social and affordable housing.
▪	Allocation between social and affordable housing shall be determined on a case-by-case basis depending on the identified social and affordable needs of the area within which the development is taking place and the specific features of the development.
▪	All residential developments to ensure that a range of house sizes and types are provided in schemes.

4.7.2 Provision of 'Part V' Social and Affordable Housing

As per the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2009, the options open to negotiate between the Councils and a developer for a "Part V" agreement are provided in Table 4.3 below. The developer should liaise with the housing section at an early stage regarding part V options/obligations.

Table 4.3

Options Available as Per 'Part V' of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006	
(a)	The transfer of completed dwellings on the site subject to the application.
(b)	The transfer of fully or partially serviced sites on the site subject to the application.
(c)	The transfer of a portion of the site which is the subject of the application.
(d)	The payment of a monetary contribution .
(e)	The transfer of serviced sites at another location .
(f)	The transfer of land at another location .
(g)	The transfer of completed dwellings at another location .

In developing the capacity of local authorities to respond to changing housing needs in these different economic times the Minister for Housing, Urban Renewal and Developing Areas, under circular N03/09 and accompanying guidance notes, is anxious that authorities avail of the opportunities that exist in the current housing market and actively seek leasing proposals. These new arrangements provide for the delivery of social housing whereby housing authorities may enter into long-term leases of private dwellings as a means of meeting housing need. This is also beneficial for the uptake in vacant housing stock. In addition, the use of long term leasing will allow for a more efficient and effective use of available public resources in meeting housing output targets.

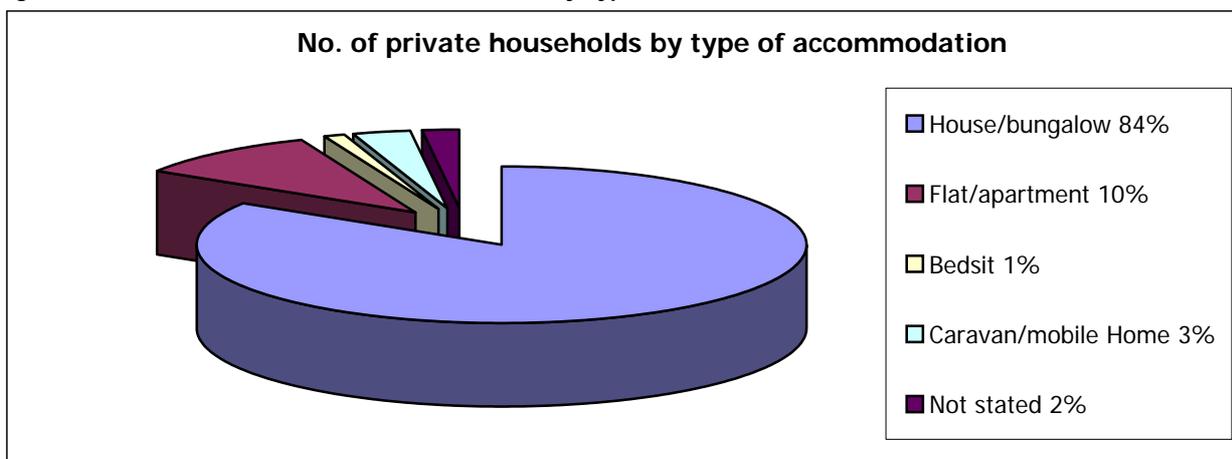
The Councils will endeavour to respond to changing housing needs and to provide a flexible range of supply options by adopting this approach recommended nationally for the delivery of social housing in Tullamore.

4.8 Future Housing Development - Challenges and Priorities from a land-use and settlement structure perspective

The National trend is one of falling household size, from an average of 4.48 persons per household in 1926 to 2.81 in 2006. Therefore housing requirements and demand have, and will continue to change to reflect this and other socio-economic factors, with perhaps an increasing need for a greater mix of house types and sizes within housing developments around Tullamore.

Figure 4.1 illustrates a snapshot of persons in private households classified by type of accommodation in Tullamore in 2006. The housing stock within Tullamore can be generally characterised as being low rise and low density and this is evident in the statistics available. 84% of private households comprise dwelling houses in the form of detached, semi-detached, and terraced houses. 11% of households comprise a flat/apartment and bedsit type accommodation generally located within or close to the town centre area.

