

Chapter 2 Core Strategy

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to set out the vision for the future of the plan area and to provide a 'core strategy' for its spatial organisation over the plan period. This core strategy will be amplified and expanded upon in the seven strategic goals set out in this chapter and in the objectives of the entire plan to follow.

2.2 Vision

For Arklow town and its Environs (plan area) to be a cohesive community of people enjoying distinct but interrelated urban and rural environment; where natural surroundings and important resources are protected; where opportunities abound to live and work in a safe atmosphere, allowing people to enjoy the benefits of well paid jobs, a variety of housing choices, excellent public services, ample cultural and leisure opportunities, and a healthy environment.

2.3 Core Strategy

The purpose of the core strategy is to illustrate that the development objectives in the Town and Environs Development Plan are consistent as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives as set out in the National Spatial Strategy 2002 – 2020 and the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area and the Wicklow County Development Plan 2010-2016.

2.3.1 Arklow Town and Environs

Arklow is located in the hinterland of the Greater Dublin Area and has been identified as a Large Growth Town II under the Regional Planning Guidelines. Arklow is strategically located on a national route the N11/M11. The town centre of Arklow contains a number of historic buildings and recreational green spaces in the form of parks, playgrounds and walking routes. In recent times there has been a shift away from the main street to the North Quay in terms of commercial and retail function. The main street of Arklow town is in need of rejuvenation and this plan will address this issue namely in chapter 4 "Main Street Strategy". Arklow Environs is rural in nature with dispersed housing and a concentration of industrial areas.

2.3.2 Population & settlement

The population and settlement objectives flow from allocations made at the different strategic levels within the national planning hierarchy. The Minister allocates population to each Regional Authority, and the members of the Mid East Regional Authority in turn decide how much of their allocation goes to each county. Finally, the members of Wicklow County Council, through the County Development Plan, decide on the share of this population to be given to each settlement and town in the County.

Arklow town's population has been increasingly modestly since 1991, with annual increases in the range of 1.5 % – 2%, increasing to around 4% per annum between 2002 and 2006.

Population – Arklow Town

Year	1971	1981	1986	1991	1996	2002	2006
Population	6,948	8,646	8,388	7,987	8,557	9,993	11,759

(Source: CSO Census of population)

Having regard to Arklow's designation as a Large Growth Town II in the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area and the Wicklow County Development Plan, Arklow and its environs is targeted in the Wicklow County Development Plan to grow to 19,000 persons up to 2016 and 23,000 persons up to 2022, at a faster rate than heretofore. In particular, the population target of 19,000 in 2016 will require a growth rate of c. 6% per annum between 2006 and 2016.

Population targets – Arklow Town & Environs

Year	2006	2016 target	2022 target
Population	11,759	19,000	23,000

(Source: Wicklow draft County Development Plan 2010)

The lifetime of this plan is between 2011 and 2017. In accordance with the Development Plan Guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in 2007, in order to provide a robust strategy a development plan should make provision for the zoning of land for 3 years beyond the plan period i.e. up to 2020 in this case. Interpolating back from the 2022 figure the target population for 2017 is 19,670 persons and 21,670 persons for 2020.

2.3.3 Housing & Zoning

In order to accommodate this growth, it will be necessary for this plan to ensure that adequate provision is made for zoned housing / mixed use land. Chapter 3 of this plan sets out in detail the availability of land for housing, which is summarised as follows:-

- The plan area is planned to grow to a total population of 19,000 in 2016 and 23,000 in 2022;
- It is estimated that by 2017 average household size in Wicklow will have declined to 2.52 (in accordance with the Regional Planning Guidelines). Assuming this same household size for Arklow and its environs, there would be a need for 7,800 dwelling units in the settlement by 2017;
- Further declines in household size to 2020 will necessitate a total housing stock in the settlement of 9,000 units to meet the 2020 population target (a household size of 2.4 is projected for 2020, in accordance with the RPGs);
- It is estimated that there are currently (June 2010) c. 5,250 residential units in the plan area and there is currently extant permission for 980 new units;
- The development plan will require to make provision for c. **2,770** new housing units up to 2020;
- Three areas have been designated for significant mixed used development during the plan period these are referred to as Action Area Plans.

It is essential that a surplus of zoned lands is provided to take account for lands that are not released to market and land that may not be developed due to normal market friction.

- For the purposes of this plan an 'excess factor' of 7% will be utilised in accordance with the RPGs and the Wicklow County Development Plan¹. Therefore this plan must ensure a framework for the delivery of c. 2,965 residential units up to 2020;
- Additional headroom of 30% will be allowed for in this plan². In this context, the plan must ensure sufficient land is designated for c. 3,850 new residential units;
- Notwithstanding the zoning of land for residential purposes, the Development Management Process shall monitor and implement the population targets and shall phase and restrict where necessary the granting of residential planning permissions to ensure these targets are not exceeded;
- Housing development shall be managed and phased to ensure that infrastructure and in particular community infrastructure is provided to match the need of the new residents.

