

CHAPTER 7

SOCIAL & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

7.0 Introduction

Social infrastructure, community facilities and community development are fundamental elements in the creation of sustainable communities and supporting a good quality of life.

The National Planning Framework (NPF) notes that *'planning affords an opportunity to facilitate and deliver a more socially inclusive society through better integration and greater accessibility at all stages of the life cycle'*. NPO 28 of the NPF requires that we *'plan for a more diverse and socially inclusive society that targets equality of opportunity and a better quality of life for all citizens, through improved integration and greater accessibility in the delivery of sustainable communities and the provision of associated services'*.

The NPF therefore recognises the need to provide for a more inclusive society through planning and the development plan. In doing so the NPF endorses and requires us to include policies and objectives to obtain universal accessibility, address the existing barriers to access that can arise within development and provide for community facilities that can be utilised by all members of our community regardless of age, health or other limiting factors that may impede accessibility. The creation of such facilities that are accessible by all will make our communities more welcoming and enable all to participate in a community regardless of any limiting factors.

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) recognises that social infrastructure plays an important role in developing strong and inclusive communities.

The RSES identifies the following guiding principles with respect to community / social infrastructure:

- *Support the '10 minute' settlement concept, whereby a range of community facilities and services are accessible in short walking and cycling timeframes from homes or accessible by high-quality public transport to these services in larger settlements*
- *Facilitate a sufficient supply of good quality sports and recreation facilities, including networks for walking, cycling and other activities and shall maximise the multiple uses of such facilities by encouraging the co-location of services between sports providers, schools, colleges and other community facilities.*

The creation of healthy and attractive places requires ongoing improvements to the physical and social infrastructure of settlements. Social infrastructure is identified as an essential element of healthy placemaking. It should be easily accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. Shared use and co-location of facilities is encouraged, in order to align service provision, use land more efficiently and facilitate opportunities for further inclusion and community participation.

With reference to the **National, Regional and County Objectives** set out in Chapter 2 of this plan, the enhancement of community infrastructure and facilities will contribute to numerous goals across the three pillars of 'sustainable healthy communities', 'climate action' and 'economic opportunity' by:

- Supporting the role of town and village centre as the heart of communities, where people of all backgrounds, ages and abilities can avail of services and interact within their communities;
- Preserving and enhancing the quality of the provision of community services and facilities;
- Ensuring that the community is adequately provided with the community facilities that are at the heart of every functioning community.

7.1 Local Strategies

7.1.1 Wicklow Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP)

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provides a stronger role for local government in economic and community development. The *'Action Programme for Effective Local Government – Putting People First'* sets out a clear focus on the importance of local government:

"Local government will be the main vehicle of governance and public service at local level, leading economic, social and community development."

One of the key provisions of the Local Government Reform Act is the formulation by every local authority of a Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP). The LECP is a six-year plan containing the measures necessary to promote and support community and economic development in the county. The Wicklow LECP 2016-2022 represents a major collaborative initiative between local community development and local economic development in the County and reflects the strengthened role of the local authority in both areas of activity. The Wicklow LECP includes objectives and actions promoting and supporting (a) economic development and (b) the local and community development of the County. The two elements are integrated for the socio-economic framework and for the actions to increase employment and quality of life opportunities in the County. The community element of the LECP was developed by the Local Community Development Committee and the Community, Cultural and Social Development Directorate of the Council. The vision for the LECP is:

"Our vision is for a County which provides a high quality of life and well-being for all; values socially inclusive urban and rural communities; is driven by a dynamic and innovative economy; promotes and prioritises sustainable development and protects and enhances the County's unique and rich natural and cultural heritage."

In this regard the LECP sets out the following 10 overarching goals for economic and community development within County Wicklow:

Goal 1	<i>Develop community capacity in disadvantaged communities and engage in urban regeneration and rural development.</i>
Goal 2	<i>Promote active citizenship and public participation to improve governance, participation and enrich decision making.</i>
Goal 3	<i>Develop high quality integrated services available to all communities, in particular, disadvantaged communities and vulnerable groups.</i>
Goal 4	<i>Develop a vibrant and innovative Community and Social Enterprise Section.</i>
Goal 5	<i>Address access to education and training to increase life opportunities for all.</i>
Goal 6	<i>Develop infrastructure and measures that are positive and supportive to investment, enterprise, innovation and knowledge creation in strategic locations.</i>
Goal 7	<i>Sustain existing enterprise and develop quality employment and income opportunities for the wide range of employment needs in the County, with possibilities for reversing commuting patterns.</i>
Goal 8	<i>Capitalise on Wicklow's unique attributes and proximity to the Dublin market, excellent quality of life, human capital, tourism, landscape, marine, agricultural and forestry resources.</i>
Goal 9	<i>Support a shift towards low carbon and climate change resilient economic activity, reducing energy dependence, promoting the sustainable use of resources and leading in the Smart Green Economy.</i>
Goal 10	<i>Harness efficiently the full resources of the County and promote interagency collaboration.</i>

The LECP addresses a wide range of community issues, including:

- Education, training and skills development;
- Developing infrastructure to address social exclusion, poverty and disadvantage, reverse social and economic decline and to realise growth potential and the sustainability of communities;

- Synergies with supports for children and young people;
- Enhancing the capacity of communities to improve their well-being; and
- Enhancing support for local volunteering, citizen engagement and active citizenship.

The strategies and objectives in this chapter are not intended to duplicate those of the LECP (which has a much wider remit in the area of community development), but rather to provide the land-use framework that will support the achievements of these goals.

