

MONKSLAND/BELLANAMULLIA (ATHLONE WEST) LOCAL AREA PLAN 2010 - 2016

MADE ON 26 APRIL 2010



*Roscommon County Council
Comhairle Chontae Ros Comáin*



TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1	INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE	1
1.2	CONTENT OF THE REPORT	2
1.3	LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT	2
1.4	PREPARATION OF THE MONKSLAND / BELLANAMULLIA (ATHLONE WEST) LAP	3
1.5	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	4
1.6	APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT	4
1.7	FURTHER REFERENCE	5

CHAPTER 2: HISTORIC CONTEXT AND PROFILE OF MONKSLAND / BELLANAMULLIA (ATHLONE WEST)

2.1	LOCATION OF THE MONKSLAND / BELLANAMULLIA (ATHLONE WEST) LAP	7
2.2	DESCRIPTION OF MONKSLAND / BELLANAMULLIA (ATHLONE WEST) LAP AREA	7
2.3	HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND PROFILE	8
2.3.1	Brief History of the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) Area: Information contained with the Development Plans	10

CHAPTER 3: SETTLEMENT POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

3.1	OVERVIEW AND STRATEGY VISION	25
3.1.1	Vision and Strategy Aims	25
3.2	POPULATION CONTEXT	26
3.2.1	Population Calculations	26
3.2.2	The 2006 Census Information	27
3.2.3	An Post Geo-directory	28
3.3	DEVELOPMENT AND SETTLEMENT STRATEGY	28

CHAPTER 4: INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

4.1	INTRODUCTION	31
4.2	ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION	31
4.2.1	Policy Context	31
4.2.2	Physical Context	33
4.2.3	Roads and Transportation Strategy	41
4.3	WATER SERVICES	47
4.3.1	Policy Context	47
4.3.2	Physical Context	48
4.3.3	Water Services Strategy	51

4.4	FLOOD RISK AND PROTECTION	52
4.4.1	Policy Context	52
4.4.2	Physical Context (Map 5)	54
4.4.3	Flood Risk and Protection Strategy	55
4.5	WASTEWATER SERVICES	56
4.5.1	Policy Context	56
4.5.2	Physical Context (Map 6)	59
4.5.3	Wastewater Services Strategy	60
4.6	WASTE MANAGEMENT	62
4.6.1	Waste Management Strategy	62
4.7	ENERGY	65
4.7.1	Policy Context	65
4.7.2	Renewal Energy	66
4.7.3	Electricity	68
4.7.4	Ireland's Gas Network	69
4.7.5	Energy Strategy	70
4.8	TELECOMMUNICATIONS	72
4.8.1	Policy Context	72
4.8.2	Physical Context	73
4.8.3	Telecommunications Strategy	
4.9	MAJOR ACCIDENTS HAZARD	75
4.9.1	Policy Context	75
4.9.2	Physical Context (Map 7)	75
4.9.3	Major Accidents Hazard Strategy	76
CHAPTER 5: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT		
5.1	INTRODUCTION	77
5.2	POLICY CONTEXT	77
5.3	PHYSICAL CONTEXT	86
5.3.1	Economic Profile	86
5.3.2	Retail and Commercial Development	92
5.3.3	Industrial Development	94
5.4	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY	95
CHAPTER 6: BUILT AND NATURAL HERITAGE		
6.1	BUILT HERITAGE	97
6.1.1	Architectural Heritage	97
6.1.2	Archaeological Heritage	102
6.1.3	Built Heritage Strategy	103
6.2	NATURAL HERITAGE	105
6.2.1	Designated Sites	105
6.2.2	Nature Conservation, the Wider Countryside and Biodiversity	111
6.2.3	Sites of Geological Importance and Eskers	112

6.2.4	Hedgerows	113
6.2.5	Trees and Woodlands	113
6.2.6	Peatlands	114
6.2.7	Wetlands	114
6.2.8	Inland Waters	115
6.2.9	Alien Species	116
6.2.10	Landscape Character Assessment	116
6.2.11	Natural Heritage Strategy	119
 CHAPTER 7: SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES		
7.1	INTRODUCTION	121
7.2	POLICY CONTEXT	121
7.3	PHYSICAL CONTEXT	122
7.3.1	Community Facilities (Map 10)	124
7.3.2	Schools and Educational Facilities	125
7.3.3	Social Inclusion and Disability	127
7.3.4	Childcare Provision	127
7.3.5	Health	128
7.3.6	Burial Grounds	128
7.3.7	Community Development Forum	129
7.4	SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES STRATEGY	130
 CHAPTER 8: RECREATION, LEISURE AND TOURISM		
8.1	INTRODUCTION	133
8.2	POLICY CONTEXT	133
8.3	PHYSICAL CONTEXT	134
8.3.1	Open Space and Sporting Provision	134
8.3.2	Integrated Tourism and Recreation Development	139
8.3.3	Tourism	142
8.4	RECREATION, LEISURE AND TOURISM STRATEGY	151
 CHAPTER 9: URBAN DEVELOPMENT		
9.1	INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT	153
9.2	POLICY CONTEXT	153
9.3	PHYSICAL CONTEXT	164
9.3.1	Housing Strategy and Residential Development	164
9.3.2	Further Development within the LAP area	173
9.3.3	Land use zoning objectives and matrix	175
9.3.4	Urban Development within LAP area	187
9.3.5	Architecture and Urban Design	191
9.4	URBAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY	199

CHAPTER 10:	DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS	
10.1	INTRODUCTION	201
10.2	GENERAL DEVELOPMENT	201
10.2.1	Building Lines	201
10.2.2	Access for persons with Disabilities and the Mobility Impaired	202
10.2.3	Light Pollution	202
10.2.4	Noise	202
10.2.5	Drainage	202
10.2.6	Conservation of Water	203
10.2.7	Wastewater Treatment	203
10.2.8	Flood Risk and Protection	203
10.3	RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT	204
10.3.1	Residential Development (Qualitative)	204
10.3.2	Residential Development (Quantitative)	206
10.3.3	Residential Density	207
10.3.4	Residential Site Development Standards	207
10.3.5	Apartments	208
10.3.6	House Extensions	210
10.3.7	Backland Development	210
10.3.8	Use of Upper Floors for Residential Purposes	211
10.3.9	Change of Use of Existing Housing in Existing Residential Schemes	211
10.3.10	Derelict Sites	211
10.3.11	Residential Care Homes	211
10.3.12	Parking in Front Gardens	211
10.4	RETAIL DEVELOPMENT	212
10.4.1	Shop Fronts	213
10.4.2	Shopping Centres	213
10.5	OFFICE/INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENTS	214
10.5.1	Office Development	214
10.5.2	Industry, Warehousing and Business Park Developments	214
10.6	CONVENIENCE FOOD SHOPPING	214
10.7	DISCOUNT FOOD STORES	215
10.8	DISTRICT, NEIGHBOURHOOD AND LOCAL CENTRES	215
10.9	RETAIL WAREHOUSE PARK	215
10.10	FACTORY OUTLET CENTRES	215
10.11	RETAIL WAREHOUSE CLUBS	216
10.12	LOCAL SHOPS AND PETROL FILLING STATIONS	216
10.13	PUBS/NIGHTCLUBS/AMUSEMENTS CENTRES	217
10.14	FAST FOOD OUTLETS/TAKE-AWAYS	217
10.15	AUTOMATIC TELLER MACHINES	217
10.16	ADVERTISING	218
10.16.1	Adverting Hoardings	219
10.16.2	Fingerpost Signage	219
10.16.3	Rural Advertising	219

10.17 TOURISM	220
10.17.1 Rural Tourism	220
10.17.2 Caravan and Camping Parks	220
10.17.3 Holiday Homes	221
10.17.4 Tourist Advertisements	221
10.17.5 Diversification	222
10.17.6 Recreation	222
10.17.7 Sustainable Tourism Planning Control Checklist	223
10.18 COMMUNITY FACILITIES	224
10.19 SCHOOLS	224
10.20 NURSING HOMES	225
10.21 CHILDCARE FACILITIES	225
10.22 NEIGHBOURHOOD FACILITIES	225
10.23 CAR PARKING	226
10.23.1 Loading and Unloading	228
10.23.2 Heavy Vehicles	229
10.23.3 Cycle Facilities	229
10.24 TRANSPORT	229
10.24.1 National and Regional Roads	229
10.24.2 Sightlines	230
10.24.3 Public Transport	230
10.25 RENEWAL ENTERGY/EFFICIENCY	230
10.25.1 Micro Renewals	231
10.25.2 Energy Conservation	231
10.25.3 Planning Exemptions for Renewal Technology	232
10.26 HERITAGE PROTECTION	234
10.26.1 Architectural Conservation	234
10.26.2 Development in Architectural Conservation Areas	234
10.26.3 Development in Areas of Archaeological Potential	234
10.27 TELECOMMUNICATIONS	235
10.28 EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY	236
10.29 FORESTRY	238
10.30 INLAND FISHERIES	238
10.30.1 River Drainage	239
10.30.2 Other Works	239
10.31 BONDING TO SECURE COMPLETION OF DEVELOPMENT	239
10.32 FUTURE PUBLICATIONS, STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES	239

Tables:

Table 1:	Population Change 2002 – 2006	27
Table 2:	National Secondary Roads Development Strategic Objectives	43
Table 3:	Other Roads Infrastructure Proposals	44
Table 4:	Record of Monuments and Places (RMPs) in the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area	102
Table 5:	Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area	106
Table 6:	Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area	106
Table 7:	Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) in the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area	107
Table 8:	Environmental Zones on and Adjacent to the lands at Bogganfin	109
Table 9:	Proposed Educational Provisions within the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area	125
Table 10:	Community Childcare Facilities	127
Table 11:	Private Childcare Facilities	127
Table 12:	Places of interest/visitor attractions in the sub-region of County Roscommon in proximity to the LAP area	145
Table 13:	Recommended Phasing within the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) Local Area Plan	167
Table 14:	Determining Factors for Phase 1	168
Table 15:	Determining Factors for Phase 2	170
Table 16:	Determining Factors for Phase 3	172
Table 17:	Proposed zoning areas for the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP 2009 – 2015	173
Table 18:	Minimum Floor Area requirements for Apartments	209
Table 19:	Car Parking Requirements	227

Maps:

Map 1:	Monksland/Bellanamullia Location Map
Map 2:	District Electoral Divisions (DEDs)
Map 3a:	Roads in Monksland/Bellanamullia
Map 3a	Figure 1: Roads
Map 3a:	Figure 2: Roads
Map 3b:	Public Transport in Monksland/Bellanamullia
Map 4:	Water Supply
Map 5:	Groundwater Vulnerability & Flooding
Map 6:	Wastewater Treatment Network
Map 7:	Gas and Electricity Network & Buffers around Elan
Map 8a:	Built Heritage in Monksland/Bellanamullia
Map 8b:	Landscape Character & Archaeology
Map 9:	Natural Heritage in Monksland/Bellanamullia
Map 10:	Community Services in Monksland/Bellanamullia
Map 11:	Places of Interest/Visitor Attractions
Map 12a:	Permitted Development
Map 12b:	Phase 2 lands - 1km radius
Map 13a:	Land use Zoning
Map 13b Figure 1:	Land Use Zoning
Map 13c Figure 2:	Land Use Zoning
Map 13d Figure 3:	Land Use Zoning
Map 13e Figure 4:	Land Use Zoning

Figures:

Figure 1:	Athlone Environs Development Plan 2002	9
Figure 2:	1981 Roscommon County Development Plan	11
Figure 3:	1981 Roscommon County Development Plan	12
Figure 4:	Athlone Environs Plan, 1991	16
Figure 5:	Monksland Action Area Plan, 1992	18
Figure 6:	Monksland Action Area Plan, 1992	19
Figure 7:	Monksland Action Area Plan, 1992	20
Figure 8:	Monksland/Bellanamullia Area Plan 2008 and the Athlone Environs Development Plan 2008	24

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The principle planning document in County Roscommon is the Roscommon County Development Plan (RCDP) 2008 – 2014 which was adopted on 3 June 2008. Its aim is to act as a primary guiding tool for the way in which development is governed in the County Council area over the set period.

“The development plan is central to achieving greater balance in regional development and enabling all areas to develop to their maximum potential. The plan creates the vision for the area it covers; specifies the type, amount and quality of development needed to achieve that vision; and seeks to protect and enhance the environment and amenities. It creates the policy framework and necessary degree of certainty within which individual development decisions can be made over the life of the plan.” (DEHLG, Development Plans: Guidelines for Planning Authorities: 2)

The purpose of the development plan therefore, is to set out the overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the County. Local Area Plans can then be prepared for the towns and villages. In light of this, Objective 3 of the RCDP recommended the preparation of full Local Area Plans for the County, one of the first of which is Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West).

What is a Local Area Plan (LAP)?

An LAP is made up of a written statement and maps, plans and drawings setting out objectives for the proper planning and sustainable development of a specific area. The LAP takes a detailed look at a specific area, identifying and analysing the various issues of relevance, before establishing and setting out principles for the future development of the area. The objectives indicated in the plan must be relevant to the local area and consistent with the provisions of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2008 – 2014. The intended timescale for the implementation of the plan must be stated and information included on the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the Plan.

An LAP is a legal or statutory document prepared in accordance with Part II, Sections 18 to 20 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 – 2006. When considering an application for planning permission within the boundary of a LAP area, the Planning Authority and An Bord Pleanála must take account of the provisions set out in the LAP. The provisions of any Draft LAP may also be considered.

Public consultation is particularly important in its preparation and the making of the LAP is the responsibility of the elected members of the County Council.

The main aim of this Local Area Plan for Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) is to set out a framework for the physical development of the area so that growth may take place in a co-ordinated, sensitive and orderly manner, while at the same time being sensitive to the environment. This plan strives to inform the general public, statutory authorities, developers and other interested bodies of the policy framework, objectives and land use proposals for the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area.

1.2 CONTENT OF THE REPORT

The Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) Local Area Plan (LAP) 2010 – 2016 has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Section 19(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and is presented in many parts. The written framework provides a Vision for the area at the start which feeds into the Strategic Goals/Aims contained in Chapter 2: Settlement Policy and Development Strategy; and these then inform the specific policies and objectives in each of the chapters of the written statement.

It should be noted that the policies and objectives outlined in this LAP are in addition to the policies and objectives contained within the Roscommon County Development Plan 2008-2014. It is acknowledged that not all strategic objectives will be achieved during the six year LAP period, however it is important to identify these objectives so there is a commitment towards achieving them over the longer term. In the interests of clarity, any reference to a goal, aim, policy and objective in the text of this Local Area Plan, shall be construed as an “objective” of this Plan for the purposes of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended and the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 as amended.

Chapter 1 of the written statement provides the **Introduction**, purpose and content of the Local Area Plan. An explanation of the legislative and policy context for its preparation is provided which includes sections on the preparation of the Plan. The following **chapters** contain the main policy material under a range of headings together with the planning strategies and principles that underpin them. The main chapters are as follows;

1. Introduction
2. Historic Context and Profile of Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West)
3. Settlement Policy and Development Strategy
4. Infrastructure and Services
5. Economic Development and Employment
6. Built and Natural Heritage
7. Social and Community Facilities
8. Recreation, Leisure and Tourism
9. Urban Development
10. Development Management Guidelines and Standards

1.3. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT

A wide variety of international, national, regional and local government policy documents, have been reviewed in preparing this Local Area Plan.

At the *international* level, the need to promote “sustainable development” is paramount. This term refers to “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. This principle lies at the heart of the LAP and its aims, as in the various European Union publications such as Agenda 2000, Local Agenda 21, the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), and various relevant EU Directives.

Policy developments with a particular relevance to County Roscommon at *National, Regional and Local* level include:

- at *national* level: the *National Development Plan 2007 - 2013* (NDP); Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland, 1997; the *National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020* (NSS); and various Planning Guidelines in relation to Retailing, Telecommunications, Renewable Energy, Built Heritage, Childcare, Schools, Sustainable Rural Housing, Quarries, “Main Environmental Challenges” for Ireland as set out in Chapter 16 – “Main Environmental Challenges” of EPA Ireland’s Environment 2008 (EPA, October 2008);
- at *regional* level: the *Regional Planning Guidelines for the West 2004-2016* (RPG’s) and the *Midlands Regional Authority: Regional Planning Guidelines, 2004* ; and,
- at *local* level: the Roscommon County Development Plan 2008 – 2014, and the “Roscommon Common Vision”, County Development Board Strategy, 2002 – 2012, Westmeath County Development Plan 2008 – 2014, which includes the Athlone Environs Plan, together with associated Local Area Plans and Action Area Plans in and around Athlone Town.

1.4. PREPARATION OF THE MONKSLAND/BELLANAMULLIA (ATHLONE WEST) LAP

The Roscommon County Development Plan (RCDP) 2008 – 2014 consists of a single document comprising the County Development Plan as well as Area Plans for all the towns together with zoning maps. These plans provide updated information concerning the towns and a guidance framework for the management of development in an environmentally sustainable manner within the development envelopes of the towns. These will continue to operate as statutory plans for the areas until such time as Local Area Plans, as defined in Part II, Chapter II of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, replace them. **The Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) Local Area Plan is one of the first to be prepared and now that it is adopted, the RCDP will be varied to allow the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP to replace the Area Plan contained within it.**

In addition, it was decided as part of the process of preparation of the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP that the Athlone Environs SO1 LAP 2006 - 2012 be incorporated into the LAP boundary and that it form an integral part of the LAP. The SO1 LAP is therefore revoked and replaced by the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP 2010 – 2016. These lands are now referred to as lands at Bogganfin.

The following is a summary of the timescale and processes which were involved in the preparation and adoption of the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP:

Pre-draft consultation: Prior to preparing the Draft LAP, the local authority consults with the public concerning the preparation of the Plan.

Preparation of the Draft LAP: The County Council then prepares the Draft LAP taking into account the issues raised during the pre-draft consultation phase.

Public Notice and LAP display period: An advertisement is placed in several local newspapers announcing the preparation of the LAP. The notice and a copy of the Draft LAP is also sent to the prescribed bodies including government agencies. The Draft LAP goes on display for a minimum period of 6 weeks during which submissions and observations are invited from the public and interested parties.

Preparation of Manager’s Report on submissions/observations: A report summarising the issues raised in the submissions and the manager’s recommendation is presented to the elected members of the County Council not later than 12 weeks after publication of the notice in the national newspaper. The elected members have 6 weeks to consider the report and adopt, amend, or reject the plan

Display of proposed modification/amendments: Any material modification / amendment to the plan must go on display for a period of not less than 4 weeks.

Preparation on Manager's Report on submissions on Proposed Modifications / Amendments: A manager's report summarising the issues raised in the submissions and the recommendation of the manager is presented to the elected members of the County Council. This takes place not later than 8 weeks after publication of the notice in the national newspaper. The elected members have a maximum of 6 weeks to consider the report and adopt, amend, or reject the plan.

1.5. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

In tandem with the LAP process, a Strategic Environmental Assessment process needs to be undertaken. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the formal systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Local Area Plan before a decision is made to adopt the plan.

The SEA process includes the following steps:

Screening: to determine which plans and programmes are likely to have a significant impact on the environment

Scoping: to identify key issues of concern that should be addressed in the environmental assessment of the Plan and to liaise with Statutory Consultees

Preparing an **Environmental Report** where the likely significant environmental effects are identified and evaluated

Consulting the public, environmental authorities, and any EU Member State affected, on the environmental report and draft plan

Taking account of the findings of the report and the outcome of these consultations in deciding whether to **adopt or modify the draft plan**

Making known the decision on adoption of the plan and how SEA influenced the outcome

Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the plan

The Screening process for this LAP at the various stages has determined that a full Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), as required by the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, and in accordance with the DEHLG SEA Guidelines is not required as the LAP is not likely to have significant effects on the environment. (see www.roscommoncoco.ie)

1.6. APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

In addition to the SEA process, an Appropriate Assessment also needs to be undertaken. Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC requires an **appropriate assessment** of land use plans with respect to the ecological implications of any plan or project, whether within or outside a designated site, which does not directly relate to the management of the site but may impact upon its conservation objectives. The impact is assessed on Natura 2000 sites which are designed to form an ecologically coherent network of designated sites across the whole of Europe. These sites consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs).

The process followed for the **appropriate assessment** is similar to that carried out for the Strategic Environmental Assessment;

Screening: the process which identifies the likely impacts upon a Natura 2000 site of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether these impacts are likely to be significant.

Appropriate Assessment: the consideration of the impact on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. Additionally, where there are adverse impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts.

Assessment of alternative solutions: the process which examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site.

Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain: an assessment of compensatory measures where, in the light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the project or plan should proceed (it is important to note that this guidance does not deal with the assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest).

The purpose of the Screening Report (see www.roscommoncoco.ie) prepared for the Appropriate Assessment is to consider whether, based on the best scientific knowledge, the Plan will have potential impacts on the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 sites, and if so, the development, where necessary, of mitigation or avoidance measures to preclude negative effects. The report has been conducted in accordance with the Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.

The LAP has been formulated to ensure that uses, development and effects arising from permissions based upon the LAP (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) shall not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites.¹

The Screening Reports for the various LAP stages have found that the LAP does not require further appropriate assessment.

1.7 FURTHER REFERENCE

When considering development in Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) it is important to note that there are a number of other planning documents which should be taken into account, for example, the Roscommon County Development Plan 2008-2014, planning leaflets, Guidance Notes on the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended), and the Development Management Guidelines, 2007. The policies and objectives contained in this Local Area Plan are in addition to the policies and objectives outlined in the Roscommon County Development Plan 2008-2014. Readers of this Local Area Plan are encouraged to visit the Roscommon County Council website at www.roscommoncoco.ie for further information. In addition, the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008 – 2014, which includes the Athlone Environs Plan, together with associated Local Area Plans and Action Area Plans in and around Athlone Town can be referred to for further information.

¹ Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. there must be:

- (a) no alternative solution available;
- (b) imperative reasons for overriding public interest, including those of a social and economic nature; and,
- (c) adequate compensatory measures to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORIC CONTEXT AND PROFILE OF MONKSLAND/BELLANAMULLIA (ATHLONE WEST)

2.1 LOCATION OF THE MONKSLAND/BELLANAMULLIA (ATHLONE WEST) LAP AREA

Athlone is located on the River Shannon just south of Lough Ree and is linked by rail and the M6 Motorway to the east and west of Ireland. The Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area is situated west of the River Shannon, within the administrative jurisdiction of Roscommon County Council and it borders the development boundary of Athlone Town Council and Westmeath County Council to the south-east. The LAP area is at a strategic location and has developed as a principal service and employment centre for County Roscommon. Centrality and accessibility are key advantages to this strategic location. (See Map 1)

2.2 DESCRIPTION OF MONKSLAND/BELLANAMULLIA (ATHLONE WEST) LAP AREA

The direction and location of development within Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) has been influenced by the physical topography of the LAP area. Its **principal characteristics** are:

- seasonal flooding of the Shannon flood plain;
- land that is poorly drained due to a high water table and poor surface run-off;
- extensive bog areas;
- gravel ridges and eskers; and,
- a pattern of roads that reflects the above characteristics.

These factors have led to a linear orientation to development and this LAP will attempt somewhat to consolidate development within the residential and business areas of Monksland, Bellanamullia and Crannagh Beg.

In terms of its location with respect to **District Electoral Divisions (DEDs) and Townland boundaries**, the development envelope of the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP is situated within three DEDs, namely Athlone West Rural in which most of the area lies (+76%), Crannagh Beg to the south (+16%), and Thomastown to the south-west (+ 9%). Over 54% of the area is situated within the townland of Monksland, 8% in Bellanamullia, and 15% in the Crannagh and Crannagh Beg Townlands. (Population figures calculated on the basis of these DEDs is discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2, and detailed on Map 2)

The **residential development** in Monksland is dense with a number of housing developments built and planned both north and south of the new Tuam Road (R362). In contrast, the housing development along the Crannagh Beg Road is characterized by “ribbon” development of single dwellings. Large-scale **Industrial** as well as **Business, Enterprise Park/Light Industry and Warehousing** developments are prevalent in Monksland with a marked deficiency in the provision of **social and community facilities**.

The **principal land use issues** in the LAP area include:

- Large scale residential development;
- Deficiency in the provision of social and community facilities;
- Large scale industrial development;
- The completion of the new M6 Motorway and the downgrading of the old N6 route to a regional road ;
- Mains sewerage and the prevalence of the use of septic tanks and other individual wastewater treatment systems;
- Ribbon development on the south-western extremity of the development envelope;

- Sub-standard link between Monksland and Crannagh Beg / Summerhill;
- Need for road improvement and improved traffic safety; and,
- A need for a focus on the environment and the development of a sense of place and focus for the Monksland area.

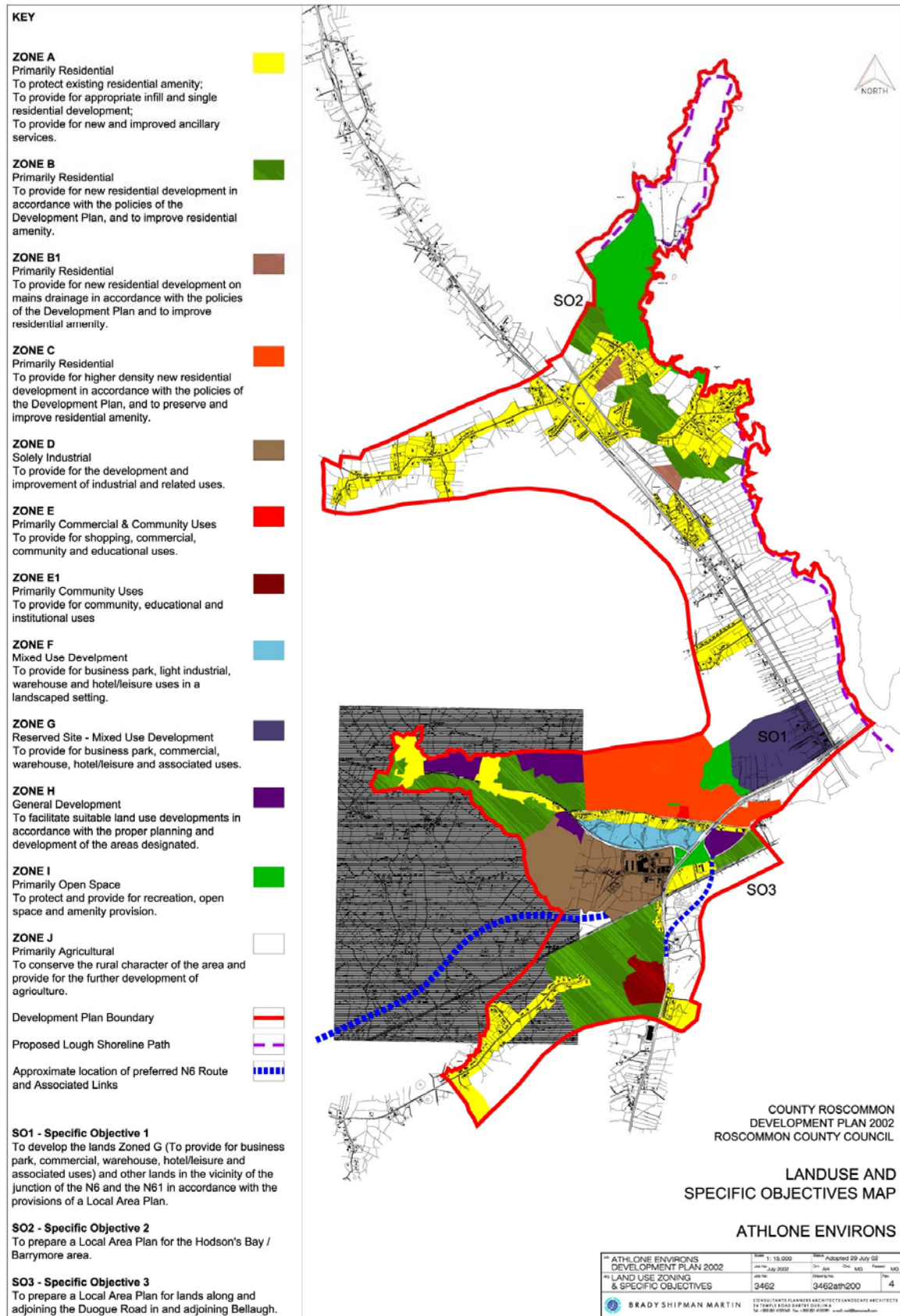
The **Athlone Environs SO1 LAP (2006 – 2012)** was prepared in response to a need identified within the *Athlone Environs Development Plan 2002 – 2008 (AEDP, 2002)*, which formed part of the *Roscommon County Development Plan 2002-2008 (RCDP 2002)*. The SO1 lands were located in Bogganfin / Monksland Townland in the Western Environs of Athlone Town at the junction of the N6/M6 National Primary Route and N61 National Secondary Route in south-western County Roscommon. These lands are within the administrative jurisdiction of Roscommon County Council however they abut the boundary of Athlone Town Council and Westmeath County Council to the south-east.

The LAP provided a greater level of detail and guidance concerning development on the SO1 lands and its linkages with the broader area. It established an agreed vision for the area. The SO1 lands comprised primarily the following: a greenfield site with over 90% of it undeveloped and/or agricultural (central portions); the area of Cushlea Bog (north-west portion); and, farmland/floodplain (north-east portion). Existing built development on the lands identified as SO1 is concentrated along the N61 and includes retail warehousing, motor showroom/garage and a number of private dwelling houses. The lands are therefore surrounded by agricultural lands and open spaces to the north and east; Cushlea Bog; forestry and the military rifle range to the north-west; and residential areas to the west and south. These residential areas form part of the edge of the built fabric of Athlone Town.

It was decided as part of the process of preparation of the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP that the Athlone Environs SO1 LAP 2006 - 2012 would be incorporated into the LAP boundary and that it form an integral part of the LAP. The SO1 LAP is therefore revoked and replaced by the Monksland / Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP 2010 – 2016. These lands are now referred to as lands at Bogganfin.

