



## 1. Vision

To support the future vitality and viability of the retail centres and to facilitate a competitive and healthy environment for the retail industry.

## 2. Context

DTZ PIEDA Consulting was appointed in April 2002 by the Wicklow Local Authorities to prepare the Retail Strategy for the County. The context for the County Retail Planning Strategy is set out by:

- The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) Retail Planning Guidelines (RPG) for Planning Authorities, December 2000
- The Greater Dublin Area (GDA) Retail Planning Strategy, November 2001

The Retail Planning Guidelines were prepared by the DEHLG in response to the increasing pressure for retail development in the last decade. They sought to provide the policy framework to enable future development to be accommodated in a way that is efficient, equitable and sustainable. The Guidelines state that the matters that are to be included in all future Development Plans are:

1. Confirmation of the retail hierarchy, the role of centres and the size of the main town centres
2. Definition in the Development Plan of the boundaries of the core shopping area of town centres
3. A broad assessment of the requirement for additional retail floorspace
4. Strategic guidance on the location and scale of retail development
5. Preparation of policies and action initiatives to encourage the improvement of town centres: and
6. Identification of criteria for the assessment of retail developments

As Wicklow is part of the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), the Council was required to co-operate with the other counties within the GDA to prepare the Retail Planning Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area.

## 3. Strategy

Since 1996, there has been significant population growth in County Wicklow, driven to a large part by the boom in economic activity and expansion of population in the GDA. This anticipated increase in population coupled with additional expenditure, has implications regarding the type, amount and distribution of additional retail floorspace across the County. In 2003, the Central Statistics Office published its principle demographic results which records a total population of 114,676 for 2002.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> The DEHLG advise that for retail strategies, local authorities make use of figures set out in housing strategies and accordingly the current draft retail strategy is based on the housing strategy 2001-2005. However it must be noted that the population figure above is derived from the CSO 2002 figures.

There is currently 1.025 million m<sup>2</sup> of trading floorspace in the seven counties of the Greater Dublin Area, of which 6.4% is located in County Wicklow. This is the second smallest proportion of retail floorspace in the GDA after Kildare, which has just 4.3% of total floorspace. Wicklow has around 8.2% of total convenience and just 5.1% of total comparison floorspace in the GDA.

There are some 65,845 m<sup>2</sup> of trading floorspace in Wicklow comprising some 41.5% convenience<sup>18</sup>, 49.9% comparison<sup>19</sup> and 8.5% bulky goods. Arklow, Bray, Greystones and Wicklow Town account for the majority of retail floorspace in the County. These four centres contain over three-quarters of all convenience and over four-fifths of all comparison floorspace<sup>20</sup>.

One of the major issues identified in the Wicklow Draft Retail Strategy is that the County is experiencing high levels of comparison expenditure leakage.

## 4. Policy

### 4.1 – RETAIL INDUSTRY

**Policy R1** : The Council will facilitate the vitality and viability of existing retail centres and encourage the provision of an appropriate range of retail uses and services in the County while protecting and/or improving the amenity of the surrounding areas.

### 4.2 – RETAIL GUIDELINES

**Policy R2** : The Council will ensure that all retail development is in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines 2000 and the Draft Wicklow County Retail Strategy 2003.

#### 4.2.1 – THE RETAIL PLANNING GUIDELINES 2000

The Retail Planning Guidelines were prepared under the Local Government (Planning and Development) Policy Directive (Shopping) 1998, issued by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government, in general adhering to the following policy objectives:

- To facilitate a competitive and healthy environment for the retailing industry of the future.
- Retail development shall generally be located within the catchment area, accessible by public transport and private car in locations which encourage multi-purpose shopping, business and leisure trips.
- To support the continuing role of the town and district centres by directing new retail development into existing established centres.
- In assessing a site for any retail development the Sequential Approach shall be applied. This defines that:

<sup>18</sup> Convenience Retailing refers to non-durable goods such as food, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, tobacco and non-durable household goods.

<sup>19</sup> Comparison Retailing refers to durable goods such as clothing, footwear, furniture, books, educational equipment and medical products.

<sup>20</sup> Draft Retail Strategy, DTZ PIEDA Consulting, 2003.