7.1.2 Healthy Wicklow 2018

Wicklow County Council produced the 'Healthy Wicklow' strategy in line with the 'National Activity Plan' and the 'Healthy Ireland' framework. The document aims to assess the requirements and provides objectives with which to improve the overall health and well being of the people of Wicklow and is guided with the four following key goals:

Goal 1	<i>Increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life</i>
Goal 2	<i>Reduce health inequalities</i>
Goal 3	<i>Protect the public from threats to health and wellbeing</i>
Goal 4	<i>Create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play their part in achieving a healthy Ireland</i>

7.1.3 Wicklow Age-Friendly Strategy 2017

The Age-Friendly Strategy was developed with the aim of making Wicklow an age friendly County, a County in which all public service and private sector providers work in partnership to make Wicklow great. It gives commitments to improving infrastructure both physical and social as well as services and information provision to improve the quality of life of older people across the County. The strategy aims, in combination with other Government and County programmes and plans, including the County Development Plan, to make Wicklow a County that is more accessible and accommodating to people as they grow older. The document seeks to address existing issues and improve the conditions for the ageing population in Wicklow under the following 9 themes:

Theme 1	Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
Theme 2	Transportation
Theme 3	Housing
Theme 4	Social Participation
Theme 5	Respect and Social Inclusion
Theme 6	Civic Participation and Employment
Theme 7	Communication and Information
Theme 8	Community Support and Health Services
Theme 9	Safety and Security

The policies and objectives contained in this chapter have been prepared with the aspirations and goals of these documents in mind.

7.1.4 Wicklow Children and Young People's Plan [CYPP] 2020

Wicklow Children and Young People's Services Committee [CYPSC] was formally established in April 2011. The purpose of the Children and Young People's Services Committees is to secure better outcomes for children and young people through more effective co-operation and collaboration by existing services and through interventions at local level. Between 2011 and to date, two action plans have been developed and implemented to address local needs as consistent with the national outcomes framework. The Wicklow CYPSC 2020 Plan will continue to progress necessary work to meet ongoing and emerging needs.

CYPSC's work towards the five national outcomes for children and young people in Ireland. These are that children and young people

1. Are active and healthy, with positive physical and mental wellbeing
2. Are achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development
3. Are safe and protected from harm
4. Have economic security and opportunity
5. Are connected, respected and contributing to their world

The CYPP presents a coordinated interagency approach to the delivery of services to children and young people in Wicklow by all agencies in Wicklow. It reflects the priorities that have been identified from an analysis of the needs in the County and a commitment by members to address these needs over the three years of the plan. The voice of children and young people is represented and the CYPSC is committed to strengthening participation with children and young people further during the lifetime of this plan.

7.2 Community Development & Land Use Planning

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':

- 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; and
- Facilitating access to the goods, services and powers structures within society for all, and particularly for those that are marginalised and powerless ('social inclusion').

A wide range of stakeholders and agencies will be required to deliver the LECP goals. It is the role of the LCDC to coordinate the various organisations and actions required to fulfil the goals of the LECP. The County Development Plan plays the following roles in delivering these goals:

1. Facilitating the delivery of community infrastructure through:
 - Identifying where possible community / social infrastructure deficiencies and needs of towns and villages including, for example, local community centres, schools, health facilities, broadband hubs, remote working facilities in community spaces, age-friendly facilities such as accessible internet spaces and increased post /delivery and collection facilities;
 - The reservation of land for the development of new or enhanced social and community infrastructure in County and local development plans where a need for new facilities is identified;
 - Managing the expansion of residential development commensurate with the community infrastructure available;
 - Requiring the delivery of new community infrastructure as part of development proposals; and
 - Cooperating with other service providers in the delivery of new community infrastructure.
2. Facilitating improved physical access to community infrastructure and services through:
 - Promoting a development pattern that maximises the accessibility of social / community facilities infrastructure by public transport, cycle or foot;
 - Requiring all new facilities to be accessible and useable by those with special needs, including mobility or other impairments; and
 - Facilitating enhancement of communications infrastructure.
3. Facilitating the maintenance, restoration and upgrading of the cultural and natural heritage of communities, environmental upgrading and general actions to enhance the environmental, amenity and physical attributes of communities.

Community Facilities Hierarchy Model

The community facilities hierarchy model, as shown in Table 7.1 below, is a list of the social and community facilities that are considered necessary in settlements, according to their population range. It is the role of the development plan to support and facilitate the delivery of such social / community infrastructure; however, the actual delivery of such infrastructure is the responsibility of a wide range of agencies (including the Local Authority) as well as private developers as part of a development proposal.

Where a new significant residential or mixed-used development is proposed, the Planning Authority may require certain social and community facilities to be provided as part of the proposed development and/or may require a special financial contribution to be made to contribute to the development of such facilities.

In the development management process, the Planning Authority will determine whether there is a need for a particular development to include the provision of a social or community facility by either:

- a) Considering the particular social infrastructure needs and deficiencies of each location and the appropriateness of the particular proposed development as to whether the deficiency needs to be rectified as part of that development proposal; or
- b) Requiring a 'Social Infrastructure Audit' (SIA) to be carried out by the developer, to determine if facilities in the area are sufficient to provide for the needs of the future residents and where deficiencies are identified, proposals will be required to either rectify the deficiency, or suitably restrict or phase the development in accordance with the capacity of existing or planned services.