2.3.4 Infrastructure

Roads

The plan area is served by one national route - the N11/M11. The N11 / M11 is part of Euroroute 01 and has undergone significant investment in the last 20 years. The final section of dual carriageway between Bray to the north and the Wexford to the south is due to be completed within the lifetime of the plan – the Ballinabarney to Arklow Scheme. Having regard to the limitations of the mainline route in the County (see below), the N11/M11 will continue to be the principal access corridor in the eastern side on the County.

The plan area is served by a network of regional and local roads, which are essential for inter-county traffic and local movements.

- In light of the likely continuing car dependency to access the metropolitan region in the short to medium term, it is the strategy of this plan to facilitate and encourage measures to improve capacity and efficiency of the national routes and facilitates the improved use of the national routes by public transport;

¹ This term describes the fact that demand for housing will exceed actual household formation due to:

- Some of the additional units being required to replace obsolete housing;
- Some units being vacant at any one time due to market frictional factors;
- Some units being second homes or pieds à terre.

This essentially means that not all new houses in the town will result in the formation of a new "household" as (a) the new occupants may have previously resided in the town, in now obsolete housing (b) the house may be vacant or (c) the house may be a second home for someone who resides permanently elsewhere.

² 'Headroom' or 'market factor' is the amount of extra land that should be zoned over and above the minimum amount needed to accommodate population targets, to allow for lands that are not released to the market for a variety of reasons over the plan period

- The priority for regional road improvement will be the east-west connector route i.e. the R747 (Arklow – Tinahely – Baltinglass).

Rail

The plan area is served by one mainline– the Dublin to Rosslare route and there is a functioning train station in the town.

- It is the strategy of this plan to encourage and facilitate significant improvements to rail infrastructure.

Water Services

Waste Water

The plan area is deficient in wastewater services. This lack of services is preventing the plan area from fulfilling its functions under the NSS and the RPGs as developments will be restricted due to the absence of waste water infrastructure in the plan area.

- It is the strategy of this plan to facilitate significant improvements to waste water infrastructure within the town.

Water Supply

The plan area is currently deficient in water services, however there is a replacement scheme in progress that will see most of the water being sourced from 16 new wells.

- It is the strategy of this plan to facilitate significant improvements to water infrastructure within the town.

Economic Development

In accordance with the role that Arklow has been designated by the RPG's as a Large Growth Town II it is considered that the level of enterprise and employment development has not kept pace with residential development;

- It is the strategy of this plan to increase the quantity and range of quality employment opportunities in Arklow;
- It is the priority of the plan to promote enterprise and innovation, particularly in services and the knowledge and green industries;
- It is the priority of the plan to ensure that strategic reserves of land are available for employment purposes.

Social Development

The plan area has a range of social and sporting facilities, buildings and clubs that cater for the large population of the plan area. New residential developments within the plan area shall make provision of social and recreational facilities.

- It is the strategy of this plan that sufficient lands are reserved for community uses;
- The expansion of the residential development shall be managed appropriately and commensurate with the community facilities available;
- It is the priority of this plan to ensure that the delivery of new community facilities as part of development proposals.

2.3.5 Retail

The County Development Plan for Wicklow includes a retail strategy for the entire County, which is consistent with the GDA Regional Retail Strategy. In accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines, the retail strategy for Arklow includes the following:

- Definition in the plan of the boundaries of the core shopping area of the town centre;
- A broad assessment of the requirement for additional retail floorspace;
- Strategic guidance on the location and scale of retail development;
- Preparation of policies and action initiatives to encourage the improvement of the town centres;
- Identification of criteria for the assessment of retail development.

2.4 Key strategic objectives

In order to implement this vision and core strategy, it is necessary to set out a number of strategic objectives that underpin all the objectives of this plan;

- To facilitate and encourage the growth of employment, enterprise and economic activity in the plan area across all economic sectors and in all areas;
- To enhance existing housing areas and to provide for high quality new housing, at appropriate locations and to ensure the development of a range of house types, sizes and tenures in order to meet the differing needs of all in society and to promote balanced communities;
- To maintain and enhance the viability and vibrancy of Arklow as a major urban centre, to ensure that the town remains at the heart of the wider community and provides a wide range of retail, employment, social recreational and infrastructural facilities;
- To protect and improve Arklow Town and Environs transport, water, waste, energy and communication infrastructure, whilst having regard to responsibilities to respect areas protected for their important flora, fauna or other natural features;
- To promote and facilitate the development of sustainable communities through land use planning, by providing for land uses capable of accommodating community, leisure, recreational and cultural facilities accessible to and meeting the needs of all individuals and local community groups, in tandem with the delivery of residential and physical infrastructure in order to create a quality built environment in which to live;
- To protect and enhance the diversity of the plan area's natural and built heritage;
- To address the climate change challenge, as a plan dynamic, throughout the plan area, directly in the area of flooding and renewable energy, and indirectly by integrating climate change and sustainable development into statements of plan policy, strategies and objectives.