

2. VISION AND CORE STRATEGY FOR NORTH TIPPERARY

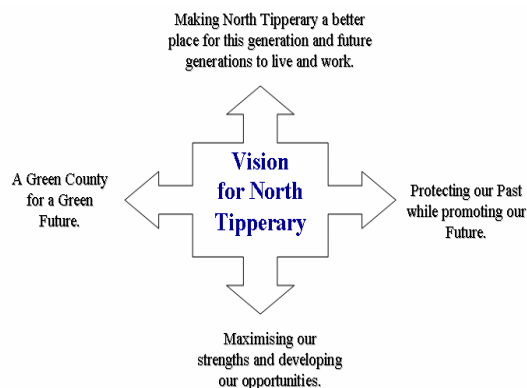
Main Sections in this Chapter are:

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2.1 Vision Statement

The challenges facing North Tipperary cannot be underestimated. The recent recession has resulted in us finding ourselves in a position of unprecedented downturn within all sectors within the County. During the ‘Celtic Tiger’ years our employment sector and economic development generally has remained low and has been unable to keep pace with the increases in residential population. We have provided homes for the people of the county, and for many who have migrated here, but have been unable to provide the corresponding level of jobs, amenities, services and physical infrastructure necessary to sustain such a population.

To address these challenges, the Vision Strategy for the sustainable planning and development of the county which will form the basis of the Development Plan is:



Having set out the overall ‘vision strategy’, the next step is to determine the detailed policies and objectives for achieving the overall ‘vision statement’ of the Plan. This has been done under the

guidance of a set of Strategic Aims and Core Strategies, which are an essential part of the thinking behind this plan.

2.2 Achieving the Vision through Sustainable Development

This section seeks to explain how the Council will achieve the stated vision for the County. While sustainability is only one of the elements of the overall vision, it will form the basis for the achievement of all elements.

Sustainability is an issue that has, over recent times, become a fundamental part of the planning process in Ireland, Europe and the World. Sustainable development forms a cornerstone of all aspects of planning and cannot be seen as a separate, independent issue.

Sustainable development is ‘development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.

(Bruntland Report, 1987)

The basic concept of sustainable development is that **ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND SOCIAL** aspects are viewed as a whole and are not in conflict with each other. There is a need to achieve a balance between human activity, development and the protection of the environment. The fundamental idea is that in order to maintain and develop a good quality of life for all, proper long-term economic development is essential and such development can only be supported by a healthy and diverse

environment. Ultimately, it is about changing the way we live as individuals and communities so that we respect the limits of our natural resources, upon which all life depends. We need to do this to ensure that future generations have an adequate quality of life.

2.3 Why do we need sustainable development?

Sustainable development is necessary because the need for development is as great as ever, but the model of the past cannot be used as a pattern for the future. Millions of people worldwide live below the poverty line, have no access to health care, and have inadequate shelter. With the rapid increase of the global population, the disparity between rich and poor is becoming greater.

Ireland and North Tipperary do not have problems on such a scale, but we cannot afford to stand aside from these issues. Global prosperity must increase and must be more widely shared. Living standards must be improved. Historically, economic activity tended to mean pollution and wasting of resources. Such activity is clearly unsustainable.

We have to find a new way forward: this is the challenge of sustainable development. For the future, we need to simultaneously achieve economic, social and environmental objectives, and consider the longer-term implications of decisions. The choices made will either promote more sustainable practices or lead us further from that outcome.

At a local level, our County needs thriving villages and towns based on strong economies, good access to services, and attractive and safe surroundings. Our countryside needs to be valued as a natural asset and not treated simply as development land, which can be developed at the impulse of its current owner.

2.4 Changing our perspective

For generations the environment was viewed as inexhaustible, available to be used to the benefit of all with no long-term

consequences. However, the world's population and the capacity of humanity to change and destroy the environment have increased so greatly in recent times that our actions are now having profound effects on the delicate balance that supports us all.

Still today, too many people consider the environment to be something 'out there'. By definition, 'environment' means 'surroundings'. All of what surrounds us makes up our environment, not only the natural surroundings or landscape. We all depend on the quality of our environment – the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, our sources of clothing and shelter. When these components break down, the impacts on our lives are profound.