- A. The preferred location for new retail development, where practicable and viable, is within a town centre
- B. Where it is not possible to provide the form and scale of development that is required on a site within a town centre then consideration can be given to a site on the edge of the town centre so as to encourage the possibility of one journey serving several purposes. An edge of centre site is taken to one that is unlikely to be more than 300-400 metres from the edge of the prime shopping area and less in smaller settlements. The distance considered to be convenient will however vary according to local circumstances
- C. Only after assessing the size, availability, accessibility and feasibility of developing sites and premises, firstly within a town centre and secondly on the edge of a town centre, should alternative out of centre sites be considered where it can be demonstrated that there are no town centre or edge of centre sites which are suitable, viable and available.

The assessment of suitable sites shall include the following issues:

- i. Accessibility and servicing
- ii. Need
- iii. Size and Scale
- iv. Quality
- v. Availability
- vi. The impact on nearby retailing activities and town centre vitality and viability
- vii. The impact on road traffic
- viii. Performance in terms of urban design and how it will integrate into the surrounding environment
- ix. To what extent will the development counter urban decline and promote urban renewal

## 4.2.2 – DRAFT WICKLOW COUNTY RETAIL STRATEGY

### 4.2.2.1 – POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

The Council will implement the policies and proposals set out in the Draft Wicklow County Retail Strategy. The Strategy sets out strategic policies, specific policies and proposals. They are:

- To sustain and improve the retail profile and competitiveness of Wicklow County within the retail economy of the GDA and beyond.
- To address leakage of retail expenditure from the County by providing the means to strengthen the range and quality availability of its retail offer.
- To ensure an equitable, efficient and sustainable spatial distribution of main centres across the County.
- To confirm a hierarchy which assists to define the County's settlement structure and objectives and provides clear guidance on where major new retail floorspace would be acceptable.
- To discourage the location of large retail development adjacent to existing, or planned, National Roads.
- To ensure that the retail needs of the County's residents are met as fully as possible within Wicklow, taking due cognisance of the GDA Retail Planning Strategy hierarchy.

- To encourage and facilitate the preservation and enhancement of the retail role of both individual villages and village/settlement nuclei clusters around the County.
- To encourage and facilitate innovation and diversification in the County's retail profile and offer
- To encourage and facilitate the re-use and regeneration of derelict land and buildings for retail uses, with due cognisance to the Sequential Approach.
- To provide the criteria for the assessment of retail development proposals.

The more specific policies and proposals of the Draft Wicklow County Retail Strategy are grouped under the following three categories:

- A. Strategic Policies: relate to the spatial distribution of centres, specific centres, their role in the hierarchy and the strategic aims of the strategy
- B. General Policies: set principles that should be applied across the hierarchy
- C. Framework for the Assessment of Retail Developments: sets out the criteria that will be used in the appraisal of future retail proposals.

## A. – STRATEGIC POLICIES

### Major Town Centre: Bray

It is the policy of the Council to promote and encourage major enhancement and expansion of retail floorspace and town centre activities in Bray Town Centre to sustain its competitiveness as a Major Town Centre and leisure destination in the GDA.

### County Town Centre: Wicklow

It is the policy of the Council to facilitate and encourage major expansion of Wicklow town centre to enhance its role and importance as a County Town Centre in the GDA.

### Sub County Town Centre: Arklow

It is the policy of the Council to facilitate and encourage the consolidation and improvement of retailing and other town centre activities in Arklow Town Centre and ensure that there is an equitable, efficient and sustainable distribution of retail floorspace in the town.

### Town Centre: Greystones/Delgany

It is the policy of the Council to facilitate and encourage the consolidation and enhancement of the retail offer of Greystones/Delgany and its role as a main centre in the County Hierarchy.

### Small Town Centres

It is the policy of the Council to facilitate and encourage the provision of shops and services that consolidate the strength of small town centres to meet the needs of the existing and expanding populations.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> As outlined in the Draft Retail Strategy 2003



## B. – GENERAL POLICIES

These general policies should be applied across all levels of the hierarchy:

### Innovation in the County's Retail Offer

It is the policy of the Council to encourage and facilitate innovation in the County's retail offer and attraction.

### Re-use and Regeneration of Derelict Land and Building

It is the policy of the Council to encourage and facilitate the re-use and regeneration of derelict land and buildings.