2.3. HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND PROFILE

In previous development plans produced by Roscommon County Council, the Monksland / Bellanamullia (Athlone West) Area was included within the **Athlone Environs Plan**. This plan area comprised what we now refer to as the Hodson Bay/Barrymore area, the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) area, and an area of land between these two settlements either side of the N61 National Secondary route. (see Figure 1)

Figure 1: Athlone Environs Development Plan 2002

Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) is characterized by urban type development whereas the area north of it, along the N61 route, is suburban and rural in nature which requires a different development strategy and it was therefore decided to produce separate plans for the areas. The 2002 Athlone Environs Plan described the area beyond Monksland as “characterised by urban generated detached housing and ribbon development along the N61 and side roads. The ribbon development is not continuous but is interspersed by areas of bog. The **principal land use issues** in this area include:

- the use of septic tanks and other individual wastewater treatment systems;
- road access and traffic safety;
- the railway line;
- conservation of the natural and built environment; and
- urban generated housing and ribbon development.” (p. 6)

2.3.1 Brief History of the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) Area: Information contained within the Development Plans

In 1981 Roscommon County Development Plan:

It was indicated that, “Since 1972 a considerable advance has been made by Roscommon County Council, in co-operation with the Industrial Development Authority, in securing the development of Monksland Area, especially in the Industrial Sphere. Sanitary Services are also being secured in the form of adequate water and sewerage facilities.”(p.51)

At that stage a single Development Plan was to be prepared in co-operation with Westmeath County Council and the Athlone Urban District Council for Athlone and its environs. “That new Town Development Plan will include the Monksland/Summerhill/Cushlea Area for Industrial and Housing developments, and also the Hodson Bay – Barrymore/Barrybeg/Bogganfin Area for Amenity/Housing developments.” (p.51)

A zoning plan was produced for this area and included within the County Development Plan. (see Figure 2)

Figure 2: 1981 Roscommon County Development Plan

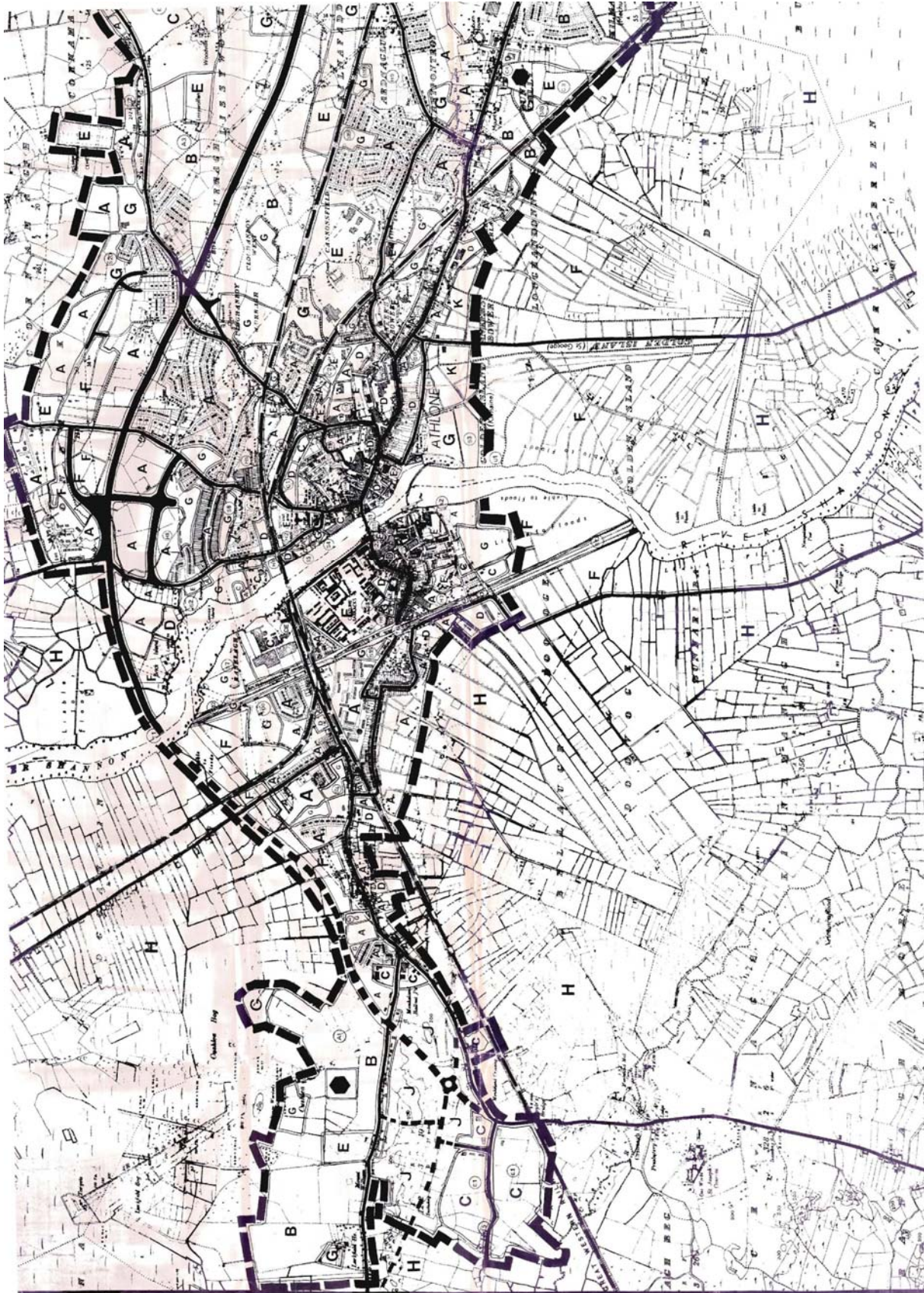
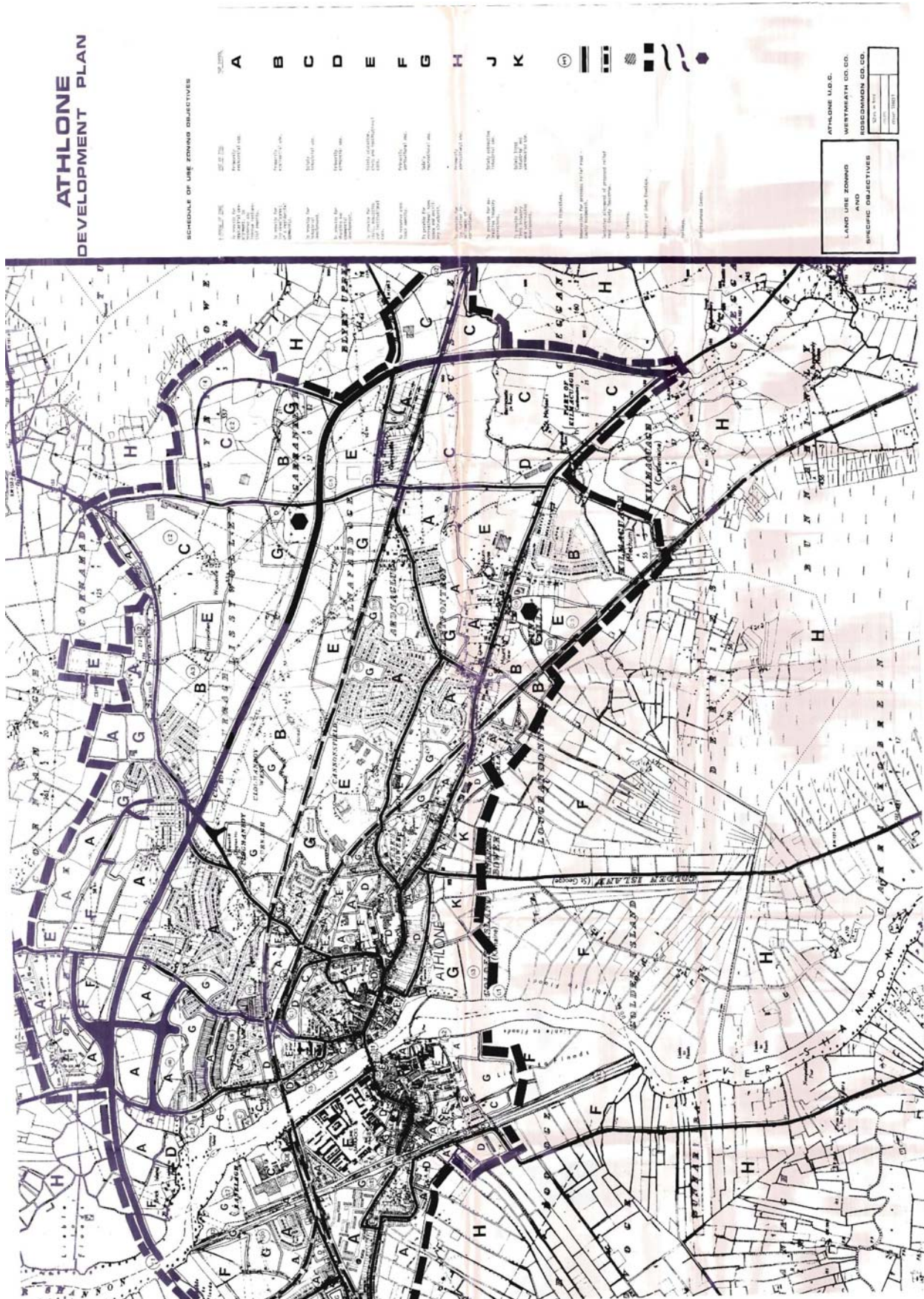


Figure 3: 1981 Roscommon County Development Plan



In the 1987 Roscommon County Development Plan:

It was indicated in the Plan that the zoning provisions be retained, as in the existing County Development Plan, until such time as the revisions are made to the Athlone Town Development Plan.

At that time, the major infrastructural development was the construction of the Athlone Relief Road which would “greatly facilitate the further development of the Monksland Industrial Estate and will ease traffic pressures relative to the new residential developments....

It is also an objective of Roscommon County Council to construct a new road (New Tuam Road) to facilitate access to the Monksland Industrial Estate and to rationalize traffic movements in the area.” (p. 77)

In the 1991 Athlone Environs Plan:

This Plan indicated that the future development of the town was being guided by the 1979 Athlone Development Plan Study which included the areas of Athlone to the west and east of the Shannon i.e. “For purposes of the 1979 Development Plan, the Monksland area was included within the urban envelope of Athlone, and was, therefore, zoned for a variety of uses.” (p.5)

“As expected, the eastern environs of the town have grown more rapidly than those to the west, perhaps reflecting the easier accessibility of that area to the east of the country, as well as its initial larger population.” (p. 3) In fact, application was made for the extension of the administrative area to the east; “Application has been made to the Minister for the Environment to extend the Urban District of Athlone to the east, taking in an additional 445 hectares. This will expand the Urban District by some 84%, and will provide about 240ha. of ‘greenfield’ land suitable for development. This extension will further emphasise the imbalance in the town between the areas lying east and west of the Shannon.” (p. 3)

“Despite the strong eastern bias to the development of Athlone, there has been significant growth in the environs of the town located in Co. Roscommon and the opening of the Athlone Relief Road is expected to accelerate growth of the western environs due to easier accessibility. Development in the Co. Roscommon environs has also differed somewhat from that anticipated in the Plan of 1979. For example, the pressure for new housing has extended beyond the urban envelope designated in the 1979 Plan, whilst the rate of growth and development of the Monksland area has not been as rapid as expected.” (p.3)

The Athlone Environs area was divided into 2 identity areas;

- The lands along the Roscommon Road (N61 route) and out towards Lough Ree, including Hodson Bay
- The area centered on Monksland but included Summerhill and the Drum Road, and the area along the Athlone to Ballinasloe National Primary Route (N6)

With regard to the latter; “For planning purposes, this is regarded as one identity area, despite certain difficulties of communication within it. In particular, there are strong functional links (schools, community centre etc.) between Monksland and the Drum Road area, but communication between the two depends on the use of the National Primary Route.” (p. 5)

“The **principle planning issues** in this area includes:

- The encouragement of further residential growth in the Monksland area
- The encouragement of further industrial development in the area

- The achievement of upgraded and improved links between Monksland and Summerhill/Drum Road (in the context of a much altered road network following completion of the Athlone Relief Road);
- The feasibility and cost of extending mains sewerage;
- The associated question of the use of septic tanks;
- The feasibility of creating a visible focus and improved ‘sense of place’ for developments in the area (including the provision of services such as shopping);
- The visual quality of the environment;
- Road access and traffic safety;
- Ribbon development; and,
- The spread of urban generated housing into the countryside.

The Athlone Development Plan 1979 envisaged the creation of a community of 4,100 in the Monksland neighbourhood, to the north of the Tuam Road. There has been considerable infrastructural investment in the area, which clearly has the capacity to absorb additional residential growth. Indeed, it is the only part of the environs area which can accommodate significant new levels of population.” (p. 6)

The Athlone Environs was viewed as an area with an important contribution to the stabilisation and growth of the county’s population, and the industrial estate was seen as contributing significantly to the economy of the county. In terms of future growth; the “environs area can contribute to the stabilisation and growth of the county’s population by:

- creating the conditions for better employment opportunities, centered on
 - the industrial estate,
 - the opportunities presented by the Relief Road, and
 - tourism in the vicinity of Lough Ree; and
- providing residential accommodation for persons, especially those with County connections, who work outside the County as well as within it.” (p. 7)

“The strategy, therefore, seeks to achieve a more orderly form of development in the future, reducing the extent of ribboning and guiding urban generated housing into more clearly defined areas. The **principle elements of the strategy** are:

- The designation of a number of residential growth areas, within which development will be encouraged;
- The containment of further development pressure in the remainder of the environs area, so as to preserve the level of rurality pertaining at the present; and
- In association with the residential growth areas, the designation of sufficient land to meet projected future needs for industry, open space and community facilities.” (p. 12)

“RESIDENTIAL GROWTH AREAS: The demand for new houses in the area may be categorized in the following manner.... These are:

- Houses to meet the needs of people genuinely engaged in farming and others who have genuine demonstrable requirement to live in a rural area. These will be accommodated throughout the areas, including the areas zoned for agriculture.
- ‘One-off’ houses will be accommodated, primarily in the form of ‘infill’ developments. This category is expected to constitute a major share of future residential development, but the proliferation of existing housing in the areas allows for considerable ‘in-fill’ development.

- Small-scale speculative developments at low densities (dictated by the need for septic tank drainage) will be accommodated in a number of zoned areas, generally corresponding to areas where a number of similar developments have already taken place.
- High density speculative and local authority developments will be confined to the Monksland areas, where mains drainage can be provided.” (p. 12)

“INDUSTRY: Additional land is now required to allow for the further expansion of industry in the area. This land will be mainly provided alongside the existing industrial estate of Monksland, using the existing sewerage provision.

The Monksland area contains some deposits of sand and gravel of variable quality. As the deposits are worked out, the land will become available for other uses.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES: Many community facilities, including shopping, are provided primarily in the town of Athlone. Existing schools as Ballybay and Summerhill serve the areas. The scale of growth envisaged in the future will not significantly alter the provision of services such as schools, but the local authority will seek to attract an appropriate level of services to the Monksland area, including some additional local shopping, and possible health and / or library facilities.” (p.12)

“ESTIMATE OF LAND REQUIREMENTS:

	ha.
520 Houses (2119 persons) @ 7/ha.*	74.0

Open Space (Athlone Plan)

Recreation @ 1.4 ha/ 1000 people	3.0
----------------------------------	-----

Amenity @ 1.2.ha/ 1000 people	2.5
-------------------------------	-----

Industry (Duplicate existing)	20.0
--------------------------------------	------

TOTAL	<u>99.5</u>
--------------	-------------

Alternatively:

520 Houses @ 7/ha. *	74.0
-----------------------------	------

Open Space (Roscommon)

10% of residential area	7.4
-------------------------	-----

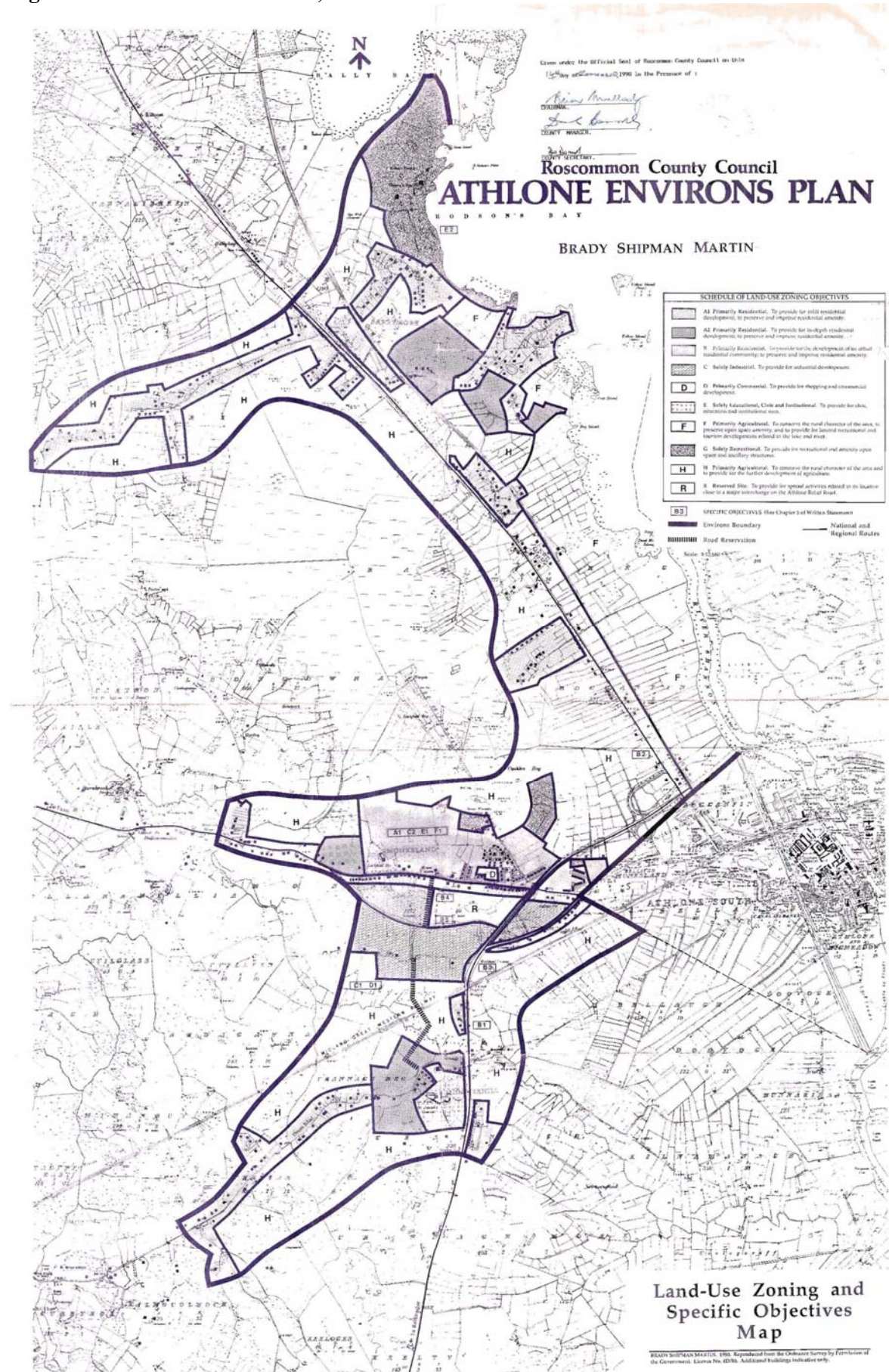
Industry (Duplicate existing)	20.0
--------------------------------------	------

TOTAL	<u>101.4</u>
--------------	--------------

Say, 100 ha, not allowing for community provision or additional open space to cater for existing population. Existing schools, churches etc. are regarded as adequate.

* allowing for one-off houses on septic tanks as well as development at higher densities.

Figure 4: Athlone Environs Plan, 1991



In the 1992 Monksland Action Area Plan:

The Action Area Plan was compiled for “most of the existing built-up area of Monksland, the areas zoned for higher density housing in the Athlone Environs Plan 1991, and the existing and future industrial lands.” (p.1)

The objectives of the Plan were as follows:

1. In co-operation with the relevant State and other Public bodies to encourage and promote the further economic and social growth of the Monksland area.
2. To rationalise the existing land-use pattern and to consolidate present development.
3. To identify in greater detail than in the Athlone Environs Plan, 1991, areas where orderly development can take place in the future.
4. To create a more viable and more attractive residential node in the Monksland area.
5. To provide for improved recreational and amenity facilities for the residents of the area.” (p. 2)

“There are strong functional links (schools, community centre etc.) between Monksland and the Drum Road area, but communication between the two depends on the use of the National Primary Route. This is not very satisfactory for short distance local traffic and especially for pedestrians which, because of the schools, includes significant numbers of children. There is also significant traffic generated by the community hall.” (p. 4)

“Open Space provided as part of a residential development shall be suitable for recreational/amenity purposes, and shall, in respect of shape and location, be suitable for the general use of all residents. Separate provision shall be made wherever possible for the needs of various age groups, particularly pre-school children, senior citizens and young adults.

Where the development proposal is such that the open-space by reason of its shape, location and size does not lend itself to use as beneficial open space the developer will be required to make a contribution to the Council in lieu of such space. This contribution will be related to the cost to the Council of providing such open space. The contribution will be liable for payment by the developer in such manner as the Planning Authority may direct and before work on site commences.” (p. 10)

“INDUSTRY: Industrial developments will be guided into areas zoned for such activities (Zone C). Such areas shall be laid out and planned in advance so as to achieve a high environmental standard in terms of access, factory layout, building design, height control and site landscaping.

Industries compatible to those in the existing industrial estate at Monksland will be guided into the extension to that estate. Other industries will be allowed throughout the area zoned for industry provided these are compatible with existing and future residential areas.

COMMERCIAL USES: Commercial activities, particularly general purpose shopping, will be encouraged in Monksland so as to strengthen the level of services provided in the area and to improve the sense of identity of the area. Commercial developments may be allowed at other locations, including locations within residential zones, on suitable and appropriate sites, subject to the requirements of the proper planning and development of the area.

Applications for hotels and/or tourism development will be considered, on their individual merits, at appropriate locations throughout the environs, including the reserved site.”(p. 10)

A reserved site was identified which was to be related to “the accessibility of the site and might include some form of distribution industry, secure warehousing or a hotel/conference centre. Parts of the reserved site should be allocated to amenity use to enhance the open space provision of the Monksland area.” (p. 11)

Figure 5: Monksland Action Area Plan, 1992

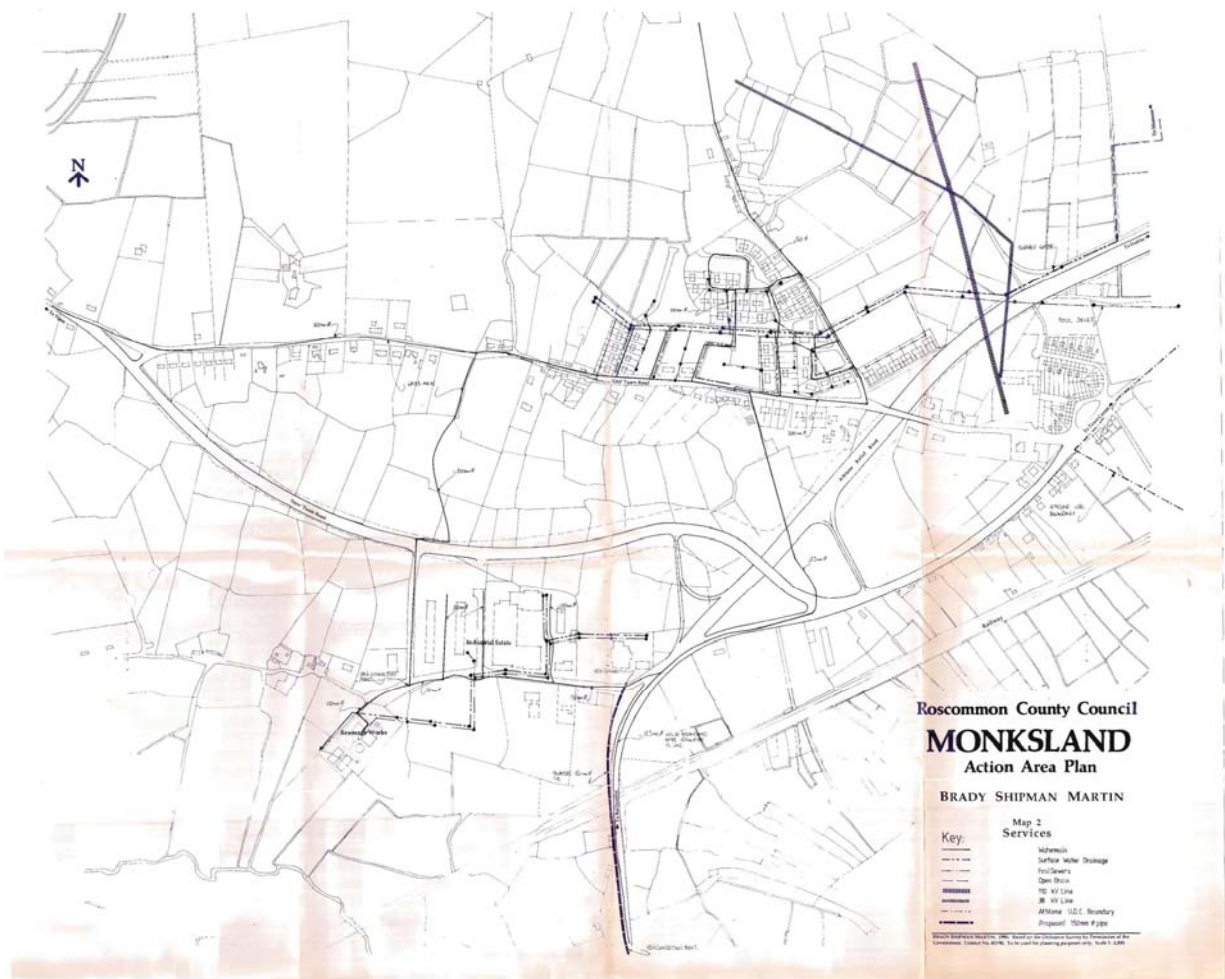


Figure 6: Monksland Action Area Plan, 1992

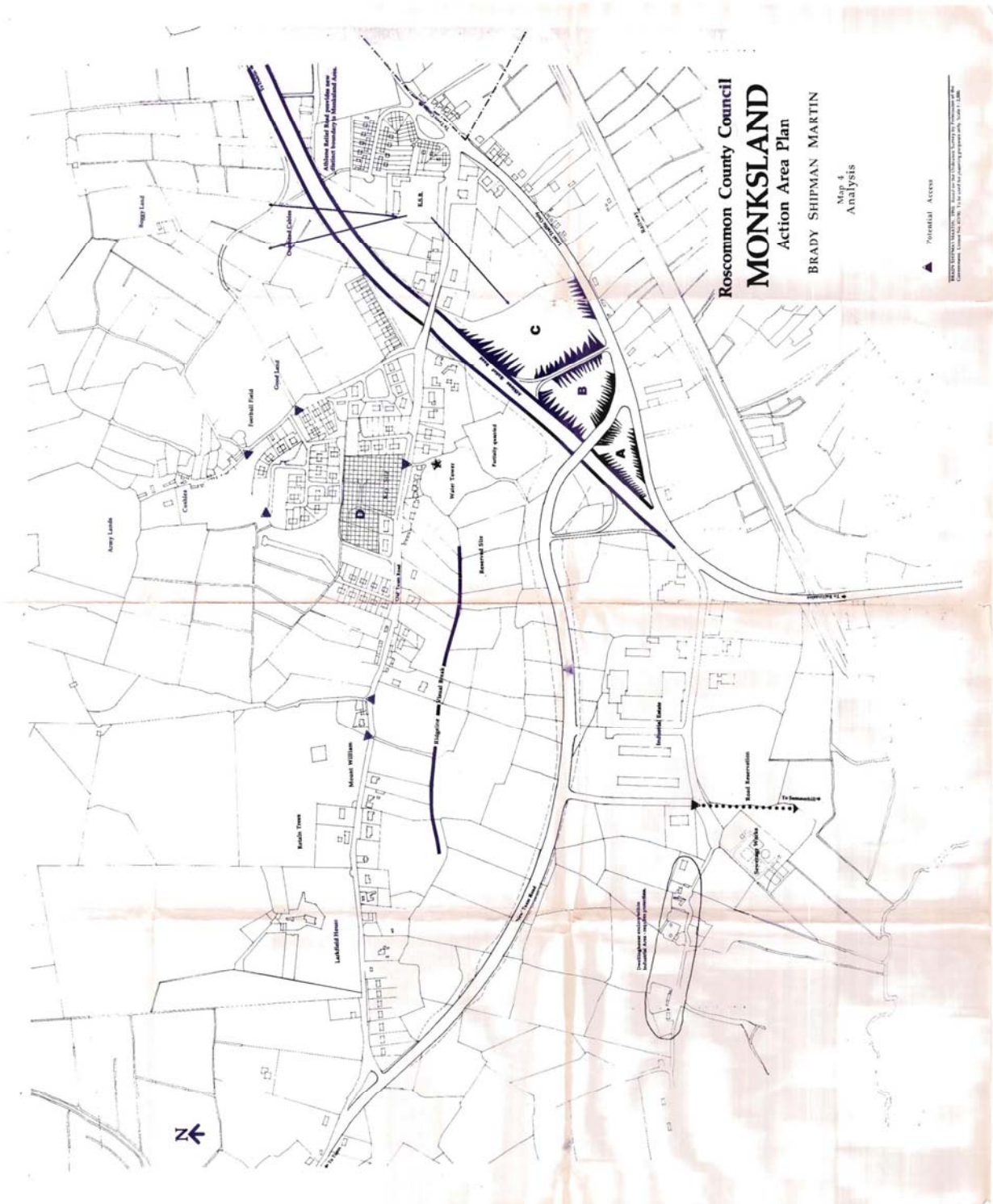


Figure 7: Monksland Action Area Plan, 1992



In the **2002 Athlone Environs Development Plan: (see Figure 1)**

The **aim of the Plan** was; “To establish a framework for the planned, co-ordinated and sustainable development of the Athlone Environs area, for the conservation of the natural environment and consolidation of the built environment.”

“The Plan Area has a number of functions that include:

- employment centre;
- residential and population centre for Athlone and County Roscommon;
- strategic transport node; and
- tourism and recreation location.” (p. 2)

“The Athlone Environs Development Plan 1991 and the Athlone Development Plan Study 1979 focused on the further development of the Monksland area and the control of urban generated housing and ribbon development. The development policies in these plans reflected the opportunities and pressures that existed within the Plan Area at that time. The Plan Area as a whole has experienced a considerable population increase in the last ten years although Monksland has experienced a lower level of social and economic growth than was predicted in the 1991 Development Plan.

The Strategy is aimed at reducing ribbon development and focusing new housing development in Monksland and to guide urban generated housing into more clearly defined areas. The strategy will be implemented through a set of development policies, including zoning provisions and the application of standards in respect of residential development. The Athlone Environs Development Plan 2002 sets out the intentions of Roscommon County Council in regard to the manner in which land should be utilised in the Plan Area and indicates specific objectives for the plan period.

The Development Strategy of Roscommon County Council, as set out in this Development Plan, is to consolidate the development of the Plan Area and especially Monksland as an attractive place in which to invest, live, work and recreate. The Plan aims to control further ribbon development and urban generated housing in the Plan Area.”(p. 8)

It was identified within this Plan that two Local Area Plans were to be prepared in the future, namely, SO1 and SO3. SO1 was carried out and adopted in 2006 and falls within the functional area of the current LAP. SO3 was to be prepared for lands along and adjoining the Duogue Road in and adjoining Bellaugh. This area is still identified and objectives are in place which indicate that this LAP will be prepared in co-operation with Westmeath County Council.

The Plan included aims and objectives of the development policy of the Council with respect to:

- Housing
- Industry and Commerce
- Tourism
- Education, Training and Community Facilities
- Public Utilities
- Transportation
- Open Space and Amenity
- Environment and Conservation
- Agriculture

In addition, sections were included which relate to Development Control, Land-use Zoning Objectives and Development Standards.

2.4 WAY FORWARD: THE MONKSLAND/BELLANAMULLIA (ATHLONE WEST) LAP 2010 - 2016

Much of the information contained within the 2002 Athlone Environs Development Plan was utilised in the preparation of the **Monksland/Bellanamullia Area Plan** (not LAP) which formed part of the **Roscommon County Development Plan (RCDP) 2008 – 2014**. The RCDP consists of a single document comprising the County Development Plan as well as Area Plans for all the towns together with zoning maps. These plans provide updated information concerning the towns and a guidance framework for the management of development in an environmentally sustainable manner within the development envelopes of the towns. As mentioned previously, these will continue to operate as statutory plans for the areas until such time as Local Area Plans, as defined in Part II, Chapter II of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, replace them. (See Figure 8: Monksland/Bellanamullia Area Plan 2008 and the Athlone Environs Development Plan 2008)

The Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) Local Area Plan is one of the first to be prepared and with its adoption the RCDP will be varied to allow the **Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP** to replace the **Area Plan** contained within it.

At this point it is important to note that it is not only those plans within the County boundary which have had an influence on the way in which this LAP area has developed but also those outside of its jurisdiction. The practice, the Monksland, Bellanamullia, and Crannagh Beg areas are functionally linked to the town of Athlone in the following ways:

- Athlone's town centre provides for the bulk shopping needs of the residents of the LAP area
- The Monksland/Bellanamullia LAP area provides for the residential needs of the community working and living on both sides of the Shannon
- As mentioned in the Draft RPGs for the West, Monksland forms an integral part of the Athlone Linked gateway and requires "phased infrastructure supports, services and facilities".
- In terms of employment, the Elan pharmaceutical group as well as the other smaller businesses within the LAP area draw workers from the two areas as do many of the business' located within the Athlone town area
- Water and wastewater services are provided independently within the County Council areas
- There are 3 opportunities to exit the M6 into the LAP area and a range of road connections between the two areas. It is desirable however, as indicated within the RCDP, and would be beneficial, to consider more cross-border linkages.
- The railway goes through the LAP area and there is an objective in the RCDP and this LAP to explore the possibility of providing a railway siding within the LAP area.
- Both areas share the same communication services and electricity infrastructure.
- In terms of educational facilities, Summerhill draws students from Athlone as well as the subregion. However, due to the limited number of schools and no tertiary institution in the LAP area many of the students need to commute into Athlone.
- There are sporting and social links between the areas. However, due to the limited number of sporting and recreational facilities, Athlone town draws residents from the LAP area as it provides a range of facilities. The community have indicated that they would hope that a range of sporting opportunities could be provided within the LAP area which are not currently available in Athlone and which would in turn attract residents from Athlone into this area.
- The Fire and Garda service is provided from Athlone town with an expressed need for a permanent Garda station in the LAP area

- The Shannon provides a unique resource for both Local Authorities in terms of ecology, tourism, recreation and leisure and the need to protect it from adverse impacts in paramount.

In terms of the influence of other plans on this area, policies and objectives within the Westmeath County Council plans have been taken into consideration in this LAP:

In the **Westmeath County Development Plan 2008 – 2014**, the strategic settlement strategy outlines the main elements of a settlement strategy and as a general principle, the Planning Authority, through its policies, will amongst others aim to;

- Maximise **economic, social and cultural development** within the County emphasising the objectives of sustainable development,
- **Concentrate population growth in the serviced urban areas** with accelerated growth directed to the linked Gateway Towns of Athlone and Mullingar,
- **Link land use and transport** to provide viable catchments to sustain public transport and provide an alternative to reliance on the private car,
- Provide **quality urban environments** for all residents of the County within a wider vibrant and attractive countryside setting.

The **RCDP and Monksland/Bellanamullia LAP** have proposed similar policies and objectives and the Vision for the LAP area, and the main strategic aims incorporate these aims.

The **Westmeath County Development Plan 2008 – 2014**, indicates that the strategy is set out in the following objectives;

- Achieve accelerated population growth in Mullingar and Athlone in sustainable quality urban environments based on the urban design principles scheduled in Section 2.8,
- Concentrate population growth in the selected towns and villages to provide an economic base on which to provide services and infrastructure and with the most viable opportunity to support a public transport network reducing reliance on the private car, and,
- Develop a strong supporting population and employment base in identified service towns in attractive quality urban environments.

The **Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP** provides details of population within the discussion on the settlement hierarchy in Chapter 3.

The **Athlone Town Development Plan** has provided the following main aims for development in its area which accord with those developed for the LAP area;

- To promote sustainable development and social inclusion.
- To achieve a higher quality of life for the residents of Athlone.
- To work in partnership with Westmeath County Council and Offaly County Council to ensure that the linked Gateway, Athlone-Tullamore-Mullingar, will achieve the critical mass of population, services and infrastructure, and complementary strengths and attractions to enable the centres to fulfill their combined role as centres for growth, in accordance with National and Regional strategies.
- To promote the balanced distribution of economic and social growth in the Town.
- To ensure an adequate supply of zoned lands at an appropriate rate to meet forecasted and anticipated economic and social need.
- To provide physical and social infrastructure to support the population of the Town and to ensure its competitiveness.
- To utilise the surrounding natural environment and natural resources, to the benefit of the Town, in a managed way that does not compromise these resources.
- To ensure the highest quality living environments and town centre.
- To protect and enhance the identity of the Town through the conservation and enhancement of its built and natural heritage and its culture.

