

TOWN & DISTRICT PLANS

INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose of this volume

This volume of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2010-2016 comprises Land Use Plans that form part of the County Development Plan, and are called 'Town Plans' or 'District Plans' for the reason of differentiating them from Local Area Plans, which are adopted through a separate process under Section 20 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2007 (as may be revised or amended).

The County Development Plan's role is to set higher level goals, policies and objectives, leaving more detailed planning and zoning to the local plan making process. It is not optimal to zone lands in the County Development Plan in any case in isolation from an analysis and public consultation of the requirements of the town itself.

It is intended to produce Local Area Plans or Town Plans for every settlement from Levels 1 to 6 of the County Settlement Hierarchy, that is, 20 settlements. Local Area Plans will be adopted or kept up to date for settlements within the administrative area of Wicklow County Council with a planned population of 2,000 or more in 2016, with settlements smaller than this being provided with Town Plans that will be adopted as variations of this County Development Plan. Thus Plans following the Local Area Plan route will be totally reviewed in accordance with the Planning and Development Act every 6 years, while depending on the amount of change taking place, the smaller settlements will be totally reviewed less frequently, up to every 10 years.

2. Purpose of this introduction

To produce parameters and a template for producing Town Plans so that their contents and method of adoption will be transparent and accessible to ordinary citizens, while being consistent with national and regional planning strategies, and consistent with this County Development Plan and other Town Plans.

A key objective will be to make the Town Plans as clear, concise, and short as possible to enable ordinary citizens and professionals alike to be able to read and absorb the content and implications of these plans as easily as possible. The Planning Authority has an obligation to ensure that the objectives set out in development plans are secured. Thus plans will be grounded in financial reality, and will only include realistic objectives that can be reasonably achieved through local or private resources

3. Template & content of Town Plans

To ensure that each final published plan is as simple and clear as possible to the professionals and ordinary citizens who will use them, and to the Elected Members of the Council who must make and adopt these plans, they will be short, to the point, and follow a similar format with similar layouts, emphases, and notations. In particular, they will separate the analysis and process from the final adopted plan, to make the published plan easy to read and absorb. The template below achieves this, by including analysis and computations in the draft plans, which will consist of Part A of the draft plan, while only Part B of the draft plan will include objectives and zonings together (with only a brief synopsis of context and analysis), and will eventually be the final published plan. This template will limit repetition of County Development Plan policies and objectives in each Town Plan. Part A of the draft plan document will be available at the Planning Office and website as a 'Background Preparation Document' once the town plan is adopted, for those who want to delve into the basis and justification for objectives and zonings in the relevant published Town Plan.

All efforts shall be made to minimise repetition of County Development Plan objectives in Town Plans, unless it is considered necessary to emphasise assets or restate objectives that have particular relevance and importance to that settlement. Development standards, retail strategies etc that are included in the County Development Plan shall not be repeated. Any specific policies / objectives or development standards required for a particular town will be stated as precisely that, and in all cases will be consistent with the County Development Plan. Thus development standards will be the same across the entire County, and any differences for specific settlements would be clear and transparent, to both those adopting the plans, and the general public alike.

Furthermore, Town Plans shall only include strategic objectives that are settlement specific and achievable, and avoid those that are aspirational or are best dealt with in the annual budget, road works programme, etc.

4. Parameters

4.1 Population

The population target used in the relevant town plan shall be that set out in Chapters 4-6 of the County Development Plan 2010-2016.

4.2 Residential Development

The amount of land to be zoned will be based on the planned increase in population, an allowance to factor in the decreasing household size, as well as allowing for an 'excess factor', extant planning permissions, 'Headroom', and Housing Density

Household Size

The average household size has been steadily falling in Co. Wicklow, from 3.23 in 1996 to 2.89 in 2006, a fall of 0.033 per annum over the 10 year period, but this accelerated to over 0.04 over the 4 years to 2006. The Regional Planning Guidelines review group for the Greater Dublin Area estimates that the average household size by 2016 will be in the region of 2.56 persons per household. To cater for the increased number of houses required for the existing population, as well as for the increased population, the entire projected 2016 population will be divided by the predicted 2016 household size to compute the required total number of houses. By subtracting the number of existing houses from this figure gives the total number of houses required to be catered for by newly zoned land.

