

CHAPTER 5

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Introduction

This chapter of the plan deals with development strategies, objectives and standards for the urban settlements of the County, that is, those settlements in Levels 1-5 of the County Settlement Hierarchy.

5.2 Vision for towns

While a high proportion of Wicklow residents live outside towns, the County's towns are the lifeblood of the County, meeting all or some of the employment, retail, cultural and social needs of all residents. The County settlement strategy sets out a hierarchy of towns from 'metropolitan' to 'small' but they will all fulfill similar functions depending on their size and catchment, and services on offer. Investment in towns and urban settlements gives the highest return to society, as economies of scale can be achieved and the highest standards of environmental protection can be achieved.

Strategic Objective For towns to be or to become the heart of the community, the principal area for communities to meet, interact, shop and recreate. The viability and vitality of centres is paramount, and all other objectives in the Plan affecting urban centres must be assessed in this context.

Objectives

UD1 To maintain the future viability of existing urban centres in the County by directing new development into designated towns and settlements.

UD2 To ensure the continued vibrancy and life of urban centres, the provision of business, retail, leisure, entertainment and cultural uses will be encouraged. In urban redevelopment proposals, the provision, retention or replacement of such uses may be required. In addition, existing residential uses should be retained wherever practical and new residential development will be encouraged.

UD3 It is an objective of the Council to:-

- To require the creation and maintenance of a high quality urban and suburban environment;
- Encourage higher residential densities in urban centres, and to reflect this in local area and town plans;
- To allow a relaxation in certain development standards in urban centres in the interest of achieving the best development possible, both visually and functionally;
- To seek to address dereliction and urban/suburban decay by supporting urban/suburban regeneration projects;
- 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;
- Encourage the provision of a wide range of employment opportunities;
- Direct all new retail activities into existing urban centres, in accordance with the County Retail Strategy (as set out in Chapter 10).

5.3 The role of towns & development objectives

The County settlement strategy sets out five different designations of towns in the County – metropolitan consolidation town, large growth towns (Types 1 and 2), moderate growth towns and small growth towns. These designations closely match the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2004-2016.

5.3.1 Metropolitan Consolidation Towns & Large Growth Towns (Levels 1, 2 & 3)

These are the main settlements in the County, that have the highest order economic and social functions, the highest potential for sustainable growth and good transport links to the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

The RPGs advise that the locations closest to Dublin City should be developed to a relatively large scale as part of the strategy for the consolidation of the Metropolitan Area. The Metropolitan Consolidation Towns are located within the Metropolitan Area and include the existing significant urban centres of Bray, Swords, Blanchardstown, Lucan, Clondalkin, Tallaght, Dun Laoghaire and Dundrum.

It is envisaged that, principally, the Large Growth Towns are most likely to be successful in attracting a concentration of major employment-generating investment and should have the high accessibility/connectivity and will therefore require a location on a main radial / orbital road intersection and high quality rail service. These centres should be economically self-sustaining, with a population, including its catchment, which is able to support facilities such as a high quality secondary (and sometimes tertiary) education service, a small hospital or polyclinic-type facility of sufficient size to provide non-specialised medical care and a comparison retail centre.

A distinction is made between Large Growth Towns I and Large Growth Towns II on grounds such as population size, accessibility, location on principal modal corridors and range of facilities. Large Growth Towns I are identified as Navan, Naas, and Wicklow, while the Large Towns II are Balbriggan, Newbridge, Greystones/Delgany and Arklow.

Objective

UD4 The settlements in Levels 1, 2 & 3 shall be prioritised for growth and investment and shall absorb regional demand for new housing from inside and outside the County.

5.3.2 Moderate Growth Towns (Level 4)

Towns of this scale in the GDA are also generally located on or near the transportation corridors radiating from Dublin and are relatively close to the larger urban areas. While large growth towns will be the main focus for responding to future growth in the GDA hinterland, these smaller towns cater for local growth in residential, employment and service functions through enhancing the built environment, water services, public transport links and capacity for development in these centres. Accommodating such additional functions must however be balanced with protecting the character and quality of these towns.

The Moderate Growth Towns that are located within the Hinterland Area include Lusk, Rush, Trim, Kells, Ashbourne, Kildare, Monasterevin, Kilcullen, Athy, Blessington and Newtownmountkennedy.