Policies 1 to 8 of the **Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP** relate to the way in which development is expected to develop in this LAP area.

CHAPTER 3: SETTLEMENT POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

3.1. OVERVIEW AND STRATEGIC VISION

As defined within the Roscommon County Development Plan 2008 – 2014, the settlement policy broadly guides where new development will occur in the county and is a fundamental component of spatial planning.

With regard to the policy framework for planning within Ireland, the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) sets a national framework for spatial planning into which all other spatial plans must fit. Regional Planning Guidelines were prepared in order to implement the NSS at regional level. The ministerial guidelines on Sustainable Rural Housing are concerned with the issue of rural housing which comes within the ambit of settlement policy. The need to carry out Strategic Environmental Assessment and the implications of the Water Framework Directive, provides for an environmental critique of the process as well as the settlement strategy. All of these form part of the new framework for County Development Plans (CDPs) and Local Area Plans (LAPs), and they must ‘in so far as is practicable’ be consistent with these policy documents. [PDA 2000, as amended: Part II, Section 9 (6)]

3.1.1 Vision and Strategic Aims

The growth and development of the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area is guided by a Vision and Strategic Aims. The function of these is to provide a framework for future development, both public and private, within the development envelope. It has been formulated in conjunction with the local community and is informed by the following:

- The pre-draft consultation process – a visioning exercise was conducted within the public workshop in which those present were asked to express their needs and aspirations
- The role of Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) within the settlement strategy as expressed within the RCDP 2008 – 2014
- The strategic aims, policies and objectives relevant to the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) area as expressed in the RCDP 2008 - 2014
- The strategic location of the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) area adjacent to the linked gateway of Athlone/Mullingar/Tullamore; adjacent to the Shannon which is a huge tourism resource; and, the major rail and road transportation routes which makes the area easily accessible
- Its importance as an economic and population growth centre of the county
- Principles of proper planning and sustainable development

The **Vision for the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP** area is as follows:

The Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) area will be an attractive, vibrant, consolidated and sustainable settlement i.e. “a wonderful place to live”, with a thriving population supporting economic and employment growth and taking advantage of the full range of co-ordinated physical, social, community and recreational infrastructure and services. People in the area will be living within a high quality built and natural environment and will experience an enhanced quality of life with equal opportunities for all.

The **Main Strategic Aims** associated with this vision are to:

- Plan for and support the socially and economically sustainable development of Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) as a Key Support Town/Settlement in the County as recognised in the RCDP 2008 – 2014 and functionally linked to the Linked Gateway of Athlone-Mullingar-Tullamore

- Provide for the future wellbeing of the residents of the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) area by:
 - promoting the growth of economic activity and increasing employment opportunities
 - protecting and improving the quality of the built and natural environments
 - ensuring the provision of necessary infrastructural and community services and facilities
- Consolidate residential and economic development in the area and ensure the development of a high quality built environment with a well developed public realm. The public realm should display appropriate building forms, materials, heights and associated landscaping which aims to create a sense of place and focus for the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area.
- Promote and facilitate the development within the LAP area of the full range of social and community facilities and services, which support all sectors of society, including education and training, health, recreation, sports, arts and culture.
- Develop a safer, more efficient and integrated transport system that will improve the road network, traffic management and parking facilities, public transport, safe pedestrian and cycle routes to serve the population of the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area.
- Ensure that the appropriate level of services and infrastructure is available to support the existing and future population in terms of wastewater disposal, water supply and surface water disposal
- Promote, encourage and facilitate the development of the tourism industry through sustainable means, in and around the Shannon and Cross Rivers, in order to maximise upon the economic benefits arising from the industry
- Contribute to a sustainable environment by encouraging the development of buildings of all types that are environmentally efficient to build and run, and which contribute to the “greening” of the County according to the principles of Local Agenda 21.
- Foster the development of a socially, and economically balanced and sustainable community, which displays a strong community spirit, civic pride through amongst others, promoting social inclusion and the implementation of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy.
- Support the County Development Board in the achievement of relevant objectives contained in the Roscommon County Development Board document Roscommon Vision: A Ten Year Strategy for Economic, Social & Cultural Development.
- Continue to influence regional and national Planning and Development policies in the interests of the County. To co-operate with the Regional Authorities and other agencies in meeting the needs and development requirements of the Western Region in accordance with the National Spatial Strategy and the Regional Planning Guidelines for the West (RPG’s)

3.2. POPULATION CONTEXT

3.2.1 Population calculations

The methodology applied to calculate the population figures for the County Development Plan 2008 – 2014 have been applied to this LAP.

Firstly, in order to define the boundaries of each of the settlements, the development boundary utilized for the RCDP 2008 – 2014 was initially applied for Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West). This has since been updated with the final LAP boundary. It should be noted at this stage that DED areas

tend to be significantly larger than defined settlements which makes more accurate figures difficult to calculate. We have therefore attempted to compensate for this by employing this 3-step methodology.

Secondly, in order to calculate the number of households, the An Post Geo-directory was used. This is a database which provides the number of residential units with postal addresses in an area and is updated on a 3 monthly basis which ensures that the information provided is current. The March 2010 updates have been utilised.

Thirdly, in order to establish the total population, the average number of persons per household was multiplied by the number of households in an area. The 2006 census information was used to establish the average number of persons per household for the towns in Roscommon i.e. 2.6 persons for aggregate town areas.

It should be noted that once the population targets are available within the Final RPGs for the Midlands and West, these can be used to review the population figures contained within this LAP.

3.2.2 The 2006 Census Information

The 2006 Census of Population records a **total population** of 58 768 persons in Roscommon. This is a growth of 4994 or 9.3% over the 2002 figure of 53 774.

As mentioned previously, the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area falls within three **District Electoral Divisions (DEDs)**, namely, Athlone West Rural, Crannagh and Thomastown (See Map 2). These areas are significantly larger than the development envelope of the LAP area and the figures below will be refined using the An Post Geo-directory.

Table 1: Population Change 2002 - 2006

Geographical Area	Persons 2002	Persons 2006	Percentage change
Athlone West Rural	2262	3122	38%
Crannagh	1058	1148	8.5%
Thomastown	733	743	1.4%
TOTAL	4053	5013	23.7%

As indicated previously, over 75% of the LAP area lies within the Athlone West Rural DED area which indicated a 38% increase in population between 2002 and 2006. In fact, the area (all three DEDs) indicated a much larger increase (23.7%) than the County (9.3%) and indeed the State as a whole (8.2%). This is despite the fact that in the period 2002 – 2006, all counties in Ireland experienced positive natural increase with the highest rates in counties with the youngest profile (Fingal, Dublin South, Kildare, Meath) and lowest in counties with the oldest age profile (Leitrim, Roscommon, Mayo).

In terms of spatial profile, the areas of significant growth in the county are Athlone West, Kiltoom and Carnagh (neighbouring EDs in the south east of the county adjacent to Athlone).

Population density in County Roscommon is 22.9 persons per sq. km compared to a state average of 60. In the DEDs surrounding Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) the population density is 72.3 persons per sq. km.

It is not possible to make further analysis of changes to urban populations as the figures for 2006 relate only to Electoral Districts and not urban boundaries. We, therefore, do not know the changes in population figures according to town boundaries to compare with 2002 figures, presented here. The Census town boundary represents a small portion and less than half of the population within the LAP boundary.

3.2.3 An Post Geo-directory

Utilising the An Post Geo-Directory database, approximately 1761 (March 2010) are resident within the LAP area and if one were to apply the figure of 2.6 persons (CSO, 2006) as the average number of people per household in the aggregate town areas for County Roscommon, the **current population for the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area is 4579**. This figure would need to be reviewed on an ongoing basis as Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) continues to grow and develop. In addition, once the population targets are available within the Final RPGs for the Midlands and West, these can be used to review the population figures contained within this LAP.

3.3. DEVELOPMENT AND SETTLEMENT STRATEGY

The *Roscommon County Development Plan (2008 – 2014)* seeks to promote the development of settlements in accordance with their location in a hierarchy and as outlined in the NSS and RPG's. As part of this hierarchy, the Plan seeks to promote industrial and commercial development particularly in the larger towns e.g. **Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West)**. The strategic aim of these policies is to create a more sustainable balanced development pattern in County Roscommon.

The **Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP** area is identified as a **Tier 2** settlement within the RCDP 2008 – 2014.

Tier 1: County Town / Primary Growth Centre (population range 5000 – 10 000)

Roscommon Town has a strong historical identity as the County Town and associated market town. It has an extensive range of services including health, community, industry and retail.

As part of the settlement strategy it will be promoted as the primary growth centre for employment generating investment with a strong and attractive residential centre. Its role will be enhanced as the primary retail and service centre as well as a growth centre for industrial development. It will have increased connectivity with other centres in the region through upgraded transportation linkages, both road and rail.

Tier 2: Key support towns/ settlements (population range 2500 – 5000)

These centres have an interacting and supporting role to the County town and also act as service centres for their adjacent rural areas which should be further enhanced. They have an extensive range of services including health, community, financial, and retail. They also have a growing residential and commercial sector. Strong connections also exist from these settlements to towns and counties adjacent to County Roscommon, for example, Boyle to Sligo, Monksland and Athlone environs to Westmeath, Ballaghaderreen to Mayo and Castlerea to Galway and Mayo.

Transportation linkages should be strengthened between these areas, and to the County Town.

It is worthwhile noting at this stage that the population for the **Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP** area is nearing the top end of the population range indicated for Tier 2. Due to its proximity to the larger centre of Athlone and the employment opportunities which exist in this area it is realistic to expect that its population will rival and indeed may exceed that of the County town itself. These Tiers should therefore not only be seen in terms of the population thresholds which they have but the services and functions which they provide within the settlement hierarchy. **Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West)** is ideally situated, in terms of transportation and location, to take advantage of the economic opportunities which will continue to present themselves in the area. In addition, it is functionally linked to the town of Athlone which forms part of the Midlands Gateway of Athlone – Mullingar-Tullamore. If we are to ensure truly sustainable settlements, we must ensure that as the economic opportunities expand so too should the residential, social and community facilities. Roscommon County Council will therefore, continue to promote this area as an economic

driver for the county and support its growing population numbers, whilst ensuring its proper planning and sustainable development.

The full Development Strategy which is being pursued within **Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West)** is detailed within Chapters 3 to 9 of this LAP and includes;

- Strategies for all Infrastructure and Service Provision;
- Economic Development and Employment Strategy
- Built and Natural Heritage Strategy
- Strategy for Social and Community Facilities
- Strategy for Recreation, Leisure and Tourism
- Urban Development Strategy

The following **policies** relate to the development of the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area:

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Policy 1 | Improve the quality of life of the residents of the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area and make it an attractive location in which to live in the future. |
| Policy 2 | Development in all instances should be sustainable and account should be taken of the availability of public transport infrastructure, the socio-economic profile of residents, the creation of appropriate and sustainable levels of employment and commercial activities which are in proportion to the residential development within the area, and protection of the rural hinterland and urban greenbelt. |
| Policy 3 | Endeavour to ensure, in so far as is practicable, that the zoning of land and growth of the area is accompanied by adequate infrastructural provision, including local social and community infrastructure (such as schools, neighbourhood centres, crèches, community halls, recreation facilities, etc.) at an appropriate rate. |
| Policy 4 | Development and growth should be generally restricted to the development envelope of the LAP area, so that Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) functions as the focal point for the development of its rural catchment and so as not to compromise the distinction between the open countryside and the built up edge of the settlement. |
| Policy 5 | Promote compact forms of development and more efficient use of public infrastructure and services |
| Policy 6 | In all instances, encourage high-quality urban design that balances the achievement of densities with the provision of high quality services, the management of public safety and the provision of high quality access and networks. |
| Policy 7 | Establish strong road connections within the area, viz between Monksland and Crannagh Beg, and between the LAP area and adjacent areas, viz. Athlone town, and promote public transport strategies. |
| Policy 8 | Link land use and transport to encourage the provision of viable catchments to sustain public transport and provide an alternative to reliance on the private car. |

The following **objectives** flow from the policies above;

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| Objective 1 | Identify and prioritise necessary infrastructural services and facilitate their provision through both public and private investment (see Chapter 4 of this report) |
|--------------------|---|

- Objective 2** Identify and prioritise necessary social and community facilities in conjunction with the relevant providers, stakeholders and community representatives, and facilitate their provision through both public and private investment (see Chapter 7 of this report)
- Objective 3** Initiate within the lifetime of the LAP an Integrated Land Use and Transportation Plan (ILUTP) for Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) in co-operation with Westmeath County Council
- Objective 4** Commence the preparation of Design Guidelines for Urban Areas within the lifetime of the RCDP 2008 – 2014 which will provide further guidance on appropriate buildings forms, materials, heights and associated landscaping which aims to create a sense of place and focus for the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area.
- Objective 5** Within 3 months of the adoption of this plan, an implementation and monitoring plan will be drawn up for 2010. Thereafter, at the start of every financial year, once budgets are known, an implementation and monitoring programme will be drawn up for that year and, where possible for consecutive years, with funding allocations, possible sources of funding for projects, and prioritisation.
- Objective 6** As a separate process from the implementation and monitoring plan, a Monksland / Bellanamullia (Athlone West) Community Action Plan will be developed to assist the delivery of the objectives contained within the LAP, especially those for social, community and recreation services and facilities. This will take place within 12 months of the adoption of the LAP.

CHAPTER 4: INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Infrastructural development and investment is a vital component in ensuring sustainable development.

The **Strategic Aim for Infrastructure** as detailed within the RCDP 2008 – 2014 is;

To provide the necessary infrastructure in order to deliver a better quality of life for all within a strong and vibrant economy and, that maintains Roscommon's competitiveness, promotes balanced development, social justice and environmental sustainability.

In addition, the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP has, as two of its **Strategic Aims** to:

- Develop a safer, more efficient and integrated transport system that will improve the road network, traffic management and parking facilities, public transport, safe pedestrian and cycle routes to serve the population of the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area.
- Ensure that the appropriate level of services and infrastructure is available to support the existing and future population in terms of wastewater disposal, water supply and surface water disposal

4.2 ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION

4.2.1 Policy Context

Roads and Transportation policies and objectives within the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP will be informed by the RCDP 2008 – 2014, national and regional strategies and guidelines as well as by policies and decisions of the elected members of the County Council.

The Council recognises that accessibility, mobility and speedy access to domestic and foreign markets is vital for future economic and social development of the county and therefore the development of an integrated transport policy is critical for future sustainable development. This policy encompasses not only integration within and between different modes of transport, but also integration with environmental, social, recreational, economic, educational, and health policies and objectives. In planning for new development areas, providing for mixed uses or for separate uses in a more closely spaced / finer grained layout, allows for more sustainable travel patterns, reducing reliance on private car usage and promote public transport as well as cycling and walking.

It was indicated as part of the RCDP, that the County Council may, in so far as funds permit, consider the preparation of Integrated Land Use and Transportation Plans (ILUTP's) for the large towns within the County, of which Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) would be a priority. Such plans should include the provision of adequate and sustainable public transport services and public transport related facilities such as the provision of parking and parking management frameworks that are appropriately scaled to the land use planning context: e.g. park and ride facilities; feeder bus services; traffic management and bus priority facilities; pedestrian and cycling facilities. Such plans should also have regard to the existing and future local transport requirements within and between the towns including links to the Midland Gateway of Athlone - Tullamore - Mullingar, to the Sligo Gateway, to the linked Hubs of Ballina - Castlebar and to locations outside the immediate local authority area and the West Region.

The *Department of Transport 2020 Vision – Sustainable Travel and Transport Public Consultation Document (February 2008)* describes the issues relating to sustainable travel and transport in Ireland with the aim of engaging participation in a public consultation process, in order to develop a Sustainable Travel and Transport Action Plan. The follow-up document, the *Sustainable Travel and Transport Action Plan-Response to public consultation, May 2008*, makes a number of recommendations to improve sustainable travel and transport in Ireland.

Smarter Travel, Travel – A sustainable transport future: A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 - 2020 indicates that “Achieving sustainable transport will require a suite of actions that will have complementary impacts in terms of travel demand and emissions. Although the Policy contains 49 actions, they can be grouped into essentially four overarching ones:

- Actions to reduce distance travelled by private car and encourage smarter travel, including focusing population growth in areas of employment and to encourage people to live in close proximity to places of employment and the use of pricing mechanisms or fiscal measures to encourage behavioural change,
- Actions aimed at ensuring that alternatives to the car are more widely available, mainly through a radically improved public transport service and through investment in cycling and walking,
- Actions aimed at improving the fuel efficiency of motorised transport through improved fleet structure, energy efficient driving and alternative technologies, and
- Actions aimed at strengthening institutional arrangements to deliver the targets.

It is important to underline that the targets and actions are relevant to both urban and rural living. The Government is committed to rural regeneration and throughout the Plan there are individual actions, such as improved bus services in rural areas, which reinforce this ambition.” (p. 13)

Three of the key actions which are relevant to the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area are;

“Action 3

Many of the Gateways and Hubs in the National Spatial Strategy comprise two or more local authority areas. Regional Planning Guidelines are in place to coordinate overall development in the regional authority areas. Land Use and Transportation Strategies (LUTS) also play a vital role in supporting better coordination and integration of development planning between local authorities across Gateways and Hubs. The Cork Area Strategic Plan (CASP) provides a good example of a LUTS approach and similar strategies are in place or are planned for Galway, Limerick and Waterford.

We will promote a wider rollout of LUTS-type strategies, supported through a technical assistance programme at national level. The emphasis in the first place will be on the Gateways followed by LUTS-type studies for the Hub locations in the National Spatial Strategy.

Action 4

The delivery of public transport, cycling and promotion of more sustainable travel patterns generally in many existing urban centres can only be achieved through retrofitting. We will require local authorities to prepare plans to retrofit areas towards creating sustainable neighbourhoods so that walking and cycling can be the best options for local trips, for example to reach local facilities such as shops and schools.” (p. 34)

“Action 42

Building on the LUTS approach (see Action 3), we will empower local authorities to prepare transport plans to complement their development plans. The transport plans will set targets for achieving

sustainable travel and transport services in their areas. The Minister for Transport will be given powers in relation to these plans similar to the powers of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in relation to development plans.

We will require regional authorities to incorporate targets for shifts to sustainable travel modes in the next statutory review of the Regional Planning Guidelines.” (p. 57)

Regional Planning Guidelines for the West (2004-2016): Transportation:

- The RPG’S recommended that the identified National Transport Routes i.e. N61 Athlone - Roscommon and the N60 Roscommon – Castlebar, should be reclassified to National Primary Status and upgraded accordingly.
- All national secondary routes in the region require upgrading over the lifetime of the NSS. For County Roscommon the most important priority routes to be upgraded include:
 - N61 (Athlone - Boyle) – which links Roscommon to the surrounding Gateways i.e. Midland Gateway of Athlone – Mullingar - Tullamore, Sligo Gateway, and indirectly to the linked Hubs of Castlebar - Ballina, and from there to the national ports and airports via its connection with the N4, N5 and N6 National Network.
- The upgrade of the N6 to dual carriageway/motorway will provide speedy access between Athlone linked Gateway and Galway Gateway.

Strategic Aims for Transportation & Movement

- Ensure that the transport system is sustainably developed and upgraded to a level that can support increased economic, social and cultural development of Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West)
- Enhance the links between Roscommon and the NSS Linked Gateway of Athlone

4.2.2 Physical Context

Public Transport (see Map 3b)

Rail

Roscommon is served by 3 rail lines, 2 of which pass through but have no stops in the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area, namely;

- Dublin Heuston to Westport Line
- Dublin Heuston to Galway Line

The main weakness in the present rail network is that the main line from Galway and Mayo through Roscommon/Athlone to Heuston comprises of single tracks while other Strategic Rail Corridors to Belfast, Limerick and Cork are all dual track. The provision of dual track helps deliver more speedy access and mobility to its passengers as well as for freight transport. Capacity problems therefore exist with single track rail lines serving the County.

It was identified within the public consultation phase of the preparation of the RCDP 2008 – 2014 that there is a need to consider the reopening of certain stations in South Roscommon (Taughmaconnell / Thomastown and Knockcroghery) as well as the development of new facilities to serve the lands at Bogganfin. At the community meeting there was a question as to whether there was a need for the passenger services at Bogganfin and whether it should be developed for freight purposes.

With increased attention being placed on sustainable ways of living, more people are likely to consider the use of public transport and the facilities associated with the likes of railway stations will become important. The parking areas associated with railway stations are hopelessly oversubscribed and the provision of Park and Ride facilities in the area should be investigated.

Bus Services

There are 4 categories of bus transportation currently within County Roscommon:

1. Bus Eireann expressway long distance services
2. Bus Eireann School Bus services operated on behalf of the Department of Education and Science
3. Private mini-bus services
4. Community Bus Routes operated under the Rural Transport Initiative(s) (RTI)

The Athlone Local Bus Service, which has been in operation since 2002, has a regular service to Monksland. It travels along the New Tuam Road as far as River Village and then back to Athlone Town along the Old Tuam Road. The service operates approximately every half hour throughout the day. The residents of the area have requested that the service be extended into Bellanamullia however Bus Eireann did not agree to this. This would still be a long term aspiration for the community.

In the community meeting the following was identified;

- There is a potential bus stop, shelter on the New Tuam Road between Bannons shop and the Mill Pub
- Potential bus stop where the New and Old Tuam roads meet
- Potential for a bus shelter where the quarry is on the New Tuam Road
- A possible bus depot, transportation hub was identified on the Pharmaplaz site
- There is one bus service through the area but it has been suggested that this may not continue at the end of the year. The residents requested that this should be continued and its area/route extended, as there are two schools in the area (Bellanamullia)
- Public transport needs to be maintained and extended to Cloonakilla and Drum
- Adequate bus service to Athlone with links to other towns from there. Some services to Tuam. There is no proper bus stop and shelter. There is a need for at least two bus stops including shelters in the area; one near Bellanamullia and one in Monksland
- The public bus currently goes to Supervalu and no further along the New Tuam Road. Public transport needs to cover the full area and certainly go out as far as Bannons
- All the public bus infrastructure needs to be developed e.g. there need to be bus stops etc
- May be good to have a transport hub within the Monksland area where long distances buses could meet the local buses and access Athlone
- Need extended bus route to Texaco garage (Bannons)
- Bus shelters needed
- Proper signage needed

Long haul buses travel past the area from Galway to Dublin for example, and the City Link collects passengers outside the B&Q shop within the Athlone Town area. It would be advantageous to have a dedicated transport node within the LAP area which could pick up this traffic and boost tourism revenues in the area. This could possibly be situated within the lands zoned for District Centre near the junction of the Old and New Tuam roads or at a suitable location along the New Tuam Road.

Rural Transport Initiative

The RTI was launched in 2001 by the Department of Transport and is administered by Pobal. There are 34 projects in total across the country. In 2003, the use of the free travel pass was extended to these schemes thereby entitling holders to free travel.

Under the auspices of the RTI there are 3 service operators providing rural transport across County Roscommon and one of them operates within the LAP area, namely; the South Westmeath Rural Transport. There are also other initiatives in the county operating rural transport services outside the support of the RTI Programme e.g. Kilbride/Four Mile House service.

Roscommon has a Rural Transport Forum including representatives from Arigna LEADER, Mid South LEADER, Roscommon Partnership (these LEADER agencies and Roscommon Partnership have been amalgamated in the Roscommon Integrated Development Company) and other relevant agencies which operate and exist to support the development of services in the county. In addition, they provide a platform for the transport operators to discuss issues of concern, share best practice information and to inform one another of their annual work programmes and initiatives, so as to avoid duplication.

Airports

International air access supports and facilitates growth in foreign direct investment, supports indigenous enterprise and tourism. As Ireland evolves into a more knowledge and service based economy, the efficient movement of people is increasingly critical as there is often individual customisation of products/services which necessitates direct customer interaction.

Direct air access to national and regional airports is therefore an increasingly important factor in the economic development of regions. The distances to the main regional and national airports are also a key factor for industrial location and for speedy access to domestic and international markets.

With its central national location, Athlone and its environs may present the ideal location for an airport/airstrip. The West Regional Authority, Regional Planning Guidelines 2004-2016 state under Zone F Roscommon/East Galway that *'There may be the potential to develop an airstrip in South Roscommon'*.¹

It is an objective of this LAP to support the investigation of the potential of providing an airstrip / airport in South Roscommon, within or adjacent to the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area.

Pedestrian and Cycling network

The public consultation phase and the community meeting has highlighted the need for a safe pedestrian and cycle network within the area;

- Walking and cycling routes should be developed in the area
- Existing circular walking route exists along the Old and New Tuam roads
- Upgrade the cycle paths on the area. Routes could start and finish in Monksland.
- The triAthlone is seen as a visitor attraction.
- There is a walking/cycling route from St Coman's Park and extends to the Cloonakilla area
- There is a existing pedestrian walkway from Ganley's towards the GAA/soccer pitches
- There is a existing walkway from the Mill Bar, heading northwards and circling back to the main road.
- There is potential for a walkway/cycleway along the Cross River near the Mill Bar.
- There is potential for a green way linking all existing and potential walk / cycle ways and open space in the area, from Ganley's to the Mill Bar and back (see Map 3b). This would also link the villages of Bellanamullia and Monksland
- Cycle path indicated on looped route of Old and New Tuam Roads and out the Bellanamullia Road / New Tuam Road
- Walking and cycling area along the New Tuam road
- Existing walkway from Cushlea pitches, adjacent to the old N6 to the N61

¹ West Regional Authority, Regional Planning Guidelines 2004-2016, page 95

- Woodland areas adjacent to Cushlea pitches and Larkfield Bog
- A walking route has been identified which extends over the Cross River adjacent to the Cloonakille Cemetery then travels north and provides a circular route which comes in the roads adjacent to the Mill Bar (see Map 3b)
- Potential walkway from potential park immediately west of the Cross River along the New Tuam Road along the Cross River bounding Oyster Homes Site onto the Mihanbee Road, to the Dolmen and back along the Mihanbee Road onto the New Tuam Road (see Map 3b)
- A possible walkway has been identified along the Cross River and adjacent to the railway line
- Potential walkway from the proposed park site along New Tuam Road onto Old Tuam Road through site identified as Mixed Residential and Commercial to the rear of housing estates and linking up to the Cushlea playing pitches

As part of a Part 8 procedure undertaken by RCC, a 3 metre wide footpath and cycleway is due to be provided along the New Tuam Road up as far as River Village opposite the Old Tuam road junction.

In addition, a footpath is proposed along the Old Tuam Road from the Caher na gCloch Housing Estate to the junction of the Old and New Tuam Roads. A footpath already exists, alternating between one side of the road and the other, from this estate back to Athlone. As part of this project the following improvements will be undertaken; the undergrounding of the telecoms, surface water drainage, public lighting, and the setting back of all the boundaries to accommodate the 2 metre wide footpath. Due to space constraints a cycle lane cannot be added to the footpath.

With respect to the provision of cycleways, it is necessary to consider how these will be provided in the future within the LAP area. There are two types of cycleways;

- those for the commuter, where cyclists ride on the roadway and there may be no clear distinction between the roadway and cyclists; and,
- those for the recreational cyclists where raised paths are created adjacent to footpaths and the same rules apply for cyclists and pedestrians

It is also worth considering that the “cycleways” developed on the main routes could be utilised for the triAthlone. The cycle race went from Athlone town as far as Brideswell Village in 2008 and 2009 and this could prove to be a regular feature. The boost to tourism for the Athlone area has been tremendous.

The Council will develop a policy within the lifetime of the plan which addresses this issue.

Roads and Traffic Management (see Map 3a)

Road Network

The Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area is located at a strategic transportation hub; at the junction between the M6 motorway and the N61 National Secondary Route, and is also traversed by the Dublin-Westport Railway Line. These major transportation routes potentially provide a high level of access, however the existing layout of this transportation hub fragments the existing surrounding area and provides no cross linkages within the area.

Access is also limited by a number of inadequate junctions which constrains the provision of new access points and the extent of additional traffic that can be accommodated. Currently there is no direct local road linkage from the lands at Bogganfin to the Monksland area to the west. The existing M6/N61 access junctions are nearing capacity and additional traffic which will result from the further development of this area will result in additional strain on the capacity and safety of this road network. In addition, the designation of the N6 as a motorway, M6, further limits traffic and pedestrian movements in the area. For example, those workers emanating from the Elan plant but living on the N61 Roscommon road are forced to turn right onto the R362 and then along the motorway until they reach the N61. Alternatively they need to travel into Athlone town at peak time to access the N61

route instead of simply being able to use the local road network to head home. Similarly, students heading by foot from the residential areas to the north of the LAP area are now forced to travel a convoluted route via the new Monksland Link Road to attend school in Summerhill rather than the original more direct route traversing the railway line.

RCC recognises the need to consider the impact of further development in this area and associated increases in traffic movements on the capacity of the national road network. This road network must be maintained to cater adequately and safely for both national traffic flows and the local road network.

At the community meeting the following issues were identified in terms of the road network;

- The poor condition of the roads
- Weaknesses of the area is the lack of infrastructure and facilities, no footpaths and lights to new developments also general upkeep and maintenance of the area.
- Disjointed footpaths in the area.
- Recommendation by members of the community that a corridor for services be put in place and that if needs be, land is acquired for the corridor. Ducting should be put down now for services that may be required in the future
- Traffic calming measures needed between the filling station, school & Rooskagh Roundabout/Road
- Pedestrian crossings needed
- Road through Cedarwood Drive was opened up but works never finished and the road was left in a very bad state
- Footpaths, lights, road surfacing and markings
- Public lighting is required along the New and Old Tuam Roads
- Road connections are required between Monksland and Crannagh Beg
- A pedestrian crossing is required at the National School in Bellanamullia
- The streets around Supervalu are too narrow
- Car parking in estates is insufficient
- Traffic calming is required on the roads heading to the soccer pitch
- There is a need for better signage at both sides of the area, and the provision of footpaths and signage along the main road would make people aware that they are entering a village(s)
- Road crossing is particularly dangerous especially at River Village
- Speeding takes place along the Old and portion of the New Tuam road
- Traffic calming is required from the potential public park (Cross River) to Bannons
- A good road surface is required on the Mihanbee road as well as public lighting
- Footpath needed on the Old Tuam Road
- New Tuam Road – traffic calming, road surface, paths, cycleway, public lighting
- Cycle lanes needed located at Summerhill schools and Cloonakilla National School.
- New Tuam Road:
 - Not adequate for traffic
 - No footpaths
 - Need for cycle lanes
 - No pedestrian crossing
 - The road alongside the Mill Bar is a speed trap
 - Traffic calming required throughout the area. There is a problem with speeding along the main road.
 - Road surface needs repair / upgrading. The quarry stone for the new M6 was used as an excuse for not upgrading the road up until now, and now the laying of new water pipes is being used as an excuse. Locals would like an approximate timeframe for when works will be completed and road upgraded.
 - The bus currently stops at the entrance to a field at a crossroads in a 60km zone. This is an accident waiting to happen. In addition, the bus route needs to be extended to the Texaco station at Bellanamullia as there are no footpaths along some of the road from Bellanamullia to where the bus currently stops in Monksland. This is very dangerous

for those walking from housing estates in Bellanamullia to catch a bus, as cars speed along this road and it's very busy at certain times during the day. There is no advertisement indicating the bus times at the bus stop. For these reasons there needs to be proper bus stops, with shelters, at several locations in the village.

- There is an issue with parking at the national school in Bellanamullia. In addition, the footpath is on the opposite side of the road and children walking to school have to cross the road. This is particularly dangerous due to speeding on the road.

- Old Tuam Road:

- This road needs public lighting
- A lot of people walk along this road, and although the road is quite narrow in parts, there is a need for a footpath on at least one side.
- There is a problem with speeding along this road. There appears to be a Garda presence but traffic calming measures are required.

- Proposed new Roads:

- The road through the village(s) should be upgraded before any new roads are built

RCC has a number of roads priorities for the development and upgrading of National, Regional and Local Roads which are included within the Roads and Transportation Strategy below. In addition, the policies and objectives for Roads and Transportation mentioned in this chapter attempt to address the challenges presented above.

It is worth noting at this stage that a Part 8 planning process was carried out for the road improvements on the New Tuam Road, R362. The project involves upgrading it from a semi-rural road to an urban road with footpaths, drainage and public lighting etc. A large roundabout is also planned at the junction of the Old and New Tuam Roads. These works are likely to be completed in 2010.

In addition, a Part 8 planning process has been approved for road improvements in Crannagh Beg which included a roundabout at the junction between the R466 and the Drum Road and improvements to the Drum Road from this roundabout for a limited distance. RCC applied for the Part 8 because the works were deemed necessary before lands zoned for development could actually be developed and no private developer was in a position to propose major alterations to the public road network. The need for a roundabout at this location has since diminished due to the reduction of traffic on the Old N6 (R466) and the fact that none of the large residential developments on the Drum Road went ahead. Consequently, it is unlikely that works approved under this Part 8 would be prioritised/funded in the short to medium future.

Issues previously identified with regard to road deficiencies include;

- The need to reduce our reliance on the national road network
- The limited number of internal connections in the LAP area. Recommended connections include; from the lands at Bogganfin to the Old Tuam Road/New Tuam Road junction; and, from the New Tuam Road in Bellanamullia to Crannagh Beg, possibly along the Mihanbee Road.
- Deficiencies on the Old Tuam road including curbs, footpaths etc.