With any *significant* residential development, the applicant *will* be required to prepare a SIA as part of the documentation required as part of the planning application process. The importance of a SIA is in assessing the impact a large scale residential development may have on the existing social infrastructure in the area, and to identify if any deficiencies exist that will be compounded or put under undue stress by the proposed development. A SIA assesses the overall impact a residential development will have on the infrastructure which is key to the functioning of the community. This is generally assessed based on the percentage increase of population that a development once completed will bring to the community where the development is planned to occur. While not an exhaustive list these generally include the following infrastructure:

- Transport (bus routes, cycle routes, green infrastructure, road networks, pedestrian pathways);
- Education (third level, post-primary, primary, crèche facilities);
- Health (primary health care, care homes, doctor surgery, G.P, dentist facilities, pharmacy);
- Community facilities (places of worship, burial grounds, community halls, sports facilities).

The applicant shall as part of the SIA be requested to obtain and submit **supporting documentation** from any social / community infrastructure providers, educational institutions, community organisations and other social service providers to be included as part of the audit. The audit shall detail that the potential increase in population that would arise from the proposed development, and take in account other new (permitted and proposed) developments in the area that are intended to be serviced by existing facilities. If the cumulative increase in population cannot be supported by the existing facilities locally, written assurance from the facility providers must be submitted confirming that there shall be sufficient accommodation to support the increased population prior to the commencement of any development.

Furthermore, in recognition of the potentially significant impacts large residential developments may have on the receiving environment the applicant must include any similar type developments to the proposed within the same locality regardless of their stage in the planning process. The cumulative impacts of these developments as well as the proposed shall be included as part of any assessment to determine the suitability of the proposed development.

Where it is determined that existing social infrastructure in an area will not be adequate to accommodate the needs of the new residents, and new infrastructure / facilities are deemed to be required to allow the development to be positively considered, the manner in which the deficiency will be addressed, by who and when, shall be detailed in the proposal, and agreed through the development management process.

All proposals for community and social infrastructure including public open space should incorporate the principles of Universal Design. Universal Design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability¹. An environment (or any building, product, or service in that environment) should be designed to meet the needs of all people who wish to use it. New development shall have regard to the provisions of the National Disability Authority's document '*Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach*' which provides comprehensive best practice guidance on how to design, build and manage buildings and spaces so that they can be readily accessed and used by everyone, regardless of age, size ability or disability.

¹ <http://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/>

Table 7.1 Community Facilities Hierarchy Model

COMMUNITY FACILITIES HIERARCHY MODEL	
LEVEL 1 – SETTLEMENTS WITH POPULATION RANGE 15,000 – 30,000	
Multi-purpose Community Resource Centre Regional and Local Indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities Swimming Pool/Leisure Centre Youth Centre Athletics Track and Field Facilities Arts and Cultural Centre Local Multi-Purpose Community Space/Meeting rooms	Outdoor Water Sports Facilities (where applicable) Neighbourhood Parks and Local Parks Outdoor (full size) Multi-Use Games Areas – Synthetic/ Hardcourt Playground(s) Playing Pitches Alternative/Minority Sports Facilities Open Space/Urban Woodlands/Nature Areas Library
<i>Acceptable rural catchment commuting time by car: 30 min</i>	
LEVEL 2 – SETTLEMENTS WITH POPULATION RANGE 7,000 – 15,000	
Multi-purpose Community Resource Centre Sport & Recreation Centre Swimming Pool/Leisure Centre Youth Resource Centre Local Multi-Purpose Community Space/Meeting Rooms Outdoor Water Sports Facilities (where applicable) Neighbourhood and Local Parks	Outdoor Multi-Use Games Areas – Synthetic/ Hardcourt Playground(s) Playing Pitches Alternative/Minority Sports Facilities Open Space/Urban Woodlands/Nature Areas Library Arts and Cultural Centre
<i>Acceptable rural catchment time by car: 15 mins</i>	
LEVEL 3 – SETTLEMENTS WITH POPULATION RANGE 2,000 – 7,000	
Community/Parish Hall Multi-purpose Community Space/Meeting Rooms Local /Town Park (s) and Open Spaces/Nature Areas Outdoor Multi-Use Games Area – Synthetic/ Hardcourt	Playgrounds Playing Pitches Library
<i>Acceptable rural catchment commuting time by car: 10-15 mins</i>	
LEVEL 4 – SETTLEMENTS WITH POPULATION RANGE < 2,000	
Community/Parish Hall Open Spaces/Play Areas	Outdoor Multi-Use Games Area – Synthetic/ Hardcourt Playing Pitches
<i>Acceptable rural catchment commuting time by car: 5-10 mins</i>	

7.3 Social Infrastructure

It is an objective of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) that '*Local authorities shall seek to support the planned provision of easily accessible social, community, cultural and recreational facilities and ensure that all communities have access to a range of facilities that meet the needs of the communities they serve*' (RPO 9.14).

The provision of 'social infrastructure', in the form of buildings, facilities, clubs and the means of accessing and using services, is necessary for the development of sustainable communities. The purpose of such infrastructure is both to provide a service and also to promote community cohesion and community identity and in doing so combat social isolation and alienation. A wide variety of facilities are required in order to have a functioning and developing society, and one's use of facilities will be dependent on a range of factors including age, family structure and physical ability.

Essentially there are four broad categories of facilities:

1. Those providing education and development, including primary, secondary and third-level schools and colleges and vocational or training centres (Montessori and pre-schools are addressed under 'childcare').
2. Those providing physical and mental care and development, such as health services, nursing homes, childcare / pre-schools, facilities for those with special needs etc.
3. Leisure and recreational facilities including community/youth centres, indoor halls, dance/gymnastic studios, sports clubs (indoor and outdoor), playing pitches, courts etc.
4. Cultural facilities, such as arts centres, theatres, libraries and places of public worship and burial grounds etc.

