



3.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the overall strategy for the development of County Wicklow over the plan period. This strategy evolves from consideration of national, regional and local plans, strategies and guidelines, as set out in Chapter 2 and the overall vision for the County which is:

VISION

For County Wicklow to be a cohesive community of people enjoying distinct but interrelated urban and rural environments; 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.

In order to implement this vision, it is necessary to set out a number of strategic goals that will underpin all the policies and objectives of this plan.

GOAL 1

To implement the overarching guidance offered by the National Spatial Strategy 2002 - 2020, the National Development Plan 2007 - 2013, the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2004 - 2016, and manage the spatial organisation of the County in an efficient sustainable manner.

To achieve this goal, a County settlement strategy is put in place that will guide the location of new development during the plan period and beyond. This strategy will establish a hierarchy of settlements based on their role and capacity for growth and to determine what levels and type of future development shall be allowed to occur at each level in the hierarchy.

- Strategic Policies**
- ▶ To structure and manage the spatial organisation of the County, having regard to the principles of proper planning and sustainable development, and the guidance given by the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020, and the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2004 - 2016;
 - ▶ To manage the County's settlement in accordance with the settlement strategy hierarchy of settlements and population apportionment;
 - ▶ To direct growth into the designated metropolitan growth centre and the large, moderate and small growth towns in the hinterland area, whilst recognising the settlement requirements of rural communities;
 - ▶ That all water, transportation and community infrastructural investments shall be informed by and based upon the County settlement strategy and hierarchy of settlements;
 - ▶ To ensure that the zoning of land is referenced by the County settlement strategy, that it is based upon rational planning grounds and a clear evidence based core strategy.



GOAL 2

To facilitate and encourage the growth of employment, enterprise and economic activity in the County, across all economic sectors and in all areas.

The promotion of economic activity is key to the future development of the County and may be facilitated through:

- encouraging a broad range of enterprise development within the County thereby avoiding dependence on a specific sector;
- adopting a cohesive and co-ordinated approach to the provision of incubation/start up units throughout the County;
- identifying key success traits of current development initiatives and highlight what is creating blockages to future development and addressing these blockages;
- promoting the provision of necessary infrastructure required for the development of industry e.g. broadband;
- creating linkages with third level education providers;
- addressing regional disparities to ensure the benefits of growth and development are evenly distributed and dispersed throughout the County;
- promoting economic growth and potential employment opportunities in the rural areas of the County in order to sustain vibrant and sustainable rural communities.

- Strategic Policies**
- ▶ To enhance the range and number of employment opportunities in the County, to increase the jobs ratio (i.e. the ratio of jobs available in the County compared to Wicklow labour force) from 0.65 in 2006 to 0.7 by 2016 and 0.75 by 2020 and to reduce the excessive commuting distances and trip times undertaken by the County's working population.
 - ▶ To facilitate the development of high technology and high value employment, including the manufacturing sector, research and development and science, to create a knowledge based economy and to build strong linkages between education, research and employment, and promote the third level institute at Clermont as a centre of excellence;
 - ▶ To promote the development of the tourism sector in a sustainable and environmentally sensitive manner, to capitalise on the County's tourism and recreational assets and generate wealth and employment in the County through the provision and upgrading of tourism infrastructure that will extend the stay and spend of tourists in the County;
 - ▶ To protect and enhance key built and natural assets that are of integrity per se, and critical to the development of a sustainable economy;
 - ▶ To overcome the County's water infrastructural deficits and in particular wastewater infrastructure to ensure such under provision does not impede economic development and wealth creation;
 - ▶ To promote and facilitate the development and expansion of the electricity transmission and distribution grid and to encourage improved availability of a high quality, high-speed information, telecommunications and broadcasting networks.



GOAL 3

To integrate land use planning with transportation planning, with the dual aim of reducing the distance that people need to travel to work, shops, schools and places of recreation and social interaction, and facilitating the delivery of improved public transport.