Traffic Management

The future development of the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area will need to consider the impact of development and associated increases in traffic movements on the capacity of the national road network, which needs to be maintained to cater adequately and safely for national traffic flows. The local road network, particularly the existing problematic road junctions and routes, will need to be able to accommodate the existing and future additional traffic flows that are envisaged.

➤ *Traffic Impact Assessments*

All planning applications for new development that may affect the national road network shall be accompanied by a Traffic Impact Assessment and shall ensure the provision of a safe and convenient movement network that:

- caters for the future orderly and sustainable expansion of Athlone Town and the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) area;
- has adequate capacity to accommodate current and expected future traffic volumes from existing and proposed developments anticipated in the lifetime of the Plan;
- will provide safe and adequate access to the lands at Bogganfin without compromising the capacity of the national or local road networks;
- will guide future development on these lands along an appropriate internal circulation network for vehicular, pedestrian and cycling movement; and,
- that will facilitate appropriate public transportation to and from these lands.

Parking

Parking is generally not an issue in the LAP area and most existing businesses, shops and restaurants have provision for on-site off-street car parking. In addition, recent developments have been required to provide sufficient car parking spaces to cater for their businesses. It was however, indicated in the Community meeting that insufficient spaces have traditionally been provided within housing estates.

Road proposals

In terms of large infrastructure projects, priority has been given to the advancement of the M6 motorway between Athlone and Ballinasloe, which forms part of the overall upgrading of the route to high quality Dual Carriageway between Dublin and Galway. This motorway is now complete. Its advancement was considered of major strategic importance to the future development of County Roscommon, the West, and the Midland Region in general. It has and will significantly improve the accessibility to these areas and decrease the travelling times to major destinations such as Dublin, by way of a motorway for the entire route.

The N61 National Secondary Route links Roscommon and the north-west to the proposed new M6 Dublin-Galway motorway and its upgrading to National Primary Status has been an objective of the Council for quite some time. The Regional Planning Guidelines for the West (2004 – 2016) indicates this as an objective. It was also included as a project to be funded within Transport 21. Previous support for this proposed upgrade has been received from the National Roads Authority (NRA) however, with the economic downturn, funding for this is not expected for the foreseeable future. RCC will however, continue to pursue this project which is of strategic importance to the County.

With the designation of the M6 motorway, the old N6 route, has reverted to a regional route, R466.

Connections between the LAP area and Athlone Town also need to be strengthened and Objective 39 within the RCDP 2008 – 2014 highlights the aspiration of RCC to work together with Westmeath County Council in the provision of further cross Shannon river linkages. Particularly considering the fact that certain groups e.g. cyclists, learner drivers, tractors etc are prohibited from using the motorway.

In terms of road upgrades and widening, a Part 8 procedure was undertaken by RCC for the widening of a portion of the Monksland Industrial Estate road from Carty Meats as far as the junction accessed from the lands to the rear of the Athlone Springs Hotel. This is due to have a 6 metre wide carriageway which will service the industrial lands in the area and it is proposed that this could be extended further west in the future. The need for this road has since diminished due to the reduction in development activity in the area. Consequently, it is unlikely that works approved under this Part 8 would be prioritised/funded in the short to medium future.

There are also a number of **indicative local link roads and indicative local access roads** proposed as part of this LAP. The **indicative local link roads** are as follows (see Map 3a);

1. Link Road from the Monksland Industrial Estate Road to the Mihanbee Road: This will necessitate the upgrading of the Mihanbee Road and will provide an alternative road access for development lands on the southern side of the Cross River. **(ILR 1)**

In Bogganfin, two options exist for the internal Local Linkage between these lands adjacent to the N61 and the central LAP area, linking into the proposed new roundabout at the junction of the New and Old Tuam Roads.

2. Local Link Road Option 1: Provide a new road linkage for these lands adjacent to the N61 and linking into the proposed roundabout at the junction of the New and Old Tuam Roads. The road would traverse more centrally through the residential areas to the north of the Old Tuam Road and bisect lands in Bogganfin. **(ILR 2)**
3. Local Link Road Option 2: Provide a new road linkage for these lands adjacent to the N61 and linking into the proposed roundabout at the junction of the New and Old Tuam Roads. The road would follow the northern edge of the LAP area and then curve down to bisect the lands in Bogganfin. **(ILR 3)**

It should be noted that all these options are indicative only until such time as a full site feasibility and investigation report is produced and a preliminary preferred route option chosen. The local access road options will be subject to separate development and consent processes depending on the planning applications received.

Local access road options will need to be considered for the areas of land zoned for development in the Bogganfin area. The **indicative local access roads** are as follows (see Map 3a – Figure 2);

1. Local Access Road Option 1: It is recommended that an access option be considered which will allow access from the M6 into the area of land zoned for ***Business, Enterprise Park/Light Industry & Warehousing***. **(IAR 1)**
2. Local Access Road Option 2 and 3: It is recommended that access options be considered which will allow access from the N61, linking into the ***Local Linkage Road*** as well as accessing the land zoned as ***District Centre***. **(IAR 2 and IAR 3)**
3. Local Access Road Option 4: It is recommended that an access option be considered which will allow access from the Local Link Road north between land zoned for ***Business, Enterprise Park/Light Industry & Warehousing*** and ***District Centre*** **(IAR 4)**

It should be noted that these road options are indicative only until such time as a full site feasibility and investigation report is produced and a preliminary preferred route option chosen. The local access road options will be subject to separate development and consent processes depending on the planning applications received.

4.2.3 Roads and Transportation Strategy

The **Roads and Transportation Strategy** aims to;

- provide a safe, efficient and integrated movement network which will improve/upgrade and sustainably expand the road network to accommodate current and potential future growth within the LAP area
- provide safe and adequate access to and from the area without compromising the existing network
- upgrade existing network to allow connections between the Monksland and Crannagh Beg areas and the opening up of these lands adjacent to the new M6 route for development
- strengthen and provide connections between the LAP area and Athlone town
- provide adequate traffic management and parking facilities
- facilitate appropriate public transportation to and from the area
- provide safe pedestrian and cycle routes to serve the existing population as well as future growth in the area

1) Public Transport (See Map 3b)

Public transport improvements, fall under the control of other agencies such as the transport providers. However, as Roads Authority and as a key player in the development arena with a remit for the promotion of sustainable development, Roscommon County Council has the potential to influence the decisions of other relevant public transport infrastructure providers.

The Council acknowledges the importance of the provision of a high quality public transport service. Further large-scale development in the LAP area will require the facilitation of appropriate public transport services to the lands, including provision for buses, possibly rail as well as areas for cyclists and pedestrians. The **existing railway** on the Dublin-Westport route in the vicinity provides potential for the future provision of a railway siding for freight and/or passenger services. The Council will also consider the provision of Rail Services and Facilities to serve the broader Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area and will consult with Iarnrod Eireann regarding the provision of such services.

Cycling is a non-polluting and energy efficient form of transport. The provision of safe and direct cycle routes, accompanied by associated facilities such as secure cycle parking facilities at popular destinations will encourage more people to travel by bicycle. The Council will seek, subject to resources, to establish and facilitate cycle routes and lanes within the Plan Area.

The Council will consider the development of a “**Green Network**” of linkages across the LAP area which will provide safe, attractive and convenient pedestrian and cycle routes, these can be termed “greenway networks”. Greenway is an EU term established in a Declaration Towards a European Greenway Network in Lille on 12 September 2000 for “circulation routes reserved exclusively for non-motorised journeys, developed in an integrated manner, which enhances both the environment and quality of life in the surrounding area.” At present this may not seem appropriate as roads traverse the area but it is worthwhile considering incorporating these into any future development and connections across the LAP area. Greenways have been successfully developed in a number of European countries and in Ireland the longest of them developed is the Beara Breifne Greenway from Castletownbere to Leitrim.

Future plans from **Iarnrod Eireann** are to increase the frequency of rail service on main lines to a minimum of 2 hourly.

It is an objective of this LAP to support the investigation of the potential of providing an airstrip / airport in South Roscommon, within or adjacent to the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area.

Policies for Public Transport

- Policy 9** Support the provision of the full network of public transport services and facilities within the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area
- Policy 10** Consult with Bus Eireann regarding the provision of adequate bus services and facilities which may include the extension of the service to Bellanamullia and Bogganfin
- Policy 11** Consider the provision of Rail Services and Facilities to serve the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area and consult with Iarnrod Eireann regarding the provision of such services.
- Policy 12** Assess development applications in terms of the provision of adequate pedestrian, cycle paths and facilities, and public lighting.
- Policy 13** Promote land use patterns which reduce the need to travel by private car and support public transport, including higher densities at public transport corridors and nodes
- Policy 14** Continue to support and encourage the RTI to expand their services
- Policy 15** Take cognisance of the recommendations contained within the document Smarter Travel, Travel - A sustainable transport future: A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 – 2020, and implement within the Plan area as appropriate

Objectives for Public Transport

- Objective 7** Investigate further the feasibility of providing a railway siding for freight and/or passenger services within the LAP area.
- Objective 8** Work with Iarnród Eireann to progress the re-opening of rail stations in South Roscommon at Knockcroghery, Taughmaconnell/Thomastown and facilitate the development of new facilities to serve the lands at Bogganfin within the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area.
- Objective 9** Investigate the provision of a Park and Ride facility at an appropriate location on the public transport system, within the LAP area e.g. consider land with a Business, Enterprise Park/Light Industry and Warehousing or Industrial zoning, possibly adjacent to old N6 (R466) route.
- Objective 10** RCC will urgently consult with Bus Eireann to explore the feasibility of providing an extended bus service to the Bellanamullia area along the Tuam Road which will include the provision of bus stops on both sides of the New Tuam Road.
- Objective 11** Investigate the feasibility of providing a transport node within the LAP area which would cater for amongst others, bus shelters and associated facilities for long haul bus operators.
- Objective 12** Facilitate the triAthlone cycling event which travels through the LAP area and maximize tourism benefits for the area.
- Objective 13** Investigate the provision of a footpath/cyclepath from the Monksland area to the Summerhill school along the old N6/R466.

- Objective 14** Provide a pedestrian friendly environment within the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area. This may require the introduction of the following measures;
- Provision of pedestrian demand crossings with audible warning systems at street junctions and other strategic points
 - Provision of tactile paving and dished kerbs at all crossings to allow ease of access for the mobility impaired
 - Providing wider footpaths in high use public areas, namely, around civic spaces to facilitate public gathering, interaction, relief, etc.
 - Provision of cycling facilities, wherever practicable, and landscaping as appropriate
- Objective 15** Provide pedestrian paths and cycle tracks in the following areas of Monksland / Bellanamullia (Athlone West);
- Along the Old Tuam Road
 - Along the Tuam Road from “River Village” to “Bannons” Shop
 - In tandem with the upgrading of the roads within the area
- Objective 16** Promote the development of a Linear Park and Amenity Trail along the Cross River which will form part of the “Green Network” for the LAP area and could form part of a longer trail, if feasible, for example to the Shannon River.
- Objective 17** Provide formal bus stops/shelters and taxi ranks at appropriate locations, throughout the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area. These would need to be provided along the bus route and a taxi rank could be considered in proximity to the shopping area/s.
- Objective 18** Support the investigation of the potential of providing an airstrip / airport in South Roscommon, within or adjacent to the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area, that could build on the synergies of existing industries within the environs of Athlone Linked Gateway.

2) Roads and Traffic Management (See Map 3a)

The following tables set out RCC’s Strategic Objectives for National, Regional and Local Roads in the LAP area and update the information contained within the RCDP 2008 - 2014.

Table 2: National Secondary Roads Development Strategic Objectives

Route	Proposal/ Scheme	Approximate Location	Timeframe 2009 - 2015
N61	N61-M6 Junction	New N61-M6 Junction to tie-in with existing N61 south of Roscommon	Carry out feasibility study on new N61-N6 Junction including upgrade of the N61 south of Roscommon. Seek NRA funding to develop the recommendations.
	Upgrade all of N61 between Athlone and Boyle to National Primary Standard	Athlone to Boyle	Carry out feasibility study and seek NRA funding to develop the recommendations.

Table 3: Other Roads Infrastructure Proposals –

1.	Construct link Road from Old Tuam Road/New Tuam Road (R362/L2047) junction to N61 at Bogganfin.
2.	Upgrade the following Roads in Monksland: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New Tuam Road R362 ▪ Old Tuam Road L2047 ▪ Drum Road L2027 ▪ The Mihanbee Road L7581 ▪ Millbrook Bridge Road L7560 ▪ The Cloonakille Road L 7558 ▪ Tuam Road from River Village to Monksfield
3.	Provide Traffic Calming on the R466 at Summerhill.
4.	Provide for a new junction at N6 Summerhill junction with the Drum Road
5.	Provide Traffic Management on the N61 at Bogganfin
6.	Pedestrian Crossings in the area

Any development proposed in the vicinity of the R466/M6 junctions will be subject to a Traffic Impact Assessment as part of the development consent process. It is not the PA's intention to interfere with the capacity of the National Road network. Any proposed development would be required to indicate one access only to these lands which would be from its western boundary.

Policies for Roads and Transportation

- Policy 16** Provide a safe and modern road network within the LAP area which is compatible with the pattern of land use in the area and with through traffic.
- Policy 17** Co-operate with the NRA to identify the need for Service Areas along the M6 and to assist in the implementation of suitable proposals for their provision
- Policy 18** Facilitate the improvement / provision of interchanges at appropriate locations along the R466 (old N6) and M6 as well as within Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) to benefit the economic growth and traffic safety and flow in the area
- Policy 19** Facilitate the improvement of existing or replacement of sub-standard interchanges at appropriate locations along the R466 (old N6) and M6 as well as within Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) to benefit the economic growth and traffic safety and flow in the area.
- Policy 20** Regulate, control and improve road signage within the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area
- Policy 21** Continue to invest in the non-national roads within the LAP area in order to improve access to peripheral areas and to provide balanced regional development and promote social inclusion
- Policy 22** Ensure that all development proposals in the area fulfill traffic safety and car parking requirements.
- Policy 23** Increase the capacity of existing local road and pedestrian network in the area. Create improved transport links between Monksland / South Roscommon area and the town of Athlone.
- Policy 24** Maintain and enhance the capacity of the national road network in the vicinity of Bogganfin to ensure that it is capable of safely and adequately accommodating additional traffic movements, general traffic flows and future increases

-
- Policy 25** Consider cross-over usage of car parking where many different uses of buildings are in place and where appropriate to maximise land usage

Roads Objectives

- Objective 19** Facilitate the programmed improvement to the National Road Network as per Table 2 above
- Objective 20** Carry out improvement works on non-national roads as per Table 3
- Objective 21** Identify and develop locations for road interchanges and junction improvements in conjunction with the NRA. These are likely to be: the M6/N61 interchange with the lands at Bogganfin, and the roundabout at the Old Tuam Road -New Tuam Road junction.
- Objective 22** Assess all development proposals that access onto the National route in accordance with the policies set down in the Roscommon County Development Plan 2008-2014 and the provisions of the NRA's Policy Statement on Development Management and Access to National Roads.
- Objective 23** Encourage the development of service and link roads within the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area to open up lands within settlements and reduce the necessity for ribbon development. For example, from Bogganfin to the Old Tuam Road/New Tuam Road junction; from the New Tuam Road in Bellanamullia to Crannagh Beg, possibly along the Mihanbee Road; and, the connection between the Mihanbee Road L7581 and the Monksland Industrial Estate Road (L75841). (See Map 3a)
- Objective 24** Ensure that development lands are not "cut-off" by reserving access points from public/private roads to these lands within the LAP area and thus allow their development potential to be realised.
- Objective 25** Continue to pursue the upgrade of the N61 to National Primary Status and facilitate the provision of a substantial upgrade of the N61 access to the M6
- Objective 26** Prepare a strategy to regulate development adjacent to and along the entire R466 route
- Objective 27** Work with Westmeath County Council in the provision of further cross river linkages.
- Objective 28** Continue to ensure that all landowners and occupiers of land take reasonable care to ensure that road side structures, trees, hedges and other vegetation growing on their land are not, or could not become, a danger to people using or working on a public road. Roscommon County Council will serve a written notice on owners or occupiers or carrying out works which it considers necessary. The cost of these works will be recovered from the owner or occupier of the land in question.
- Objective 29** Facilitate the provision of internal link roads within the Bogganfin area in a manner that will enhance the attractiveness of the lands for development, that will structure the lands appropriately to provide different land parcel opportunities for different types of land uses, that will facilitate public transport access to the lands and that will minimise the impact on the capacity of the national road network

- Objective 30** Provide adequate circulation and parking facilities to serve developments in accordance with the minimum car parking standards set out under the Development Management Guidelines and Standards section of this LAP. Large expanses of surfaced parking should be avoided through the introduction of landscaping and open spaces to provide visual relief and break-up parking areas and basement parking areas should also be considered, particularly for larger developments with extensive car parking requirements.
- Objective 31** Within 12 months of the adoption of the LAP, prepare and present a detailed plan setting out a clear timeframe for the provision of road infrastructure improvements which would include footpaths, public lighting, cycle lanes and speed limit reductions in and around schools

4.3 WATER SERVICES

Water supply and wastewater treatment and disposal are critical infrastructure requirements for sustainable development. Without an environmentally sound means of supplying water and disposing of wastewater, the principles of sustainable development cannot be met.

4.3.1 Policy Context

Water Supply

In terms of water supply, it is important to ensure an adequate, continual potable and clean supply of water to all people, in accordance with applicable quality standards. Policy relating to water services must have regard to the requirements of the following policies and directives:

- ***EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)***

A European Community Directive (2000/60/EC) designed to integrate the way we manage water bodies across Europe. It requires all inland and coastal waters to reach “good status”, or “good ecological potential” in the case of heavily modified water bodies, by 2015 through a catchment - based system of River Basin Management Plans (RBMP), incorporating a programme of measures to improve the status of all natural water bodies.

- ***EU Groundwater Directive 2006 provisions***
- ***EU Drinking Water Regulations 2007***

Water Quality

Groundwater and major surface water sources are important to the development of the county and their protection is of paramount importance. The GSI Ground Water Protection Study, 2003 is important when considering water quality in the County. The recommendations contained within the Shannon River Basin Management Plan, once published are also vital to consider.

The draft ***European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations, 2008***, have been developed for the purposes of responding further to the requirements of:

- The Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) which requires that all surface waters achieve ‘good status’ by 2015.
- The Dangerous Substances Directive (2006/11/EC – formerly 76/464/EC) on pollution caused by certain dangerous substances discharged into the aquatic environment.
- A judgment of the European Court of Justice in June 2005 in relation to the Dangerous Substances Directive.
- A proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on water quality standards (Common Position adopted in June 2008).

The draft Regulations:

- Give legal status to the criteria and standards to be used for classifying surface waters in accordance with the ecological objectives approach of the Water Framework Directive.
- Establish environmental objectives for the protection of surface waters whose status is high or good (as classified by the EPA) and require the restoration of waters of less than good status to at least good status by 22 December 2015 (this date may be extended subject to certain specified conditions).
- Establish a wide range of environmental quality standards to provide a more coherent and comprehensive system of quality objectives for all Ireland’s surface waters. These include standards for 41 chemical substances (e.g. pesticides, heavy metals and other groups of substances such as flame retardants) established at EU level and also 16 chemical substances relevant in an Irish context.

- Prohibit point and diffuse source discharges liable to cause water pollution except where such discharges are subject to prior authorisation or general binding rules. Discharge authorisations must lay down emission limits that aim to achieve the environmental objectives/quality standards specified in the Regulations.

The *European Communities (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2009* are a revision, with amendments, of the European Communities (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2006 and 2007. Their purpose is to provide for strengthened enforcement provisions and better farmyard management in order to comply with an EC judgment in relation to the Dangerous Substances Directive, and to provide the legal basis for the operation of derogation under the Nitrates Directive granted to Ireland by the European Commission. The opportunity was also taken to consolidate the European Communities (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations and to make a number of other miscellaneous amendments. The main new features incorporated in the Regulations are:

- Strengthened enforcement powers for local authorities.
- Enhanced cross-reporting arrangements between local authorities and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.
- Requirements for improved farmyard management
- Provisions relating to making application to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for a derogation
- Temporary exemption to allow an extension of time for establishment of green cover following ploughing competitions

Strategic Aim for Water Services

- Provide and maintain an adequate supply of water of suitable quality for domestic, industrial, agricultural and other uses.

4.3.2 Physical Context

Water Supply (see Map 4)

The provision of adequate water supply and sanitary services is important for the future development of residential, industrial, agricultural, commercial and other uses in the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area and is in keeping with the overall aims of the RCDP 2008 – 2014.

The Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area has experienced a significant increase in development pressure in recent years, particularly for residential type development. This development pressure has resulted in a critical increase in demand for water. The water supply in this part of the County is currently close to maximum capacity. However, funding has been secured and work has commenced to upgrade of the South Roscommon Water Scheme.

At the community meeting, the following were identified as issues in terms of water supply;

- Problem with discolouration in the water
- A 2 ft pipe should be provided for the water which will allow expansion of servicing.
- There is an issue with extreme lime in the water, which wrecks household appliances. A household filter system could be installed but this can cost upward of €750

A number of infrastructure improvements are being progressed for the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area including a new water reservoir built at Feamore. This will provide increased water pressure and quality for the wider area. In addition, a new water treatment plant is to be built in Lisbrock which will feed into the Athlone/Monksland existing supply. The demand assessment for lands at Bogganfin has also been included into the design. It should be noted that a

Groundwater Source Protection Plan for Lisbrock would be prudent. A new Water Colour Removal Plant is also being proposed in Killeglan, in order to address the problematic colour of the water at certain times of the year. These infrastructure improvements when completed will provide spare water capacity to 2030 for the South Roscommon Area.

It should be noted that the capital projects are funded primarily by the DEHLG through the National Development Plan. Since the introduction of the Water Pricing Policy, the marginal cost of facilitating the non-domestic sector is not funded centrally and must be provided for by the Local Authority via this sector. This can range from 30% to 40% on some schemes and will have financial implications for the County Council through raising of loans and other fiscal strategies.

The Council have already introduced charges for non-domestic water metering.

Groundwater Vulnerability and Protection

“Some of the rain that falls on Ireland filters through the soil, subsoil and rocks and becomes groundwater. Much of that water moves slowly underground and remains there for long periods before emerging as base flow in rivers or as springs. Some is extracted for drinking, particularly for single houses in the country, and often receives little or no treatment prior to use.

Groundwater is protected against pollution from the surface if there is sufficient depth of overlying soil and subsoil but, if that depth of cover is small, then groundwater is vulnerable from septic tank effluents and from slurry spreading. Much of the underlying rock in Ireland is limestone that is easily dissolved by water and this has created cracks and fissures in the rock that allows pollutants from the surface to move quickly down to the underlying water body. Hence much of Ireland’s groundwater resources are vulnerable to pollution.

The pollutants of most concern to groundwater in Ireland are Nitrates from fertilizer use on land and microbial contamination from septic tanks and slurry spreading. Septic tanks are used extensively for sewage treatment in the rural areas of the country and, while the tank itself separates out gross solid material, the real treatment occurs in the soil and subsoil of the percolation area downstream of the tank. Almost all animal manures are recovered as fertiliser on farm land and this material has the potential to be highly polluting with a very high microbial count.”²

The Council is responsible for the protection of all waters including rivers, lakes, and groundwater. The responsibilities include; implementation of pollution control measures, licensing of effluent discharges, implementing and monitoring compliance with environmental regulations, the drawing up of pollution contingency measures.

The Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area can be classified as follows (see Map 5):

- The third of the area to the north-west falls within the Rk/H Groundwater Protection Zone
- The remaining two thirds are classified within the LI/E Groundwater Protection Zone
- Over 80% of the area falls within an area of High Vulnerability
- The remaining 20% to the south-west falls within an area of Extreme Vulnerability

These classifications will have an impact on the outcome of development applications in the area.

² <http://www.askaboutireland.ie/reading-room/environment-geography/environmental-information/environment-overview/water-quality/groundwater/index.xml>

Water Quality

Drinking Water Quality

The monitoring currently being carried out by RCC is in accordance with the Drinking Water Regulations. The Water Services Section works in co-operation with the Environmental Laboratory within RCC regarding the mandatory drinking water regulations for all private group, semi-private and public water schemes for the county. Mandatory testing is performed on a regular basis depending on the size of the schemes.

Surface Water Quality

It is an aim to have water quality within all the County's schemes defined as 'good status' by 2015. An integrated approach to management and monitoring of lake and river catchments areas is underway with the support of the DEHLG. The GSI prepared the Groundwater Protection Schemes for RCC. The measures recommended in these plans aid the protection of sources for both public and private water scheme supplies. The RCDP has also provided guidance concerning the control of development and associated septic tanks.

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)

The Council will have regard to the guidance concerning Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) designed to manage stormwater run-off in urban areas. The aims are to control discharge as soon as possible after precipitation (source control); slow down the speed of discharge off-site (control of quantity); use passive techniques to filter and settle suspended matter (control of quality).

SUDS is the approach favoured by Roscommon County Council as the best way to manage stormwater runoff and avoid causing flooding. These techniques reduce the risk of flash floods arising from runoff from impermeable surfaces.

The presence of pollution causes changes in flora and fauna of rivers. Well documented changes occur in the macro-invertebrate community in the presence of organic pollution; sensitive species are progressively replaced by more tolerant forms as pollution increases. The Q Value system describes the relationship between water and the macro-invertebrate community in numerical terms. Q5 waters have a high diversity of macro-invertebrates and good water quality, while Q1 have little or no macro-invertebrate diversity and bad water quality. In addition, in accordance with the Water Framework Directive, surface waters in Ireland are classified as high, good, moderate, poor and bad quality.³

The Cross River which traverses the LAP area has a Q4 rating through the Shannon Callows cSAC and the river in the vicinity of the discharge point has a rating of Q 3 (ref. Section 2.1.4 Appropriate Assessment carried out for the Monksland WWTP Discharge, May 2009 – Appendix 1).

For the Cross River and areas around Lough Ree along the Shannon River, the core objectives for surface waters is to improve waters where necessary in order to achieve at least good status by 2015. For groundwaters, the core objectives are to; improve quantity and chemical quality where necessary to achieve good status; and, reverse increasing pollution trends.⁴ For the River Shannon waters close to the LAP area this means obtaining a Q value of, at least, 4 by 2015.⁵

³ Consultation Paper on the Draft European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations, 2008, DEHLG, page 16,

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Environment/Water/WaterQuality/ConsultationDraftSurfaceWaterRegulations/FileDownload,18286,en.doc>

⁴ Water Matters "Help us plan!", Draft River Shannon District Management Plan, page 20 to 22

⁵ Water Matters "Help us plan!", Draft River Shannon District Management Plan, page 20, http://83.138.131.106/shannonrbd/pdf/shannon_tier2.pdf

4.3.3 Water Services Strategy

The **Water Services Strategy** aims to;

- ensure that there are adequate services and infrastructure associated with the water supply network for the current and future development envelope
- ensure that the network and its provision is efficient, cost effective, environmentally appropriate and that it protects public health
- wherever practicable, services and infrastructure should be delivered in an integrated manner prior to the development of areas

Policies in relation to Water Services

- Policy 26** Continue the development and upgrading of the water supply so as to ensure that an adequate, sustainable supply of piped water of suitable quality is available for domestic, commercial, industrial and other uses (e.g. fire safety) for the sustainable development of the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area
- Policy 27** Utilise the existing water supply in an effective, efficient, fair and equitable manner, in the best interests of proper planning and sustainable development and in accordance with EU policies and Directives
- Policy 28** Have regard to the Groundwater Protection Plans for the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area as well as the draft (and final) European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations, 2008, and any future reports in relation to surface water environmental quality standards for the County.

Objectives in relation to Water Services

- Objective 32** Ensure that all fire hydrants are clearly identified, maintained and marked and that any that have been surfaced over be unearthed and tested on a regular basis. All the necessary state of the art equipment shall be supplied to the local Fire Services.
- Objective 33** Ensure that all drinking water within the LAP area complies with the highest EU and national standards applicable e.g. European Communities (Drinking Water) (No.2) Regulations 2007
- Objective 34** Facilitate the implementation of water conservation projects, which reduce leakage in existing water distribution systems
- Objective 35** Have regard to and promote the objectives of the Shannon River Basin District Management Plan, and associated Programme of Measures, when completed and any future reports in relation to water quality for the County, e.g. The Provision and Quality of Drinking Water in Ireland - A Report for the Years 2007-2008.
- Objective 36** Promote the protection of waters within and adjacent to the Plan area that are used for bathing in accordance with the new Bathing Water Quality Regulations 2008. Where any water bodies used for bathing fail the mandatory bathing standards, ensure that the public are made aware of this fact by means of information notices posted at the bathing area

4.4 FLOOD RISK AND PROTECTION

“Flooding is a natural process and can happen at any time in a wide variety of locations. It constitutes a temporary covering of land by water and presents a risk only when people and human assets are present in the area which floods. Assets at risk from flooding can include housing, transport and public service infrastructure, commercial and industrial enterprises, agricultural land and the environmental and cultural heritage.” (Planning Guidelines, The Planning System and Flood Risk Management: 2008: 1)

At the community meeting, the following areas were indicated as prone to flooding;

- Major drainage works needed in the area including Old Tuam Road
- Area of flooding indicated on the Cloonakille Road – beyond the proposed LAP boundary
- Old Tuam Road
- Old Galway Road beside O'Reillys
- Beside National School at Summerhill
- There are potholes along the road at the Mill Bar that collect water
- There are areas along the Shannon and Cross Rivers which are prone to flooding
- Land around the Cushlea pitches
- On lands across the New Tuam Road from the Mill Bar
- Winter and spring flooding of the Cross River. Maintenance of the River should take place so that flooding will not occur
- Area of flooding on Crannagh Beg Road opposite Summerhill National School
- There are areas of flooding at the bottom of the first housing estate to the east of the Mihanbee Road along the New Tuam Road
- Area prone to flooding at the end of the Old Tuam Road before it links in with the New Tuam Road
- Area in close proximity to Woodview Country Club
- On the road into Athlone, close to the Athlone Urban District boundary

Understanding flood risk is an essential step in managing the associated impacts and in the LA making informed decisions. The guidance recommends a staged approach to flood risk assessment, which covers both the likelihood of flooding and the potential consequences. Screening, scoping and appropriate flood risk assessments are key steps. Planning authorities will need to commission assessments of flood risk and ensure that the impacts of climate change are accounted for.

Therefore, the management of potential future flood risk aims to reduce the potential risks to people, property and the environment through a hierarchy of avoidance, followed by substitution of lower vulnerability uses (where avoidance is not possible) and, only if avoidance and substitution are not possible, reduction and management of the risks through a variety of techniques.

4.4.1 Policy Context

OPW Guidelines on Flood Risk, 2005, states, in terms of location, that development that is sensitive to the effects of flooding would generally not be permitted in flood-prone or marginal areas. The guidance also states that appropriately designed development, which is not sensitive to the effects of flooding, must not reduce the flood plain or otherwise restrict flow across floodplains. Development consisting of construction of embankments, wide bridge piers, or similar structures would not normally be permitted in or across flood plains or river channels.

The guidance states that development must incorporate the maximum provision to reduce the rate and quantity of runoff. Developments must be set back from the edge of the watercourse to allow access for channel clearing / maintenance. In addition, developments must be constructed to meet specific minimum flood design standards and flood impact assessment must accompany certain applications. Roscommon County Council will have regard to these and any future Guidelines.

EU Directive (2007/60/EC) on the assessment and management of flood risks 2007, aims to reduce and manage the risks that floods pose to human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity. The Directive requires Member States to first carry out a preliminary assessment by 2011 to identify the river basins and associated coastal areas at risk of flooding. For such zones they would then need to draw up flood risk maps by 2013 and establish flood risk management plans focused on prevention, protection and preparedness by 2015. The Directive applies to inland waters as well as all coastal waters across the whole territory of the EU.

The Planning System and Flood Risk Management, DEHLG and OPW, (November 2009) (excerpts taken from the guidelines)

These guidelines require the planning system at national, regional and local levels to:

- (1) Avoid development in areas at risk of flooding, particularly floodplains, unless there are proven wider sustainability grounds that justify appropriate development and where the flood risk can be reduced or managed to an acceptable level without increasing flood risk elsewhere;
- (2) Adopt a sequential approach to flood risk management when assessing the location for new development based on avoidance, reduction and mitigation of flood risk; and,
- (3) Incorporate flood risk assessment into the process of making decisions on planning applications and planning appeals.

The core objectives are to:

- Avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding;
- Avoid new developments increasing flood risk elsewhere, including that which may arise from surface run-off;
- Ensure effective management of residual risks for development permitted in floodplains;
- Avoid unnecessary restriction of national, regional or local economic and social growth;
- Improve the understanding of flood risk among relevant stakeholders; and
- Ensure that the requirements of EU and national law in relation to the natural environment and nature conservation are complied with at all stages of flood risk management

The key principles are to:

- Avoid the risk, where possible,
- Substitute less vulnerable uses, where avoidance is not possible, and
- Mitigate and manage the risk, where avoidance and substitution are not possible.

$$\text{Flood risk} = \text{Likelihood of flooding} \times \text{Consequences of flooding}$$

Sequential approach

A sequential approach to planning is a key tool in ensuring that development, particularly new development, is first and foremost directed towards land that is at low risk of flooding.

The sequential approach makes use of flood risk assessment and of prior identification of flood zones for river and coastal flooding and classification of the vulnerability to flooding of different types of development, as illustrated in Table 3.1. It is essential that the risk potentially arising from other sources of flooding should also be taken into account in all areas and at all stages of the planning process.