7.3.1 Education and Development

Education and training have a key role to play in all three dimensions of 'sustainable development' - environmental, economic and social. It is widely recognised as a key component of a competitive economy and a vibrant society.

The Council seeks to create an environment in which everyone can develop to their full potential to enable them to participate in and contribute to all aspects of social, economic and cultural life. The Council will endeavour to facilitate the provision of the best possible educational facilities at pre-school, primary, secondary and adult levels, on suitably zoned lands, in conjunction with the Department of Education, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, the Department of Health and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

In line with RPO 9.21 of the RSES which states '*in areas where significant new housing is proposed, an assessment of need regarding schools provision should be carried out in collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills and statutory plans shall designate new school sites at accessible, pedestrian, cycle and public transport friendly locations*' it shall be an objective of this plan to ensure that the selection of any site for the purposes of educational need shall be provided at locations are accessible for healthy travel options and public transport.

7.3.2 Health, Care & Development

Health

A number of public, voluntary and private agencies are responsible for the provision of healthcare facilities within the County, with the Health Service Executive being the primary agency responsible for delivering health and personal social services. The RSES recognized the needs for providing for the specific need of our ageing population when determining the location of our healthcare services, as set out in RPO 9.23 which gives direction to '*Facilitate the development of primary health care centre's, hospitals, clinics, and facilities to cater for the specific needs of an ageing population in appropriate urban areas in accordance with RSES settlement strategy and core strategies of development plans*'.

Residential & Day Care

Having regard to the 'ageing' of the Irish population, in addition to health care facilities, there is a growing need for the provision of specific residential and daycare facilities for the elderly. The Council recognises that the provision of residential / daycare and nursing homes are an essential community requirement and that this area is underdeveloped in this County.

A number of agencies are active in County Wicklow providing residential and daycare services to those with physical or intellectual disabilities. The Council recognises the special services provided by these bodies and aims to facilitate them wherever possible.

As those in residential or daycare facilities will have different needs and abilities depending on health and ability, it is important to ensure that such facilities are well integrated into society and afford residents full access to goods and services outside of the facility.

Residential and daycare facilities can take many forms, ranging from day time activities / services to care / nursing homes, supported living facilities, assisted living units to independent (but supervised) living units and it is not therefore always possible to craft policies that will address all development types. All applications for development will be considered on their merits with particular regard to their location and the type of service being provided.

Childcare & Preschool

The provision of childcare and preschool facilities is recognised by Wicklow County Council as a key piece of social infrastructure enabling people to play a more active role in society, particularly in accessing employment and education. Childcare services range from childminding a small number of children in a private home to pre-schools and crèches. A large number of childcare facilities now provide a full range of services from caring for newborns to pre-school and Montessori type education. The growth in population and housing in Wicklow over the last number of years has not been matched with the necessary growth in childcare services, notwithstanding the implementation of the DoECLG Childcare Facilities Guidelines, which require the provision of 20 childcare places for every new 75 housing units granted permission.

7.3.3 Leisure & Recreation

The types of leisure and recreational facilities provided / required vary greatly from area to area and from person to person ranging from active to passive activities. The Council recognises this fact and aims to provide for adequate leisure and recreational facilities throughout the County, which are capable of meeting the requirements of the resident population of all age levels. The importance of physical activity and the benefits it brings to a population from a health and recreational standpoint is recognised by both the Council and the Government at the national level.

In recognition of the growing importance for the provision of open space and associated facilities at the regional scale, the RSES under objective RPO 9.17 explicitly supports the creation of such provision and facilities.

Wicklow County Council has developed a Sports & Recreation Policy. This policy recognises the importance that sport and recreation contributes to the quality of life of individuals, communities and the County as a whole. It will be the overarching policy document that provides a strategic approach, which includes the identification of deficiencies, needs and priorities and the inclusion of underpinning principles of social inclusion and sustainable development framework. Its implementation will be carried out in partnership and co-operation, to enable all residents of the County to have equal access to sport and recreation facilities and opportunities for participating in the sport or recreation of their choice.

Children's Play In addition to childcare facilities, pre-schools and after school services (dealt with previously) children also require opportunities to socialise, play and exercise. Wicklow County Council has responded to this need by preparing a Play Policy for County Wicklow. The purpose of the Play Policy is to change the culture of thinking on play and provide more opportunities for children to play. This play policy reflects the importance that Wicklow County Council places on the value of play in childhood and the importance of children in our society. It also recognises that changes in today's society are having an impact on children's opportunities to play. The policy makes a clear commitment to play as a right and to ensure that children and their needs are considered when it comes to policymaking and that provision is made to meet their needs.

Play is not just about the provision of facilities. It is also about creating the conditions that facilitate children's play, not only in playgrounds but in the wider environment. In addition, facilities for children's play do not always have to consist solely of the traditional playground equipment – they can be an interesting and natural environment with features such as a sensory garden, bushes, or an interestingly placed tree trunk. Research has shown that for children, a playground is their base for play, somewhere from which to safely explore their neighbourhood. This emphasises safe, enjoyable and attractive play environments. However, neighbourhood spaces, estates, parks, streets, libraries, community centres and gardens are as important as dedicated playgrounds.