The 2006 Census figures give an indication of commuting patterns in Wicklow. The figures indicate that the County has by far a greater percentage of people travelling for longer lengths of time than the national average, with the percentage of people travelling 1-1.5 hours to work, school or college at 10%, which is nearly double the national average of 6%. Similarly, County Wicklow residents have longer distances to travel, with significantly higher numbers of people travelling 25 kilometres and longer, at 20%, compared to the national average of 12%. This level of commuting is unsustainable on many fronts, including socially, economically and environmentally, and is an important contributor to assessing the overall quality of life for the inhabitants of the County. Reducing the need to travel long distances by private car, and increasing the use of sustainable and healthy alternatives, can not only bring multiple benefits to both our environment and communities, but also to our own mental and physical wellbeing.

- Strategic Policies**
- ▶ Craft land use policies to produce settlements of such form and layout that facilitates and encourages sustainable forms of movement and transport, prioritising walking and cycling, and for larger settlements, bus transport;
 - ▶ Promote the improvement of public transport services, in particular the upgrading of the Dublin - Rosslare train line, bringing the LUAS to Bray and the development of improved bus services;

GOAL 4

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.

The Housing Strategy, which forms part of this plan, sets out projected housing growth, the availability of zoned and serviced land to meet this demand, and the issue of housing affordability based upon, in the main, projections of income and housing unit prices.

While it is estimated that there is sufficient land to meet Wicklow's housing needs up to 2016, limitations in water and particularly wastewater capacities have and will continue to present serious blockages to development. Wastewater collection and treatment deficits may persist to 2014 and beyond. This key finding has implications for the spatial distribution of development within the County, with housing demand capable of being met in the north and east of the County and significant restrictions elsewhere.

In its appraisal of housing affordability, the Housing Strategy estimates that up to 40% of new households formed over the plan period will expect affordability challenges and 20% will clearly not be able to enter the housing market.

- Strategic Policies**
- ▶ To zone sufficient land in accordance with the County's Settlement Hierarchy, to accommodate the projected increase in population and households over the plan
 - ▶ To promote the delivery of appropriately scaled and located employment, retail and social / community infrastructure in tandem with new residential development;
 - ▶ To ensure that new retail, employment, education, community and recreational facilities are directed to the locations with the highest concentration of residents;
 - ▶ To adequately service zoned land where housing demand exists and or is planned;
 - ▶ To ensure that a mixture of house types and sizes is developed to reasonably match the requirements of the different categories of households including the range of social and affordable housing identified by The County Housing Strategy;
 - ▶ To ensure new housing developments are designed and constructed to the highest of standards.



GOAL 5

To maintain and enhance the viability and vibrancy of settlements, to ensure that towns and villages remain at the heart of the community and provide a wide range of retail, employment, social, recreational and infrastructural facilities.

While a high proportion of the County's residents live outside towns, the settlements of the County provide a significant component of employment, retail, social and cultural needs for all of the County's people. While the proportion of the County's population living in towns and villages is gradually increasing, the future viability of our towns and villages is under threat, particularly because of the significant outflows of retail expenditure from the County.

Notwithstanding this, the County's towns and villages are best placed to absorb additional growth and in accordance with the County settlement strategy, new development is to be directed into settlements. With additional development comes the need for the implementation of appropriate development standards, that result in a good mix of development types, high quality development and places and improved viability of infrastructural services (including public transport). In these regards, the density of development requires to be appropriately managed.

- Strategic Policies**
- ▶ To promote the development of the County's urban settlements and in the interests of maintaining higher order economic development, social and cultural infrastructure, promote efficiencies in engineering services and transportation;
 - ▶ To encourage higher residential densities in urban centres, and to reflect this in local area and town plans;
 - ▶ To seek to address dereliction and urban decay by supporting urban regeneration projects;
 - ▶ To ensure that businesses and services with a high potential for public transport utilisation by employees and visitors are sited in locations which are easily accessible or which can be made easily accessible by public transport;
 - ▶ To direct new retail activities into existing urban centres, in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines for Local Authorities (2005), the Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area (2008) and the County Retail Strategy;
 - ▶ To retain a greater percentage of retail expenditure in the County, to stem expenditure outflows and in particular the excessive leakage of comparison spend and to encourage the increased provision of both comparison and convenience retail opportunities in the County.