A number of these towns are envisaged as having an interacting and supporting role to their adjacent Large Town, and in both Kildare and Meath, a number of Moderate Growth Towns form part of

'dynamic clusters' with adjacent Large and Metropolitan Growth Towns. However, no such 'clusters' have been identified for the Moderate Growth Towns in Wicklow, although it would seem logical that Blessington could be clustered with Naas or Tallaght in the Metropolitan area given proximity, road links and strong interaction for services and Newtownmountkennedy could be clustered with Greystones.

Objective

UD5 The settlements in Levels 4 (moderate growth towns) shall be prioritised for moderate growth and investment and shall absorb demand for new housing from inside and outside the County subject to the following controls

- in any new multi-house development, a minimum of 20% of new houses shall be sold to persons that have been living and/or working in County Wicklow for at least 1 year. There are no restrictions on the remaining 80%.
- Any new single house developments shall be restricted to those living and/or working in the County for 1 year.

5.3.3 Small Growth Towns (Level 5)

The classification of Small Growth Towns is largely synonymous with the centres identified by the NSS as yielding a population of between 1,500 and 5,000 persons. It is envisaged that major employment-generating investment companies will seek to locate in Large Growth or possibly Moderate Growth Towns, and not necessarily in these locations. Relatively small and locally financed businesses are expected to locate in Small Growth Towns; however, other economic investment could be supported where sustainable and in keeping with the size and services of the town. Retail is likely to be mainly in the convenience category, with a small supermarket and possibly local centres serving only the town and its local catchment area. Small Growth Towns would likely contain facilities such as a primary and sometimes a secondary school, as well as a health clinic.

Within this category of settlement, the Regional Planning Guidelines identify a range of small town 'types' including small commercial towns, remote from core commuter areas and having a strong trading tradition serving a large rural hinterland; in particular, Baltinglass is identified as such a town. Such economically active independent towns, with less dependence on commuting for population growth, are recognised in the RPGs for their key local importance and should be supported in this role. It is important that the investment in social infrastructure in such locally significant towns is at a higher level, equivalent to larger size centres in recognition of their role as key centres for a very large rural hinterland and for surrounding smaller villages and towns.

The RPGs also note in Section 4.7 'Strategic Policies and Recommendations - Recommendations for Development Plans & Core Strategies' that '*The rural and particular landscape qualities of the County, which see a large rural hinterland to the south west more focused towards Carlow, allows the town of Baltinglass to grow in a sustainable manner, meeting the needs of the local community and surrounding districts, and playing critical local role*'. Accordingly, within this small growth town category, Baltinglass will have a superior significance.

Section 4.7 also recognises that "*the recommended examination of possible improvements to the Wicklow rail route by the RPGs will assist in supporting economic and housing activity inthe smaller rail served towns of Rathdrum and Kilcoole, and support the continued delivery of a strong defined settlement pattern for the County*". This plan will thus give due recognition to this elevated status of Rathdrum and Kilcoole within this small growth town category, particularly with regard to their growth targets.

Objective

- UD6** The settlements in Levels 5 shall be re-inforced as attractors for more indigenous growth and investment and shall absorb demand for new housing from inside and outside the County subject to the following controls
- In any new multi-house development, a minimum of 50% of new houses shall be sold to persons that have been living and/or working in County Wicklow for at least 1 year. There are no restrictions of the remaining 50%.
 - Any new single house developments shall be restricted to those living and/or working in the County for 1 year.

5.4 Urban design standards

Urban design considers the relationship of buildings to one another and to the spaces around them. This section sets out the principal standards that Wicklow County Council will apply to all new developments in urban areas, but with particular emphasis on the standards applicable to developments that include residential use¹. There have been a number of guidance documents published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government on urban design and all applicants for permission in urban areas are advised to consult these documents, as they will also be utilised as a tool in the assessment of planning applications².

5.4.1 Appropriate consideration of local setting and context

Any proposed development must consider both its site and its surroundings and respond to them in a positive way. All of Wicklow's larger settlements still have at their core a traditional two - three storey 'main street' where most economic activity is concentrated, with the larger settlements having developed 'satellite' economic centres, normally in the form of new neighbourhood retail centres in housing expansion areas.