Figure 4.1 Persons in Private Households Classified by Type of Accommodation in 2006 in Tullamore



Source: Central Statistics Office, Census 2006

The urban area of Tullamore comprises a well established residential component. In sequential terms, the environs area offers largely undeveloped lands in which to focus new residential development areas.

Notwithstanding the above, the Councils recognise the importance of having a variety of mixed uses (including residential) within the town centre to continue its vibrancy, vitality, decrease the need to travel and encourage more sustainable modes of travel. The Councils will continue to encourage the development and percentage increase of appropriate residential development in the town centre including large apartments/flats/bed-sits and living over-the-shop units.

4.8.1 Housing Demand and Supply – 2010-2016

The Housing Strategy for Offaly identified that Tullamore had a disproportionately low level of land zoned to support the required levels of residential development to meet Gateway Requirements. However, since the Housing Strategy was undertaken, Tullamore Town Council and Offaly County Council have made provision through the adoption of variation no. 4 of the previous Development plan 2004-2010, relating to the availability of zoned land for residential use within the town and environs. There are adequate lands zoned residential within this plan to meet these projected demands within the lifetime of this plan and beyond.

Requirements

As outlined in section 2.1, Chapter 2 of this plan and in Chapter 3, the population target to be reached for Tullamore is 30,000 by the year 2020 as set out in the MRPGs 2004-2010. The estimated current population (December 2009) is approximately 14,000 which determines that the town needs to grow by 16,000 over a 10 year period (from 2010 to 2020).

Revision of Targets

Given that the Regional Planning Guidelines for 2010-2016 are to include revised population targets to 2022, which are lower than the current target of 30,000, the target for population growth over this plan period shall be **5,250**. Table 4.4 below sets out the requirements for population and housing over this plan period.

Table 4.4. Housing and Land Requirements for 2010-2016

Population Target 2010-2016	No. of Units required (based on occupancy rate of 2.56)	Basic land required for 2010 - 2016 (based on 35/ha)	Amount of land required over plan period based on providing for a 9 year requirement¹
c. 5,250 (4,200 in Phase 1 of Masterplan Areas and 1,050 in other undeveloped residentially zoned lands).	2,050 (1,640 in Phase 1 of Masterplan Areas and 410 in other undeveloped residentially zoned lands).	59ha (47ha in Phase 1 of Masterplan Areas and 11.7ha in other undeveloped residentially zoned lands).	89ha (71ha in Phase 1 of Masterplan Areas and 18ha in other undeveloped residentially zoned lands).

Delivery

Having regard to the amount of land zoned for residential development within Tullamore and the need to ensure the growth of the Gateway as the key driver within the county, the Councils will implement a strict 'sequential approach' when assessing development applications. This is set out in TTEP P04-01.

Phase 1 of the Masterplan areas has the potential to deliver a population over 16,000. Having regard to the requirement to zone land for 1 and a half times the need, land is required to be zoned for a population of c. 8,000, of which 1,600 is to be delivered on undeveloped residentially zoned lands outside of the Masterplan areas over this plan period. These zoned lands are significant in size and are required to be retained to deliver population for the following reasons:

- It is important to have adequate zoned lands throughout the town in order to ensure a balanced development strategy can be achieved.
- While a number of these lands have been slow in coming forward, there are existing planning permissions on these lands that will accommodate residential development.

The remainder of the 8,000 is to be delivered in Phase 1 in the Masterplan areas. In light of the current climate, half of Phase 1 is to be developed over this plan period (c. 6,400 population). This is considered reasonable, particularly having regard to the following:

- Tullamore's Gateway designation.
- The strong sequential approach adopted by the Planning Authority throughout the plan.

¹ The Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities indicate that Planning Authorities should ensure that Development Plans should provide for the 'equivalent of 3 years demand beyond the date on which the current plan ceases to have effect' (Section 4.14, 'Development Plan, Guidelines for Planning Authorities', DoEHLG, 2007).

- The need for flexibility in order to take account of varying pressures, including bringing forward other lands for development.

In striving to meet the applicable population need over the plan period, the Planning Authority will monitor the growth and development of the town taking the following into account:

- The sequential approach to be applied to development, particularly in the Masterplan areas.
- Current relevant data over the plan period such as Census 2010.

As the overall target for growth for this plan period is an important factor in contributing to Tullamore achieving the necessary critical mass for a Gateway town, the Planning Authority shall seek to deliver this population in a flexible manner using the principle of sequential approach.