GOAL 6

To protect and enhance the County's rural assets and recognise the housing, employment, social and recreational needs of those in rural areas

Wicklow's proximity to Dublin, which allows for easy access to the main commercial and employment centres of the Metropolitan area, coupled with its beautiful landscape and amenities, has led to considerable urban generated pressure for housing in our rural area and smaller villages. This has resulted in competition for housing sites and difficulties for rural natives in securing suitable sites. In accordance with 'Sustainable Rural Housing - Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (DoEHLG) 2005, this plan recognises that people who are part of the rural community should be facilitated by the planning system in all rural areas, including those under strong urban-based pressures.

Furthermore, the decline in the primary sectors of agriculture, forestry and fishing has resulted in the need to diversify the rural economy and into alternative resource based industries as well as appropriate non-resource based activities.

These housing and employment activities require to be accommodated in such a way that does not diminish the County's rural assets, including our landscape, nature designations, water quality and the safety of all road users, including pedestrians and cyclists.



- Strategic Policies**
- ▶ Rural housing development shall be in accordance with the provisions of 'Sustainable Rural Housing - Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (DoEHLG 2005), the sustainable settlement policy framework as articulated in the National Spatial Strategy and the rural housing strategy and objectives set out in this plan;
 - ▶ That rural housing shall be accommodated where rural housing need has been established, where it strengthens the established structure of villages, smaller settlements and other rural areas, where it sustains and revitalises established rural communities and does not endanger key rural assets or the vitality and viability of the higher order County Settlements;
 - ▶ To minimise the impacts of new rural housing, in terms of adverse effects on the landscape, water quality, natural and built heritage and road users;
 - ▶ To address the changing nature of the rural economy by promoting the diversification of employment options and towards maximising the potential of resource based development in the areas of forestry, marine, rural enterprise and services, natural resources, renewable energy production, tourism and agri-tourism. To promote re-structuring and efficiencies

GOAL 7

To protect and improve the County's transport, water, waste, energy and communications infrastructure, whilst having regard to our responsibilities to respect areas protected for their important flora, fauna or other natural features

- Strategic Policies**
- ▶ To continue to improve the County's transportation infrastructure, with an emphasis shift away from new road construction in favour of solutions that facilitate the delivery of improved public transport (where feasible), reducing the demand for travel and improved public safety;
 - ▶ To promote and facilitate the improvement of the mainline train and DART services and to promote the linkage of the LUAS extension to Bray and Fassaroe and the linking of both DART and LUAS at Bray.
 - ▶ To continue the County's investment in water services infrastructure and in particular investment in waste water infrastructure to ensure that existing barriers to growth, economic progress and the sustainable development of the County, are removed
 - ▶ To implement the provisions of the 'Planning System and Flood Risk Management' Guidelines (2008), have regard to the guidelines, objectives formulated around flood management, avoidance of development in flood risk areas, reduction and mitigation of risk and flood risk management and assessment.
 - ▶ To implement the Wicklow Waste Water Management Plan 2006 - 2011 and have regard to the National Waste Prevention Plan 2009, and the National Hazardous Waste Management Plan.
 - ▶ It is policy to pursue best practice in accordance with the Waste Management Hierarchy and formulate guidance regarding solid waste management including green waste and waste to energy facilities, hazardous waste and emissions, emissions to air, noise and light pollution.



GOAL 8

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.

The term 'community development' refers to a complex and broad range of actions and measures involving a wide range of practitioners and bodies with the common aim of improving various aspects of local communities. There are however two key strands to the development of 'sustainable communities':

- (1) Facilitating communities in developing the skills, capacities and projects needed to enable them to have a greater say in the management of their own futures;
- (2) Facilitating access to the goods, services and structures within society for all, and particularly for those that are marginalised and powerless ('social inclusion').