Teenagers & Young Adults

Many teenagers and young adults feel disenfranchised in society, particularly with regard to the lack of facilities provided specifically to meet their needs. These young people are too old for playgrounds and while many are active in sports clubs, there is still a lack of facilities for socialising and relaxation. The RSES requires that the development plan *'provide for the development of dedicated youth spaces in key urban areas and the development of multifunction spaces in smaller communities / rural areas'*. Depending on the age, there are a number of facilities that are considered attractive to teenagers and young adults including Mixed-Use Games Areas (MUGAs), which would typically provide a hard-surfaced area allowing for basketball and other hard court sports, skate parks and youth clubs.

Older Persons

In recognition of the ageing nature of our population, it is more important than ever that we ensure that facilities are available for older persons to continue enjoying full and fulfilling social and community life, and in addition that we adapt our environments to provide for a variety of needs that come with ageing. There are many different ways in which people interact and move through spaces and different barriers that may impede the safe usage of these spaces. We must ensure that our community and recreation facilities are accessible and usable by all ages and abilities including the elderly.

Open Space

Access to good quality active and passive open space is an essential element of healthy placemaking. Such facilities should be within walking distance of residential communities to ensure their optimum usage. The development plan has an important role to play in protecting open space from inappropriate development and ensuring that new development incorporates high quality public and private open space and appropriate recreational infrastructure. Where this is not possible, for example on infill sites, the applicant will be required to make a financial contribution to the provision, development and enhancement of the wider overall open space network.

The need for high-quality open space is becoming increasingly necessary and important as a result of the increase in high-density residential development where private open space is limited. In recognition of the impacts that climate change is having on our environment the protection of our natural and open spaces is more important than ever. Similarly, with the ever-increasing need for residential development, the change in the receiving environment and the impacts on the natural flora and fauna that this represents can be significant. In light of these environmental impacts on habitats and the natural environment, the provision of greater protections for the need for more bio-diverse friendly design in our open spaces is a necessity.

The delivery of new sports and other outdoor community facilities and spaces is dependent on adequate 'open space' being reserved and developed. 'Open space' can take many forms but for the purpose of this plan is generally considered to be space designated for such use in Local Area Plans, Town Plans or Action Area Plans or land reserved or set out for active and passive uses and visual amenity purposes as part of new development of housing or commercial development. Open space can take a number of forms, with some use types overlapping:

1. Private open space – open space owned and/or dedicated to use of single individuals or small groups, for example, private gardens, terraces, yards, balconies or shared private spaces in apartment developments;
2. Residential Open Space - the open space generally provided in housing developments that is public in the sense that there are no barriers to access, but its function is to provide for use principally by the residents of that development. For land-use zoning purposes, as such spaces form an integral part of any residential zone; such space will normally be zoned 'RE – Existing Residential'.

3. (Active) Open Space² – space provided or designated for uses such as sports grounds, playing fields, hard-surfaced courts, parks and walkways, covered open spaces, playgrounds etc; (for the purpose of land-use zoning, two forms of such open space is designated - 'active open space' which is that space used/proposed for organised sports such as playing fields, courts etc whereas 'open space' is used to denote those existing / planned spaces that are intended for more casual usage such as parks and playgrounds);
4. Passive Open Space – these are lands that are not designated for 'active' use and generally are undeveloped natural areas such as flood plains, buffers zones along rivers, areas of natural biodiversity, where the general objective is to maintain the lands in their current undisturbed state.

Allotments & Community Gardens

Interest and activity continues to grow in the use of land for allotments and community gardens. Allotment gardens allow a number of people to cultivate their own vegetables in individual plots/land parcels on lands owned by another private individual or body. The individual size of a plot/parcel ranges between 200-400sqm and often the plots include a shed for tools and shelter. The individual gardeners are usually organised in an allotment association which leases the land from the owner who may be a public, private or ecclesiastical entity, provided that it is only used for gardening (i.e. growing vegetables, fruits and flowers), but not for residential purposes. Unlike allotments which are plots of land that are worked on by individuals or families, a community garden is all about sharing – both the work and the harvest.

Public allotments and community gardens are becoming an increasingly important element of sustainable communities. They have a number of benefits including the promotion of healthy lifestyles, biodiversity and providing a cheaper local and sustainable source of food. The Council supports the provision and wider distribution of such facilities across the County.

Community Centres

Community centres provide an important function for all groups in society, by providing for an indoor space for active recreation and meetings/club use. While many 'outdoor' sports clubs also have indoor spaces, these may not be suitable for non-sport activities such as support group meetings, bridge clubs, mother-and-baby groups etc. In Ireland, there is a particular dependence on the use of function rooms in hotels and public houses for club or meeting use, which are often not ideal in design or size. Community centres provide a key social function within communities and can provide a range of extended services alongside their traditional existing uses.

As part of this key function, the use of our community centres and other such facilities needs to be universal and inclusive and in this regard there is a need for greater facilities within our community centres and civic buildings, for example the provision of 'Changing Places'. While this should include baby changing facilities there is also a need for the provision of adult changing facilities, which would provide for a safe and hygienic changing space for the user as well as whoever is assisting them. Examples of which may range from the inclusion of adult size changing table as well as a hoist to assist in safe lifting or any other such aids as may be required.

² For the definitions of 'Active Open Space' 'Open Space' and 'Passive Open Space' in each individual town / local area plan refer to the individual plan.

The needs of communities are constantly evolving and some of the new demands can be supported through the existing community centre infrastructure and any future community centres as part of their overall function. These functions can range from the provision of local services such as digital hubs for local businesses and community groups as well as facilitating local service provision such as delivery collection points through locker storage postal facilities such as those provided for by An Post at various locations around the country. In providing these modern services as part of our community services we ensure that community, as well as local business, is provided for within the community.