Core town centre area

The core town centre area, which is usually the historic core, will normally be zoned 'town centre', which allows for a wide range and mix of uses. New development in such areas will normally comprise infill or brownfield sites, or redevelopment opportunity sites put together through acquisition of a number of underperforming or derelict sites. Regardless of the type of site, new development shall generally follow the pattern of development in that area, with regard to building form, massing, height and design features, unless the relevant local plan specifies otherwise. In particular:-

- new developments will require to be 'integrated' with the existing built fabric, in the sense that it will knit together, both physically and visually with the surrounding buildings;
- new developments will be required to form new street frontage or to bridge existing gaps in the streetscape. Where an access point is required, this should be in the form of a tunnel or arch. Where appropriate or necessary, buildings may however be stepped backwards or forwards, to add visual interest and variety to the town, subject always to this not undermining or interfering with an established streetscape;
- the development of new streets and squares will be encouraged, as well as the opening up of new links between sites or from backlands to the street front;

¹ For development standards relating to employment generating development, namely industry, office, small-medium sized business etc please refer to Chapter 7; for shopfront design standards refer to Chapter 10.

² 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Area's (DoEHLG 2008), Urban Design Manual, 'Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments' (DoEHLG 2007), 'Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities' (DoEHLG 2007), Recommendations for Site Development Works for Housing Areas (DoEHLG 1998)

- where the plot width of the site is considerably wider than the prevailing plot width along the street, the new building's facade will be required to be broken into visually distinguishable elements, to allow for a more seamless transition between existing and new;
- in town centres that are designated Architectural Conservation Areas, applications for new development shall pay due regard to the features of the area that warranted that designation and shall identify key elements of the existing townscape that are to be carried forward into the new development;
- while intensification of development in town centres is encouraged, excessive height shall not be utilised as the principal mechanism for achieving this. Heights more than 1-storey above adjoining buildings will not normally be accepted, unless the individual town plan has set a height standard. Any application for heights in excess of this shall submit detailed justification and visual assessment of the proposal, including rendered drawings / photomontages and day and sunlight analysis;
- As internal ceiling height in older buildings may not meet modern needs, necessary deviations from the prevailing 'storey line' shall be mitigated by design for example, through the use of fenestration.

Greenfield developments

New developments on greenfield sites may need to establish their own identity, as some may be of such a scale and distance from the core town centre area as to render analysis of existing 'context' meaningless. In this regard, it is considered appropriate to consider two forms of greenfield development – the large-scale planned expansion area and small to medium scaled housing developments.

Large-scale expansion areas

Large-scale expansion areas are considered to be those developments that would add 10% or more to the existing housing stock of a town (e.g. the development of Charlesland in Greystones which added around 30% to the existing housing stock in Greystones / Delgany) or comprise more than 200 residential units. Normally the local area or town plan will set out the detailed design parameters for large-scale planned expansion areas.

Unless otherwise specific in a local plan, the following shall apply:-

- at the outset, a vision for the area shall be established and agreed with the Planning Authority. This shall set out the 'type' of place that is envisaged, the design ethos and the influences on form and design emerging;
- an evaluation of the existing surroundings of the site, as well as future proposals / zoning for lands in proximity, shall be carried out to determine how the new development will integrate with the area and allow for maximum connectivity and permeability;
- the development shall include distinctive and / or landmark type buildings and a series of new spaces that allow for the development of a sense of place and identity;
- new roads / streets shall be laid out in a legible hierarchy from distributor to local roads;
- the retail, employment and community needs of the new area shall be met at a scale appropriate to the development, having regard to the availability of such facilities in the settlement and their proximity to the site in question.

Small-medium scale housing developments

These developments would not normally be of scale that warrants the establishment of a new neighbourhood 'identity', but rather are intended to 'fit' into the existing built fabric of the settlement. These developments will normally be within or adjacent to existing developed areas or at the very edge of the settlements. Again the local area or town plan will often set out the specific design parameters for new housing estates and unless otherwise specific in a local plan, the following shall apply:-

- Visual integration and physical connectivity with the area surrounding the site will be required to be at the fore of any design model;

- While the format and design should complement the prevailing pattern of development in the area and should not degrade the residential or visual amenities already enjoyed in the area, new developments shall meet the highest standards of modern layout and design even if this means a development that is very different from its surroundings;
- Where such a small to medium scale development is to form part of a future larger development, the developer will be required to show possible future development zones / layouts in the area and compliance with the principle set out for large scale developments (above);
- Where such a small to medium scale development is adjoining future development lands or provides the only possible access route to other lands, new roads will be required to be designed to ensure that future access to other lands can be facilitated.