A review of the relevant target (including committed planning applications) following the 2010 census will give an indication of the relative growth of the town and in turn will inform decision making in the latter four years of the Development Plan.

In the case where development proposals come forward in Masterplan areas that are not included in Phase 1 or in areas where Phase 1 has already been developed and has delivered a satisfactory proportion of population, the Planning Authority will consider such proposals only where the following criteria can be demonstrated:

- Lands within the sequential phasing plan outlined in Chapter 5 for all Masterplan areas are not coming forward for development. The overall progress of the Masterplans will be taken into account when determining development proposals.
- The proposal is in line with the relevant population target for this plan period.
- The development is to be undertaken in a sequential manner.
- The proposal meets the required objectives for the subject lands as set out in Chapter 5.

The Planning Authority will continue to have regard to the Department's guidelines on 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas' when assessing development applications, particularly having regard to densities.

4.9 Application for 'Part V' Exemption Certificate

In accordance with the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006, an exemption from 'Part V' requirements may be sought from the Councils in the case of small housing developments i.e. those of **four or fewer houses**, or on land of **0.1 hectares or less**. This may be subject to conditions, where necessary.

4.10 Special Needs Accommodation

The Councils continue to address particular identified needs through the provision of **purpose built, adaptable dwellings**, where feasible. This includes provisions for the needs of the elderly, persons with physical disabilities and persons with learning disabilities.

4.11 Traveller Accommodation Needs

Table 4.5

Traveller Accommodation Options Available
Standard Local Authority Housing
Group Housing Schemes
Halting Sites – Permanent/Temporary/Transient
Single House Purchase
House Purchase Loans
Voluntary Housing Schemes
Private Rented Accommodation/Rental Accommodation Scheme

The Councils recognise the needs of the Travelling Community within Tullamore. These are addressed and delivered within the context of an adopted specific Multi-Annual Programme for Traveller Accommodation in the county, where feasible. This Programme states that to meet the accommodation needs of the Travelling Community within the county, a range of accommodation options will be required including those shown in Table 4.5. In accordance with the traveller accommodation options, the Councils will continue to take a flexible approach to the location of accommodation for Travellers.

Tullamore Town Council and Offaly County Council are responsible for the provision of accommodation for members of the travelling community. Tullamore Town Council, however, will have regard to the current Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013, which was prepared by Offaly County Council in accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998.

The Government, under the Housing Acts 1966-2004, and in particular the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, provides the necessary legal, administrative and financial supports to facilitate Local Authorities in meeting the accommodation needs of Travellers. The Housing Acts 1966-2004, places responsibility on Local Authorities for the provision of serviced caravan sites for the Travelling Community.

It is an objective of both Councils' to provide a good living environment for travelling communities including recommended standards of accommodation, sanitary facilities and pre-school education facilities. In accordance with stated government policy, the Councils will continue its policy of assisting in the process of integration of the travelling community with the settled community.

4.12 Homelessness

The Councils continue to provide an important role alongside voluntary groups and other agencies in the provision of emergency accommodation for the homeless and for those in need of crisis facilities.

4.13 Implementation of Plan

In order to secure the successful implementation of this plan for Tullamore and the County Development Plan's overall settlement strategy, the Councils will undertake an ongoing review and monitoring programme.

This process will involve in particular:

- Analysis of Census data
- Analysis of planning applications decided
- Development trends relating to Tullamore and the remainder of the county, having regard to obligations set out by the Regional Planning Guidelines.

Subsequent corrective action will be taken where necessary. In accordance with Section 15 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 - 2009, a 2-year report on the progress achieved in securing the objectives contained in the plan will be undertaken. It will contain a sub-section purporting to key findings and possible outcomes of this analysis.

In addition, the Council in its Development Management function will have regard to current relevant Ministerial Guidelines where reference is made to appropriate growth levels in urban areas.

4.14 Policy

Overall Strategic Development Policy

TTEP 04-01 It is the Councils' policy to strategically prioritise the development of Tullamore as part of the Midlands Linked Gateway. The Councils will monitor the growth of the gateway in nominal terms towards the 2020 target of 30,000 persons and also relative to the growth of the remainder of the county and in particular the share of County population attributed to the Gateway.

It is the Councils' policy to implement the 'sequential approach' i.e. develop from the centre first, then outwards, in assessing proposed housing developments to avoid isolated development in outer zoned areas.