Zone A - High probability of flooding. Most types of development would be considered inappropriate in this zone. Development in this zone should be avoided and/or only considered in exceptional circumstances, such as in city and town centres, or in the case of essential infrastructure that cannot be located elsewhere, and where the Justification Test has been applied. Only water-compatible development, such as docks and marinas, dockside activities that require a waterside

location, amenity open space, outdoor sports and recreation, would be considered appropriate in this zone.

Zone B - Moderate probability of flooding. Highly vulnerable development, such as hospitals, residential care homes, Garda, fire and ambulance stations, dwelling houses and primary strategic transport and utilities infrastructure, would generally be considered inappropriate in this zone, unless the requirements of the Justification Test can be met. Less vulnerable development, such as retail, commercial and industrial uses, sites used for short-let for caravans and camping and secondary strategic transport and utilities infrastructure, and water-compatible development might be considered appropriate in this zone.

In general however, less vulnerable development should only be considered in this zone if adequate lands or sites are not available in Zone C and subject to a flood risk assessment to the appropriate level of detail to demonstrate that flood risk to and from the development can or will adequately be managed.

Zone C - Low probability of flooding. Development in this zone is appropriate from a flood risk perspective (subject to assessment of flood hazard from sources other than rivers and the coast) but would need to meet the normal range of other proper planning and sustainable development considerations.

It is recommended that a Plan-making and Development Management Justification Test be applied where development is being considered in areas of moderate and high flood risk. These will be linked to the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processes.

4.4.2 Physical Context (Map 5)

The River Shannon and rivers flowing to it, are the primary sources of flooding in the environs of Athlone and indeed the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area. Although this issue was identified at the community meeting and there seem to be drainage issues along some of the roads in the area.

The RCDP has taken cognisance of the OPW's Flooding Report (www.floodmaps.ie) and any future reports in relation to flood risk for the County will also be taken into consideration. Developments granted permission in areas close to flood plains will contain measures to ensure that the risks of flooding are minimised or eliminated.

The Flooding maps which have been provided are of an historical nature as are the flood points. In terms of predictive flooding mapping, the OPW has begun the process of preparing these for other parts of the country, however these have not been produced for County Roscommon. The OPW are intending going out to tender for these, however it is not envisaged that a product will be available for at least 2 years.

Unpublished draft maps have been produced by the OPW which indicate areas of significant risk. They have been categorised as high, medium or low risk. From the maps it appears that the only one in proximity to the LAP area is one of low risk north of the lands at Bogganfin.

4.4.3 Flood Risk and Protection Strategy

The **Flood Risk and Protection Strategy** aims to;

- Avoid development in areas at risk of flooding by not permitting development in flood risk areas, particularly floodplains, unless it is fully justified that there are wider sustainability grounds for appropriate development and unless the flood risk can be managed to an acceptable level without increasing flood risk elsewhere and where possible, reducing flood risk overall;
- Adopt a sequential approach to flood risk management based on avoidance, reduction and then mitigation of flood risk as the overall framework for assessing the location of new development in the development planning process; and
- Incorporate flood risk assessment into the process of making decisions on planning applications and planning appeals

Policies in relation to Flood Risk & Protection

- Policy 29** Have regard to the OPW's Guidelines on Flood Risk, 2005, the Planning Guidance on Flood Risk Management, and any future reports in relation to flood risk for the County.
- Policy 30** Control development and ensure appropriate mitigating measures are in place for the natural flood plain of rivers and develop guidelines in co-operation with the adjoining LA's for permitted development in different flood risk category areas.

Objectives in relation to Flood Risk & Protection

- Objective 37** Liaise with the OPW on all issues involving river drainage and flood relief, especially when dealing with any applications in the vicinity of important drainage channels
- Objective 38** Require all significant development impacting on flood risk areas to provide a Flood Impact Assessment, to identify potential loss of floodplain storage and how it would be offset in order to minimise impact on the river flood regime
- Objective 39** All new large scale developments shall provide 'Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)' as part of their development proposals.
- Objective 40** Where technically feasible and economically viable, improve and extend the surface water disposal infrastructure to serve all zoned areas, in order to facilitate development
- Objective 41** Within the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area, RCC shall;
- avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding;
 - avoid new developments increasing flood risk elsewhere, including that which may arise from surface run-off;
 - ensure effective management of residual risks for development permitted in floodplains;
 - avoid unnecessary restriction of national, regional or local economic and social growth;
 - improve the understanding of flood risk amongst relevant stakeholders; and
 - ensure that the requirements of EU and national law in relation to the natural environment and nature conservation are complied with at all stages of flood risk management

4.5 WASTEWATER SERVICES

As mentioned previously, water supply and wastewater treatment and disposal are critical infrastructure requirements for sustainable development. Without an environmentally sound means of supplying water and disposing of wastewater, the principles of sustainable development cannot be met.

4.5.1 Policy Context

In addition to drinking water treatment and distribution, LA's are also responsible for wastewater collection/ disposal and stormwater management, including collection and disposal. The drainage system collects foul sewerage, industrial effluent and rainwater, all of which must be discharged or treated whilst minimising flood risk or environmental impacts.

Water Framework and Urban Wastewater Directives

The development and expansion of the County's wastewater and surface water drainage system is essential to the future sustainable development of the County and to the improvement of water quality within and adjoining Roscommon.

The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD)

In response to the increasing threat of pollution and the increasing demand from the public for cleaner rivers, lakes and beaches, the EU has developed the Water Framework Directive (WFD). This Directive is unique in that, for the first time, it establishes a framework for the protection of all waters including rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwater, and their dependent wildlife/habitats under one piece of environmental legislation. Specifically the WFD aims to:

- protect/enhance all waters (surface, ground and coastal waters)
- achieve "good status" for all waters by December 2015
- manage water bodies based on river basins (or catchments)
- involve the public
- streamline legislation

On 22 December 2000, the European Union (EU) passed a new piece of legislation, the Water Framework Directive (WFD). This is the most significant piece of water quality legislation to be developed by the EU for at least twenty years and it will revolutionise the way we manage one of our most important resources.

Previous European water legislation set objectives aimed at protecting particular uses of the water environment from the effects of pollution and guarding the water environment from dangerous chemical substances. The WFD takes many of these objectives forward. More importantly, it also introduces additional, broader ecological objectives that are designed to defend, and where necessary restore the structure and function of aquatic ecosystems.

The Directive establishes an original, integrated approach to the protection, improvement and sustainable use of rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwater within Europe. It impacts on the management of water quality and water resources and affects conservation, fisheries, flood defense, planning and environmental monitoring. It requires us to control all impacts –physical, polluting or otherwise – on our water resource.

The primary focus of the Directive is to achieve 'good' ecological status for all waters by 2015.

The Directive:

- Considers the full range of the water environment, from "Source to Sea" i.e. groundwaters, rivers, lakes, estuaries, transitional waters and coastal waters.

- Considers the impact upon wetlands of the management of water quality and quantity.
- Sets environmental objectives, which take account of the full range of pressures upon the aquatic environment (pollution, abstraction, flow regulation/transfer and habitat impact). The emphasis being on ecological quality.
- Ecological status is divided into five classes (high, good, moderate, poor and bad) and is derived from measurements of biological, hydro-morphological and physio-chemical elements. The measurement of the biological elements includes aquatic flora (plants), benthicinvertebrates (small animals that live on the bottom of rivers, lakes and coastal water bodies) and fish.
- Promotes sustainable use of water resources.
- Defines a planning, management and reporting system based upon River Basin Districts and International River Basin Districts. These are based upon large river basins or a combination of smaller neighbouring basins and include all rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and associated groundwaters.
- Involves social participation and transparency. Member States have to involve as many parties as possible (e.g. stakeholders, local and regional authorities, water users and environmental groups) in drafting, discussing and updating River Basin Management Plans.

The Water Framework Directive and its relationship with other legislation

The Directive, due to its wide-reaching nature, will eventually replace a number of the other water quality directives (for example, those on Surface Water Abstraction, Freshwater Fisheries and Shellfish Waters) and implementation of others (for example, the Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control, Urban Waste Water Treatment, Habitats and Nitrates Directives) will form part of the 'basic measures' for the Water Framework Directive.

The new approach of the Water Framework Directive

The Directive states that water quality management be centered on river basins, which are natural geographical areas that occur in the landscape. This is in contrast to other water management systems which use administrative management units which have arbitrary boundaries.

Management of these basins will be achieved through management plans, a plan being created for each River Basin District. "Characterisation Reports" must be in place for every River Basin District. The reports give an account of each basin, including the pressures and impacts caused by humans. The report is necessary to work out whether such effects are likely to inhibit the accomplishment of good status.

The scientific assessment of the river basin that is contained in the Characterisation Report is vital for the production of the "Programme of Measures". The Programme of Measures consists of policies and strategies, such as monitoring programmes, that are intended to reduce the risk to water bodies and allow them to attain good status.

Urban Waste Water Directive Overview

The ***Council Directive 91/271/EEC concerning urban waste-water treatment*** was adopted on 21 May 1991. Its objective is to protect the environment from the adverse effects of urban waste water discharges and discharges from certain industrial sectors (see Annex III of the Directive) and concerns the collection, treatment and discharge of:

- Domestic waste water
- Mixture of waste water
- Waste water from certain industrial sectors (see Annex III of the Directive)

Four main **principles** are laid down in the Directive:

- Planning
- Regulation
- Monitoring
- Information and reporting

Specifically the Directive requires:

- The Collection and treatment of waste water in all agglomerations of >2000 population equivalents (p.e.);
- Secondary treatment of all discharges from agglomerations of > 2000 p.e., and more advanced treatment for agglomerations >10 000 population equivalents in designated sensitive areas and their catchments;
- A requirement for pre-authorisation of all discharges of urban wastewater, of discharges from the food-processing industry and of industrial discharges into urban wastewater collection systems;
- Monitoring of the performance of treatment plants and receiving waters; and
- Controls of sewage sludge disposal and re-use, and treated waste water re-use whenever it is appropriate.

The purpose of *The Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations, 2007*, is to prevent and reduce the pollution of waters by waste water discharges by giving effect to Article 6 of the Dangerous Substances Directive and includes the purpose of implementing the following measures required under the Water Framework Directive. Under these Regulations, there is a requirement for all wastewater discharges, including storm water discharges, which come within the scope of these Regulations to be licensed. The EPA is currently in the process of licensing discharges from wastewater treatment facilities.

As part of the **Water Services Investment Programme** a number of Capital projects are underway, one of which is the Monksland Sewerage Scheme.

The **Serviced Land Initiative (SLI)** was introduced under the Water Services Investment Programme to provide water services specifically for new residential development. The schemes receive 40% funding from the DEHLG with the remaining 60% funded by the local authority on foot of development contributions from the developer. New scheme proposals must demonstrate the following:

- a focused response to housing supply requirements in cities, towns and villages and their transport catchments;
- include only such works as are necessary to improve water services where the lack of available serviced land is the main constraint to housing development;
- be capable of being completed quickly; and,
- have an estimated cost not exceeding €m, including all contract and non-contract costs.

In considering applications for funding, the DEHLG will have regard, in particular, to the policy for housing development outlined in Section 5.3 of the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020. SLI's have temporarily been suspended due to the proposed cuts in funding, however, in future if these are reintroduced in order to ensure that the infrastructural development keeps pace with and facilitates growth, Roscommon County Council envisages the use of SLI's across the county and these schemes will primarily be schemes which will fast track parts of water or wastewater infrastructure in order to cater for imminent development.

SLI funding will be applied to put additional infrastructure (surface water or water-main) into villages in conjunction with the provision of foul sewers. Schemes for inclusion into this project can be added on a continuous basis throughout this period.⁶

⁶ RCC Assessment of Needs, October 2006, p. 6

Strategic Aims for Wastewater Services

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide systems for the safe and adequate disposal of sewage |
|--|

4.5.2 Physical Context (see Map 6)

One of the capital projects listed as part of the RCC Assessment of Needs and Water Services Investment Programme 2007 - 2009 is the Monksland Sewerage Treatment Plant. The following is required as part of the project: an increase in the existing treatment capacity to provide for the expansion in the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) area and the consideration of extending the catchment area.

The present capacity of the Monksland WWTP will not be exceeded by development proposals in this plan unless unforeseen industrial uses are proposed. RCC has also commenced the process of considering the upgrading of this facility to meet future demands. The design for a significant upgrade for this treatment plant is nearing completion by RCC. RCC have applied for a discharge license for the current WWTP and an EIS is under preparation for the upgrade to the treatment plant which will involve discharge to the Shannon River. This upgrade will cater for domestic, commercial and industrial demand for a 20 year horizon. As part of the application for the discharge license an appropriate assessment has been prepared and it is envisaged that the license will set out strict parameters concerning the operation of the plant within which the County Council will operate.

The particular challenge within the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area is the presence of multiple numbers of pumping stations for wastewater disposal. At present there are 6 public pumping stations and 8 existing and 5 proposed private pumping stations. This is not sustainable and the following are three options which should be considered going forward;

1. Explore the consolidation of these systems, i.e. a larger pumping station into which three or four could feed
2. Provide a collection system in order to reduce the numbers of pumping stations required
3. Where technically feasible and economically viable, all existing and future pumping stations should come under the control of RCC.

In relation to discharges to the Cross River and the quality of the river itself, the Monksland Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) is the principal source from which the impact on the Shannon Callows cSAC and Middle Shannon Callows SPA will arise. The river at present has a Q4 water quality rating through the cSAC, the river in the vicinity of the discharge point has a rating of Q 3 (ref. Section 2.1.4 Appropriate Assessment carried out for the Monksland WWTP Discharge, May 2009 – www.epa.ie). Roscommon County Council (RCC) in its licence application to the EPA for the WWTP, presents data showing that the design standards from the WWTP will raise the BOD levels of the Cross River by less than 1mg/litre and that the plant is habitually operating at a much higher level than the design standard (see attachment C1 F1 of the WWTP Discharge Licence application – www.epa.ie). The situation is similar with respect to Phosphorous levels. It can therefore be reasonably concluded that the operation of the plant, and by implication the proposed LAP, will not have a significant effect on any of the Natura 2000 sites downstream of Monksland.

4.5.3 Wastewater Services Strategy

The **Wastewater Services Strategy** aims to;

- ensure that there are adequate services and infrastructure associated with the wastewater collection, treatment and disposal for the current and future development envelope
- ensure that the network and its provision is efficient, cost effective, environmentally appropriate and that it protects public health
- wherever practicable, services and infrastructure should be delivered in an integrated manner prior to the development of areas

Policies in relation to Wastewater Collection & Treatment

- Policy 31** Facilitate the provision of an adequate wastewater collection, treatment and disposal system for Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area to serve existing and future populations in accordance with the Water Framework Directive 2000, and EU Urban Wastewater Directive and in accordance with the EPA Discharge License.
- Policy 32** Ensure that all new developments have and are provided with satisfactory drainage systems in the interests of public health and to avoid the pollution of the ground and surface waters
- Policy 33** Implement the recommendations of the adopted Sludge Management Plan (as reviewed in September 2006) for the County, including any amendments

Objectives in relation to Wastewater Collection & Treatment

- Objective 42** Implement and ensure all existing wastewater schemes meet the Urban Waste Water Regulations, public health legislation and promote, as appropriate, the provisions for the implementation of the relevant recommendations set out in “Urban Waste Water Discharges in Ireland for Population Equivalents Greater than 500 Persons – A Report for the Years 2006 and 2007”.
- Objective 43** Where technically feasible and economically viable, improve and extend the wastewater collection, treatment and disposal infrastructure to serve all zoned areas, in order to facilitate development
- Objective 44** RCC shall adopt the following approach when considering development applications;
- Significantly reduce the use of multiple private pumping stations
 - Where technically feasible and economically viable, existing and future pumping stations should come under the control of RCC
 - Pumping arrangements shall be designed in a sustainable manner
 - Development shall be phased in such a way as to only allow areas to be developed which can connect into the sewerage network directly
 - The feasibility of a collection network should be explored, possibly along the Cross River, which will reduce the need for so many pumping stations
- Objective 45** Investigate the possible extension of the public sewerage system to un-serviced areas within the LAP boundary; promote the development of a wastewater leak detection programme; and, the use of a strategic metering system to aid in leak detection in and around the LAP area, as appropriate

- Objective 46** In currently unserved areas, strictly control the siting of septic tanks and proprietary treatment systems and promote public awareness on the issue of correct installation, monitoring and maintenance in the interests of the protection of the environment and public health.
- Objective 47** Explore the feasibility and appropriateness of entering into PPP's for the provision of necessary infrastructure⁷

⁷ Public-Private Partnership (PPP) is basically just a different method of procuring public services and infrastructure by combining the best of the public and private sectors with an emphasis on value for money and delivering quality public services. More information on PPP is available on the Irish Government Public Private Partnership Website <http://www.ppp.gov.ie>

4.6 WASTE MANAGEMENT

The Replacement Waste Management Plan for the Connacht Region 2006 - 2011

The Connacht Waste Management Plan has been developed by the Local Authorities of Galway County and City, and the Counties Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo, and covers the period from 2006-2011. The Plan is based on the waste hierarchy established in the EU Framework Directive on Waste.

The Plan has been adopted through an alternative legislative process and shall be the guiding document for the implementation of an integrated waste management approach within the Region as a whole.

The Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP shall have regard to all legislative, national and regional documents and objectives in the implementation of waste management.

Roscommon County Council also recognises that litter is a major environmental problem, which can significantly detract from the visual quality of the County's towns and villages. The Council actively promotes anti-litter awareness through its annual Spring Clean-Up Week Campaign and other activities. In addition, the Council has appointed two Litter Wardens and an Environmental Educational Officer to promote community initiatives such as tidy towns, golden mile etc. and school initiatives such as green schools and tidy schools. The Council has also provided a recycling centre at the Monksland Civic Centre. The Athlone Tidy Town Committee carries out work in this LAP area.

4.6.1 Waste Management Strategy

RCC promotes an integrated approach to waste management for any proposed development(s) within the local authority area.

In addition, RCC promotes the development of an integrated plan for managing waste including wastes generated during the construction phase of development as well as the operation and maintenance phases. In this regard, developers are directed to the DEHLG Best Practice Guidelines on the preparation of Waste Management Plans for Construction & Demolition Projects, July 2006. Developers are referred, in particular, to the thresholds set out in Section 3 of these Best Practice Guidelines with respect to the recommendation that developers of projects with significant potential for the generation of Construction and Demolition (C&D) should prepare a Waste Management Plan.

RCC promotes the undertaking of appropriate investigations to determine the nature and extent of any soil and / or groundwater contamination and the risks associated with site development work, where Brownfield development is to occur within the Plan area. Management of all wastes associated with excavation, demolition and development activities, including contaminated and hazardous material, must have the required authorisation, as appropriate.

At the community meeting the following issues were identified in terms of **recycling facilities** in the area;

- Some residents are happy enough with the existing recycling facilities – as most use the facilities in Athlone Town
- At the far side of Cushla village could be a good area for an Amenity Site.
- Civic amenity site was indicated where ESB station is situated adjacent to the Athlone Town boundary
- Existing bottle banks are located at the Monksland Community Centre. There is a need for more recycling facilities/areas, e.g. Beside Supervalu Car park and Bannon's Petrol Station.
- There are bottle banks at the community centre which are adequate
- Bottle banks are not adequate in the area and more should be provided.

Policies in relation to Waste Management

- Policy 34** Implement the objectives of the Connaught Waste Management Plan 2006-2011 and promote, where appropriate, the DEHLG Best Practice Guidelines on the preparation of Waste Management Plans for Construction & Demolition Projects, July 2006
- Policy 35** Encourage waste reduction and recycling in accordance with the National Environmental Awareness Campaign
- Policy 36** Promote the increased re-use and recycling of materials from waste sources and co-operate with local retailers and residents associations in managing collection points for recycling goods

Objectives in relation to Waste Management

- Objective 48** Work with and assist local community groups and schools in litter prevention and control, and support initiatives such as the Tidy Towns, Tidy Estates, Tidy Gardens, Tidy Graveyard, Golden Mile, Green Schools Programme and schools anti-litter awareness competitions
- Objective 49** Upgrade waste management facilities in the area, including bring banks and litter bins, and extend the bring bank network where appropriate to all new housing developments
- Objective 50** Ensure that the Litter Act and the relevant Waste Management Regulations are enforced by making the public aware of the fines / prosecutions, ensuring that pollution complaints are dealt with efficiently and transparently, and that offenders are penalised
- Objective 51** Ensure that all new developments, particularly those including apartments, should have adequate provision for management of waste which includes sufficient receptacles for occupiers
- Objective 52** Have regard to any national and regional waste management planning processes so that priority waste issues are addressed e.g. the implementation of segregated brown bin collection for bio-waste, mentioned in the DEHLG Circular WPPR 17/08 National Strategy on Biodegradable waste
- Objective 53** Have regard to the information and any recommendations in the EPA reports, where appropriate, namely;
- The Nature and Extent of Unauthorised Waste Activity in Ireland (Sep 2005)
 - National Waste Report 2006
 - National Hazardous Waste Management Plan 2008-2012
 - Ireland's Environment 2008- State of the Environment report
- Objective 54** Have regard to any policies and programmes that may be in place for waste management issues, such as the relevant Environmental Inspection Plans (developed in line with the Council Recommendations on Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections – RMCEI) and Enforcement Policy for Unauthorised Waste Activity established following the Ministerial Policy Direction of July 2008 (Circular WPR 04/08)

- Objective 55** Require the undertaking of appropriate investigations to determine the nature and extent of any soil and / or groundwater contamination and the risks associated with site development work, where Brownfield development is to occur within the Plan area

4.7 ENERGY

The County Council recognises that the development of a secure, reliable and sustainable energy supply and associated infrastructure is a key factor for supporting economic development and attracting investment to the area.

4.7.1 Policy Context

The National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020 indicates that the key points to consider between local planning and electricity network planning are;

- The need to address electricity infrastructure in CDP's and LAP's to facilitate national, regional and local economic progress
- The need to liaise with the operators of the transmission and distribution grids, particularly in the environs of towns, to ensure the continued availability of corridors for overhead cables and continuity of supply for existing and new users of electricity.

The Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006, makes provision for key infrastructure development applications to be directed to the new division of An Bord Pleanála for consideration. All planning applications for high powered transmission lines are now expected to go directly to the Board. This change in the legislation will ensure a more speedy approach to such applications, and, decisions will be delivered within an 8 week timeframe by the Board directly, rather than by a LA.

White Paper on Energy Policy Framework 2007-2020, sets out the Government's *Energy Policy Framework 2007-2020* to deliver a sustainable energy future for Ireland.

The National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012 builds on the Government's commitment to sustainable development as outlined in "Towards 2016" and the NDP 2007-2013. It is also one of a number of inter-related Government initiatives that will address energy and climate change issues.

In relation to energy, the Strategy supports the aim that 15% of electricity shall be generated from renewable sources by 2010 and 33% by 2020, and Biomass shall contribute up to 30% of energy input at peat stations by 2015. The Strategy also provides support for Combined Heat and Power projects and "Towards a National Ocean Energy Strategy".

The NSS 2002-2020 is the key government policy on Regional Development. As is highlighted throughout the NSS, the development of regional infrastructure is essential to achieve balanced regional development. The NSS emphasizes that:

- Reliable and effective energy systems, such as gas and electricity to power stations and services, are key pre-requisites for effective Regional Development⁸

Main considerations in terms of spatial policies relating to energy include;

- Developing energy infrastructure on an all-island basis to the practical and mutual benefit of both the Republic and NI
- Strengthen energy networks in the West, North West, Border and North Eastern Areas in particular
- Enhancing both robustness and choice of energy supplies across the regions, through improvements to the national grids for electricity and gas

⁸ National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020, p.64

For the purposes of this section, Energy is divided into three areas, namely;

- Renewable Energy
- Electricity
- Gas Network

4.7.2 Renewable Energy

Physical Context

The development of renewable energy offers sustainable alternatives to our dependency on fossil fuels, a means of reducing harmful greenhouse emissions and opportunities to reduce our reliance on imported fuels. Renewable energy comes from natural resources that are continuously replenished by nature. The main sources of renewable energy are the wind, the sun (solar), water (hydropower, wave and tidal energy), heat below the surface of the earth (geothermal energy) and biomass (wood, biodegradable waste and energy crops or bio-fuels such as rapeseed and lupines).

Roscommon County Council has submitted an expression of interest in the location of a sustainable energy facility and solateur school (sustainable energy training facility) in the Monksland area for consideration by the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Monksland has been identified as an area suitable for such a venture due to its proximity to the town of Athlone and the possibility of the location of businesses and industry capable of utilising the energy produced.

The project description was provided in the “Report on the potential to establish local enterprises and create jobs based on the generation and utilisation of energy from renewable energy resources”. In it the following description was provided of the project in Güssing, South –East Austria;

“The District of Güssing was previously very dependent on the Agriculture and forestry. But when the market for its produce declined, it diversified its activities and created a whole new industry for itself.

It still uses the same resource to sustain its new industry that previously sustained its agriculture and forestry sectors – land. But instead of using land to grow food it now uses it to grow raw materials to feed its bio fuel industry. In the process it has succeeded in getting 50 new companies to locate in the area and it has created 1,000+ jobs. It has boosted the local economy into a cycle of ongoing growth that will hopefully create more jobs in the years ahead.” (p 4)

“Since the early 1990’s the local economy has been given a major boost. The establishment and continual expansion of an alternative system of producing energy from sustainable resources, grown, garnered and utilised in the local area, and using this energy to supply electricity and heat to business, industry and private homes in the same area is driving this boost.

The ecological energy approach has proved to be a driving force for the local economy and an impressive example of a sustainable regional development process. The use of self-sustained renewable energies has added €18 million per annum to the local economy and has resulted in increasing levels of employment and decreasing levels of commuting, migration and emigration.

This is the first community in the European Union to cut carbon emissions by more than 90 percent and is an example to the rest of Europe and the world.”

A few of the options for the provision of renewable energy, on a larger scale within the LAP area, are discussed below. It should also be noted that Chapter 10: Development Management Guidelines and Standards has details on renewable energy.

1. Wind Energy & Windfarms

It is an objective of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2008 – 2014 to achieve a reasonable balance between responding to government policy on renewable energy and in enabling the wind energy resources of the county to be harnessed in an environmentally sustainable manner.

The siting of wind turbines requires careful consideration. While turbines located on elevated sites, tend to have a higher output, they also have a significant visual impact. Visual obtrusiveness depends on location, layout, size, number of turbines, design and colour of the turbines as well as the subjective perceptions of the viewer. Noise generated from rotating blades as well as rotation flicker are also considerations in the siting of wind turbines.

Proposals will generally be discouraged in or close to pNHA's, cSAC's, SPA'S designations, scenic routes and protected views and highly sensitive rural landscapes, although these areas are not automatically precluded. Current windfarm locations within County Roscommon are at Kilronan, Laragan Hill and Altagowlan. Energy produced by the windfarms is fed into the national electricity grid and augments the existing network.

It was recommended within the Landscape Character Assessment which formed part of the RCDP 2008 – 2014 that the following objectives and policies be adopted, all of which are relevant for the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area.

1. It will be an objective of the Council to encourage the development of wind energy in suitable locations in an environmentally sensitive way in accordance with Wind Energy Planning Guidelines and land use policies of the County Development Plan.
2. It will be an objective of the Council to investigate the potential for relatively small-scale wind energy developments within urban and industrial areas, and for small community-based proposals outside the key areas that are identified as being potentially appropriate for wind energy development. Community ownership of wind energy projects enables local communities to benefit directly from local wind energy resources being developed in their local areas, ensuring long-term income for rural communities.
3. It should be a policy of the Council that applications for wind turbines be assessed with regard to:
 - Wind Speed Atlas produced by SEI.
 - Accessibility to the National Electricity Transmission and Distribution Grid. (This can be found in the Wind Atlas with further information available in the Transmission System Operators Forecast Statement www.eirgrid.com).
 - The suitability of the site having regard to other land use policies and objectives to protect all aspects of the landscape including visual, cultural and environmental. All wind turbine proposals, irrespective of size should be subject to full and proper Environmental Impact Assessment.
4. Assessment of visual impact of proposals will have regard to the Landscape Character Assessment and in particular:
 - The immediate visual impact and long distance views.
 - Scenic Routes and Scenic Views depicted in Appendix 1.
 - Sites of special value for example in the bogland north of Castlerea (LCA 27) and Upper Lough Ree (LCA 6) which have been identified as of particular importance for their sense of isolation and tranquility.
5. Applications should have regard to guidance on the siting and design of wind farm projects that are included in the Wind Energy Planning Guidelines 2006.
6. Applications should have regard to the Wind Energy Planning Guidelines 2006 regarding the landscape impact of associated development (including roads and tracks, power poles and lines, the control building, wind measuring mast and the compound) as well as works during the construction phase.

7. Where wind energy developments are permitted on peatlands, the implementation of the following construction guidelines (along with others that are recommended in the Environmental Impact Statement) may serve to reduce impacts, including minimising habitat disturbance and loss, hydrological disruption and the risk of erosion:
- A thorough ground investigation, including hydro-geological investigations where appropriate, and a detailed evaluation of the nature of the peat, its geotechnical properties and the associated risk of instability and habitat loss or disturbance during construction and operation of the wind energy development, is to be carried out where the depth of peat is in excess of 50cm.
 - Avoid construction, if possible, on wet areas, flushes and easily eroded soils.
 - Avoid the excavation of drains, where possible, unless it is necessary for geotechnical or hydrological reasons.
 - If drains are unavoidable, ensure that silt traps are constructed and that there is only diffuse discharge of water.
 - Avoid blocking existing drains.
 - Where blasting is being used in or near a peatland area for borrow pits, foundations etc, the possible effect on the peat stability should be assessed.
 - Avoid stock grazing on any disturbed peat until local peatland vegetation has recovered (e.g., by use of temporary electric fencing).

The Council would favourably consider the provision of wind turbines within the Industrial Area of the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area.

2. Energy Efficiency and Energy Performance for Buildings Directive

In addition to promoting renewable energy development there is also the issue of energy efficiency to be considered. The EU Directive on the Energy Performance of Buildings (EPBD) as transposed into Irish Law in 2006, contains a range of provisions aimed at improving energy performance in residential and non-residential buildings, both new build and existing.

Roscommon County Council is committed to developing sustainable building requirements with regard to a shift to energy efficient, low environmental impact buildings. The incorporation of good design into developments will be welcomed. Good design is the key to achieving the optimum energy performance of buildings at no extra cost. Roscommon County Council will also promote the use of 'passive house'/timber framed house design and construction within the County.

4.7.3 Electricity

Physical Context (Map 7)

Bulk electricity, generated in the various generating stations in Ireland is transported around the country using a system of 110kV, 220kV and 400kV overhead lines to the major load centres (i.e. cities, towns and industry which has a direct transmission supply). The Transmission network in Ireland is known as the National Grid.

RCC recognises that the development of secure and reliable electricity transmission infrastructure is a key factor for supporting economic development and attracting investment to the area.

Existing and Proposed Projects with County Roscommon

The electricity demand of the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area is distributed from the 110kV Station Bulk Supply Point in Athlone, through the 38kV, Medium Voltage (MV), and Low Voltage (LV) network to customers. Map 7 indicates the Electricity supply network. Within Bogganfin, a single 10kV line, two 38 kV lines and a number of 110kV lines traverse these lands and would need to be under-grounded or incorporated, as appropriate, into the layout (in roads, footpaths or open spaces) as part of any development on these lands, in accordance with the requirements of the

ESB. With regard to the development of the lands at Bogganfin, it was indicated at the time that the majority of services necessary to support development on these lands are readily available within the surrounding area. The development of these lands requires a new dedicated overhead electricity power line from the 110kV Bellaugh Electricity Distribution Station to the south with interconnection with the existing lines, a natural gas connection to the existing 180mm diameter PE4 bar main under the N61 and a broadband connection to the existing Athlone Town or Monkland networks.

Eirgrid has published its Forecast Statement 2006-2012 and it includes the following projects in the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area;

- A new 110kV Line between Athlone 110kV Station and Shannonbridge 220kV station which will provide the necessary reinforcement of electricity supplies to Athlone

This project is at an advanced stage and Eirgrid have liaised with the Council as the project has progressed.

In addition, as identified within the RCDP 2008 – 2014, the following are the most significant elements of work which have a high probability of being needed during the course of the LAP plan period. (Note: All these projects will be evaluated in detail by ESB Networks prior to commencement and if they are to proceed they will go through the standard planning permission process):

1. A new 38/MV or 110/MV station will be required in West Athlone.
2. Under the 20kV conversion programme a significant amount of the 10kV – medium voltage lines in Roscommon will be switched to 20kV operation. These lines are already built to 20kV standard and by converting to 20kV, losses will be reduced by 75% and the capacity of the lines will be doubled.

4.7.4 Ireland's Gas Network

Physical Context (Map 7)

Natural gas is the cleanest of all fossil fuels and its chemical composition makes it an environmentally friendly fuel. There has been a large increase in the consumption of gas for electricity generation and also for residential and industrial heating and other uses.