5.4.2 Intensity of development (density)

In urban settlements and particularly in the core area of urban settlements, measures such as 'units per hectare' are problematic as they do not allow meaningful measurement of the quantum of development permissible on mixed-use sites and do not reflect the range in unit sizes that may be proposed. Therefore plot ratio, which is the ratio of development floor area to site area, will apply in such areas. Often local area and town plans will set out the minimum or maximum density permissible at that location, as this is likely to vary from town to town, depending on local characteristics. Unless otherwise specified, the following standards will apply:-

Location	Maximum plot ratio
Commercial, housing or mixed use core town centre area (zoned TC)	2 (20,000sqm of development per hectare)
Commercial, housing or mixed use edge of centre (zoned TC)	1 (10,000sqm of development per hectare)
Housing only edge of centre	0.5 (5,000sqm of development per hectare)
Housing only greenfield	0.35 (3,500sqm of development per hectare)

- All planning applications shall provide a table of data showing site area, development area, building footprint, total building floor area and a calculation of plot ratio;
- 'Density' will only be allowed to be generated from land that is capable of being built upon; land which is ultimately unsuitable for such purposes (e.g. due to excessive slope) will not be considered to be part of the density equation even if it forms part of the overall site. Any such areas should be clearly shown on planning applications drawings;
- The density that can be achieved on any site will ultimately depend on compliance with 'qualitative' standards such as fit with surroundings, height, open space provision, adequate privacy, car parking etc and the density ultimately proposed should be the outcome of the design process rather than the starting point;
- In certain circumstances, such as brownfield sites in urban areas or sites in very close proximity to a high quality, reliable public transport network, departures from the maximum density standards specified may be considered, subject to the highest quality of design;
- Where a new 'neighbourhood' centre forms part of a large-scale greenfield expansion area, plot ratio in the neighbourhood hub (i.e. only that area forming an integrated part of the shopping / community facilities provided) may be allowed to increase to 1:1.
- A plot ratio of 0.5:1 or 5,000sqm per hectare would be the equivalent of 40 houses of 125sqm to the hectare or 16 houses to the acre. Expressing the density allowable in terms of sqm per hectare allows for density to be adjusted where houses are larger or smaller than 125sqm (for example, if all houses were 100sqm, 50/ha would be allowable whereas only 25/ha would be possible if all houses were 200sqm);
- A plot ratio of 0.35:1 or 3,500sqm per hectare would be the equivalent of 28 houses of 125sqm to the hectare or 11 houses to the acre.

5.4.3 Suitability of the proposed use at that location

- The uses allowable in any zone in an urban centre will normally be set out in the local area or town plan applicable. However, while a particular use may be allowable, it does not imply that it is desirable or acceptable at all locations;
- In particular, in core town centre areas, active uses will normally be required at ground floor level i.e. retail, commercial, community or leisure uses. All non-residential floors will be required to be designed to be suitable to a range of users. The mix and balance of different type of uses (including retail and retail services) is important to attract people to core town centre areas and to ensure town centres remain the main meeting point for the community. Too many of certain types of outlet can destroy the balance of the town centre, and accordingly the Planning Authority will control the number of bookmakers, off-licences (including off-licences in convenience stores), financial institutions, and other uses that can adversely affect the character of a town centre;
- 'Living over the shop' i.e. residential use over ground or first level commercial use will be specifically encouraged by allowing a relaxation in development standards such as car parking and open space;
- At edge of centre locations, even where a local area or town plan allows for commercial or mixed uses, these will only be considered where there are either no better sites available in the town centre core or there is some impediment to the development of available town centre core sites and it can be shown that trade or activity will not be drawn away from the core;
- At greenfield locations separated from the town core, where a local area or town plan does not specify otherwise, any significant new residential developments will be required to be accompanied by that quantum of retail, commercial and social / community development necessary to meet the needs of that community.

5.4.4 Accessibility

Town centre locations will normally be well serviced by a good road network and some of the larger urban centres will also have public transport infrastructure. Departures from the maximum density standards specified may be considered where the site is in very close proximity to a high quality, reliable public transport network (subject to the highest quality of design). New development may also be required to include services and formats that facilitate penetration of public transport into the development / site.