Excess Factor

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.

The excess factor can vary over time, between regions, within counties, and between urban and rural areas. The Regional Planning Guidelines have assumed that by 2010 the "excess factor" will be 13% in the Mid-East region. Given that the "excess factor" is greater in the Town Council areas, an excess factor of 6% will be used for the less significantly sized settlements covered by these

Plans. Thus 6% will be added to the figure computed under population above.

Extant Planning Permissions

This is the number of houses with planning permission that are not yet built. This figure must be subtracted from the gross number of houses including excess factor.

Headroom

This is the amount of extra land that should be zoned over and above the minimum amount needed to be sure to accommodate population targets. It is also known as “*market factor*” and is intended to allow for that element of zoned land that may not be released to the market for housing purposes during the Plan period. Headroom is normally in the 30% - 50% range; a figure of 30% will be applied in the north of the County where there is greater development pressure, and 50% will be applied in the south of the County where there will be less market pressure to ensure land is released for development. The number of houses computed under the previous paragraph will thus be increased further by the market factor to yield the total number of houses to be catered for.

Housing Density

Once the required number of new housing units has been determined, it will then be necessary to apportion that growth to various parts of the settlement, both to the existing built up or town centre area and to new greenfield sites.

Available land within the town core will be considered first for development and the appropriate density to be allowed on such lands will be determined having regard to the characteristics, prevailing density and vision for that settlement. Where existing core lands cannot provide for the full quantum of housing growth required, new greenfield lands will be proposed for residential zoning at a density appropriate to that settlement. Density allowable on such sites shall be in accordance with and shall not exceed the maximum density allowable in the County Development Plan.

Each town plan will clearly set out the rationale for the selection of various sites for residential or mixed use zoning, state the densities allowable and an indicative number of new residential units that may be developed on each site.

It shall be noted that while extra land will be zoned to give a market factor on 2016 populations, the actual number of houses that will be granted planning permission will be managed to ensure that 2016 population targets are not breached.

4.3 Employment

While employment characteristics will vary considerably across settlements, towns of less than 2,000 persons in size usually have a low employment base, with a large proportion of the population requiring to leave the area for work, including commuting to the larger towns of the County and the Dublin area. While the ‘planning role’ of these small settlements amidst higher order towns, is to sustain the local community, these Town Plans will seek to enhance their role as a nucleus for local enterprise and to accommodate a large proportion of their citizens, and those of their hinterland, to be able to work locally, without having to travel more than moderate distances to work. The type of employment envisaged is typically service based, with some light industry.

The following assumptions will be used to calculate the amount of employment zoned land that is required:

- 63% Labour Force participation rate (A);
- A ‘jobs ratio’ of 0.5-0.7. The ‘jobs ratio’ is the ratio of the number of jobs in the area compared to the number of people in the Labour Force (B);
- A gross employment density of 40sqm per employee, to reflect the likely mix of service manufacturing and distribution based employment opportunities in these towns (C);

- A low density plot ratio of 0.4 to reflect the rural nature and scale of these smaller towns (D);
- 'Headroom' / market factor of 50-100% to reflect the traditionally low, or slow, take up of employment land (E).

Thus the net overall amount of land required for employment will be:

Target population (including the town's catchment) * A * B * C / D

The amount of land required to be zoned will be the balance between this figure and the area of developed employment land already existing in the town, multiplied by the market factor (E).

It should be noted that this calculation assumes that all of those employed will be working on 'employment' zoned land and does not take account of those working in the Town Centre in shops, services etc or those working in education, tourism etc. Therefore plans will be generous in the designation of land for employment, which is considered appropriate and necessary to provide maximum opportunities for new employment creation.