TTEP 04-02 It is Councils' policy to ensure that housing developments both individually and cumulatively are reflective in size/scale of the relevant settlement/area's position within the County's Settlement Hierarchy. In this regard, and without prejudice to other development plan policies or development management best practices, there will be positive presumption for housing developments of the following size **or smaller** within Tullamore as appropriate:

Gateway: 150 houses.

This policy is not intended to preclude developers / landowners who have large blocks of zoned and serviced land for development from developing same. In such cases, land blocks should be put forward for development by means of planning applications in a sequential manner. While it is general policy of the Councils to require that developments be linked to each other and to the existing fabric of the settlement by means of roads, footpaths, linked open spaces etc., it is also a general policy of the Council's to require that developments **differ in design and layout** while maintaining the overall character of the area in order to achieve interest and variety in the built form and to provide choice to the prospective new or second hand house purchaser. It is policy that directly provided Local Authority housing or housing delivered in co-operation with the Council, will adhere to the above principles also.

Further, it is the Councils' policy to require a **mix** of dwelling types in housing developments and in particular to encourage as **part of** housing developments the provision of:

- Small numbers of single storey houses to give choice to persons with enhanced accessibility needs i.e. the elderly and persons with a disability.
- Detached dwellings on large sites subject to adherence with general principles regarding the efficient use of building land i.e. such dwellings may form part of a mixed density development.
- Individually serviced sites, particularly in Local Service Towns and villages, subject to submission with the planning application, of a detailed template(s) for the general design, scale, position, materials, boundary treatment etc. of the dwellings so as to avoid uncoordinated development of settlements.

All new development shall have such a mix of house types such as not to closely overlook the curtilage of existing dwellings.

TTEP 04-03 It is the policy of the Councils to facilitate a population for Tullamore of 24,500 by 2022 and in the interim, a population of 19,250 by 2016, in line with the breakdown indicated in Table 4.4 of this chapter.

TTEP 04-04 It is the Councils' policy to ensure that Tullamore can support the level of growth (socially and economically) to underpin its role as part of the 'Midland's Linked Gateway' and as a 'driver' of development in sustaining strong levels of economic growth and prosperity in the county and region as a whole.

Housing Policy – Tullamore Environs

TTEP 04-05 It is the Councils' policy that, notwithstanding compliance with policies set out hereunder, quality, design, siting and other environmental considerations will be of paramount importance in the assessment of each individual application for a dwelling in the environs countryside.

Single Rural House Policy within Tullamore Environs

TTEP 04-06 It is the Councils' policy that within the areas of the open countryside within the environs area of Tullamore which are under development pressure/urban influence, a positive presumption will be given towards a new single house for the permanent occupation of an applicant who falls within either of the 3 categories below and meets the necessary criteria.

Category 1: Local Rural Persons

The following **3 criteria** arise in assessing applicants under this category:

The applicant must come within the definition of a 'Local Rural Person'

and

the proposed site must be situated within their 'Local Rural Area'

and

the applicant must have a 'Local Rural Housing Need'

- a.) A 'Local Rural Person' (applicant) is a person who was born within the local rural area, **or** who is living or has lived in the local rural area for a minimum of **5 years** at any stage prior to making the planning application. It includes returning emigrants seeking a permanent home in their local rural area.
- b.) The 'Local Rural Area' for the purpose of this policy is defined as the area generally within an **8km** radius of where the applicant was born, living or has lived. *The rural area excludes those settlements listed within Tiers 1-2 of the County Settlement Hierarchy inclusive, which are urban settlements i.e. Gateway, Large Towns.*
- c.) An applicant who satisfies a 'Local Rural Housing Need' is defined as a person who does not or has not ever owned a house in the surrounding rural area and has the need for a permanent dwelling for their own use.

Category 2: Persons Working Fulltime or Part-time in Rural Areas

Such persons shall be defined as persons who by the nature of their work, have a functional need to reside permanently in the rural area generally immediately adjacent to their place of work. Such circumstances will normally encompass persons involved in full-time farming, horticulture or forestry as well as similar part-time occupations where it can be demonstrated that it is the predominant occupation. Other cases will be dealt with on their own individual merits having regard to the intended spirit of the policy. In each case the applicant must not already own or have owned a house in the surrounding rural area.