Swimming

Swimming is a sport that enhances safety on and near water and is a form of physical activity that is particularly well-suited to lifelong participation. It is one of the few sports that is accessible by all ages, genders and abilities, regardless of fitness levels or health status. The importance of swimming as a sport in its own right and as a gateway to other sports including surfing, rowing, canoeing and kayaking is recognised in the National Sports Policy 2018 – 2027. The expansion and improvement of indoor and outdoor swimming facilities will be supported.

7.3.4 Culture

Cultural facilities are places for the creation, production and dissemination of culture and include buildings and cultural sites.

Arts

Arts and cultural infrastructure include theatres, performance spaces, galleries, arts centres and outdoor event spaces. These facilities enhance town and village centres and significantly add to vitality and vibrancy. The Arts create opportunities for the cultural development of all the community. In addition, it offers all the community, young, old and minority groups, a creative outlet and an alternative to sport and active recreation.

In order to provide for the existing and future development of the Arts in County Wicklow, the Council has developed the Wicklow County Arts Plan. A number of objectives and actions have been identified in the Arts Development Plan and these will be reflected in increased resources and support to the arts community from Wicklow County Council, Statutory Agencies, Local Development Agencies, the private sector and the wider community.

Libraries

The purpose of the public library is to support the community's needs for education, information, recreation, arts and culture. The public library is a publicly funded resource providing a cost-effective means to equity of access. With thirteen branches throughout County Wicklow each providing free internet access, the Council recognises the library service as an important resource in promoting its policy on social inclusion and in providing public access to the Information Society. The library is a means to ensure support for literacy, independent learning and distance education.

Places of Worship & Burial

In many communities, churches, burial grounds and other places of worship form a focal point for the local population and often provide not only a religious service, but also meeting places and other cultural services.

7.4 Community Development Objectives

General

- CPO 7.1** To consult and engage with prescribed bodies, National Governing Bodies of Sport, local community interest groups and individuals during the local plan-making process for towns and villages to determine community / social infrastructure deficiencies and needs in accordance with the provisions of the Planning and Development Act.
- CPO 7.2** During the local plan-making process for towns and villages, to seek to facilitate community development and socially inclusive communities, through proper land-use zoning and transportation planning, phasing and the setting out of high standards of design in both streets and buildings.
- CPO 7.3** To support and facilitate the delivery and improvement of community facilities in accordance with the 'Hierarchy Model of Community Facilities' prepared under the Development Levy Scheme (under Section 48 of the Planning and Development Acts) (as set out on Table 7.1 of this chapter). While the above 'Hierarchy Model of Community Facilities' provides an extensive list of community infrastructure, the Council recognises that needs may differ from area to area over time and therefore it is recognised that additional community infrastructure needs may arise and such facilities will be facilitated where considered appropriate.
- CPO 7.4** To recognise the needs of those with disabilities throughout the County and to acknowledge their right to lead as enriching, fulfilling and independent lives as possible. In support of this, all policies, objectives and development standards of this plan have been proofed to ensure that not only do they not impede on the lives of people with disabilities but that they proactively assist and enable them.
- CPO 7.5** Housing development shall be managed and phased to ensure that infrastructure is adequate or is being provided to match the needs of new residents.

New significant residential or mixed use development proposals (of which residential development forms a component)³, shall be required to be accompanied by a **Social Infrastructure Audit**, to determine if social and community facilities in the area are sufficient to provide for the needs of the future residents. Where deficiencies are identified, proposals will be required to either rectify the deficiency, or suitably restrict or phase the development in accordance with the capacity of existing or planned services.

New significant residential or mixed use development proposals shall be required to be accompanied by a **'Accessibility Report'** that demonstrates that new residents / occupants / employees (including children and those with special mobility needs) will be able to safely access through means **other than** the private car

- (a) local services including shops, schools, health care and recreational and sports facilities, and
- (b) public transport services.

Where deficiencies are identified, proposals will be required to either rectify the deficiency, or suitably restrict or phase the development in accordance with the capacity/quality of existing or planned linkages.

³ Being defined as developments in excess of 50 units of housing in any settlements in Levels 1-4 in the hierarchy, 25 units in Levels 5-10, and **all developments over 25 units** in excess of 500m distance to a public transport service, as well as other format / sizes / locations are may be deemed necessary by the Local Authority.

- CPO 7.6** To require as part of any Social Infrastructure Audit process that the cumulative effects of similar large scale developments be appropriately factored as part of the audit when determining the capacity of the assessed infrastructure that will be affected by the increase in population. This is to ensure that the compounding effects of any such large scale increase to a local population will be adequately serviced with community infrastructure.
- CPO 7.7** To require that as part of Social Infrastructure Audit the applicant submit supporting documentation from any social / community infrastructure providers, educational institutions, community organisations and other social service providers, verifying the assessment set out in the audit.
- CPO 7.8** To promote and support Universal Design whereby all environments and facilities can be used to the greatest extent possible by all people, regardless of age, ability or disability.
- CPO 7.9** To require that new social / community buildings provide for on-site child and adult changing facilities as appropriate.