By adopting more sustainable practices in the workplace, at home or in the community, we can make a difference. If we can bring about economic, social and environmental benefits by adopting the sustainable approach, then we can improve North Tipperary and set an example for the rest of Ireland, and the rest of the world.

2.5 Sustainability at a Local Level

2.5.1 Local Agenda 21

At the United Nations (UN's) 1992 Rio Earth Summit, world leaders signed up to Agenda 21 – the name given to a programme of action for the 21st Century. Chapter 28 of this document calls for local authorities to develop Local Agenda 21 (LA21) Plans – a crucial part of the movement towards sustainable development. LA21 is the process of developing local policies for sustainable development and building partnerships between local authorities, the private sector, voluntary organisations and communities themselves to implement them. In this regard the 'County Economic, Social and Cultural Strategy' will be the Council's Local Agenda 21 Plan. LA21 is a continuing process, rather than a single document or activity, and it is the responsibility of local authorities to enable and promote that process.

2.5.2 Why Local Authorities?

This substantial responsibility was placed on local authorities because they are the closest level of governance to communities and individuals, and play a vital role in interacting with the public to promote sustainable development. The planning process has a very important role in sustainable development. The Development Plan is the main instrument for regulation and control of development, and contains policies that guide development toward sustainable practices. Planning takes into account the environmental costs of any proposed development, involves local communities and provides mechanisms for people to contribute to matters that have an impact on their quality of life (“bottom-up” planning).

2.6 Achieving Sustainability

Land-use policies and controls are central to the achievement of sustainability. As stated earlier, the County Economic, Social and Cultural Strategy will be the Council’s Local Agenda 21 Plan. However, the Development Plan, as the Council’s principal policy statement on land-use, will provide the land-use basis for ‘Local Agenda 21’.

The following strategic objectives have been identified, and the policies, guidelines and proposals in the Plan have been designed to facilitate their achievement:

- 1. Minimise the consumption of natural, non-renewable resources, including land;**
- 2. Preserve the quality of the landscape, open space, architectural and cultural heritage, material assets and natural resources;**
- 3. Protect the integrity of the built environment from damage caused by insensitive development proposals; and**
- 4. Promote the involvement of the local community in decision-making on environmental sustainability issues.**

While the achievement of these objectives will involve all areas of the Council’s activities, in land-use terms they are reflected in the Development Plan by the adoption of policies and proposals which:

- promote the active involvement of the community through the provision of information, public consultation and joint partnerships;
- permit a mix of land uses under each zoning objective (compatible with protecting amenities), to help to reduce the need to travel;
- promote a more compact urban form, particularly higher residential densities close to the town centres;
- promote the re-use of urban derelict land and buildings;
- promote the use of walking and cycling and reduce the reliance on the private car;
- strictly control the further expansion of suburbs into rural and high amenity areas;
- strictly control the development of inappropriate one-off houses in the countryside;
- ensure the protection of flora, fauna, quality landscapes and the promotion of bio-diversity;
- promote community health;
- provide high quality public water supply and drainage systems; and
- promote waste prevention, reduction, recycling and re-use.

2.7 Overall Strategic Planning Aims of the Draft Plan

The Strategic Aims and Core Strategies are set out below and are presented under the headings of the main themes of sustainable development outlined above i.e. **Economic, Environmental and Social.**

2.7.1 Economic Strategy

It is an aim of the Plan to build on and enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of North Tipperary as a location for investment and employment generation by promoting and developing the Vision of North Tipperary as **‘Being a Green County with a Green Future’.**

At the same time North Tipperary has a key role in supporting the Limerick / Shannon Gateway under the NSS in order to promote the economic strength of the Mid-West Region. The manner in which this strategy is to be addressed includes;

(i) To facilitate the provision of adequate land for employment uses, including sites at suitable locations for industrial, enterprise, office, retail and other small business uses having regard to spatial planning, infrastructural, environmental and transportation requirements and compatibility with adjoining uses;

(ii) To secure the county's role as a location for economic growth in the Mid-West Region in support of the Limerick / Shannon Gateway and to ensure that the employment benefits are better balanced across the whole county;