4.4 Social & Amenity Infrastructure

4.4.1 Community & social facilities

Community & social facilities include community centres, childcare facilities, libraries etc. These need to be analysed on a town-by-town basis, and will take into account the existing facilities and the capacity of these to accommodate increased populations.

4.4.1 Education

The need to make provision for school expansion will be determined on a town by town basis. However, analysis will be based on the Department of Education and Science (DES) estimates for school going populations and schools site size requirements.

The DES currently estimates that approximately 12% of the population is of primary school going age. The town population (as well as its rural catchment) will be multiplied by this factor to determine the number of primary pupils in the area. This is then divided by 25 per classroom to get the number of classrooms required. Primary schools are normally provided in blocks of 8 classrooms, with the DES providing standard site size requirements for schools of 8, 16 or 32 classrooms.

The amount of land required in theory is net of the existing number of classrooms, but in practice many of the existing schools are unsuitable, or cannot be extended, and often land is required to be zoned for the full population of the town. The land should be located in close proximity to existing housing areas or residentially zoned land to facilitate children walking to school. A market factor the same as that used to compute residential land should be applied to ensure that school land is adjacent to whatever residential land is developed.

The DES currently estimates that approximately 8% of the population is of secondary school going age. The number of classrooms required will be computed in the same manner as for primary pupils. Normally, for small settlements, the population will not necessitate the zoning of land for a secondary school where one does not currently exist. However, in settlements with secondary schools, regard shall be taken of the catchment of that school and planned population growth for that wider area and additional lands at existing schools or new sites shall be zoned where a need is identified.

4.4.2 Play

The Council's adopted Active Open Space policy requires the provision of active open space at a rate of 2.4ha of land per 1,000 population. This should be divided into:

- 1.6ha for outdoor sport
- 0.6ha for casual play space

- 0.2ha for equipped playspace.
The amount of land to be zoned for play will take into account the existing facilities and the capacity of these to accommodate increased populations.

4.5 Retail

While regard shall be taken of the County Retail Strategy, particularly with regard to the retail function of the settlement concerned, the County Retail Strategy does not include retail floorspace 'allocations' for the smaller settlements in the County. Therefore the retail needs of towns shall be determined on a case-by-case basis through the Town Plan process. This will include an evaluation of existing retail floorspace (both convenience and comparison), an estimate of the population in the retail catchment of the town and through the application of current retail spending estimate (per capita) and retail floorspace turnover estimates, an estimate of the retail needs of the town shall be determined.

It is not expected that all of the retail needs of residents in such small towns will be met locally, but it will be assumed that the vast majority of convenience spending can be absorbed locally, while only 30-50% of comparison spending will be accommodated.

5. Plan Process

For each new or revised plan:

- An issues paper shall be produced, detailing the key strategic questions to be addressed by the plan, and this will be used as the basis of public consultation meetings. The public consultation meetings shall be widely advertised and held in the settlement concerned and written submissions will be invited;
- After background surveys and analysis is completed, having taken submissions from the public into consideration, a first draft map will be prepared to include all proposed land designations, infrastructural reservations and works objectives. Input will then be sought from a broad group of officials and Area Councillors including area engineers, planners who deal with the area concerned, senior officials of Roads, Water Services, Housing, Planning, and Councillors from the relevant electoral area. Should there be a general consensus, the plan will be drafted taking these views into consideration;
- The plan will then be advertised and put on display, sent to the prescribed bodies, and thereafter follow statutory process on to adoption.

6. Town and District Plans included in this Volume

1. **Aughrim Town Plan**
2. **Baltinglass Town Plan**
3. **Carnew Town Plan**
4. **Newcastle Town Plan**
5. **Roundwood Town Plan**
6. **Shillelagh Town Plan**
7. **Tinahely Town Plan**
8. **Rathdown No. 2 District Plan**