The Dublin – Galway Gas pipeline, which forms part of the 322km (high pressure) cross-country transmission pipeline extending from Dublin to Galway and Limerick connects into the national grid and will supply natural gas to thousands of homes and businesses in the Midlands and west of Ireland. The gas network in Athlone currently abuts the south-east corner of lands at Bogganfin and at the western end of the New Tuam Road Bridge. At the time of drafting the SO1 LAP 2006 – 2012 it was indicated that the existing gas network in Athlone Town had sufficient capacity to supply the heating needs of a mixed-use/commercial development on the SO1 lands and the heating needs of at least 1 500 houses in the area. This would still apply. (see Map 7)

Planning permission has been granted for a gas turbine power station in the LAP area. Planning permission was granted for a 100 MW open cycle gas turbine power station with a turbine hall 8.75m high, maintenance bay, exhaust stack 20m high, air vent 20m high, air cooler, water cooler, power control module, main and auxiliary transformers, bunded fuel oil tank 1800m, raw water tank 580m, water treatment module, treated water tank 580m, firewater module, tanker unloading area, office/workshop and associated site development works. No development has taken place as yet, the planning permission is valid until November 2013.

4.7.5 Energy Strategy

The **Energy Strategy** aims to;

- encourage the development and upgrading of energy infrastructure and services within the LAP area to support the proposed growth in economic activity and population within the development envelope
- ensure that the network and its provision is efficient, cost effective, environmentally appropriate and that it protects public health
- wherever practicable, services and infrastructure should be delivered in an integrated manner prior to the development of areas
- encourage the development and use of renewable energy sources within the LAP area
- support the aims of sustainable energy use and conservation in building design and construction

Policies in relation to Energy Supply

- Policy 37** Promote the implementation of the following:
- White Paper on Energy Policy Framework, 2007 - 2020, “Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland”
 - National Climate Change Strategy, 2000 by facilitating measures to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases within the LAP area
 - Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (Directive 2002/91/EC) as transposed into Irish Law in 2006
 - National Spatial Strategy, in so far as it aims to deliver reliable and effective energy systems such as electricity and gas in order to power industry and services.
- Policy 38** Co-operate and liaise with statutory and non-statutory providers in order to facilitate energy infrastructure provision, including the development of renewable energy sources at suitable locations, doubling of the electricity transmission voltage where required within the LAP area, in order to reduce power wastage by 75%, so as to provide for the further physical and economic development within the LAP area
- Policy 39** Safeguard strategic energy infrastructure corridors from encroachment by other developments which may compromise their provision in the future
- Policy 40** Work in collaboration with An Bord Gáis, the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) and other statutory bodies in the provision of a comprehensive gas distribution grid within the LAP area and indeed, throughout County Roscommon

Objectives in relation to Energy Supply

- Objective 56** Where technically feasible and economically viable, require the exclusive provision of renewable energy sources in developments within the LAP area, and prepare and implement an Energy Conservation Strategy and associated awareness campaign within the Plan area.
- Objective 57** Designate areas within the LAP area, as eluded to in the Landscape Character Assessment, which may be suitable for wind energy development in line with the national guidelines on wind energy, and take a proactive role in encouraging applications in these areas. Areas may include, the industrially zoned areas within Monksland.
- Objective 58** Assess applications for wind farms with regard to national guidance and that contained within the Landscape Character Assessment of the RCDP 2008 - 2014.

- Objective 59** Promote the maintenance and upgrading of electricity infrastructure within the LAP area
- Objective 60** Support the extension of the gas network within the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area.
- Objective 61** Safeguard any strategic energy infrastructure corridors which become evident, from encroachment by other developments which may compromise their provision in the future.

4.8 TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Telecommunications investment, including broadband, is essential to furthering the social and economic development of County Roscommon.

4.8.1 Policy Context

Broadband

The provision of Broadband and the speed with which it operates provides considerable advantage to home-users, businesses and industry and is vitally important in attracting new industry/business and FDI into an area.

The implementation of broadband falls under the auspices of the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources. There are 3 programmes in place to ensure the delivery of broadband within the country; –

- Metropolitan Area Networks (MAN) which is a network serving businesses and residences in urban areas
- Group Broadband Scheme
- Broadband for schools

Roscommon County Development Board (RCDB) has identified the provision of broadband as vital for the development in County Roscommon and has developed a Broadband Strategy ***‘The Rollout of Broadband in County Roscommon’***.

Mobile phone network

With regard to mobile phone network development, the physical infrastructure and structures needed must be developed in a strategic way that minimizes the impact, where possible, on the environment. RCC aims to achieve a balance between facilitating the provision of telecommunications services in the interests of social and economic progress and sustaining residential amenities including public health as well as maintaining a quality environment.

In terms of the location of telecommunications masts, as a means of achieving reduced exposure, base stations and mobile phone telecommunications masts should comply with the following standards;

1. In general not be constructed in proximity to Protected Structures, archaeological sites and monuments, and in the vicinity of larger towns, developers may endeavor to locate in industrial estates
2. In areas outside towns/villages freestanding masts should be placed in areas free of obstruction, and where they do not have a negative effect on the environment and have good access roads.
3. It shall be the preferred approach that all new support structures meet fully with the co-location or clustering policy of government guidelines and that shared use of existing structures will be insisted upon where the number of masts located in any single area is considered by the PA as too many.
4. Where the antennae and their support structures are no longer being used by the original operator and no new user has been identified they should then be demolished, removed and the site reinstated at the operators expense. In future all such permissions granted will contain a bonding arrangement to this effect. It shall also be an obligation of the original operator to inform the PA if he intends to dispose of the site to another suitable operator.

4.8.2 Physical Context

Broadband

The main modes of delivery of Broadband throughout the country are DSL via phone lines, Wireless Broadband and Satellite Communication.

Athlone Town forms part of the Midlands Broadband Project and is the beneficiary of High Speed Broadband, to the level of Metropolitan Area Network. Monksland also has such a system and wireless Broadband available with good backhaul availability.

DSL service providers include Eircom, Digiweb, Imagine, Cinergi, BT and Perlico. Within the LAP development envelope, **DSL provision** is available in Athlone/Monksland. This effectively means that a broadband supply with residential and business service offerings is available up to four kilometres from these exchanges, subject to line test. Eircom exchanges have low capacity, are slow and are not suitable for business use. It should also be noted that broadband ducting will be provided as part of the upgrades on the Old and New Tuam Roads. There is a new exchange building adjacent to the Athlone Springs Hotel with the most up to date equipment therein. The extension of the broadband infrastructure along the Old Tuam Road will then connect to the exchange.

At the community meeting two views were expressed concerning broadband provision in the area;

- broadband and mobile phone coverage was highlighted as a strength;
- in terms of business opportunities, access to proper broadband is a problem and a recommendation was made by a community member that 100 megabit broadband should be available within the LAP area. Ducting is required and the current wireless network does not provide good service. “If we are to attract multi-nationals this will be required.”

In addition, it was mentioned that there should be a telecommunications exchange within the area to service the LAP area. A services corridor should also be located along the main road to allow for any further services in the future. It was suggested that this could be done “now” while the water pipes are being laid.

Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) Broadband:

Wireless broadband does not require a phone line. This service is transmitted wirelessly from local transmission stations around the county. Wireless service providers include Last Mile Broadband, Azotel-Brisknet, **FWA is available** in a number of areas with transmitters centred in Athlone, Ballinlough, Ballyleague, Boyle, Knockcroghery and Strokestown. Problems encountered with this form of broadband access centre around the slow uploading of information due to the speed of the network.

Metropolitan Area Networks (MANs):

The Council has been centrally involved in the design and construction of the Metropolitan Area Networks (MAN) in Roscommon Town. The Roscommon Town network is in place but without service provision as yet and the project for Monksland has been completed.

Satellite Broadband:

Direct Satellite broadband is available in most parts of Roscommon and is provided by 12 satellite broadband service providers as listed in the Department of Communications website. Satellite service providers include Digiweb Satellite, Orbitlink, Pure Telecom Satellite, Avonline, Eircom Satellite, Media Satellite and Broadband. Satellite is currently available throughout the county, however in general it is more expensive than other access technologies.

Broadband for schools initiative:

This programme is a partnership between the Government and the telecommunications network. This joint approach was announced in 2004 under the Broadband for Schools Initiative whereby industry committed €15 million and the Government a further €3 million over a 3 year period to fund the rollout of broadband to primary and secondary schools by the start of the 2005 academic year. Roscommon is continuing its delivery of broadband under this initiative. In terms of current and planned broadband Athlone/Monksland currently has DSL (Eircom) and FWA (Last Mile) and FWA Irish Broadband is planned.

Mobile Phone Provision

Meteor, O2, Vodafone, Perlico, and Eircom are mobile phone operators working within the LAP area.

4.8.3 Telecommunications Strategy

The **Telecommunications Strategy** aims to;

- achieve a balance between facilitating the provision of telecommunications services in the interests of social and economic progress and sustaining residential amenities including public health as well as maintaining a quality environment.

Policies in relation Telecommunications Infrastructure

- Policy 41** Support enhanced coverage, further co-ordinated and focused development, and the extension of telecommunications infrastructure including broadband connectivity within the LAP area as a means of improving economic competitiveness and enabling more flexible work practices e.g. tele-working, video-conferencing, e-business and e-commerce
- Policy 42** Have regard to Government guidelines on telecommunications infrastructure, including Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures–Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG, 1996) and any subsequent revisions, as well as the Landscape Character Assessment contained within the RCDP.
- Policy 43** Promote an integrated approach within the LAP area with service providers and appropriate bodies in the creation of a modern telecommunications infrastructure.

Objectives in relation to Telecommunications Infrastructure

- Objective 62** Support the RCDB in facilitating the take-up of the School Broadband Access Programme and the Group Broadband Scheme, once it is no longer suspended
- Objective 63** Support, by way of planning condition, where appropriate, the development of underground telecommunications broadband infrastructure for road, commercial and residential schemes, as set out in the government's recommendations
- Objective 64** Ensure, by way of planning conditions, that telecommunications infrastructure is adequately screened, integrated and/or landscaped, so as to minimize adverse visual impacts on the environment, where practicable.
- Objective 65** Encourage the provision of broadband, including the provision of electronic courtyards, within developments
- Objective 66** Facilitate and encourage shared access for service providers to erect antennae for line of sight broadband access

4.9 MAJOR ACCIDENTS HAZARD

The EU Directive on the Control of Major Accidents Hazard is addressed in this process by the mandatory objectives in relation to Establishments.

4.9.1 Policy Context

The “Seveso 11” Directive 82/96/EC is concerned with the prevention of major accidents and limiting their consequences. **Article 12** of this directive relates to land use planning and under this section members are now obliged to ensure that the objectives of preventing major accidents and limiting the consequences of such accidents are covered by land use policies. To achieve these objectives **Article 12** states that controls shall be put on:

- The siting of new establishments
- Modifications to an existing establishment to which Article 10 of the Directive applies or proposed development in the vicinity of an existing establishment for the purposes of reducing the risk, or limiting the consequences, of a major accident.

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) is the Authority prescribed under Article 13 of the Planning & Development Regulations (SI 600 of 2001). The requirements are to provide the general approach of the Authority to land use planning advice and also to provide more detailed advice in relation to a particular notified site and its zone classification under Appendix 2 of the Seveso 11 Directive.

In establishing whether Regulations apply to a particular establishment, the primary criteria to be assessed is whether dangerous substances are present in quantities equal to or in excess of those listed in the First Schedule of the Regulations. There are 2 tiers of industries; lower and upper tiers, depending on the quantity of substances used, handled or stored on site. Regulations require different duties of operators for lower and upper tier establishments

Lower Tier establishments are required to notify the HSA and the local PA of their existence and provide information in relation to-

- Inventories of dangerous substances
- Type of activity in operation
- The surrounding environment of the establishment
- Take all necessary measures to prevent the occurrence of a major accident and to limit the consequences of any accident for people and environment
- Prepare and implement a major accident prevention policy
- Take action in the event of a major accident
- Maintain a register of notifiable incidents

Upper Tier establishments are obliged to include those set out above for the Lower Tier and in addition to;

- Produce a Safety Report
- Prepare an internal emergency plan
- Provide information to those responsible for off-site emergency plans
- Provide information for the safety of the public

4.9.2 Physical context (Map 7)

The Elan Pharma International Limited manufacturing facility in Monksland, Athlone is one of the Establishments as referred to in the European Communities (Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances). The Regulations covering their operation (Lower Tier), is the European Communities (Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations, S.I. 74 of 2006.

The H.S.A. have requested in relation to land use planning that a Consultation Distance of 1 km from Elan be set and should be drawn around the Elan site on a local map and that any planning applications for within this circle should then be forwarded to the H.S.A for consultation. (see Map 7)

The following is the type of information that should be forwarded with the application to the Authority [Planning and Development Regulations, 2001: Part III, Section 13 (s)] :

- A copy of the relevant planning application
- Include an up-to-date map of sufficient scale to show the proximity of the proposed Development to the Seveso establishment (location to be indicated on the map), such map to include all existing and approved residential developments and outlining the site location of the proposed development in red
- Where the planning application relates to a development covered by sub-article 1(b) or 1(c) of Article 137 of the Planning & Development Regulations of 2001, identify the relevant establishment or establishments.
- Where an EIS has been submitted with the planning application, include a copy of the statement
- Where the planning application relates to development which comprises or is for the purposes of an activity requiring an integrated pollution control license or a waste license, include that fact
- Request technical advice on the effects of the proposed development on the risk or consequences of a Major Accident

4.9.3 Major Accidents Hazard Strategy

The **Major Accidents Hazard Strategy** aims to ensure the prevention of major accidents and limiting their consequences.

Policies in relation Major Accidents Hazard

- Policy 44** Comply with the “Seveso 11” Directive 82/96/EC with regard to the prevention of major accidents and limiting their consequences
- Policy 45** Liaise with the Health and Safety Authority and with notified site operators and other statutory bodies with regard to safety regulations and safety zones.
- Policy 46** The Council will comply with its Major Emergency Plan as well as the provisions of the Fire Services Act, 1981, in assessing developments.

Objectives in relation to Major Accidents Hazard

- Objective 67** Facilitate the implementation of the “Seveso 11” Major Accidents Directive.
- Objective 68** Collaborate with the H.S.A in relation to the annual review of notified sites and implement any specified revisions as proposed by the H.S.A Authority.
- Objective 69** An indicative Consultation Distance of 1 km from the Elan site has been set (see Map 7) which will be confirmed with the H.S.A and the relevant local authorities within 6 months of the adoption of the Plan. Any planning application for within this circle should then be forwarded to the H.S.A for consultation.

CHAPTER 5: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Planning and development issues today have become more complex and frequently overlap with other policy areas such as economic development, transport, education and health provision. As the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area is one of the strongest economically, it is appropriate to consider how it can be developed to benefit the County as a whole.

5.2 POLICY CONTEXT

The National Development Plan (NDP) 2007 – 2013 states that, balanced regional development means supporting the economic and social development of all regions in their efforts to achieve their full potential. The NDP aims to promote the development of all regions in Ireland within a co-ordinated, coherent, and mutually beneficial framework.

The **National Spatial Strategy (NSS)** has established an integrated spatial policy framework embracing both urban and rural areas in *“developing the full potential of each area to contribute to the optimal performance of the state as a whole – economically, socially and environmentally”*¹

The **NSS** places County Roscommon in the **West Region**, which has as its goal to promote economic activity and build balanced regional development through building on the dynamic role of Galway as a gateway and expanding its influence. Due to its location the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) area is also influenced by the **Midland Region**. The **NSS** notes the following;

“combining the complementary strengths of Athlone, Mullingar and Tullamore as a gateway at the heart of the region, is essential to boosting the region’s overall economic strength. It will also be important to build on the central location of the Midlands and the key towns at the intersection of national road and rail routes, the attractiveness of the village structure in the Midlands and the natural and other resources of more rural areas. The gateway in the region will help to position other areas to benefit from the strength of that gateway, but those other areas will need to put plans in place to ensure that this happens.

In support of the gateway role of Athlone... which are strategically placed on national road and rail links, can be enhanced in competitive terms to drive development at the county level.”
(p 80)

The **NSS** recommends the following, amongst others:

- Gateways and hubs can support development in smaller villages, where pressure for development exists, through servicing and development initiatives
- Identifying key assets and presenting or assembling a quality tourism package relying on the natural and cultural heritage of areas, such as those located along the Shannon River

The **NSS** highlights the importance of the availability of social infrastructure in improving the quality of life of the existing population and in attracting internationally mobile labour with in-demand skills. The **NSS** notes that it is important to build on the central locations of the key towns at the intersection of national road and rail routes, the attractiveness of the village structure and the natural resources of the rural areas. High quality education, skills and research, together with physical infrastructure and services for the population is critical to underpin future economic growth.

¹ National Spatial Strategy in the National Development Plan, 2007-2013, p.58

In terms of marketing our tourism potential, the **NSS** states “Ireland must continue to trade on its ‘green’ image, a mark of quality, which is attractive for tourism and all investment. Protecting this environmental quality will be crucial”. Specific spatial responses are required to maximise the potential contribution of the tourism sector, while protecting the assets that make these areas attractive for visitors.

The principle messages within the **NSS** of particular relevance to the Midland Region can be summarised as follows:

- The Region needs to boost its critical mass, become more self-sustaining and build on its central location, its proximity to Dublin, its quality of life and natural and cultural heritage attributes.
- The Region needs to focus on the implementation of the linked gateway (Athlone, Tullamore, Mullingar).
- The role of the linked gateway needs to be partnered by a focus on the development and role of other significant towns in the Region.
- The Region must benefit strongly from improving transport and communications infrastructure, improving the connectivity, cohesion and identity of the Region.
- The vitality of rural communities should be maintained in tandem with a strengthened network of towns and villages.

The local authorities of Westmeath and Offaly have been working together and with other agencies and interests are attempting to maximise the development potential of the Midland Linked Gateway.

In response to the principal messages of the **NSS** and the need to generate self sustaining growth as opposed to commuter led growth which has happened in the past; the following actions/measures are proposed;

- Building up a strong critical mass of population within the linked gateway at the heart of the region with an aim to reach a combined population of 100,000 in the period to 2020 and beyond.
- Harnessing the potential of the Midland Region’s **third level knowledge and innovation infrastructure**, including development of linkages with other region’s third level facilities and to the enterprise sectors.
- Assisting the move towards a **highly productive and diversified economic base** with strong representation from the value added sectors including innovative property solutions such as a Strategic Development Zone within the Gateway.
- **Improving the physical infrastructure** of the towns in the Linked Gateway in preparation for their accelerated development including better roads and public transport links between the towns that will place the Gateway and the region at the heart of the physical territory of the state.
- Conserving the natural and cultural heritage of the region, its constituent counties and the linked gateway towns in particular, including where appropriate, integration with necessary new development in order to offer a high quality of life and a distinctive basis for tourism based enterprise.
- Ensuring that the development of the Gateway is effectively linked to other parts of the counties and the region overall through enhanced local transport and the complementary development of other towns, villages and rural areas.

The Strategic Development Framework for the Midland Region entitled “Developing a World Class Knowledge based Competitive Gateway” (prepared by Indecon in November 2006), aims to provide the basis for developing a range of high quality employment and education opportunities with excellent accessibility and mobility. The strategy has also been formulated to ensure the availability of choice in residential, retail, leisure and tourist facilities based on the principle of **quality of life and environmental enhancement**.

The report identified ten priority areas which must be addressed in order to build on the strengths and address identified weaknesses. The priority areas require progress to further implement policies and programmes to address the issues, and, guidance is given in the report also. The ten priority areas and their associated indicators include:

Key Elements in Plan	Performance Indicator
1. Population Growth and Critical Mass <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Development of 3 Key towns Interlinked Strategic development Towns and Development of a new Strategic Development Zone ➤ Development of Balanced Residential Growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Co-ordinated Development plans with a common gateway chapter ➤ Development of new Strategic Development Zone ➤ Increase in population as per Agreed Targets for Gateway
2. Infrastructure and Connectivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Priority Investments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Funding approval for investments ➤ Planning Permission / Commencement of Construction
3. Productivity Gap <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Development Agencies to promote high value added activities ➤ Development of ICT, manufacturing and educational sectors in Athlone ➤ Development of engineering, consumer products financial services in Mullingar ➤ Development of engineering, consumer products financial services in Mullingar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Significant increase in value added per employee in manufacturing and international services in gateway ➤ Increase in number of new projects in sectors ➤ Expansion of existing projects
4. Third and Fourth Lower Institutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increased investment in Athlone Institute of Technology / other third level institutions ➤ Building 4 Development Research Centres in Gateway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ AIT/ other third level entities to secure an increased share of R&D / Research Funding ➤ Funding Approval for Projects from AIT
5. Skills / Educational Attraction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implementation of Plan to increase progression of Students into 3rd Level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase in percentage of population studying at 3rd level
6. Tourism Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Development of Tourism Product and Infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increased Investment in Tourism
7. Retail and Distribution Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Promotion of Midlands Gateway for retail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increased investment in retail and distribution
8. Quality of Life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Investment in recreational and community facilities in Gateway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Establishment of separate sub-heading ➤ Support for specific projects
9. Cost Competitiveness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Policies to Ensure Midlands do not Fail Competitive Disadvantage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Comparative costs facing residents and businesses
10. Effective Branding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Marketing and Branding Strategy for Region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implementation of Marketing Plan

Source: Indecon/KSA

Following from the abovementioned framework and subsequent implementation requirements, the Local Authorities of Offaly and Westmeath have agreed on the following three key implementation priorities for the Midland Gateway:

- 1: The development of the Midland Gateway will be driven forward by the relevant Local Authorities in a strategic and co-ordinated manner that clearly demonstrates vision, leadership and a regional perspective in vigorously implementing the concept. Specifically, the Local Authorities are establishing mechanisms to deliver such co-ordination through, for example, a **joint Gateway Co-ordination Office** to work within and between the various local authority structures, local stakeholders such as the private sector as well as Government Departments and Agencies.

The Gateway Implementation Forum was established in 2007 in response to a recommendation within the Indecon Report to establish a three-tier approach for the strategic development of the Midland Linked Gateway. The Forum seeks to provide and promote an interagency focus on the progression of the Indecon recommendations and membership comprises representatives from the following: Westmeath County Council; Offaly County Council; The Midland Regional Authority; The DEHLG; Athlone IT; The Midland Chamber of Commerce; Enterprise Ireland; FÁS; IDA, HSE and Fáilte Ireland.

- 2: Collaborative action in implementing the gateway concept will embrace a **coordinated approach** amongst the Local Authorities to key gateway issues such as the preparation of urban design frameworks for each of the gateway towns as well as a coordinated approach to Housing and Retail Strategies and combined efforts to secure funding for iconic gateway projects such as the early delivery of major improvements to the roads and public transport connectivity within the Linked Gateway.
- 3: A visionary and **joined up approach** to gateway development by the Offaly and Westmeath Local Authorities will be complemented by **effective linkages** with relevant private sector and community interests through the establishment of, for example, a joint Gateway Sub-committee of the Offaly and Westmeath County Development Boards. Private sector participation in the Gateway project is a vital component for success in **winning investment** and the Local Authorities will encourage a strategic approach by business and community interests in working with the Local Authorities to agree planning and development policies and investment priorities that will deliver the critical mass and complementary attractions across the towns in the Linked Gateway.

In response to the recommendations of the Indecon Report, RCC propose that the next review of Retail and possibly Housing Strategy in respect of the Athlone Area should be carried out jointly by Westmeath and Roscommon County Council. In the interim the joint policies and actions mentioned at the end of Chapter 5 should be followed by both authorities.

In addition, the following actions could be undertaken jointly by the Roscommon and Westmeath Local Authorities;

- the Roscommon and Westmeath Local Authorities should begin preparing an urban design framework for Athlone and its environs;
- the preparation of a joint river front strategy for the Shannon within the urban development zone;
- work together on the joint strategy for land use management around Lough Ree

These are over and above the objectives which have already been included into the RCDP and this LAP, namely;

Objective 3 Initiate within the lifetime of the LAP an Integrated Land Use and Transportation Plan (ILUTP) for Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) in co-operation with Westmeath County Council

Objective 27 Work with Westmeath County Council in the provision of further cross river linkages.

Objective 164 Prepare a joint Local Area Plan with Westmeath County Council / Athlone Town Council for lands at Bellaugh and including lands outlined as Specific Objective 8 (SO8) (as amended)

The Industrial Development Agency (IDA) of Ireland

The Industrial Development Agency (IDA) is Ireland's inward investment promotion agency and is responsible for the attraction and development of foreign investment into the country.

The agency provides a range of services and incentives, including funding and grants, to those considering foreign direct investment in Ireland. While investment from overseas manufacturing and internationally traded services are the broad focus of IDA Ireland, the agency continues to work with investors once in Ireland to encourage and assist in expanding and developing their businesses.

The IDA are focused on securing investment from new and existing clients in the areas of High End Manufacturing, Global Services (including Financial Services) and Research, Development and Innovation. The key sectors within these areas for investment are Life Sciences (Pharmaceutical, Biopharmaceutical and Medical Technologies), Information Communications Technology (ICT), Engineering, Professional Services, Digital Media, Consumer Brands and International Services. They are also actively focusing on emerging areas such as Clean Technology, Convergence and Services Innovation. These areas offer exciting new overseas investment opportunities and are ideally suited to the Irish skill-set, experience and in the case of Clean Technology, geography and climate.

The IDA attracts overseas and inward investment by:

- Focusing on business sectors that are closely matched with the emerging needs of the Irish economy and that can operate competitively in global markets from an Irish base.
- They compile up-to-date statistics and facts for research and development in industry, the economy and foreign direct investment in Ireland.
- Building links between international businesses and third level education, academic and research centers to ensure the necessary skills and research and development capabilities are in place.
- Pursuing Ireland's policy of becoming a knowledge-based economy by actively building world-leading clusters of knowledge-based activities.
- Strongly influencing the competitive needs of Ireland's economy by actively engaging in the development of infrastructure and business support services, telecoms, education, regulatory issues especially in relation to EU policy.

The IDA's commitment to County Roscommon and the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area is as follows;

“IDA is committed to working with all relevant stakeholders in a proactive and innovative way to secure further investment in Co. Roscommon. This includes working with our own Property Marketing team as well as with the private property sector on marketing the area for investment. IDA actively promotes the Midlands Region to potential investors and this includes the promotion of our property availability in Roscommon, in all Gateway locations of Mullingar, Athlone and Tullamore as well as in Portlaoise and Longford. IDA is committed to strategic balanced regional development throughout the Midlands and considers a new project investment in one Midlands town to have a positive impact on all surrounding areas due to the close proximity of all main locations.” (IDA submission, 17/09/2009)

Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland is the government agency responsible for the development and promotion of the indigenous business sector. Their mission is to accelerate the development of world-class Irish companies to achieve strong positions in global markets resulting in increased national and regional prosperity.

Enterprise Ireland focuses on five areas of activity for Irish companies:

1. **Achieving Export Sales:** Their primary focus is to help their client companies achieve international success.
2. **Driving Research and Innovation:** Improving the prospects of companies through R&D and Innovation
3. **Competing Through Productivity:** Increasing competitiveness through business innovation
4. **Starting Up & Scaling Up**
5. **Driving Regional Enterprise**

Enterprise Ireland's commitment to County Roscommon and the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area is as follows:

"Enterprise Ireland is focused on the creation of new jobs through supporting entrepreneurs setting up new High Potential Start-up companies, the retention and creation of new jobs in existing companies and in enhancing innovation capability through the support of research in companies and third level institutions. Enterprise Ireland continues to work closely with its client base in Co. Roscommon to assist these companies grow and develop their businesses. Enterprise Ireland works closely with over 70 companies in the County (Forfas – Annual Survey 2008) and approved over €5m to its client both North and South of the County in 2008. A key focus of this work is to support the internationalisation of these companies by identifying export markets for their products and services and to improve competitiveness.

A key resource in the County for the clients is Athlone Institute of Technology and in 2008 Enterprise Ireland approved €2m to AIT to develop its innovation and incubation capability and facilities." (Enterprise Ireland submission, 16/09/2009)

Fáilte Ireland Strategic Statement 2008 -2010

Fáilte Ireland's vision is of a tourism sector that is dynamic, innovative, sustainable and highly regarded, and that offers international and domestic visitors a positive and memorable experience beyond their expectations.

The Strategic Goals attached to this vision include:

- Seek to improve the competitive position of individual tourism enterprises with a particular emphasis on the more vulnerable but invaluable population of smaller enterprises
- Stimulate private and public sector investment in market-led development to expand and enhance the range of tourism products and services available to consumers
- Support the spatial development of tourism through implementation of regional tourism development strategies
- Support the sensitive development of the natural and built environment as a cornerstone of Ireland's appeal as a tourist destination
- Influence the shaping of public policies impacting on tourism nationally and regionally for the benefit of tourism
- Expand co-operation in tourism development on a cross-border basis to support the promotion of the island of Ireland as a tourist destination.

The following are the key strategic areas on which focus will be placed over the 2008 – 2010 period:

- Product development
- Enterprise development
- Education and training
- Regional development
- Environment
- Advocacy.

The strategies set out in this Strategy Statement are complemented by the regional strategies prepared by the five Regional Tourism Development Boards. Each regional strategy sets out a three-year plan for the development of tourism in the region.

Failte Ireland West, Regional Tourism Development Plan 2008 – 2010

The West of Ireland will sustain and develop its position as Ireland's quintessential visitor destination through a focused and innovative strategy which will reach into every corner of the region. The strategy is grounded in the principles of sustainability, authenticity and delivering a world class experience.

Key West Regional Strategic Goals:

- Develop the region as Ireland's primary outdoor and adventure destination, while focusing on environmental sustainability
- Enhance the cultural experience for visitors
- Continue to develop tourism hubs to exploit synergies
- Improve access to and within the region

Key Actions To Reach Goals:

Develop the region as Ireland's primary outdoor and adventure destination while focusing on environmental sustainability:

- Brand West as Outdoor capital of Ireland - Make rural West irresistible to visitors.
- Maximise potential of USP's of outdoors activities, marine and angling.
- Focus on the conservation and protection of the environment, including the promotion of better environmental practices.
- Build Adventure Boomerang - Achill Activity Island, Adventure Centres at Achill, Uisce, Delphi, K2, Petersburg.
- Upland walking - Achill, Nephin, Maamturk, Mweelrea, Twelve Pins, Partry throughout the region.
- Cycle Hubs - New Loops, South Roscommon Shores, Galway City, link hubs and family hubs.
- Adventure Events - Gaelforce, New All Ireland Challenge and Wild Ireland Run.
- Lobby for/act as advocate for the development of marinas at key locations along the west coast e.g. Galway City, Westport and Ballina.
- Marine - Volvo Ocean Race 2009.
- Provide additional visitor moorings and upgrade existing visitor moorings.
- Support the feasibility of an artificial reef for diving.
- Develop angling centres of excellence – salmon capital – wild brown trout lakes.
- Develop Salthill – Barna coastal walk.
- Utilise the Lakelands approach in East Roscommon and East Galway.
- Support the feasibility of re-opening the Galway-Clifden railway line as a greenway for walking and cycling.

Enhance the Cultural Experience of Visitors:

- Engagement with cultural activities – Ireland's Cultural Heart.
- Upgrade visitor experience at key attractions.
- Support new attractions with potential to enhance the visitor experience in the region e.g. Salmon Life Centre and Lough Corrib.
- Engage with Irish language and culture in Gaeltacht; support traditional cultural initiative such as Cnoc Suain.
- Develop themed touring routes.
- Encourage the development of new festivals particularly in rural areas and in shoulder and off-peak season.
- Implement Pilot Islands Strategy.
- Pilot East Galway Cultural Centre of Excellence.
- Identify opportunities for overseas visitors to experience our national games e.g. hurling and football.

Continue to develop Tourism Hubs in order to Exploit Synergies:

- Protect and enhance cultural and architectural core of Galway.
- Develop music venues, conference facilities, Latin Quarter.
- Provide major building of significance for arts/museum.
- Expand hubs of Galway, Westport, Ballina and Roscommon as touring/signposting centres.
- Identify and expand rural nodes as secondary hubs - Clifden, Boyle, Leenane, Belmullet, Athenry/Loughrea, Inis Mor, Strokestown.
- Position Galway as a Business Tourism/Conference destination.
- Integrated approach to brand Connemara as a tourism hub both domestically and overseas.
- Lakelands-based hub potential in East Roscommon and East Galway.
- Improve Access to and within the Region:
- Exploit the market opportunities of new route development at Galway and Ireland West airports.
- Encourage provision of public transport from urban centres to regional airports.
- Upgrade signage of tourism attractions on national primary and secondary roads.
- Help improve rural transport services.
- Support and encourage the Western Rail Corridor and spur to Ireland West airport.
- Encourage hourly frequency on Galway-Dublin trains and better Westport frequency.
- Monitor progress and encourage timely completion of N6 and N18 roads.

Faillte Ireland East and Midlands, Regional Tourism Development Plan 2008 - 2010

The East & Midlands regions will, through a focused suite of themes, create a vibrant and rejuvenated tourism industry across the region. The themes will drive new business from the international and home markets and harmonise with the experiential approach of Fáilte Ireland and the National Development Plan. Through careful sustainable development, excellent marketing and visitor servicing and through focused business development and training, the attractiveness and quality of the region's tourism industry will be moved quickly upwards.

Key East & Midlands Regional Strategic Goals:

1. Develop coherent themed sub-regions:

- 'Lakelands'
- 'Equestrian Ireland'
- 'Beyond Dublin'
- 'Heritage Country'

2. Overall quality improvement

Key Actions to Reach the Goals:**1. Lakelands**

- Position Ireland's central waterways as an integrated international and domestic visitor hub.
- Focus on water-based:
 - Cruiser Fleets – mooring and navigation services
 - Angling
 - Boating – sailing, kayaking, canoeing, water skiing.
- Focus on land-based:
 - Accommodation – food and beverage
 - Attractions
 - Activities
 - Festivals.
- Focus on Athlone-Longford and Mullingar-Tullamore hubs.