- Strategic Policies**
- ▶ To ensure the provision of a comprehensive, integrated infrastructure of social and community facilities through out the County.
 - ▶ To ensure the provision of social and community facilities as an essential part of the development of settlements where the scale and range of such infrastructure provided shall be in accordance with the Hierarchy Model of community facilities prepared under Strand 3 of County Development Levy scheme;
 - ▶ That land use planning facilitate the delivery of social and community projects, the improved physical access to goods and services and the overall improvement in the quality of the built environment including the provision of open space.

GOAL 9

To protect and enhance the diversity of the County's natural and built heritage

Wicklow's built heritage wealth is reflected in its abundance of archaeological and historical sites and monuments ranging from the late bronze age right through Christian, Viking, Norman and medieval eras, large county houses, planned estate villages, Georgian houses and other vernacular structures as well as bridges, harbours, stone walls and structures and sites associated with mining, industrial, political and religious heritage. The County's natural heritage includes an excellent diversity of natural and semi-natural habitats such as marine, coastal, wetland, woodland, lake, river and upland habitats that in turn support a diverse and varied flora and fauna.

Our natural and built heritage is under threat and is being diminished by, in the main, the pressures wrought by population growth and economic change and development. The Council recognises heritage's intrinsic value, and the importance of protecting and conserving Wicklow's heritage potential to the economic, social, cultural and environmental development of the County.

- Strategic Policies**
- ▶ To protect, conserve and enhance buildings, areas, structures, sites and features of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest.
 - ▶ To ensure the conservation, wise management of areas of natural heritage value, and of features of natural interest and value such as woodlands, wetlands, watercourses and areas of unspoilt uplands. To protect plant animal species and habitats which have been identified in the Habitats Directive, Birds Directive, Wildlife Act (1976) and the flora Protection Order 1999.
 - ▶ To protect and promote the enhancement of the natural and built environment and the coastal zone as identified in the County Development Plan. Facilitate and strictly control appropriate development, prohibit development that is detrimental to coastal areas while minimising the adverse impacts of existing activities, promote the economic, social, cultural and environmental use of the coast, the bio-diversity of coastal cells and their critical support systems.

**GOAL 10**

To address the climate change challenge, as a plan dynamic, throughout the County Plan, directly in the areas of flooding and renewable energy, and indirectly by integrating climate change and sustainable development into statements of plan policy, strategies and objectives.

We predominately use fossil fuels, non-renewable resources, such as coal, oil and natural gas, to generate energy. We inevitably face the depletion of these resources in the future and the associated risk of security of fuel supply. Furthermore the combustion of such fuels results in greenhouse gas emissions. The development of renewable energy shall be to the forefront of Wicklow County Council's policy formulation to ensure that our use and dependence on fossil fuels be reduced.

Flooding is an area of special planning concern, in the main attributable to the noticeable increase in the severity and frequency of flooding, and because of failure to appropriately take account of flood risk and the subsequent wide ranging costs incurred.

- Strategic Policies**
- ▶ To facilitate the minimisation of emissions to the air of greenhouse gases in accordance with international and European agreements and the National Climate Change Strategy. In this regard, the Council will support any appropriate initiatives taken to provide for more sustainable forms of energy use.
 - ▶ To have regard to the National Climate Change Strategy (2007), the Government White Paper 'Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland - The Energy Policy Framework' (2007), the Wind Energy Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2006) and the Planning & Development Acts 2000 - 2007 in the development of appropriate strategies and objectives for the development of alternative and renewable energy, in particular Wind Energy;
 - ▶ To reduce energy demand in the areas of primary consumption being transport, electricity and heating, particularly through improved integration of land use and transportation planning and higher standards of building design;
 - ▶ To implement the provisions of the 'Planning System and Flood Risk Management' Guidelines (2008), have regard to the guidelines, objectives formulated around flood management, avoidance of development in flood risk areas, reduction and mitigation of risk and flood risk management and assessment.