Category 3: Exceptional Health Circumstances

Having regard to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government's '*Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines*' (2005), special consideration shall be given in limited cases of exceptional health circumstances - supported by relevant documentation from a registered medical practitioner and a disability organisation proving that a person requires to live in a particular environment or close to family support, or requires a close family member to live in close proximity to that person.

TTEP 04-07 It is the Councils' policy that specific areas within the plan boundary shall be subject to more detailed guidance. This will take the form of Masterplan areas (refer to Chapter 5). These areas will be governed by the policies contained therein as well as those in this chapter.

Replacement of Habitable Houses in Tullamore Environs

TTEP 04-08 In the case of the proposed demolition of a substandard dwelling and its replacement with a new single dwelling, it is the Councils' policy to favourably consider proposals subject to normal environmental, siting, design and layout considerations. In such circumstances, the provisions of policy TTEP 04-05 (i.e. 'Local Need' requirement) will not apply. Notwithstanding the above, it is the Council's policy to protect Tullamore town and environs vernacular building stock from demolition where restoration is a feasible option.

Reuse of existing structures as dwellings in Tullamore Environs

TTEP 04-09 It is the Councils' policy to favourably consider all applications (i.e. 'Local Need' requirement will not apply) for the refurbishment and/or reuse of older building stock subject to the following criteria.

- The external walls and roof are substantially intact.
- The design of the proposal does not erode the siting and design qualities of the building which makes it attractive in the first instance.
- The size of any extension takes account of the siting and size of the existing dwelling.
- The design, scale and materials used in the refurbishment and/or extension are in keeping and sympathetic with the existing structure.
- Mature landscape features are retained and enhanced, as appropriate.
- That normal planning considerations i.e. road safety, amenities, public health, design etc. shall take precedence over the 'principle' of encouraging such development.

Refurbishment of Derelict Dwellings in Tullamore Environs Countryside

TTEP 04-10 It is the Councils' policy to encourage the sensitive refurbishment of existing dwelling houses which have fallen derelict subject to the following:

- That normal planning considerations i.e. road safety, amenities, public health, design etc. shall take precedence to the 'principle' of encouraging such development, and in particular that for such developments alongside or directly accessed from National Roads, that the provisions of policy TTEP 08-22 shall apply (refer to Chapter 8, Transport, Movement and Accessibility).

Overall Housing Policy

Reservation of Lands for the Provision of Social and Affordable Housing

TTEP 04-11 It is the Councils' policy, as required under Section 95 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2009 that **20% of all land** zoned for residential use and/or for a mixture of residential and other uses, shall be reserved for the provision of housing for the purposes of either or both:

- 1) Housing for persons referred to in Section 9(2) of the Housing Act, 1988;
- 2) Affordable housing (as defined in Section 93 of the Planning and Development Acts, 2000-2006).

TTEP 04-12 It is the Councils' policy to ensure that a sufficient amount and variety of serviced land, designed for residential use, is available for house building in Tullamore.

TTEP 04-13 It is the Councils' policy to ensure housing of a high standard is provided in Tullamore to meet projected needs. It is the policy of the Councils that every family unit should have housing of a standard suitable to its needs.

TTEP 04-14 It is the Councils' policy to promote social inclusion by ensuring that social and affordable housing is suitably distributed throughout all residential developments and locations.

TTEP 04-15 It is the Councils' policy to allow for revisions should the Housing Strategy be reviewed or Planning Legislation (notably 'Part V') is amended during the lifetime of plan.

TTEP 04-16 It is the Councils' policy to ensure the delivery of the policies and objectives of the Housing Strategy by ensuring sufficient lands within Tullamore are zoned in accordance with its position within the County Settlement Hierarchy.

TTEP 04-17 It is the Councils' policy that where considering development and/or acquisition of social and affordable housing the Councils will have full regard to the following:

- (a) The policies contained in the Tullamore Town and Environs Development Plan and Offaly County Development Plan and any other relevant action plans.
- (b) Tullamore's position within the County Settlement Strategy.
- (c) The policies contained in the Councils' Social Housing Multi-Annual Programme.
- (d) The need for social integration.
- (e) The need to ensure the overall coherence of the development.

Social Housing

TTEP 04-18 It is the Councils' policy to provide social houses through a combination of mechanisms including direct build, 'Part V', turnkey and the acquisition of second-hand housing in accordance with Tullamore's position within the County Settlement Hierarchy to meet identified needs, through the most appropriate measures, subject to resources and funding. Social housing units will be allocated on the basis of the Councils' adopted scheme of letting priorities.