2. Equestrian Ireland

- Position the region as the heart of equestrian activities in Ireland.
- Using race courses, equestrian centres, trekking centres.
- Create equestrian experiences.
- Develop tours, visits, festivals.
- Establish Visitor Centre at Curragh.

3. Beyond Dublin

- Develop tourism experiences within easy reach of Dublin.
- Focus on quality resorts and upgrade the experience for tourists visiting towns throughout the region.
- Corporate and leisure business – domestic and international markets.
- Golf – international markets.

4. Heritage Country

- Assemble, develop and present quality heritage experiences.
- Convert day visitors into overnights.
- Focus on Boyne Valley.
- Focus on Christian Heritage.
- Focus on Walled Towns.
- Focus on Literature.
- Focus on industry, bogs, music, houses and gardens.

5. Focus on Quality Improvement

- Average quality products cannot succeed competitively.
- Excellent new accommodation products must be accompanied by overall top-quality standards.
- East & Midlands will lead the way in this field.

The objective of the **Border Midland and Western (BMW) Operational Programme 2007-2013²** is to; “facilitate innovation, ensure sustainable development, improve accessibility and develop the urban fabric within the region in order to enhance overall productivity and competitiveness”. Their three key priorities and key interventions accord with the three core aspects of the strategy i.e.:

Priority 1: Innovation, ICT and the Knowledge Economy consisting of 33% of allocation share which will be targeted at applied Research enhancement, incubation and collaboration, research capacity, micro enterprise & entrepreneurship, broadband provision and experimental actions.

Priority 2: Environmental and Risk Prevention consists of 17.7% of allocation share and will be targeted at rural water source protection, pilot village sewerage schemes and renewable energy.

Priority 3: Urban Development and Secondary Transport Networks consists of 49.3% of allocation funding and will be targeted at urban development, key link routes and public transport infrastructure.

The County Development Board Strategy 2002 – 2012, “Roscommon Common Vision”: A ten year strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development sets an overall framework within which public bodies in the county will deliver their range of services over the next decade. One of the three Strategic Goals is; *“To develop and enhance the economic well-being in County Roscommon so as to facilitate existing and future economic growth, in line with balanced regional development.”*

² BMW Operational Programme 2007-2013 Ex Ante Evaluation Final Report 2007, p. 15

The **policy orientation** of this strategy, identified a number of key priorities in relation to entrepreneurship, manufacturing and advanced sectors of the economy and includes the following:

- Develop County Roscommon as a location for indigenous industry and for decentralized government departments
- Facilitate the provision of high quality serviced sites/land ready for industrial/commercial development and workspace
- Develop geographical spread of affordable workspace in a range of sizes
- Develop the widespread dispersal of SME's of an appropriate scale and activity
- Promote co-operation and co-ordination among educational providers, public bodies and agencies supporting enterprise in the county
- Support the development of extra jobs in established enterprises and increase employment in the county
- Promote the county as the location for county graduates to involve themselves in the business sector by developing a relationship between education facilities and economic development
- Promote the involvement of women in entrepreneurial activity
- Address the barriers that are experienced in getting a product/service to market
- Promote public –private partnerships in the provision of industrial sites and business parks
- Seek to maximize employment creation within the West Region.

Currently there are two Tourism studies which are of relevance for this LAP area, the **Roscommon Tourism Strategy 2010 – 2014**, and the **Lough Ree and Mid-Shannon Tourism Study** which is in draft format. It will be important to take the recommendations into consideration once published.

The **Roscommon County Development Plan 2008 – 2014**, built on the priority defined in the 2002 plan to attract a wide range of employment opportunities, particularly those that supported its overall strategy of attracting and retaining a young adult population. Policies and objectives were formulated which focused on integrating transport and land use in order to attain a sustainable development framework for economic, social and cultural development within the County. Key to promoting this employment growth and a strong entrepreneurial spirit was the idea that high quality infrastructure needed to be provided which included broadband and the creation of more third level education opportunities including R&D facilities; the support for small and medium size enterprises (SME's) ; and, high potential start-up companies (HPSU's). Additional information concerning the strategy, policies and objectives form part of the economic strategy for the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP provided below.

The **Future Economic Strategy** as identified within the RCDP 2008 – 2014 will involve maximising employment generation and entrepreneurship within Roscommon through enterprise creation and support; attracting foreign investment; harnessing the potential of the social economy and reflecting the need for balanced development; and, to address any strategic gaps within physical or social infrastructure in a fair manner.

5.3 PHYSICAL CONTEXT

5.3.1 Economic Profile

At the community meeting the following issues were identified;

- Empty retail warehousing units in the area
- Potential for a garage, shop, servicing area where one leaves the new M6 travelling onto the old N6 (R466)
- There are three unoccupied retail units where SuperValu is situated

The following employment and business opportunities in the LAP area were also identified;

- The quarry in the centre should be shut down and there is a question as to whether Pharmaplaz would open at all.

- Existing large employment opportunities in the area include;
 - Elan
 - Athlone Springs
 - The Mill Bar
- There are also small businesses in the units across from Elan: - Garage, Office Blocks, Hairdressers, Restaurant etc.
- There is opportunity for the following:-
 - Warehouse retail outlets
 - An enterprise Centre for small/medium start up businesses
- There is a need for improved broadband facilities and a permanent library where people could access these facilities.
- Use existing warehouses for large retail and medical services.
- There are plenty of locations/units available for businesses to set up in the area but many are empty. Due to its location in proximity to Athlone, most people work in Athlone and there are a wide range of facilities and services there.
- There is a lot of through traffic but very little stops in the area. There is potential to benefit from this traffic with the right type of businesses.
- Need to encourage industrial and retail companies into units in the area.
- The Neighbourhood centre would be better placed adjacent to the Athlone Springs Hotel.
- The potential neighbourhood centre site is identified adjacent to Supervalu and between it and the industrial sites adjacent to Elan. The community felt this would be a more appropriate site.

The Demographic, Economic and Employment Profile of County Roscommon was produced in 2006/7 as background source material for the RCDP 2008 – 2014. As part of the document the following **opportunities** were identified for the economy and employment;

- Significant growth of labour force
- Growth and consolidation of Higher Education Centre
- Lough Key and Hodson Bay developments and further potential for environment-based tourism activities
- Continued development of Enterprise Centres
- Significantly increased allocations for Social Inclusion and Rural Development measures in new NDP present opportunity for real action of spatial development and agricultural diversification
- Availability of Gateway standard infrastructure and marketing opportunities at Monksland
- Broadband offers opportunities for business development in more remote areas based on work/life balance
- Mid Shannon Tax Incentive Scheme
- Upgrading of N61 and Dublin-Galway route
- Construction-related opportunities from Transport 21
- Demand for new types of rural tourism and outdoors activities

In addition a full **SWOT analysis** was undertaken which highlights what is important in terms of the **Future Economic Strategy** for the County, many aspects of which are important for the LAP area:

1. **Net Migration** levels show that the county is attractive to newcomers as a place to live and work. This will have a positive impact in lessening the county age dependency ratio. The growth in the labour force allied to high participation levels at third level will ensure a good supply of labour at different skill levels over the life of the Plan.
2. In terms of **Spatial Profile**, the areas of significant growth in the county are Athlone West, Kiltoom and Carnagh (neighbouring EDs in the south east of the county adjacent to Athlone); Ballaghaderreen; Boyle; Roscommon town and surrounding EDs; Castlerea; Termonbarry and Danesfort, the latter two being close to urban centres outside the county boundary.

Significant increases in the next LEADER and Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP) as well as increased allocations for CLÁR, Rural Social Scheme, Western Investment Fund and Rural Transport Initiative offer opportunities for real action on spatial equity and meeting some of the challenges for the rural areas listed above. The challenge will be in ensuring effective co-ordination and an emphasis on community infrastructure and employment/enterprise supports.

3. The **County's Education Profile** is improving. A high rate of third level participation and improved take –up of science, IT and business subjects in recent years will give the county the skills relevant to enterprises involved in a knowledge economy which compete in the global market place. The development of community education and third level courses at the Higher Education Centre is seen as a necessary opportunity to develop greater linkages between education and the workplace, allowing the enterprise sector to benefit from up-skilling of the workplace in a flexible manner.
4. The **County's Employment Base** faces a considerable challenge to develop and attract industries in modern sectors of the economy i.e. those with a significant knowledge content that add value through intellectual input such as research, innovation or design.
5. **Economic Growth Sectors** locally include the pharmaceutical industry and extractive industries, both of which have significantly increased their share of salaries provided in the county. In recent years, investment in indigenous **HPSUs** (High Potential Start-ups), **R & D** (Research and Development) and **Enterprise Centres** in the county has increased. However, the overall level of such activity is low. As Ireland's policy at national level is to support mechanisms for transition to a Knowledge Economy, it is essential that Roscommon nurture innovation in knowledge intensive businesses. The provision of infrastructure for HPSUs including flexible accommodation and broadband access are supported by this Plan and is seen as a key driver of the future economic wellbeing of the county. It is recognised that in the Knowledge Economy, many smaller enterprises can be located away from large urban centres if these supports are available.

The **availability of commercial property** has significantly improved in recent years and it is an aim of this Plan to facilitate the development of modern, flexible commercial space to meet the needs of local entrepreneurs and service providers as well as to attract mobile investment.

To win further jobs and business activity from the mobile and **FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) sectors**, the county will need to focus on those activities suited to its skills base and accommodation base. In terms of the trends into non-city locations in Ireland, the potential exists to win mobile investment in shared services; financial services and European headquarter locations – typically businesses of 20 to 50 persons in office environments. Further relevant sectors are pharmaceutical businesses, currently clustering in Monksland; and logistics given the county's location and improving access. Access, environment and tourism provide opportunities and challenges for the county. Tourism revenues and numbers are very low, less than 4% of that of the Ireland West region. In previous years, private and public investment in flagship enterprise and marketing activity has been low. There has been improvement in this area in recent years with the development of facilities at Hodson Bay and Lough Key.

The **Micro-Enterprise** sector continues to be a major strength with almost 1500 firms employing between 1 and 9 people. About 10% of these receive agency assistance. The existence of such firms testifies to local entrepreneurial spirit but there is both a challenge and an opportunity to assist some of these to expand through innovation and diversification.

6. The following potential exists in terms of tourism: **marina-type development and improved access to the River Shannon**; development and marketing of outdoor sports through trails and other facilities; and the upgrading of the N61 from Athlone; and, the primary route from Dublin to Galway are key pieces of infrastructure that will facilitate improved tourism activity.

The proposed **Mid Shannon Tax Incentive Scheme**, and its limits on the ratio of accommodation floor space, will be a significant catalyst for investment in the area within 12 kilometres of the Shannon.

The provision of further **Flagship Enterprises**; the facilitation of ecologically-sensitive access to the county's lakes and rivers; as well as improved access into the county; the development of cycle and walking routes; along with other outdoor activity-based tourism; and, the encouragement of public and private investment in such facilities are aims supported in the RCDP 2008 – 2014.

7. **Overall, a number of key conclusions of the 2005 Job Creation Strategy still hold :**

- Sustainability of remote communities in some parts of the county need to be supported
- Need to move away from reliance on more vulnerable employment sectors
- Need to support innovation and growth in indigenous enterprise
- Lack of flagship enterprises in modern sectors
- Need for greater investment and marketing in tourism sector

Therefore, the **future economic strategy** for the **Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP** area could focus on the following;

- Mobile investment in shared services; **financial services and European headquarter locations** – typically businesses of 20 to 50 persons in office environments.
- **Pharmaceutical businesses**, currently clustering in Monksland; and **logistics** given the county's location and improving access.
- The **Micro-Enterprise** sector continues to be a major strength but there is both a challenge and an opportunity to assist some of these to expand through innovation and diversification.
- Potential exists in terms of tourism: **marina-type development and improved access to the River Shannon**; development and marketing of **outdoor sports through trails and other facilities**; and the upgrading of the N61 from Athlone; and, the primary route [M6] from Dublin to Galway are key pieces of infrastructure that will facilitate improved tourism activity.
- The provision of further **Flagship Enterprises**; the facilitation of **ecologically-sensitive access to the county's lakes and rivers**; as well as improved access into the county; the development of **cycle and walking routes**; along with other **outdoor activity-based tourism**; and, the encouragement of public and private investment in such facilities.
- Addressing the shortcomings in **Telecommunications (most importantly broadband) and access infrastructure** (particularly **air access**) will be critically important in attracting ICT business. The provision of a **transport hub** and improving **rail facilities** in the area will also be vital.
- The supply of **social infrastructure** including health facilities, schools, arts and recreation facilities play a significant role in attracting such enterprises.

- The offer of highly competitive packages for the lease of **commercial space** within the LAP area.

In addition, **other measures** which would support the economic development on the area could include;

- Enhance the skills base of SME'S within the traditional sectors which are facing particular challenges in adapting to changing conditions
- Adopt a proactive and creative approach to continually up-skilling the Labour Force in the region which should not be confined to re-skilling redundant workers but should be based on a strategy for lifelong learning and skills development. It should be led by the enterprise agencies and delivered in partnership with the private sector. Roscommon County Enterprise Board and LEADER Companies have a particular role to play in this regard in order to assist innovation and knowledge intensity through backing the acquisition of capital equipment, software and other technological applications by Traditional Manufacturing enterprises
- Continue to target Medical Technologies and devices (MTD's) companies particularly in their efforts to become more knowledge intensive. State agencies should be proactive in facilitating the creation of networks between firms in the sector and in strengthening the links between them and Third Level Institutions.
- Develop support structures for spin-offs of hi-tech and IT businesses to help promoters to develop their business ideas, carry out viability studies and generate business plans
- Seek the financial support for enterprises through the Western Investment Fund (WIF) ³
- Promote a Regional Knowledge Initiative to include the strengthening of research capacity within the regions HEI's, IoT's and through business processes and non-technological innovation ⁴

Policies in relation to Future Employment, Enterprise and Economic Strategy

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Policy 47 | Promote and facilitate the implementation of targeted economic development in zoned and serviced areas (within speed limit areas) as part of the Future Economic Development Strategy for the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area. |
| Policy 48 | Support the RCDB in encouraging indigenous innovation and enterprise by making suitable start up locations available to entrepreneurs. This will include the provision of high quality serviced sites/land ready for industrial/commercial development including workspace units with broadband connectivity within all key towns and strategic locations. |
| Policy 49 | Support the RCDB in its promotion of the county and LAP area as a business location for county graduates through the development of a relationship/network between education facilities including Third Level Institutes and economic development |
| Policy 50 | Promote the use of PPP in the provision of industrial sites and business parks. |
| Policy 51 | Support the RCDB in investigating innovative approaches towards the development and densification of quality employment enterprise clusters of various sizes including Smaller Office and Knowledge Sector HPSUs |

³ Western Development Commission, Enterprise and Employment in the Western Region , Issues, Challenges and Recommendations, 2004, p. 21-24

⁴ Western Development Commission, Western Development for Ireland's Future submission to NDP 2007-2013, p. 18

-
- Policy 52** Support the RCDB in facilitating the development of a technologically-based knowledge network in the County and LAP area that establishes strong links with surrounding industries, Third Level Institutions, State and Local Agencies, including FÁS and Teagasc
- Policy 53** Encourage the RCDB in its support of SME's, and the enhancement of their skills base especially those within the traditional sectors which are facing particular challenges in adapting to changing conditions
- Policy 54** Support the BMW Operational Programme 2007-2013 and help implement **Priority 2: Innovation, ICT and the Knowledge Economy** within County Roscommon which will be targeted at applied research enhancement, incubation and collaboration, research capacity, micro enterprise & entrepreneurship, broadband provision and experimental actions. Help implement **Priority 3: Urban Development and Secondary Transport Networks** which will be targeted at urban development, key link routes and public transport infrastructure.
- Policy 55** Support the RCDB in its liaison with the IDA to promote foreign direct investment and the establishment of new industries in the LAP area.
- Policy 56** A Road Safety Audit (RSA) is required for all development that incorporates a proposal for a new access to a national road and where the development may give rise to a significant increase in traffic on an existing access to a national road. A Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) is required where a development gives rise to a significant increase in traffic. These need to be assessed in association with their cumulative impact together with neighbouring developments on the road network. The DEHLG / DoT / DTO Traffic Management Guidelines and the NRA Design Manual for Roads and Bridges provide guidance in this respect. In addition, the RSA and TIA should be produced in accordance with best practice guidelines set out in the NRA's Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines, 2007, and should be carried out by suitably competent consultants.

Objectives in relation to Future Employment, Enterprise and Economic Strategy

- Objective 70** Investigate the provision of Third Level and R&D facilities within the LAP area
- Objective 71** In consolidating the urban form, support the location of quality employment and residential developments in proximity to each other in order to reduce the need to travel and the dependence on private transport.
- Objective 72** Assist the RCDB in attracting major new industry/service providers to nurture and grow existing industry. This can be done through the provision of development information, appropriate zoning provisions; and, a favourable development contribution scheme.
- Objective 73** Ensure that the infrastructure and services in the LAP area are sustainably developed and upgraded to a level that can support increased economic activity. The location of industries such as pharmaceutical projects, logistics and ICT Manufacturing will require world class facilities, infrastructure and services.
- Objective 74** Ensure that a high standard of design, layout and amenity is provided and maintained at locations selected for enterprise development.
- Objective 75** Work with and support Enterprise Ireland in the creation of clusters, liaison with developers in ensuring competitive packages for the provision of commercial and industrial space, within the LAP area.

Objective 76 Support the RCDB in adopting a proactive approach to re-skilling redundant workers based on a lifelong learning and skills development strategy. Promote this strategy through the enterprise agencies including Teagasc and delivered in partnership with the private sector.

5.3.2 Retail and Commercial Development

Within the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area, **commercial activity** was always relatively weak but is now stronger with the development of other **retail (for convenience and comparison goods) and commercial units** on both sides of the New Tuam Road. The provision of the SuperValu and associated restaurant and shops as well as the restaurant, furniture shop and units containing the doctors surgery etc across the road and to the east of it, have created some 'sense of place' and focus for the area.

Section 9.3.4 of this LAP provides a detailed discussion concerning the provision of **District and Local/Neighbourhood Centres**. Two District Centres are proposed within the LAP area. The preferred options for their location are listed below and the reasons outlined in Section 9.3.4;

- **Location Option 1: Bogganfin**
- **Location Option 2 and 3: Lands along the New Tuam Road and at the New and Old Tuam Road Junction**

This could be supplemented by local centres within Monksland, Bellanamullia and Crannagh/Summerhill.

The proposed new **District Centre at Bogganfin (Option 1 above) and linked District Centre on the New and Old Tuam Roads (Option 2 and 3 above)** would primarily serve the local needs of residents in the area and would be readily accessible to the pedestrian catchment within a 500m radius of the centres and to a wider residential catchment via private car, public transport (bus) and cycling. The centres would not contain retail units of a size and nature that would compete directly with Athlone Town Centre. The centres may contain a food supermarket or superstore and non-retail services, such as banks, building societies, restaurants, pharmacies, take away, video/DVD rental, public house, and dental/medical surgery.

Mixed-use developments would need to be encouraged in the centres, with the possibility of accommodation over retail/commercial units, grouped small starter/incubator workshops, craft or service units, guest houses, etc.

The **Local / Neighbourhood centres** may contain a newsagent, sub-post office, and small shops serving a small, localised catchment population. It is in the interests of the LAP area that these appropriately located **Local/Neighbourhood Centres** encourage greater spend in the locality and allow people to carry out their shopping at a more convenient location to their places of residence and work.

The **District Centres** could be supplemented by improvements in the existing facilities and the provision of new local facilities in suitable locations for residents in Monksland, including community facilities, local shopping facilities, public transport facilities, etc. This includes reinforcing the existing Athlone Area Office/Monksland Community Centre and establishing new local nodes of activity in close walking distance of residential areas to provide an attractive set of facilities for local residents. The junctions between the proposed new link roads and the existing road network can also be utilised as possible locations for the provision of localised, low order community facilities, corner shops, etc.

Retail warehousing units selling bulky household goods such as DIY products, carpets and furniture for example; often require large display and storage areas and adjacent surface level car parking. The

development of which is often unsuitable for town centre locations. Edge-of-centre locations are generally considered to be the optimal locations for retail warehousing.

There are a large number of **retail warehousing units** including those within the Monksland Retail and Business Park and the West Point Business Park in which there are a number of vacant units. The Retail Strategy has recommended that the level of future retail warehousing developments permitted in the Athlone Western Environs area should be curtailed until these units have been occupied.

The Retail Strategy does however indicate that the deficit capacity in terms of retail warehouse floor-space indicated within the Retail Strategy should not be seen as a constraint to the delivery of further schemes of this nature in the County. This form of retailing is increasingly being developed due to increasing diversification of retailers in terms of their product offer and increasing expenditure on home improvements and DIY. It is detailed in the Retail Planning Guidelines that “*generally speaking the evidence is that planned retail parks do not have any material impact on town centres provided the range of goods is limited to truly bulky household goods or goods generally sold in bulk*”. It is envisaged that the market will largely dictate the need and demand for further schemes of this nature in the County. It is not the purpose of the planning system to constrain development. The key point will be not to inhibit competition or the development of such parks, but to ensure that the range of goods sold from such units is tightly controlled so that there is no adverse impact on the vitality and viability of town centres within the County or adjacent counties. The Council recognises that areas within the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area still have the potential for such development. The Council will facilitate the development of appropriate **retail warehousing** on BE zoned land in this location but will have regard to the perceived impact on similar uses in other urban centres in County Roscommon and County Westmeath.

A study undertaken by the Athlone Chamber of Commerce in March 2004 noted that there is increased demand for **office use** on the west side of Athlone. With a notable trend for new office development to locate outside of the main town centre, which has been primarily attributed to the need of many new office based businesses to have to access new communications infrastructure and in some cases a large amount of available space to operate. Traditional town centre buildings do not always provide suitable options. Given this current trend, the demand for office space at edge of town centre locations could increase, a portion of which could potentially be accommodated in the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area.

Policies for Commercial/Retail

- Policy 57** Implement the findings and recommendations of the Retail Strategy for County Roscommon.
- Policy 58** Promote and develop the vitality of the existing shopping area and facilitate the provision of local retail needs where appropriate.
- Policy 59** RCC will support the County Enterprise Board, Roscommon County Development Board, National Development Agencies (e.g. IDA, state bodies) and private developers in encouraging and facilitating the location of new employment generating projects and businesses throughout the LAP area. The Planning Authority will facilitate variations of its plan in a timely manner, particularly for large scale development proposals which do not accord with existing development objectives or which overlap areas zoned for different development objectives.

Objectives for Commercial/Retail

- Objective 77** Facilitate and encourage the appropriate provision of retail facilities in the LAP area, particularly focused in the areas zoned as Neighbourhood and Local Centres.

- Objective 78** Assess all retail proposals against the criteria and recommendations set down in the Retail Planning Guidelines, and the Retail Strategy for County Roscommon.
- Objective 79** Create a more attractive and safer pedestrian environment including the provision of pedestrian crossings, high quality pavements and cycle paths, street lighting and street furniture in the area including the provision of a new pedestrian/cycle route from the existing Cushlea residential area and the new residential areas in the west of Monksland to the commercial, retail and community facilities on the New Tuam Road in Monksland. This pedestrian / cycle route should continue along the new link road and extending through the lands in Bogganfin to the existing Ganly's Roundabout on the N61, connecting ultimately to the existing footpath network into Athlone Town.

5.3.3 Industrial Development

The industrial development present in the area centres mainly around the Elan Pharma International Limited manufacturing facility in Monksland, and it is one of the Establishments as referred to in the European Communities (Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances). The Regulations covering their operation (Lower Tier), is the European Communities (Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations, S.I. 74 of 2006.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the H.S.A. have requested in relation to land use planning that a Consultation Distance of 1 km from Elan be set and should be drawn around the Elan site on a local map and that any planning application within this circle should then be forwarded to the H.S.A for consultation. (see Map 7)

Other industrial manufacturing enterprises include; Athlone Pharmaceuticals, Pharmaplaz, Arran Chemicals, and Carty meats.

In addition, planning permission was granted in October 2008 for a 100 MW open cycle gas turbine power station with a turbine hall 8.75m high, maintenance bay, exhaust stack 20m high, air vent 20m high, air cooler, water cooler, power control module, main and auxiliary transformers, banded fuel oil tank 1800m, raw water tank 580m, water treatment module, treated water tank 580m, firewater module, tanker unloading area, office/workshop and associated site development works.

In terms of facilitating this industrial development, a Part 8 procedure was undertaken by RCC for the widening of a portion of the Monksland Industrial Estate road from Carty Meats as far as the junction, from the lands to the rear of the Athlone Springs Hotel. This is due to have a 6 metre wide carriageway which will service the industrial lands in the area and it is proposed that this could be extended further west in the future to allow more of this land to be opened up and connect with an upgraded Mihanbee Road.

The Council will seek to promote the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area as a desirable location for industrial investment. At the community meeting, Elan was indicated as a strength for the area. All proposals for individual industrial development will be carefully assessed, to ensure that development will not have a detrimental impact on the environment, residential amenity or traffic safety and flow. The Council recognises that inadequate infrastructure severely limits the development potential of an area. To ensure that development in the LAP area is not limited through a lack of infrastructure, the Council will co-operate with the relevant authorities in actively pursuing the delivery of these essential facilities and ensuring that shortfalls are eliminated at the earliest possible opportunity. Chapter 4 has dealt with major infrastructure proposals recommended for the area.

Policies for Industry

- Policy 60** Support the RCDB and IDA in encouraging new high tech industries and high potential start-ups to locate in the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area.

Policy 61 RCC will support the County Enterprise Board, Roscommon County Development Board, National Development Agencies (e.g. IDA, state bodies) and private developers in encouraging and facilitating the location of new industries which provide a positive and flexible response to job creation possibilities in the LAP area whilst protecting residential amenity and the environment. The Planning Authority will facilitate variations of its plan in a timely manner, particularly for large scale development proposals which do not accord with existing development objectives or which overlap areas zoned for different development objectives.

Objectives for Industry

Objective 80 Where technically feasible and economically viable, provide for or facilitate the provision of the necessary infrastructure and services for industrial development within the LAP area.

5.4 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY

The **Economic Development and Employment Strategy** aims to provide support for those industries and businesses located within the area and encourage the expansion of the retail role of the LAP area, to ensure that all residents of the County have easy access to basic convenience goods, whilst not compromising the role of the Athlone town centre.

As mentioned previously, the **future economic strategy** for the **Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP** area could focus on the following;

- Mobile investment in shared services; **financial services and European headquarter locations** – typically businesses of 20 to 50 persons in office environments.
- **Pharmaceutical businesses**, currently clustering in Monksland; and **logistics** given the county's location and improving access.
- The **Micro-Enterprise** sector continues to be a major strength but there is both a challenge and an opportunity to assist some of these to expand through innovation and diversification.
- Potential exists in terms of tourism: **marina-type development and improved access to the River Shannon**; development and marketing of **outdoor sports through trails and other facilities**; and the upgrading of the N61 from Athlone; and, the primary route [M6] from Dublin to Galway are key pieces of infrastructure that will facilitate improved tourism activity.
- The provision of further **Flagship Enterprises**; the facilitation of **ecologically-sensitive access to the county's lakes and rivers**; as well as improved access into the county; the development of **cycle and walking routes**; along with other **outdoor activity-based tourism**; and, the encouragement of public and private investment in such facilities.
- Addressing the shortcomings in **Telecommunications (most importantly broadband) and access infrastructure** (particularly **air access**) will be critically important in attracting ICT business. The provision of a **transport hub** and improving **rail facilities** in the area will also be vital.
- The supply of **social infrastructure** including health facilities, schools, arts and recreation facilities play a significant role in attracting such enterprises.
- The offer of highly competitive packages for the lease of **commercial space** within the LAP area.

In addition, **other measures** which would support the economic development on the area could include;

- Enhance the skills base of SME'S within the traditional sectors which are facing particular challenges in adapting to changing conditions
- Adopt a proactive and creative approach to continually up-skilling the Labour Force in the region which should not be confined to re-skilling redundant workers but should be based on a strategy for lifelong learning and skills development. It should be led by the enterprise agencies and delivered in partnership with the private sector. Roscommon County Enterprise Board and LEADER Companies have a particular role to play in this regard in order to assist innovation and knowledge intensity through backing the acquisition of capital equipment, software and other technological applications by Traditional Manufacturing enterprises
- Continue to target Medical Technologies and devices (MTD's) companies particularly in their efforts to become more knowledge intensive. State agencies should be proactive in facilitating the creation of networks between firms in the sector and in strengthening the links between them and Third Level Institutions.
- Develop support structures for spin-offs of hi-tech and IT businesses to help promoters to develop their business ideas, carry out viability studies and generate business plans
- Seek the financial support for enterprises through the Western Investment Fund (WIF) ⁵
- Promote a Regional Knowledge Initiative to include the strengthening of research capacity within the regions HEI's, IoT's and through business processes and non-technological innovation ⁶

It is important to note that the Retail Planning Guidelines (January 2005) in S30 require that a joint retail strategy for the Athlone Area be carried out by Westmeath and Roscommon County Councils. This has to yet been carried out due to the different timeframes Councils have for their respective development plan reviews. The council resolves that at the next review of either county's retail strategy a joint retail strategy will be carried out for the Athlone Area.

In the interim period it is recommended that the following joint policies and actions will be followed by both authorities in considering applications for large retail developments in the Athlone Area.

- Each council will consider the sequential test to be of paramount importance with regard to the appropriateness of any application for a large convenience foodstore (supermarkets).
- Applicants for large retail outlets will be required to prepare a retail impact assessment which will have regard to the policies in both the Roscommon and Westmeath Retail Strategy.
- Both councils are conscious of and support the concept of having a commercially vibrant town centre in the core of Athlone commensurate with its status as a Gateway. It is considered that such support will progress and expand commercial activity in both the core area and its hinterland in a coherent and healthy manner.
- Both councils will require applicants for large retail developments to carry out traffic impact assessments which will have regard to the road networks within both functional areas.

⁵ Western Development Commission, Enterprise and Employment in the Western Region , Issues, Challenges and Recommendations, 2004, p. 21-24

⁶ Western Development Commission, Western Development for Ireland's Future submission to NDP 2007-2013, p. 18

CHAPTER 6: BUILT AND NATURAL HERITAGE

6.1 BUILT HERITAGE

6.1.1 Architectural Heritage

The Heritage Act (1995) includes in its definition of heritage; ‘monuments’, ‘archaeological objects’, ‘heritage objects’, ‘architectural heritage’, ‘inland waterways’ and ‘heritage gardens and parks’. The need to conserve the built heritage; awareness of the social and economic benefits of conserving this part of our common inheritance and on improving our quality of life; and, also of the place of conservation in policies of sustainable development, has gathered increased recognition in recent years.

The Built Heritage of County Roscommon includes not only works of great artistic and structural achievements but also everyday items, which have acquired special cultural interest through time. This built heritage includes all manmade structures and features of the landscape in the county; such as the houses, bridges, towns, demesnes and stone walls. It is a non-renewable resource, once lost it cannot be replaced, so it is important that we appreciate what we have and provide adequate protection for the built environment in its existing form. When looking at built heritage we must be open to sympathetic re-use of historic buildings, though their original function and use may not be relevant nowadays, if this is the only way that enables the architectural heritage to survive. In addition, awareness of the social and economic benefits of conserving this part of our common inheritance, and of the place of conservation in policies of sustainable development, has gathered increased recognition in recent years. The Monksland/Bellanamulia (Athlone West) LAP will seek to protect the archaeological, natural and built heritage of the area and the conservation of existing buildings and features of heritage value.

1. Policy Context

Ireland has ratified a range of International Agreements in relation to our archaeological and built heritage. Such Agreements place legal obligations on the State in relation to the conservation and management of our archaeological and built heritage, which are given effect through the National Monuments Acts 1930-2004 and the Planning and Development Act, 2000.

The **Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006** consolidate all previous Planning Acts and are strategic in the approach towards the protection of our built heritage. Part IV of the 2000 Act deals specifically with architectural heritage; it introduced the concept of the ‘protected structure’ which is a structure that is considered to be of ‘special interest’ from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical point of view. Every planning authority is obliged to have a Record of Protected Structures (RPS) that includes structures of special interest in its functional area. The Acts place obligations on both Planning Authorities and on the owners/ occupiers of Protected Structures.

The **Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2004)** produced by the DEHLG aims to support the effort of protecting architectural heritage. They offer guidance to Planning Authorities on the criteria to be applied when selecting structures for inclusion in the RPS, on issuing a declaration on a protected structure and on determining planning applications in relation to protected structures, proposed protected structures or the exterior of a building within an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA). While the guidelines are primarily aimed at Planning Authorities, they are also of assistance to owners and occupiers of protected structures, buildings within ACAs, and to those proposing to carry out works on structures of architectural heritage interest generally.

The **National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)** is a state initiative managed by the DEHLG. It aims to promote the appreciation of, and contributes to the protection of, the Built Heritage by systematically recording a representative sample of that built heritage on a nationwide basis. The NIAH forms the basis for recommendations by the Minister of EHLG for inclusion in the Record of Protected Structures under the Planning and Development Act 2000. The NIAH provides a source of guidance to local authorities for the selection of structures for protection and also supplies data, which helps them to make informed judgments on the significance of building stock in their functional area.

The **Co. Roscommon Heritage Plan 2002-2008 (extended to 2009)** has as its aim ‘*to create and promote an increased knowledge, awareness and appreciation of the natural, built and cultural heritage of County Roscommon, and to conserve it for future generations*’. This plan, which is currently under review, represents the commitment of Roscommon County Council to the conservation and promotion of the cultural heritage of Co. Roscommon. Its key objectives are: to raise awareness of our heritage, to collect and disseminate heritage information, and to promote best practice in heritage conservation and management.