New entry / exit points off the 'main street' will be strictly controlled in order to maintain free movement of vehicles and pedestrians along the street. Where no other option is available, new / expanded entry / exit points will be allowed subject to no adverse traffic congestion or pedestrian safety problems being created. Where new entrances are allowed, they may be required to be so located and designed to allow for access to other sites.

At edge of centre or greenfield locations, good connectivity to the town centre area will be required and where access roads or pedestrian / cycle links do not exist, these will be required to be provided or financed by the developer.

New developments will be required to place a high emphasis on **permeability** and **legibility** of access routes. A permeable layout is one that is well connected and offers a choice of direct routes to all local destinations, thereby encouraging walking and cycling, facilitating public transport penetration and generating higher levels of pedestrian activity, casual social interaction, informal supervision and thus security. A legible development is one that is structured in a way that creates distinctive places and spaces that may be easily 'read' and that are easy to find one's way around. A legible layout is based on designing at a human scale in response to the positive features of a site and how it relates to the wider area, rather than technical demands of traffic or the internal logic of the individual site.

Relaxation in car parking standards in town centres may be considered where

- Good public transport is available;
- the applicant can provide a robust model of car parking usage to show that dual usage will occur and that peak car parking demand at any time of the day / week will always be met;

- there is a parking enforcement system in place in the town concerned or town car park in proximity to the site. In such cases, only the needs of long-term users (e.g. employees, residents) will have to be addressed by the developer.

(Car parking standards are set out in Chapter 11, Table 11.2)

5.4.5 Design quality

5.4.5.1 Layout

- New urban developments shall be so laid out to have a 'relationship' with the public realm, with windows / balconies overlooking existing or proposed streets / open spaces. Buildings backing onto public areas, whether they are streets or public open spaces, will not be permitted;
- A variety in set backs and building lines shall be provided to provide for visual interest and to create interesting spaces. As set out in Section 5.4.5.4 to follow, car parking does not always have to be located uniformly along the front of houses;
- Notwithstanding established separation 'rules' that may be applied to maximise privacy for dwellings (see below), traditional back-to-back rows of 2-storey houses, exactly 22m apart should be avoided and more imaginative layouts and building forms provided, subject always to adequate privacy being provided;
- Layouts shall ensure adequate sunlight and daylight, in accordance with "*Site layout planning for daylight and sunlight: a guide to best practice*", (BRE 1991);
- Roads should be designed in a hierarchical manner, so that the bulk of traffic moves around distributor roads, with the majority of residences located on lightly trafficked routes (this of course should be balanced with the need to maximise permeability within the development). Roads, footpaths and car parking areas shall be located and designed so that obstructive on street parking or parking on kerbs is not necessary;
- Greenfield developments shall be so laid out as to maximise retention and integration of natural features, such as mature trees, hedgerows, water courses etc into the site layout;
- The maximum size of any greenfield housing development will depend on the size of the town and the requirements of the town plan / local area plan, but shall not be greater than 100 units where only traditional houses are proposed or 200 units where there is a mix of houses and apartments. Any development exceeding this number shall be broken up into a number of distinct 'estates', even if accessed from a shared road, with materially different architectural styles.

5.4.5.2 Building design

New buildings shall be attractive, safe and secure and provide a high quality living environment. In particular, the design of new buildings shall accord with the following requirements: -

External appearance

- Good modern architecture with a building language that is varied and forward-looking rather than repetitive and retrospective will be required; however, reference and 'clues' must be drawn from surroundings, particularly in traditional or protected town centre areas;
- Variation in external materials will be expected, again subject to 'fit' with surrounding buildings. Care shall be taken in excessive use of contrasting materials and generally no more than two contrasting materials shall be utilised on any façade;
- The possibility of providing roof mounted communal satellite dishes in town centre commercial and apartment developments will be required to be considered, to avoid demands for numerous individual dishes;
- Where a development takes the form of more than one structure (i.e. a number of apartment blocks or a multitude of individual houses), adequate variety in form, height, materials etc shall be employed, within an overall unified theme, to provide for visual diversity.