Education & Development

- CPO 7.10** To facilitate the provision of schools, by zoning suitable and adequate land in local plans, capable of meeting the demands of the projected population. Prior to the identification of lands for primary and secondary school provision, the Planning Authority shall consult with the Forward Planning and Site Acquisition and Management Sections of the Department of Education.
- CPO 7.11** To ensure that lands zoned for and sites selected for educational development are highly accessible, pedestrian, cycle and public transport friendly locations.
- CPO 7.12** Where lands are zoned for educational use, to facilitate the development of facilities that provide for linkages between schools types. For example, particular encouragement will be given to primary and secondary school campuses, the linking of pre-school services with primary schools and the linking of secondary schools with vocational training facilities.
- CPO 7.13** Where lands are zoned for employment use, to facilitate the development of employment training facilities (privately and/or publicly funded).
- CPO 7.14** Where practicable, education, community, recreational and open space facilities shall be clustered. However, schools shall continue to make provision for their own recreational facilities as appropriate. The need for schools to have access to local sports and swimming facilities is also recognised and will be taken into account when considering the need and planning and development of such facilities.
- CPO 7.15** To facilitate the development and expansion of third level facilities within the County, in particular the further development of the Wicklow County Campus at Clermont, Rathnew including the development of full time tertiary vocational and academic courses on campus with a focus on developing research centres of excellence.
- CPO 7.16** To seek the provision of dedicated facilities for adult and community education in recognition of the growing demand for life-long learning opportunities.
- CPO 7.17** To facilitate and promote the use of education facilities after school hours/weekends and during the summer period, for other community, cultural and non-school purposes, where possible.
- CPO 7.18** To support and promote the continuation and expansion of rural/village primary schools.

Health and Care

- CPO 7.19** To facilitate the development of healthcare uses at suitable locations, in liaison with the appropriate health authorities. Health facilities will be considered at all locations and in all zones provided that:
- the location is readily accessible to those availing of the service, with a particular presumption for facilities in towns and villages and in areas of significant residential development. Isolated rural locations will not generally be considered except where it can be shown that the nature of the facility is such that demands such a location;
 - the location is generally accessible by means other than private car, in particular by public transport services, or by walking/cycling; and
 - the location is accessible to those with disabilities.
- CPO 7.20** To facilitate the establishment of new or expansion of existing hospitals, nursing homes, centres of medical excellence, hospices, wellness/holistic health centres, respite care facilities or facilities for those with long term illness.
- CPO 7.21** To allow for a change of use of all or part of an existing dwelling in a residential zone to health care usage, subject to normal planning considerations, paying particular regard to car parking availability, impacts on traffic flow and obstruction and impacts on residential amenities.

Residential & Day Care

- CPO 7.22** To facilitate the development and improvement of new and existing residential and daycare facilities throughout the County.
- CPO 7.23** To facilitate the development and improvement of new and existing supported living facilities throughout the County.
- CPO 7.24** Residential and daycare facilities shall, in general, be required to locate in existing towns or villages where sustainable mobility is easily achieved, shall be located close to shops and other community facilities required by the occupants and shall be easily accessible to visitors, staff and servicing traffic. Locations outside of delineated settlement boundaries shall only be considered where:
- The site is located in close proximity to a settlement and would not comprise an isolated development;
 - An alternative site within the settlement boundary is not available;
 - There are excellent existing or potential to provide new vehicular and pedestrian linkages to settlement services; and
 - The design and scale of the facility is reflective of the semi-rural location.
- CPO 7.25** 'Retirement villages', made up of a number of independent housing units, with limited / no on-site care facilities will be required to locate on residentially zoned land in settlements (or where no local area plan exists, within the defined boundary of the settlement).
- CPO 7.26** Clinically managed/supervised dwelling units, such as 'step down' (i.e. post-acute care) accommodation or semi-independent housing provided as part of a medical facility, nursing home or other care-related facilities, will be considered strictly only on the following basis:
- The units are associated with an already developed and established medical facility, nursing home or other care-related facilities; the units are held in single ownership with the overall medical / nursing home / care facility; no provision is made for future sale or subdivision; and a strict management agreement is put into place limiting the use of such structures to those deemed in need of medical supervision or care;

- The number of such units on any such site shall be limited to 10% of the total number of hospital/ nursing/care home bedrooms unless a strong case, supported by evidence, can be made for additional units;
- Such units shall be modest in scale and limited to single bedroom units only and independent facilities such as car parking and gardens shall not be provided to each unit (in order to ensure such units are not rendered suitable for standalone use as private dwellings).

Childcare & Preschool

- CPO 7.27** To facilitate the provision of childcare in a manner, which is compatible with land-use and transportation policies and adheres to the principles of sustainable development.
- CPO 7.28** To facilitate the provision of a network of childcare facilities that reflects the distribution of the residential population in the County, in order to minimise travel distance and maximise opportunities for disadvantaged communities.
- CPO 7.29** Where considered necessary by the Planning Authority, to require the provision of childcare facilities in all residential developments comprising 75 houses or more (including local authority and social housing schemes). In accordance with Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government guidelines, childcare places shall be provided at a ratio of 20 places per 75 residential units, having regard to cumulative effects of permitted development, (unless it can be demonstrated that having regard to the existing geographic distribution of childcare facilities and the emerging demographic profile of the area that this level of childcare facilities is not required). Without substantial cause, it is the policy of the Planning Authority not to allow a change of use of these premises within five years.
- CPO 7.30** While the Planning Authority does not encourage the provision of childcare facilities in rural areas consideration may be given subject to the following strict criteria:
- Existing infrastructural services (water supply, wastewater disposal, entrance and car parking arrangements) are adequate or can be upgraded to a standard suitable to meet the needs of the facility; and
 - The scale of the facility (i.e. the number of children attending) shall be modest and appropriate to the rural location and will be required to be justified on the basis of the catchment of the facility, the proximity to other childcare facilities and the proximity to an existing towns or village, where land is zoned or available for childcare development.