### Retailing in Tourism and Leisure

It is the policy of the Council to encourage and facilitate the development of retailing within the tourism and leisure sectors in accordance with tourism and rural development policies.

### Corner shops and smaller villages/Crossroads

It is the policy of the Council to encourage and facilitate the retail role of corner shops and small villages around the County.

### Enhancement of Towns and Villages

It is the policy of the Council to encourage and facilitate the enhancement and environmental improvements of the County's towns and villages.

## C. – FRAMEWORK FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF RETAIL DEVELOPMENTS

All applications for significant retail development should be assessed against a range of criteria. What is significant will vary around the County. As a general rule, it is recommended to be 1,000m<sup>2</sup> (gross) of convenience development and 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> (gross) of comparison development. The criteria to be considered in the assessment of significant applications will include:

- Testing the proposal against the sequential approach and that other options have been considered
- The impact of towns and village centres, including cumulative impact
- To ensure that the baseline information, capacity and/or impact assessment is fit for purpose and is transparent
- To demonstrate there is need for development
- Check the relationship of the application to any plan allocation
- Its contribution to town/village/centre improvement
- Its contribution to site and/or area regeneration
- The quality of access by all modes of transport and by foot and bicycle
- Its role in improving the competitiveness of the County and sub-areas of the County
- Its role in sustaining rural communities
- The extent to which it is relevant to consider the imposition of restrictions on the range of goods permitted for sale
- Any other Development Plan allocations.

If the retail proposal, whether significant or not, accords with the Development Plan policies and proposals in all material respects it should expect to meet with approval. However, the onus is on the applicant to demonstrate convincingly that the proposal does comply closely with the Development Plan.<sup>22</sup>

## 5. Development Control Objectives

### 5.1 – VITALITY AND VIABILITY OF TOWN CENTRES

In regard to town centres, the main aims of the Retail Planning Guidelines are:

1. To sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of existing town centres through a mix of uses, including residential, in particular the concept of "Living Over the Shop". In some such cases residential and urban development standards may be relaxed where it is considered appropriate, where it meets a very high standard of design which is sympathetic to the overall streetscape and where it does not adversely affect the amenities of adjoining units.
2. To promote good urban design of buildings, paving, lighting and street furniture.
3. To carry out health check assessments within areas with a well developed hierarchy of retail centres, assessing the relative strength of the main towns, identifying areas of weakness and opportunity and creating a vision for the centre and ensuring the following:
  - (a) Accessibility by a range of transport types
  - (b) Creating an attractive and safe town centre for pedestrians
  - (c) Undertaking effective management and promotion of centres

### 5.2 – SHOPPING CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

The following general standards shall apply to all new shopping centre developments:

- Adequate car parking and separate service areas should be provided in accordance with car parking standards detailed in Table 5.3, Chapter 5.
- Tree planting and generous soft and hard landscaping should form an integral part of the scheme
- All outdoor storage and service areas should be screened from public areas within the scheme.
- Pedestrian space of appropriate scale and design and enclosure should be provided within and around the centre and adequate street furniture should be provided.
- Provision should be made within the overall scheme for public facilities such as toilets, crèches, advice centres, etc.
- Activities and uses that keep the centre alive during the day and evening such as stalls, cafes, bars, etc. should be encouraged.

<sup>22</sup> Draft Retail Strategy, DTZ Pinda Consulting, 2003.



### 5.3 – OUT OF TOWN REGIONAL SHOPPING CENTRES

The development of Out of Town Regional Shopping Centres is not considered sustainable and consequently there shall be a general presumption against large scale out of town retail development.

### 5.4 – DISTRICT CENTRES

District centres provide for the local community living within a 15-20 minute drive time, containing a range of shops and non-retail service outlets. In line with the Retail Planning Guidelines, the Council will allow for new district centres or the extension of existing centres where there is a considered need and where located on suitably zoned lands.

### 5.5 – NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES

The function of a neighborhood centre is to provide a range of convenient and easily accessible retail outlets and services within walking distance for the local population. The Council will encourage the provision of an appropriate range and type of retail uses and services in neighborhood centres subject to the protection of the residential amenities of the surrounding area.

### 5.6 – LOCAL/NEIGHBOURHOOD SHOPS

Local shops will generally be permitted when:

1. Located in local areas or neighbourhood centres e.g. in a peripheral housing estate
2. Their importance can be substantiated.