(iii) To work with Shannon Development, the IDA, Enterprise Ireland etc. in continuing to facilitate and encourage the development of technology parks, green industries, enterprise units and centres for start up businesses, such as would support local populations and employment and ensures that economic activity in the County is economically sustainable and provides benefits to the County as a whole;

(iv) To encourage all forms of economic and employment development throughout the county, in particular within settlements, at a scale and nature appropriate to the chosen location and subject to normal planning considerations, and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area;

(v) To work with appropriate bodies to ensure that adequate infrastructure is in place to attract investment. Electricity generation, road and rail networks, water and wastewater, broadband and gas could be harnessed to create nationally important areas, which are able to accommodate very large scale value added employment while avoiding potential for future environmental and planning conflicts;

(vi) To maximise the potential and opportunities of the retail sector, while protecting the environment of existing and established town centres and the retailing hierarchy in the county. The Retail Planning Guidelines, together with the County Retail Strategy and the Mid-West Retail Strategy will be implemented in this regard;

(vii) To maintain a vibrant and healthy agricultural sector based on the principles of sustainable development whilst at the same time finding alternative employment in or close to rural areas to sustain rural communities;

(viii) To develop forestry to a scale and in a manner which maximises its contribution to the economic and social well being of the County on a sustainable basis and which is compatible with the protection of the environment;

(ix) To ensure adequate supplies of aggregate resources to meet the future growth needs of the County.

(x) Resolution of infrastructural deficits throughout the region, where possible, focusing on the achievement of the Settlement Hierarchy and the Economic Development Strategy for the Mid-West Region;

(xi) Promote land use planning measures which facilitate transportation efficiency, economic returns on transport investment, minimisation of environmental impacts and a general shift towards the use of public transportation throughout the County. This will also be achieved by locating quality employment and residential development in proximity to each other, reducing the need to travel & the dependence on the private car and by further developing and enhancing the availability and attractiveness of public transport;

(xii) Continue to protect and preserve motorways, national primary and national secondary, Class 1A (downgraded national primary roads) Regional Roads and Class

1 Regional Roads from inappropriate development and access points onto them;

(xiii) Continue to protect, preserve and promote the inter-urban and commuter rail network within the County;

(xiv) Continue to develop, subject to resources, the water supply and wastewater collection and treatment infrastructural projects as contained in the Assessment of Water Services Needs in order to accommodate the planned levels of growth for the County and to ensure that the necessary projects are included in future Water Services Investment Programme;

(xv) To promote higher residential densities within identified growth centres as facilitated by the DoEHLG Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, so as to support viable public transport services, in line with the MWASP;

2.7.2 Environmental Strategy

A key aim of this Plan is to ensure that as far as possible the future growth of the County takes place in a manner which impacts in a minimal way on the environment and which has regard to the proper planning and sustainable development of the County.

The manner in which this strategy is to be achieved includes;

(i) To encourage the continued sustainable development of rural communities without compromising the physical, environmental, natural and heritage resources of the County;

(ii) To support and promote the sustainable social and economic development of rural areas with a particular focus upon those areas particularly disadvantaged;

(iii) To reinforce the vitality and future of smaller rural towns and villages as nodes for rural development and ensuring a functional relationship between housing and the rural area in which it is located;

(iv) To promote, encourage and facilitate the development of the tourism industry through sustainable means, including the conservation, protection and enhancement of the built and natural heritage, the protection of sensitive landscapes, cultural and community environments in order to maximise the economic benefits arising from the industry.

(v) Promote the use of a sustainability matrix to be completed as part of all housing developments (See Appendix 8);

(vi) Protect, conserve and enhance the County's bio-diversity and natural heritage; which includes wildlife (flora & fauna), habitats, landscapes and/or landscape features of importance to wildlife;

(vii) Protect, conserve and enhance buildings, areas, structures, sites and features of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest;

(viii) Promote and develop a unified approach to landscape planning and management, linking policies and objectives for the preservation of the County's and the Region's unique landscape character to all relevant planning policies and objectives throughout the Plan.

(ix) To facilitate energy infrastructure provision and in particular the development of renewable energy sources at suitable locations, so as to provide for the further physical and economic development of North Tipperary and its Vision of becoming a key focus/location for renewable energy within the Country.