Unit sizes & formats

- All planning applications shall be accompanied by a data table setting out number and floor area of all commercial and residential units;
- New apartment developments³ will be required to include a range of unit sizes to cater for different housing needs, while new greenfield housing areas shall also include a range of unit types including apartments, duplexes, townhouses, semi – detached and detached houses, including single storey dwellings;
- The minimum size apartment allowed will be 45sqm⁴. No more than 20% of the units in any single development shall be under 50sqm. At least 50% of the units in any development shall be 73sqm or larger;
- The minimum room size and storage space standards set out in *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments*’ (DoEHLG 2007) shall be adhered to;
- Single aspect residential units will only be permitted where the main living rooms face south, west or east;
- In the design of new residences, cognisance shall be had of the changing space demand of households over time. For example, apartment formats should allow for either the future subdivision of larger units or the merging of two or more smaller units (either horizontally or vertically) and houses should have attics capable of conversion to habitable rooms;
- In ‘edge of centre’ or ‘out of centre’ new residential development, the quantum of apartments allowable will be regulated, as this dense format of development is more suited to urban core locations, where direct access to services is available. In this regard the maximum quantum of floor space that may be devoted to apartments in ‘edge-of-centre’ locations shall be 40% of the development and 20% in ‘out-of-centre’ locations.

Privacy

- Residential developments shall be so designed and constructed to ensure maximum privacy for residents;
- Windows and balconies shall be positioned and designed such that direct intrusion into private living areas from other dwelling units or from the public realm is avoided. In this regard, the design of ground levels units with little or no separation from footpaths or other public areas shall be carefully considered and mitigation measures applied;
- A separation of 22m will normally be required above ground level between opposing windows serving private living areas (particularly bedrooms and living rooms). However, this rule shall be applied flexibly: the careful positioning and detailed design of opposing windows can prevent invasion of privacy even with short back-to-back distances. Windows serving halls and landings do not require the same degree of privacy as say balconies and living rooms;
- The degree of ‘overlooking’ afforded by different windows types shall be considered appropriately; for example, an angled roof light will not have the same impact as a traditional ‘flat’ window on the same elevation;
- In ‘traditional’ housing developments, with side-to-side and back-to-back housing, the following standards will be applied for boundary walls
 - all walls bounding the private (usually rear) garden shall be 2m in height
 - side boundaries between houses shall be provided at a height of 2m at shall extend from the front façade of the house to the rear wall of the house.
 - All boundaries shall be of solid construction i.e. they form a complete screen barrier with no gaps
 - Walls bounding any public areas shall be rendered and capped on the outside
 - If timber boundaries are utilised, they must be bonded and supported by concrete posts. Concrete post and plank walls will not be permitted for any boundary visible from the public domain.

³ Apartments are residential units in a multi-unit building with grouped or common access and single-storey own door units that form part of a ‘duplex’ unit

⁴ Measurements are internal wall-to-wall dimensions and apply to units on one floor.

Green issues

- To require all new buildings during the design process to incorporate sustainable technologies capable of achieving a Building Energy Rating in accordance with the provisions S.I. No. 666 of 2006 European Communities (Energy Performance of Buildings) Regulations 2006;
- All new buildings will be required to incorporate water saving measures, as set out in Chapter 12. This may include rain water harvesting for internal service uses. In particular, all new dwellings with individual surface water collection systems will be required to be provided with water butts;
- All buildings will be required to be provided with a suitable area on site for the keeping of waste storage receptacles for mixed dry recyclables, organic waste (composters) and residual waste. In apartment developments, this may be in the form of grouped individual bins in car parking areas or a designated waste building; for individual houses with no side or rear lane from the garden to the public road (e.g. mid terrace houses), this may entail a designated, appropriately designed / screened / enclosed area to the front of the house;
- Consideration should be given in the design of new buildings to the provision of green roofs or walls (i.e. roof gardens / planted balconies etc), to aid in both water absorption but also to contribute positively to the environment and visual amenity.