### 5.7 – SHOPS IN SMALL TOWNS AND VILLAGES

New shopping development within small towns will generally be permitted and promoted, if it complies with the following criteria:

1. The development provides an effective and valuable service to the local community, providing convenience and some comparison shopping at an appropriate scale.
2. Out of town development shall be discouraged if the provision is likely to lead to a reduction in the range of local facilities and shops within the neighbouring area.

The Council will promote the development of vital village shops providing an immediate convenience to local rural residents. An assessment of the likely implications of a major retail development on vital village shops shall be undertaken in the eventuality.

### 5.8 – RURAL SHOPS

Small shops outside existing settlements shall be discouraged unless under the following circumstances:

1. A shop ancillary to activities arising from farm diversification
2. A shop designed to serve a tourist facility
3. A small scale shop attached to a craft workshop, retailing the product direct to the public

### 5.9 – RETAIL WAREHOUSING

Retail Warehousing relates to non-food and non-clothing goods, the sale of which is not normally feasible in conventional shops. Such items include building materials, electrical goods, and DIY products – items that normally require the use of a vehicle for transportation. The use may include outdoor display areas and is likely to generate large-scale car parking requirements.

Applications for non-food retail warehouses will be considered:

1. On suitable zoned lands preferable on edge of town sites or on suitable out of town site (in line with sequential testing and Retail Planning Guidelines), where the development, its associated car parking and likely traffic generation can be accommodated.
2. Applications for retail warehousing will be considered in commercial and industrial areas where the development is not likely to have an adverse affect on the vitality and viability of established retail outlets within its potential catchment area. The Council will ensure that retail warehousing in industrial estates is only permitted when it can be shown that suitable locations for such outlets are not available in or adjacent to existing town centres.
3. Individual smaller retail warehouses (less than 700 m<sup>2</sup>) may be considered within town centre locations. Larger individual retail warehouses (of around 5000 m<sup>2</sup> and above) which are proposed out of town centres shall be discouraged.
4. Retail Warehouse Clubs, such as Cash and Carry shall be treated as retail business and subjected to assessment.

### 5.10 – LARGE FOODSTORES

New foodstores will be considered where they satisfy the following criteria:

1. Located in a town or major village or district centre or on an edge of town centre site where public transport is available.
2. Planning permission will not be granted for a supermarket or extension to a supermarket where the total net retail floorspace is more than 3500 m<sup>2</sup>

### 5.11 – DISCOUNTED FOODSTORES

Discounted foodstores of up to 1,500 m<sup>2</sup> shall be considered, first within existing centres or the re-use of existing non-retail and vacant premises. An assessment of the possible impact of the development on the viability of smaller centres shall be required.



## 5.12 – FACTORY OUTLET CENTRES

This type of development refers to the selling of products at discounted prices usually located as part or adjacent to the production facility or the grouping of factory outlets set away from the manufacturing facility. Factory Outlet Centres will only be considered on the following terms:

1. Unless the sale of these goods can be regarded as incidental to the manufacturing process, such outlets shall be treated as any other retail development and assessed accordingly.
2. Particular attention shall be given to the location of factory outlet centres on edge of smaller town centres where a short high quality public transport link can be provided and in areas where commercial synergy can be achieved
3. Such development is not considered appropriate for greenfield out of town locations.

## 5.13 – PETROL FILLING STATIONS

New petrol filling stations should be located on the outskirts of towns but inside the speed limit area. The extent of any ancillary retail sales outlet should depend on:

- the extent of the site,
- the availability of off street car parking,
- the extent of existing retail activity in the area
- the extent of the retail activity on the road network

A workshop for minor servicing (tyre changing, puncture repairs, oil changing, etc.) may be acceptable only where it would not adversely affect adjacent residential amenity.

Retail outlets will only be permitted within the curtilage of a petrol filling station where the following criteria are satisfied:

1. The retail outlet is secondary to the petrol filling station
2. The gross retail floorspace does not exceed 100 m<sup>2</sup>
3. The sequential approach must be applied to any retail outlet that has a gross floor space greater than 100 m<sup>2</sup>
4. Car parking and vehicular circulation within the forecourt shall be considered.