(x) To work with appropriate bodies to ensure that adequate infrastructure is in place to attract investment. Electricity generation, road and rail networks, water and wastewater, broadband and gas could be harnessed to become nationally important areas to accommodate very large scale value added employment while

avoiding potential for future environmental and planning conflicts;

(xi) To promote and facilitate the provision of the necessary infrastructure to fully accommodate the demand for future population increases in an environmentally sustainable manner at appropriate locations as identified in the Settlement Hierarchy (see Chapter 3 of the Draft plan).

(xii) Encourage the continued sustainable development of rural communities without compromising the physical, environmental, natural and heritage resources of the County;

2.7.3 Social Strategy

It is a key aim of the Draft Plan to reinforce the vitality and viability of smaller rural towns and villages as nodes for sustainable social development. The Draft Plan also seeks to provide the social support for those living in the County.

The manner in which this strategy is to be addressed includes:

(i) The promotion and channelling of development in the first instance to Nenagh, Thurles, Roscrea and Templemore which are the four major designated areas of growth in the county. Nenagh in particular, will accommodate a significant part of the County's share of regional growth going forward and will continue to accommodate a significant level of immigration. The continued development of Roscrea will be balanced with the protection of its inherent qualities as a Heritage Town which may limit the quantum and scale of development;

(ii) The continued development of Borrisoleigh and Borrisokane on a sustainable basis will also be pursued. .

(iii) The Development Plan has identified Cloughjordan, Ballina, and Newport as District Service Centres in the Settlement Strategy;

(iv) The development of Local Service Centres and Villages will be more closely

linked to locally derived growth rather than to regionally derived overall growth,

(v) To ensure that over time the development of our county's towns and villages become more self sustaining in terms of more people being employed locally.

(vi) Implementation of the guidance document published by the DoEHLG in 2008, entitled 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, Guidelines for Planning Authorities', and its accompanying Urban Design Manual;

(vii) Implementation of the guidance document published by the DoEHLG and the Dept. of Education on the Provision of Schools and the Planning System,

(viii) Ensure that new residential developments present a high quality living environment for its residents, both in terms of the individual dwelling units and in terms of the overall layout and appearance of the scheme;

(ix) Promote housing policies that are socially inclusive and which take particular account of the needs of older people and people with disabilities;

(x) Promote high quality living environments for enhancing the quality of life being enjoyed by the resident population;

(xi) Actively encourage participation in the housing sector through partnership arrangements and the provision of infrastructure and serviced land for social, voluntary and private housing, where possible.

(xii) To ensure that individual house developments in rural areas satisfy the housing requirements of persons who are an intrinsic part of the rural community in which they are proposed, subject to compliance with normal planning criteria. An assessment of individual rural development proposals including one-off houses shall have regard to other policies and objectives in this Development Plan;

(xiii) To support and promote the sustainable social and economic development of rural areas with a particular focus upon those areas particularly disadvantaged;

(xiv) To reinforce the vitality and future of smaller rural towns and villages as nodes for rural development and ensuring a functional relationship between housing and the rural area in which it is located;

(xv) To support the provision and even distribution of a range of social infrastructure facilities, including schools and open space, to meet the needs of the County's population in liaison with other statutory, voluntary and community groups and ensure that they are located close to or within walking distance of housing, accessible to all sectors of the community and facilitate multiuse functions through their design and layout,

(xvi) Strengthen the vitality and viability of towns and villages in the County through the promotion of an adequate provision of integrated community services and facilities of high standard, age, appropriateness and which are accessible to all age groups and sectors of society, in the most appropriate locations, in partnership with all relevant bodies and groups;

(xvii) Facilitate the provision of adequate zoned land in accordance with the Settlement Strategy of the Plan to accommodate the population targets from the Mid-West RPGs and the DoEHLG and changing household needs including social and affordable housing. In the last Plan there was 273.98ha of high density residential land zoned within the County Development Plan area which at 25 houses to the hectare would have accommodated 6,849 dwellings. The zonings in the Draft Plan now account for 184.88ha. Approximately 80% of this land is zoned for low density housing, with only the larger towns and the centre of villages having higher density zonings. At densities of 8-10 to the hectare for low density and 25 to the hectare for higher

densities, this would be sufficient land for 1,183-1,479 houses on low density and 924 houses on higher density lands.

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