5.4.5.3 Open space

- Open space shall be provided in all new developments, the scale of which shall be dependent of the use of the building/site. In commercial developments, this may be limited to a small area utilised by employees for passive use, such as small courtyard area or roof garden. While the provision of such space may not always be possible in built up urban locations, new developments shall endeavour to provide a minimum area equivalent to 5% of the building gross floor area;
- All residential units shall be provided with private open space, either in the form of private balconies, terraces or rear / side gardens. Where necessary to make up for a shortfall in private open space, communal private space, for example, in the form of internal courtyards or roof gardens, shall be provided. Care shall be taken to ensure such spaces receive adequate sunlight and meet the highest safety standards;
- All apartments shall be provided with a minimum area of 30sqm private open space, which shall be at least partially made up of a private balcony or terrace. The front wall of balconies should be made from an opaque material and be at least 1m in height. The minimum balcony / terrace sizes shall be:

Apartment size	Minimum balcony / terrace size
One bedroom	5sqm
Two bedrooms	7sqm
Three bedrooms	9sqm

- Dwellings (including own door duplexes) shall be provided with private open space at a rate of 0.64sqm per 1sqm house floor area (for the first 150sqm), with the minimum garden size allowable being 48sqm.
- Public open space shall be provided in accordance with the standards set out in Chapter 15. In particular,
 - Public open space will normally be required at a rate of 15% of the site area – areas within the site that are not suitable for development or for recreational use must be excluded before the calculation is made;
 - The need to provide public open space in town centre developments may be waived if the development specifically achieves other overriding aims of this Plan, particularly where public amenity space such as a town park or beach is in close proximity;
 - In greenfield developments, a hierarchy of open spaces shall be provided to provide for the different play needs of different age groups and all efforts shall be taken to ensure that all houses are in visual range of one open area;
 - Spaces less than 10m in width or 200sqm in area will not be counted as useable public open space; nor will space that is excessively sloping or otherwise unsuitable for usage.

- New organised sports areas shall be located in proximity to existing or planned community or neighbourhood facilities such as neighbourhood retail centres, schools etc.

5.4.5.4 Car parking

- 2 off street car parking spaces shall normally be required for all dwelling units over 2 bedrooms in size. For every 5 residential units provided with only 1 space, 1 visitor space shall be provided. Parking for non-residential uses shall be provided in accordance with the standards set out in Table 11.2 (Chapter 11) except where a deviation from the standard has been justified (in accordance with Section 11.5 of Chapter 11);
- In new housing areas, car parking has traditionally been located on site, to the front of houses resulting in a regular 6-10m set back and regular buildings lines. Alternative parking arrangements that avoid this format will be encouraged; however, parking will always be required to be proximate to the dwelling served. In cases where the front door of a residential unit is directly onto a road that is not suitable for on-street parking (e.g. a main distributor road), car parking shall be located adjacent to a back or side door;
- Communal car parking areas shall be conveniently located for residents and suitably lit at night-time;
- Adequate provision shall be made for visitor and disabled car parking;
- Designated sheltered and secure bicycle parking will be required in apartment developments.

5.4.5.5 Social & community facilities

In accordance with the Objective CD5 (Chapter 15), all applications for large-scale residential expansion areas shall include a community facilities audit and where facilities are found to be inadequate, proposals to address these deficiencies will be required.

5.4.6 Other issues

5.4.6.1 Infill / backland development in existing housing areas

Many older housing areas were built at densities and in such formats that resulted in particularly large plot sizes. Where opportunities arise for infill or backland type development, the following standards shall apply:

- The site / plot must be capable of being developed in accordance with the density limit set for that area in the local area or town plan, or in any case in keeping with the prevailing density of the immediate area. Where no density limit is set (for example, in areas zoned 'existing residential'), the quantum of development that will be permissible will flow as a result of adherence to best development standards as set out in this chapter;
- The design of a new house should complement the area. Where an area has an established unique or valuable character worthy of preservation, particular care should be taken to match the style and materials of the area; however, where an area is a 'mixed-bag' of styles and periods, more flexibility can be applied;
- Particular attention will be required to be paid to the design and location of new windows, in order to ensure that the privacy of either the existing house on the plot or adjacent houses is not diminished;
- Gable walls abutting public areas (e.g. footpaths, car parking areas and open spaces) will not be permitted and a minimum separation of 0.9m will be required between the house gable and the side wall of the plot;
- Where the access route to a proposed development site is proposed to run alongside the external walls of the existing dwelling on the development plot or the external walls of a dwelling on an adjoining plot, there must be adequate separation available to facilitate the required driveway (normally 3m) and allow a 0.5m 'buffer' area alongside any existing dwelling.

Any deviation from this standard must be evaluated on traffic safety and residential amenity grounds.