Leisure & Recreation

- CPO 7.31** Support the objectives of public health policy including Healthy Ireland, National Sports Policy and the National Physical Activity Plan.
- CPO 7.32** To facilitate opportunities for play and support the implementation of the Wicklow County Council Play Policy and its objectives, including the collection of development levies.
- CPO 7.33** In all new residential development in excess of 50 units, where considered necessary by the Planning Authority, the developer shall provide, in the residential public open space area, a dedicated children's play area, of a type and with such features to be determined following consultation with Community, Cultural & Social Development Office of Wicklow County Council. The location of any such proposal shall be situated within a centrally located area capable of being passively supervised by surrounding developments.
- CPO 7.34** All new estates, streets, open spaces/parks and community facilities shall be designed with the needs and safety of children, the elderly and people with disabilities as a priority.

- CPO 7.35** Subject to safety considerations, natural features (trees, streams etc) shall be retained in new developments.
- CPO 7.36** In accordance with Objective CPO 7.5, where a deficiency in facilities for teenagers/young adults and/or indoor community space is identified in an area, the proposed development should include proposals to address this deficiency in consultation with young people and appropriate stakeholders.
- CPO 7.37** All-new neighbourhood parks or active open space zones shall include a 'mixed-use games area' (MUGA) of an appropriate size and nature to be determined in, pre-consultation with the Community, Cultural & Social Development Office of Wicklow County Council.
- CPO 7.38** New community buildings/facilities shall be designed to facilitate a wide range of uses including active uses (e.g. basketball, badminton, gymnastics/dance, martial arts etc), meeting/club use and the operation of youth clubs and youth services and such buildings / facilities shall be universally accessible.
- CPO 7.39** To provide for the development of facilities that will contribute to the improvement of the health and well-being of the inhabitants of County Wicklow and facilitate participation in sport and recreation.
- CPO 7.40** Facilities for sports shall normally be located on designated active open space, close to towns or villages where they are easily accessed by sustainable mobility options. All efforts shall be made to locate new sports facilities close to existing community facilities, schools or areas of dense residential development. The Council may consider providing sites for these purposes or may be prepared to make financial or other assistance available, subject to reasonable access being made available to the public and to reasonable safeguards for the continued use of the land as open space.
- CPO 7.41** The redevelopment for alternative uses of open space and recreational lands whether owned by private recreational clubs or publicly owned, will normally be resisted by the Planning Authority unless suitable and improved alternative recreational facilities can be provided in a convenient location.
- CPO 7.42** The development of new sports or active open space zones shall be accompanied by appropriate infrastructure including:
- Fully accessible changing rooms and drinking water fountains;
 - Car parking with EV charge points;
 - Pedestrian / cycling access and facilities; linkages to public transport.
- CPO 7.43** To prioritise, facilitate and support the development of a community swimming pool facility and a sports complex within the western region of the County, so located to achieve maximum accessibility to the residents of West Wicklow.
- CPO 7.44** To facilitate and support the development of multipurpose covered outdoor areas for all year round outdoor activities such as yoga, Pilates, tai chi etc.
- Open Space**
- CPO 7.45** Through the local plan process, to designate suitable open space & covered open space in all settlements, commensurate with its needs and existing facilities, in accordance with the provisions of the Wicklow County Council Play, Sport & Recreation and Active Open Space policies.
- CPO 7.46** To require open space to be provided in tandem with new residential development (in accordance with the standards set out in the Development & Design Standards Appendix).

- CPO 7.47** In existing residential areas, the areas of open space permitted, designated or dedicated solely for the use of the residents will normally be zoned 'RE' as they form an intrinsic part of the overall residential development. Non-community uses on such lands will not normally be permitted.
- CPO 7.48** To support and facilitate the development of allotments and community gardens, of an appropriate scale, on lands which meet the following criteria:
- land situated within or immediately adjacent to the edge of towns/villages;
 - land that is easily accessible to the residents of a particular town or village;
 - where an adequate water supply can be provided;
 - where adequate road infrastructure and access exists/can be provided; and
 - where adequate parking facilities can be provided.
- CPO 7.49** To require proposals for open space to include in their layout and overall design that will enhance and create greater biodiversity, in accordance with the objectives of Chapter 17 and 18 of this plan and the standards set out in the Development & Design Appendix.
- CPO 7.50** To support the development of regional-scale Open Space and Recreational facilities particularly those close to large or growing population centres within the Region.
- CPO 7.51** All open spaces shall be provided with environmentally friendly lighting in order to ensure their safe usage after daylight hours, in accordance with Chapter 15 of this plan 'Light Pollution' and the standards set out in the Development & Design Appendix.

Arts & Culture

- CPO 7.52** To facilitate opportunities for the provision and development of Arts projects.
- CPO 7.53** To facilitate the creation and display of works of art at appropriate public locations, including appropriate locations within the streetscape, provided no unacceptable environmental, amenity, traffic or other problems are created.
- CPO 7.54** To facilitate and support the development of the library service within the County.
- CPO 7.55** To facilitate the development of new, improved or expanded places of worship and burial grounds including natural burial grounds at appropriate locations in the County, where the demand for the facility has been demonstrated.
- CPO 7.56** To support and promote the development of a craft/design hub in Arklow, Co. Wicklow as a legacy to Arklow Pottery.

Social Enterprise

- CPO 7.57** To encourage and facilitate the development of social enterprise hubs that foster and support social enterprise⁴, social entrepreneurship and social innovation in the community.

⁴ Social enterprises are businesses whose core objective is to achieve a social, societal or environmental impact. Like other businesses, social enterprises trade in goods or services on an ongoing basis. However, any surpluses generated by social enterprises are re-invested into achieving a social impact, rather than maximising profit for their owners (National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019 – 2022).