Affordable Housing

TTEP 04-19 It is the Councils' policy to appropriately manage the provision of affordable housing provided by the Councils within Tullamore.

House Types and Sizes

TTEP 04-20 It is the Councils' policy to ensure that an appropriate mix of house types and sizes are provided in each residential development. House designs and layout should reflect the requirements of different categories of households within Tullamore – particularly those needs and requirements of elderly persons and persons with disabilities coupled with continuing trends in changing demographics i.e. decreasing household size. This will be considered in relation to Tullamore's position within the settlement tier of the County Settlement Hierarchy.

TTEP 04-21 It is the Councils' policy to promote a mix of house types and social integration within residential developments.

TTEP 04-22 It is the Councils' policy to require that a high standard of design and layout of residential development is achieved, including the provision of adequate suitably designed open space.

TTEP 04-23 It is Councils' policy to encourage the use of currently unoccupied or under occupied dwellings over the development of new builds.

Serviced Sites

TTEP 04-24 It is the Councils' policy to encourage the provision of private serviced building sites, for example as part of housing developments within Tullamore in order to strengthen the fabric of the town and environs, and to offer an element of choice. It is also the Councils' policy to ensure that the size of such sites is adequate for appropriate levels of privacy and choice of house type and style.

TTEP 04-25 It is the Councils' policy to encourage and facilitate private house building in Tullamore and suitably designed residential infill development where appropriate.

Homeless People

TTEP 04-26 It is the Councils' policy to actively promote integrated solutions to address the issue of homelessness within Tullamore. The Councils will continue to work in partnership with the statutory and voluntary agencies on the Offaly Homeless Forum to address the accommodation needs of homeless persons in a targeted and focussed manner using an inter-agency approach.

Travellers

TTEP 04-27 It is the Councils' policy to respect the distinctive culture of the **Travelling Community** and assist in the process of integration with the settled community.

TTEP 04-28 It is the Councils' policy to provide a good and well-managed living environment for the **Travelling Community** including recommended standards of accommodation, sanitary facilities and pre-school education facilities, where feasible.

TTEP 04-29 It is the Councils' policy to provide accommodation to meet the needs of the Travelling Community in the Tullamore Area and to prohibit illegal parking.

Elderly

TTEP 04-30 It is the Councils' policy to take account of the demand and need for elderly persons' dwellings in its annual housing programme. The possibility of providing housing for the elderly close to existing services in the town centre area will be examined.

4.15 Objectives²

TTEO 04-01 To secure the implementation of the **Housing Strategy 2008-2015** including the proper implementation of its policies, objectives and goals, in particular, through the reservation of 20% of all land zoned solely for residential use, or for a mixture of residential or other uses, to be made available for the provision of social and affordable housing referred to in Section 94(4) (a) of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2009. Further, it is the Councils' objective, that the allocation between social and affordable housing will be determined on a case-by-case basis depending on the identified social and affordable needs of the area within which the development is taking place and the specific features of the development.

TTEO 04-02 To co-operate with Voluntary Housing Associations in the provision of social housing.

TTEO 04-03 To facilitate orderly development to meet housing requirements of the town and environs.

Ratio of Social to Affordable Housing

TTEO 04-04 To seek the development of social and affordable units on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with the existing local needs and special needs requirements of the population of an area.

Proposed Accommodation for the Travelling Community

TTEO 04-05 To provide adequate accommodation for Travellers in accordance with the Council's Traveller Accommodation Programme for County Offaly.

TTEO 04-06 To meet the accommodation requirements of the travelling community of the Tullamore and Environs area.

Purpose built dwellings

TTEO 04-07 To provide purpose built dwellings for those with special needs, including provisions for the needs of the elderly, persons with physical disabilities and persons with learning disabilities where feasible and in conjunction with other voluntary bodies and the private sector.

Identification of accommodation and sites

TTEO 04-08 To carry out the following detailed objectives:

- Provide suitable accommodation for Travellers at appropriate locations in the plan area.
- Identify further sites for infill housing for public and private sector development.

² The order of listing of objectives is not intended to indicate priorities. Subject to the availability of resources, it is the Councils aim to monitor and accomplish the objectives listed in this section within the period of the plan.