- The re-design of access and car parking arrangements for the existing dwelling on the plot must be clearly detailed, and permission included for same where required; developments accessed from a long narrow driveway must provide for the turning of vehicles within the site;
- Cognisance will be required to be taken of the potential of adjacent rear / side plots to be developed in a similar manner and separation between site boundaries, location of windows etc must not prejudice development options on the adjacent plot;
- New apartment developments dependent on access through existing established areas of predominantly single family homes, will not be permitted.

5.4.6.2 Sub-division of dwellings

In established areas of predominantly single family homes, the subdivision of a dwelling into apartments or bedsits will generally not be permitted, except in exceptional circumstances. Where sub-division is permissible, normal qualitative standards with regard to internal space, private open space, privacy and car parking will required to be complied with.

5.4.6.3 House extensions

The construction of extensions to existing houses will be encouraged generally as it usually provides a less resource intensive method of expanding living space than building a new structure. Given the range of site layouts prevailing, it is not possible to set out a set of 'rules' that can be applied to all extensions, but the following basic principles shall be applied

- The extension should be sensitive to the existing dwelling and should not adversely distort the scale or mass of the structure;
- The extension shall not provide for new overlooking of the private area of an adjacent residence where no such overlooking previously existed;
- In an existing developed area, where a degree of overlooking is already present, the new extension must not significantly increase overlooking possibilities. If for example a two-story dwelling already directly overlooks a neighbours rear garden, a third storey extension with the same view will normally be considered acceptable;
- New extensions should not overshadow adjacent dwellings to the degree that a significant decrease in day or sunlight entering into the house comes about. In this regard, extensions directly abutting property boundaries should be avoided;
- While the form, size and appearance of an extension should complement the area, unless the area has an established unique or valuable character worthy of preservation, a flexible approach will be taken to the assessment of alternative design concepts.

5.4.6.4 Independent living units ('Granny-flats')

A 'granny flat' or 'independent living unit' is a separate living unit on an existing house site, used to accommodate a member of the immediate family, often an elderly parent, for a temporary period. The construction or conversion of part of an existing dwelling into a 'family flat' will only be permitted where the development complies with the following requirements

- The need for the unit has been justified and is for the use of a close family member;
- The unit forms an integrated part of the structure of the main house – in exceptional circumstances, the conversion of an existing detached garage / store etc may be considered subject to the structure being in very close proximity to the main house;
- The unit is modest in size and in particular, it shall not exceed 45sqm and shall not have more than 1 bedroom;
- The unit shall not be sold or let as an independent living unit and the existing garden shall not be sub-divided;
- The structure must be capable of being functionally re-integrated into the main house when its usefulness has ceased. Permission for such units shall be restricted to a period of 7 years, after

which it must revert to a use ancillary to the main house (e.g. garage, store, hobby room) unless permission has been secured for its continuation as an independent unit for another period.

5.4.6.5 Temporary residential structures

Temporary residential structures (e.g. mobile homes, caravans, portacabins etc) form a haphazard and substandard form of residential accommodation and generally have poor aesthetic value and can detract from the overall appearance of an area. Therefore permission will generally not be granted for such structures.

5.4.6.6 Naming of developments

It shall be a condition of a planning permission for new housing schemes that the developer will submit a scheme for the naming and numbering of the estate prior to the commencement of the development. The naming of housing estates shall reflect in as far as possible the local context in which it is located. The names of new estates in as far as possible should be in bilingual format or in Irish alone. On approval of the naming of the scheme, the developer will be required to provide nameplates and numbers, as required by the Council.

5.4.6.7 Taking in charge

New developments shall be taken in charge in accordance with the adopted 'Taking in Charge Policy' of Wicklow County Council (2007), as may be varied over the life of the plan.

5.4.6.8 Entrances to developments

The name of the development shall be clearly identified at the entrance. Measures shall be put in place to ensure parking is restricted for sufficient distance at the start of the development to eliminate potential traffic hazard on the public road. Gated developments will not be permitted, except in exceptional circumstances.

5.4.6.9 Flood routing

Chapter 12 of this plan specifically deals with the assessment of flood risk and the techniques to be applied to avoid or minimise flood risk. One of these methods is the manipulation of the layout and design of a development to provide flood 'routes' i.e. in the event of surface water sewers, or a nearby culverted stream failing, the development shall be so laid out that the resultant flood waters can take a natural route through the site without having to flow through people's homes.