2. Physical Context (Map 8a)



The LAP area has seen a lot of development in recent years and this has served to conceal its historic origins. Formerly however, it had the character of a rural area with industrial pockets, comprising mills and breweries along with their associated features - mill races, mill streams, mill ponds, sluices, bridges etc - dotted about the landscape. The Mill Bar is a landmark building that survives as a reminder of these former times. There was also a military influence in the area which emanated from the barracks in Athlone. Pockets of architectural heritage exist and these are identified below as either Potential Protected Structures or Buildings of Interest. Currently there are no Architectural Conservation Areas or Protected Structures within the development envelope. At the community meeting the Mill Bar was indicated as an important landmark as well as Larkfield House.



8. The Mill Bar is a local landmark and is a reminder of the former semi-industrial character of the area; it is a mixture of new and old fabric and can be considered a Building of Interest. The mill wheels in the car park enhance its historical value.

Potential Protected Structures

The following three structures have been identified as potential candidates for designation as protected structures in the future as they are of sufficient architectural, historic and artistic merit to warrant it. Further investigation could uncover other categories of special interest that they have.

	<p>1. Larkfield House is a four-bay two-storey over basement house, originally apparently a sixteenth-century tower house which had a wing added 1775-1784, and was the home of the Larkins family. Stone steps on the façade lead up to a stone block-and-start doorcase. The house was renovated recently with new roof and new timber sash windows. The interior has early nineteenth-century plasterwork, decorative tread-ends to the staircase and a rare scagliola paint scheme in the hall. Fine stable buildings and coach-house set around a courtyard to the rear.</p>
	<p>2. Woodberry House is a three-bay two-storey house c. 1800, now with PVC windows, but with many original features to interior including a fine curvilinear staircase, door architraves and panelled doors and shutters. Stone outbuildings and walled garden.</p>
	<p>3. St Joseph's School, Summerhill, is a large school complex from c. 1890, ranging from one to three storeys, set around a courtyard; having a five-bay three-storey central block topped by a steeple; chapel to left hand side; rendered elevations, slated roofs, mixture of original timber sash and later PVC windows. In grounds of earlier Summerhill House, now demolished, which in 1843 was the site of the largest of Daniel O'Connell's monster meetings. Later school buildings of no current heritage value to rear.</p>

Buildings of Interest

Buildings of interest are structures which have a local heritage value; they are not considered important enough individually to become protected structures at this point in time but are attractive in their own right and add continuity and a sense of place to a neighbourhood. Their conservation is therefore desirable.

➤ Bellanamullia Village

There is still a legible historic village cluster in Bellanamullia. It is distinguished by a group of three buildings of interest on the south side of the road. The most dominant structure is the three-bay two-storey stone house which was formerly an RIC barracks from c. 1860; the removal of its external render and the addition of PVC windows is regrettable from a heritage point of view. Nearby is a fine three-bay two-storey white-painted house with slated roof, which could be rehabilitated for use; attached to it is a ruinous extension. Opposite is a single-storey school building and some attractive landscaping. A purpose-built concrete handball alley from 1928 is located up a lane that runs between these buildings on a site donated by the local landowner. Two cast-iron water pumps feature in this group which aren't original to here but which add interest and colour.



Village cluster of Bellanamullia.



9. Former Constabulary Barracks, of local historic and architectural interest.



10. and 11. Other buildings of interest in the Bellanamullia village cluster whose appearance is enhanced by the well-maintained planting.



		
12. Ball alley.	13. and 14. Two cast-iron water pumps added as features of interest.	

➤ Other Buildings of Interest in LAP Area

	
7. Small rural cottage and outbuildings on south side of R362 in traditional arrangement, now a rare and pleasant survival of the type of built fabric that was once common in the area.	6. Attractive pair of semi-detached houses with bay windows, on south side of R466, one with original sash windows – typical of the well-designed historic suburban houses on the edge of Irish towns/ villages.
	
4. Fine farmhouse c. 1900, on old N6 (R466), with bay windows and decorative mouldings to quoins and to openings, whose appearance is enhanced by decorative wrought-iron entrance gates.	5. Two-storey farmhouse, on old N6 (R466), whose well-maintained appearance creates a nice vista from the road and a sense of place for the group of houses around it.

There are various non-habitable structures in the area which also contribute to its character and attractiveness and should be retained and looked after; as well as the cast-iron water pumps mentioned above there are stone boundary walls and iron gates.

6.1.2 Archaeological Heritage

Archaeology is the study of past societies through the material remains left by those societies and the evidence of their environment, which includes anything made or modified by people from earliest times up to 1700AD. The archaeological heritage of Co. Roscommon includes structures, constructions, groups of buildings, developed sites, all recorded monuments as well as their contexts, and moveable objects; situated both on land and under water¹.

The Archaeological Heritage comprises of:

- Recorded sites and features of historical and archaeological importance included in the Record of Monuments and Places as established under section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994 (Map 23)
- Major sites of archaeological importance in Roscommon in State Ownership or Guardianship, are listed in the table below.
- National Monuments in Roscommon which are the subject of preservation orders are listed in the table below.
- All previously unknown archaeology that becomes known, such as through ground disturbance or the discovery of sites underwater.

1. Policy Context

The National Monuments Act 1930-2004 sets out the legislative procedure for protection of all known archaeological monuments.

The Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage Guidelines (1999) set out the basic principles of national policy on the protection of the archaeological heritage

2. Physical Context (Map 8b)

There are two structures within the development envelope identified and listed for protection in the Record of Monuments and Places, a statutory inventory of sites protected under the National Monuments Acts. (see Map 8b). At the community meeting the Dolmen in Drum, which falls outside the LAP development envelope, was indicated as an important landmark.

Table 4: Record of Monuments and Places (RMPs) in the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area		
Monument No.	Townland	Classification
RO052-028	Bellanamullia	Burnt Spread
RO051-019	Cloonakille	Mill - Unclassified

The protection of archaeological heritage is a mandatory objective within the RCDP 2008 – 2014. Roscommon County Council will work closely with the National Monuments Service of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, The Heritage Council and the Discovery Programme in securing the protection of archaeological heritage, as well as in developing policy and identifying sites and zones of archaeological potential. The need to preserve the archaeological heritage in the County is recognised and will be protected through ensuring archaeological considerations are taken into account for developments in sensitive areas. The actual designation and legal protection of archaeological features as National Monuments is outside the remit of the local authority, and provided for under the National Monuments Acts.

¹ The European Convention for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage, Valetta 1992.

6.1.3 Built Heritage Strategy

The **Built Heritage Strategy** aims to ensure the protection of architectural and archaeological heritage within the LAP area.

Policy in relation to Built Heritage

- Policy 62** Identify, protect and conserve structures (i.e. includes conservation, preservation, and improvement compatible with maintaining the character and interest of the structure), or parts of structures, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or which contribute at a local level to the character of the area.
- Policy 63** Promote pride and awareness of the importance and value of Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West's) architectural heritage and manage any change to that heritage in such a way as to retain its character and special interest.
- Policy 64** Provide advice and information for owners and occupiers of structures on the Record of Protected Structures, Buildings of Interest and other historic buildings.
- Policy 65** Identify and protect the architectural heritage of the county and to manage any change to that heritage in a sustainable manner and in such a way as to retain its character and special interest.
- Policy 66** Secure the preservation (i.e. preservation in situ or, as a minimum, preservation by record) of all archaeological monuments included in the Record of Monuments and Places as established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994, and of sites, features and objects of archaeological interest generally. In securing such preservation Roscommon County Council will have regard to the advice and recommendations of the National Monuments Section of the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government, both in respect of whether or not to grant planning permission and in respect of the conditions to which permission, if granted, should be granted.

Objectives in relation to Built Heritage

- Objective 81** Apply conservation principles to all development applications relating to historic buildings and structures, whether protected or not. These principles are: Research prior to planning work; Minimum intervention – repair rather than replace; and, Respect the setting of the building.
- Objective 82** Promote best conservation practice and the importance of informed decision making with regard to historic buildings through advice to owners / occupiers and by encouraging engagement of a suitably qualified conservation specialist with regard to material specification and application for protected structures.
- Objective 83** Promote appropriate use/re-use and repair of protected structures, including the implementation of the Conservation Grants Schemes.
- Objective 84** Issue declarations on types of works that would or would not materially affect the character of a protected structure.
- Objective 85** Promote new development, which is designed for flexible and sustainable use, while being sympathetic to the existing built fabric.

-
- Objective 86** View as unfavourable, development which is likely to adversely affect the character of a protected structure or the setting of a protected structure, where the setting is considered to be of importance.
- Objective 87** Prioritise reuse and renovation over demolition of Buildings of Interest and other historic buildings.
- Objective 88** Retain traditional features such as original windows, doors, fanlights, renders, roof coverings and rainwater goods.
- Objective 89** Conserve and protect historic street furniture, such as stone kerbing, steps, milestones, benchmarks, streetlights, manhole covers, ventilation pipes, etc.
- Objective 90** Conserve and protect features of the built environment such as stonewalls, pillars, piers, stiles, gates, railings, holy wells, mass rocks, historic telephone boxes, post-boxes and memorials.
- Objective 91** Review and implement the County Roscommon Heritage Plan as it relates to the LAP area.
- Objective 92** Ensure that any development, either above or below ground, within the vicinity of a site of archaeological interest shall not be detrimental to the character of the archaeological site or its setting.
- Objective 93** Provide guidance to developers and property owners regarding the protection of the archaeological heritage and the archaeological implications of proposed development.
- Objective 94** Have regard to the advice and recommendations of the National Monuments Service of the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government, both in respect of whether or not to grant planning permission and in respect of the conditions to which permission, if granted, should be subject.
- Objective 95** Ensure that proposed developments, that may (due to their location, size, or nature) have implications for the archaeological heritage, are subject to archaeological assessment.

6.2 NATURAL HERITAGE

Our natural heritage includes the variety of all life around us. The Heritage Act, 1995 defines natural heritage as including flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, inland waterways and heritage gardens and parks.

6.2.1 Designated Sites

A wide range of different sites have been (or will be) designated under National and EU legislation and under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. There are 25 species and 60 habitats in Ireland, which are recognised by the EU as being in need of special protection, which has led to a comprehensive network of protected areas being established in Ireland in recent years. This network is made up of sites of European importance (Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas) known collectively as European Sites, and sites of national importance (Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs)). Many of these habitats and species are found in Roscommon and some, such as Turloughs and Active Raised Bogs, are priority habitats because of their importance and rarity. The three main types of site designations are detailed below. Some sites have multiple designations, for example, Ballinagare Bog is designated both as an SAC and an SPA.

1. Policy Context

Government policy and legislation on the protection of natural heritage has come about as a result of signing up to several international conventions and increased public awareness about the value of our natural heritage. To comply with these conventions, two related EU Directives have been implemented, the **Wild Birds Directive, 1979** and the **Habitats Directive, 1992**.

The **Wild Birds Directive** requires protection for sites, which are of importance to birds, such as listed rare and vulnerable species for example, the Whooper Swan, Greenland White-fronted Goose and the Corncrake. It also requires protection for regularly occurring migratory species, such as ducks, geese and waders. Finally, it requires protection for Wetlands, especially those of international importance, which attract large numbers of migratory birds each year. The **Habitats Directive** lists certain habitats and species that must be given protection. This includes habitats such as raised bogs and turloughs. It also includes species such as Otter and Freshwater Pearl Mussel.

The application of these Directives is through the designation of sites as **Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)**. These designated sites together form the ‘**Natura 2000**’ network of protected sites throughout the European Union. The directives also have legal requirements for wider countryside conservation and trade in endangered species. The **EU Water Framework Directive 2000** aims to conserve the quality of all surface, coastal and ground waters.

2. Physical Context (Map 9)

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

These are the prime wildlife conservation areas in the country, considered to be important on a European as well as Irish level. The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) lists certain habitats and species that must be protected. Ireland introduced the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 (S.I. No. 94/1997) to give effect to SACs under Irish Law. Any development in, near or adversely affecting an SAC should avoid any significant adverse impact on the features for which the site has been designated or proposed for designation.

At the north eastern boundary of the LAP area is the Lough Ree SAC/pNHA. There are no other designations within the proposed development envelope. The Cross River which flows through the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area, from the north-west to the south-east, flows into

the Shannon River and through the Shannon River Callows which is a SAC, SPA and pNHA. (see Map 9)

The Lough Ree SAC/pNHA – the main habitat is the lake itself and there are also interesting shoreline, terrestrial and semi-aquatic habitats.

The River Shannon Callows pNHA/SPA/SAC is a long and diverse site which consists of seasonally flooded, semi-natural, lowland wet grassland, along and beside the river between the towns of Athlone and Portumna. It is closely associated with the River Suck Callows and the Little Brosna Callows and is mainly composed of lowland wet grassland. The Middle Shannon Callows of which this forms part has the following principal species, listed in the table below:

There is one SACs within the LAP area, indicated on **Map 9** and listed in the table below.

Table 5: Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area			
Site	Status	Site Code	Principal Habitat
Lough Ree	cSAC	000440	Natural eutrophic lake habitat
Shannon Callows	cSAC	000216	Lowland wet grassland
cSAC – candidate SAC			

Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

These sites are areas of importance for birds (and often are also important for other types of wildlife). The EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) requires designation of SPAs for listed rare and vulnerable species, regularly occurring migratory species and wetlands, especially those of international importance, which attract large numbers of migratory birds each year.

Any development in, near or adversely affecting an SPA should avoid any significant adverse impact on the features for which the site has been designated. SPAs were given effect in Irish Law mainly under the Conservation of Wild Birds Regulations 1985 (SI. 291 of 1985). There are no SPAs within the LAP area, however those in close proximity are indicated on Map 9 and listed in the table below.

Table 6: Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area			
Site	Status	Site Code	Principal Species
Lough Ree	SPA	004064	Wigeon, Teal, Pintail, Tufted Duck, Goldeneye, Golden Plover & Lapwing
Middle Shannon Callows	SPA	004096	Whooper Swan, Mute Swan, Wigeon, Golden Plover, Lapwing & Black-tailed Godwit

Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs)

The Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 substantially strengthened the protection for wildlife previously available under the Wildlife Act 1976. In particular, the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 provides for the designation and conservation of Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs). NHAs are sites that support elements of our natural heritage which are unique, or of outstanding importance at the national level. Any development in, near or adversely affecting a Natural Heritage Area should avoid any significant adverse impact on the features for which the site has been designated. There is two proposed Natural Heritage Areas in the LAP area, it is indicated on Map 9 and listed in the table below.

Table 7: Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) in the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area			
Site	Status	Site Code	Habitat
NHA's			
Lough Ree	pNHA	002310	Natural eutrophic lake habitat
River Shannon Callows	pNHA	000216	Lowland wet grassland
pNHA – proposed NHA			

Other Natural Heritage Designations

In addition to the above Protected Areas, there are many other designations both statutory and non-statutory, which are concerned with conservation and protection of the natural heritage such as a National Park, Statutory Nature Reserve and Wildfowl Sanctuary; there were none of the two aforementioned sites in Co. Roscommon at the time of preparation of the RCDP 2008 – 2014. There are, however, Wildfowl Sanctuaries which are managed by the NPWS. None of these exist in the LAP area.

Another natural heritage designation that applies in the county is a 'Refuge for Flora or Fauna'. Under the Wildlife Acts the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government may designate Refuges for wild birds or wild animals or flora and impose protective measures to conserve both the species and their habitats. None of these exist in the LAP area.

Some rare plant species are afforded legal protection by the Wildlife Acts, under the Flora (Protection) Order 1999 (or other such orders). The locations of these rare plants is not published.

It is illegal to cut, uproot or damage the listed species in any way, or to offer them for sale. This prohibition extends to the taking or sale of seed. In addition, it is illegal to alter, damage or interfere in any way with their habitats. This protection applies wherever the plants are found and is not confined to sites designated for nature conservation. Any major change in existing land-use (e.g. a change from pasture to arable, or a change in fertiliser regime would be covered by this provision².)

² Ref: www.npws.ie

Table 8: Environmental Zones on and Adjacent to the lands at Bogganfin

ZONE	FAUNA AND FLORA	LANDSCAPE CHARACTER	SIGNIFICANCE AND SENSITIVITY	MITIGATION MEASURES
Lough Ree cSAC: Callovs and Lake Shore	The Lough Ree cSAC is a habitat of international significance and populations of birds of international significance utilise this cSAC/SPA. This should be considered at all times to mitigate against any negative impact on the cSAC. A wide variety of mammal, bird, frog and insect species are likely to utilise this area.	The appearance and character of this area is dominated by natural processes and features. Though it is laid out in a series of rectangular fields the high water table and relatively low intensity of farming make the character feel natural. This increases with proximity to the shore where the uninterrupted vistas of sky make a deep impression of special amenity.	Extreme Sensitivity This area forms the edge of a major designated visual, recreational and conservation amenity. It is flat, open and unable to sustain screening vegetation. Development in this zone would be highly contrasting and would be visible over a wide area. This zone contains sensitivities arising from habitats (internationally designated), landscape, pollution vulnerability as well as flooding potential. There is no potential to mitigate impacts on the two most significant sensitivities (habitats and landscape) while the others would require exceptional and, ultimately, disruptive measures.	No structures of any type (including land uses) should be permitted in this area, except as may be required in connection with conservation management. All developments in adjoining and adjacent areas should be scrutinised to avoid adverse primary or secondary impacts, particularly water pollution, visual impacts or overspill of night lighting. In particular, excessively scaled structures that would adversely affect the appearance and character of this area should be avoided.
Cushlea Bog	Cushlea Bog is generally considered to be of moderate local value. This is because of the relatively high general occurrence of bog areas in the region, and in particular, bog areas of international conservation value, such as Mongan Bog. The area is already heavily drained and mostly lies the development zones. The area should be retained and left undeveloped as a habitat for wildlife. A variety of mammal, bird, frog and insect species are likely to utilise the area.	In this area, the patterns of agriculture and settlement give way to an area where the appearance, character and processes begin to become more natural, notwithstanding the bog cutting. The elevation of the area and the trees make the area prone to a local loss of character if developed.	Moderate Sensitivity This zone contains landscape sensitivities because it constitutes the transition between two types of landscapes and also because of its (relative) visual prominence as seen from points to the east, including the motorway. The moderate, local habitat significance also arises from the zones transition function.	This zone should be kept free of development, apart from those activities and land uses that facilitate the retention of the majority of the existing natural processes and vegetation and the assessment of the feasibility of providing the link road from Monksland to the N61. Development on the adjoining lands to the west (i.e. existing Cushlea residential areas) and the east (i.e. the existing farmland and future development area) of this zone should contain developments that provide orderly transitions between the developed and open space areas.
Transitional Agriculture	The habitats in this area are generally considered to be of low local ecological value, apart from the hedgerows and tree lines, which are considered to be of moderate and high local value respectively. Wherever possible, the hedgerows and tree lines should be retained and included within open space areas. A variety of mammal, bird, frog and insect species are likely to utilise the area.	These fields constitute an area where agriculture viability has largely ceased and where new land uses are beginning to emerge without any coherent pattern. The appearance is currently of a type that is abundant throughout the region, but it is very vulnerable to becoming like the area of uncontrolled development that currently blights the visual environs of the N61 to the east of these lands. If poorly developed, these lands will be conspicuous to drivers arriving by motorway from the west and have the potential to create a very poor first impression of Athlone.	Moderate to Low Sensitivity Residual areas of natural vegetation and drainage channels comprise the principal intrinsic environmental sensitivities of this zone. This zone has a generally moderate, but local, landscape sensitivity on account of the relative visual prominence of the area, as seen from the motorway and access ramp. These are all local sensitivities that can be readily ameliorated by incorporating reliable mitigation measures into the design.	These lands should be developed in accordance with the normal considerations of orderly planning and sustainable development. Such good practice would include the retention and incorporation into the design of natural processes and vegetation, where feasible, as well as the improvement of the visual amenities of the area, especially as seen from public areas such as national roads. Site drainage will require careful design to avoid the potential for water pollution or excessive runoff to reach sensitive habitats of the Lough Ree system.

Roads and Buildings	<p>The habitats in this area are generally considered to be of low local ecological value, apart from the existing roadside hedgerows and tree lines, which are considered to be of moderate and high local value respectively. Wherever possible, the hedgerows and tree lines should be retained and included within open space areas. Few mammal and bird species are likely to utilise this area.</p>	<p>This area's character is dominated by a range of man-made structures. These vary in appearance and quality from that of the M6, which is very high, to the environs of the N61 and its junction with the access ramp, which is low. The area around the N61 is in need of urgent development control to bring about improvements in visual amenities and civic facilities.</p>	<p>Robust Areas This zone is dominated by areas that are already extensively man-modified. In many parts, low quality design and maintenance of structures combined with high traffic and associated noise, odours, dust or nuisance as well localised dumping and pollution of surface water all combine to reduce the amenity of the area. The landscape sensitivity of the N6 should be noted, however, in terms of elevated views.</p>	<p>Development in this area should be encouraged (or conditioned) to incrementally stabilise and improve the amenities of the area. Such improvements should address the following: retention and augmentation of mature vegetation, especially in road-side areas; improving vegetative screening of the Lough Ree system and associated wetlands; improving public amenities, by good design and provision of facilities in the public domain; control and monitoring of material used for fill in authorised development sites; prevention of unauthorised 'reclamation' of wetlands; and prevention of unlicensed discharges, direct or indirect, to surface water systems.</p>
----------------------------	---	---	---	---

Policy for Designated Sites

- Policy 67** Protect the following SAC, NHA and SPA: Lough Ree SAC, SPA and the River Shannon Callows, NHA, SPA and SAC.
- Policy 68** Protect geological NHAs as they become designated and notified to Roscommon County Council during the lifetime of this LAP
- Policy 69** Protect any additional areas that may be designated during the lifetime of the plan, including the proposed and designated Protected Areas under the Water Framework Directive Register of Protected Areas, by resisting development which would detrimentally impact on the conservation status of those sites e.g. eskers
- Policy 70** Promote development in these areas, for recreational and educational purposes, where it would not conflict with the preservation and protection of these sites.

Objectives for Designated Sites

- Objective 96** No projects which will be reasonably likely to give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites having regard to their conservation objectives, shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) unless imperative reasons of overriding public interest can be established.

6.2.2 Nature Conservation, the Wider Countryside and Biodiversity

While protected areas, cover a significant part of the country, approximately 90% of the country lies outside of this network. There are many other sites, which are of local importance for geology, flora and fauna. RCC has prepared a Biodiversity Plan which will form a component of the Roscommon County Heritage Plan 2010 to 2014. This aims to raise awareness and gather data on the flora and fauna of the county.

It should also be noted at this stage that ecologically important areas were identified within the community meeting;

- Banks of Cross River should be protected
- Fish – Trout need to be protected
- Area around the Mill is a lovely area
- A good job was done at ‘Mill Naughton’ (Brideswell area) in conjunction with Elan, Roscommon County Council and the Fisheries Board – could this be extended?
- Cushlea Bog
- Cross River
- Larkfield Bog
- Forestry
- Esker Riada
- Sand Pit
- Woodland around Larkfield Bog – potential for walking route

Policies for Nature Conservation and Biodiversity

- Policy 71** Promote the implementation of key actions and objectives set out in the County Roscommon Heritage Plan, the County Roscommon Biodiversity Plan and all subsequent and associated Plans as appropriate
- Policy 72** Until such time as a standard Visual Impact Assessment has been developed by the Local Authority, require planning applications, with potential to impact adversely on

the landscape character of the Plan area, to include an appropriate visual impact assessment of the proposed development

Objectives for Nature Conservation and Biodiversity

- Objective 97** Promote the conservation of biodiversity outside of designated areas, while allowing for appropriate development, access and recreational activity.
- Objective 98** Identify, protect and conserve, in co-operation with the relevant statutory authorities and other groups, vulnerable, rare and threatened species or wild flora and fauna and their habitats. These include plant and animal species afforded protection under the Wildlife Acts and the EU Habitats & Birds Directives e.g. The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland, NPWS & DEHLG, 2008.
- Objective 99** Conserve, protect and enhance important landscape features, such as lakes, rivers, wetlands, stonewalls, hedgerows etc, which form wildlife corridors and link habitats, providing the stepping stones necessary for wildlife to flourish, while also protecting and enhancing surface water and groundwater resources.
- Objective 100** Ensure that any development on or near such a site or landscape feature should avoid any significant adverse impact on the features for which the site is considered to be of local importance.
- Objective 101** Ensure that the conservation and management of biodiversity is a key priority in water resource management and other infrastructural projects in the LAP area, particularly those undertaken by RCC
- Objective 102** Have regard to impacts of floodlighting and public lighting in open spaces and to minimize light intrusion in areas of habitat value.
- Objective 103** Have regard to the recommendations of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and any national guidance documents, which may come about during the lifetime of this plan, with respect to potential impacts on nature conservation, when considering development applications relating to activities such as use of jet-ski's and power boats on sites of nature conservation importance.
- Objective 104** Should development applications be received in proximity to the Cross, Shannon Rivers and south west section of the LAP area, applicants should consult the NPWS conservation ranger to ascertain the likely presence of protected and rare species. Appropriate ecological advice should be sought and Appropriate Assessment conducted, if necessary.

6.2.3 Sites of Geological Importance and Eskers

Geology is the study of the planet Earth as a whole, or in part and the materials of which it is made. It includes study of the processes that act and have acted upon these materials; the products and structures formed by such action and the physical and biological history of the planet since its origin including the history of life preserved as fossils in rocks and deposits at the surface or in layers beneath the surface of the earth. It also includes stratigraphic succession, caves, fossil content of any other items of scientific interest, and includes geomorphology, lithology and mineralogy³.

There is a statutory requirement placed on Local Authorities to have due regard for conservation of geological heritage features under the Planning and Development Act 2000, Planning and Development Regulations 2001, The Heritage Act 1995 and the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000.

³ Ref: A Methodology for Local Authority Heritage Officers on the Preparation of County/City Heritage Plans, The Heritage Council.

There are no sites designated of geological interest within the LAP boundary. However, it is worthwhile noting that Castlesampson esker to the west is the best - preserved esker in the country with vegetation typical of dry, calcareous soils. The importance of the site lies in its almost intact structure, something that is very rare in Irish eskers, in its relatively undisturbed state and in the presence of good quality, species-rich dry calcareous grassland of a type listed, with priority status, on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive (Special Area of Conservation). It provides a good contrast to the more acidic eskers nearby.

Eskers are glacial features found in south Roscommon, composed of narrow ridges of sand and gravel. Eskers are important because of their cultural, geological and natural heritage qualities. In ancient times they were used as roadways, in more recent times they are being used for extraction of the sand and gravel required by the construction industry. The glacial soil of eskers provides a habitat for many rare plants and for species-rich dry calcareous grassland of a type listed, with priority status, on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. Roscommon County Council recognises that there is a need to balance the requirements of aggregate extraction with the requirements of conservation of these important landscape features, allowing them to survive and achieve their educational, tourism and recreational potential.

6.2.4 Hedgerows

The County Roscommon Hedgerow Survey Report (2005) found that townland boundary hedgerows and roadside hedgerows contain a greater diversity of native shrub species than other hedges. It is important that hedgerows be retained where possible, especially townland boundaries, roadside hedges and hedgerows linking other habitats, forming a wildlife corridor. However, proper care and maintenance of hedgerows is also important.

Objectives for Hedgerows

Objective 105 Ensure that any development, which impacts on a townland boundary, roadside hedgerows or hedgerows which form links with other habitats and form wildlife corridors; should first seek to retain, translocate or replace with native species of local provenance, these hedges. The overall goal should be to have no net loss of the hedgerow resource⁴.

Objective 106 The retention, re-location, or re-establishment of hedgerows in planning consents shall be the subject of a bond sought by the Local Authority from those seeking the planning permission. The bond to be returned on the successful retention, re-location or re-establishment of the hedgerows concerned within a given period.

Objective 107 All mechanical hedge cutting carried out by or for Roscommon County Council should be carried out only by operators who have achieved the Teagasc proficiency standard MT 1302 – Mechanical Hedge Trimming and should be carried out only in the season permitted under the Wildlife Acts 1976 - 2000.

6.2.5 Trees and Woodlands

Trees and woodlands contribute to the landscape and visual amenity of County Roscommon. Native trees are particularly valuable as a habitat for invertebrates and bird life and trees provide a carbon sink and contribute to clean air and quality of life in the county as well as providing a valuable source of shelter and acting as a buffer from noise. Many other woodlands survive around the county, especially in demesnes and estates. The importance of demesnes as locations for trees and woodland is evident in the number of significant trees recorded in these demesnes by the Tree Council in the Tree Register of Ireland, as Champion Trees in County Roscommon⁵.

⁴ Roscommon County Council has successfully piloted hedgerow translocation on a site in Croghan. See www.roscommoncoco.ie for details.

⁵ Ref: http://www.treecouncil.ie/tree_register_of_ireland.htm

Objective for Trees and Woodlands

- Objective 108** Discourage the felling of mature trees to facilitate development, and encourage tree surgery rather than felling, where possible. All these works should be carried out in accordance with the provisions in the Forestry Act 1946.
- Objective 109** Consider the use of Tree Preservation Orders to protect important trees, groups of trees or woodlands within the LAP area as appropriate, during the lifetime of this plan.
- Objective 110** Undertake an assessment of the condition and potential hazard of roadside hedgerow trees, with mitigation measures specified.
- Objective 111** Commit to using native species wherever possible in its landscaping work and on Roscommon County Council property

6.2.6 Peatlands

Peatlands or bogs, as they are more commonly known, are a distinctive feature of the Co. Roscommon landscape. Bogs are a unique habitat, rich in wildlife possessing a combination of plants and animals that have evolved especially to thrive in a bog. Bogs can also be considered a living history book, containing within them semi fossilized plant remains and human artifacts, such as stumps of bog pine from trees that grew about 4000 years ago and ‘toghers’ or ancient wooden roadways which were built from the Bronze Age up to the medieval, from c. 2000 BC up to c. 1500 AD before the bog grew over and concealed them. ‘Bogs are important controllers of water levels in river catchments, providing a source of water in dry conditions and soaking up excess water during wetter periods’⁶

Blanket bogs are found on the high ground, such as Kilonan Mountain in the north of the county. Raised bogs are found throughout the rest of the county. Active blanket bogs and active raised bogs are considered to be priority habitats, listed in Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. Peatland sites of European and national conservation importance are also designated areas.

Objective for Peatlands

- Objective 112** Identify peatlands of local ecological or archaeological importance within the LAP area, and conserve them from inappropriate development, within the lifetime of this plan.
- Objective 113** Seek hydrological reports for significant developments within and close to peatlands so as to assess impacts on the integrity of peatland ecosystems.

6.2.7 Wetlands

‘Wetlands are simply lands covered with water – lakes, rivers, marshes, fens, bogs and other waterbodies whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, still or flowing water’⁷. ‘A fen is a wetland habitat with a permanently high water level at or just below the surface. Its principal source of nutrients is from surface or ground water and the substrate is an alkaline to slightly acid soil. The vegetation of fens is diverse and usually dominated by sedges and brown mosses’⁸. Wetlands are a significant feature of the landscape in Co. Roscommon, such as the Shannon and Suck Rivers and their associated callows or floodplains are major habitats. Wetlands are of importance for their habitat value and the rich wildlife that they provide a home to. However, wetlands have another importance – drainage; much of the surface water, which remains on land in Ireland is stored in wetlands. However

⁶ Ref: ENFO WL12 Irish Raised Bogs

⁷ Ref: ENFO FS7 Wetlands in Ireland

⁸ Ref: ENFO BS35 Irish Fens

wetlands, including fens, are under increasing threat from drainage, reclamation and development. The EU Water Framework Directive and the Ramsar Convention provide guidance for the protection of wetlands.

Objective for Wetlands, Watercourses and Fens

Objective 114 Promote awareness and educational opportunities relating to the wetlands within the LAP area and ensure that they are retained for their biodiversity and flood protection values.

Objective 115 Require a suitable environmental assessment of all proposed flood prevention works.

Objective 116 Ensure that where flood alleviation works take place the natural heritage and landscape character of rivers, streams and watercourses are protected and enhanced to the greatest extent possible.

6.2.8 Inland Waters

Inland waterways are canals, canalised sections of rivers and lakes, navigation channels in rivers and lakes, and their associated navigational features⁹. There are 8 inland waterways in Co. Roscommon, all of which are connected to the Shannon Navigation. The River Shannon provides the eastern border of the Monksland/ Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area.

These waterways have a rich built, natural and cultural heritage associated with them. Nowadays, inland waterways have an economic value, in terms of tourism attractions with potential to generate revenue. They also have a quality of life value, valuable to locals and visitor alike. They provide access to places where people can walk along towpaths and enjoy the surroundings of the waterside.

At the community meeting, the Cross River was viewed as a strength for the LAP area and it was indicated that a public right of way existed along the River and that this could be re-opened.

Policy for Inland Waterways

Policy 73 Have regard to the recommendations set out in the ‘Waterways Corridor Study 2004 - A Study of the area surrounding Lanesborough to Shannonbridge’, Waterways Corridor Study 2004 - The Shannon River between Roosky and Lanesborough’ and the ‘Waterways Corridor Study 2005 – A Study of the area surrounding the Upper Shannon navigation down to Roosky, including the Boyle River, Lough Allen, Lough Key and the Carnadoe waters’ (www.roscommoncoco.ie)

Policy 74 Promote the protection of fisheries and shell fisheries, where relevant and appropriate, in and around Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) including adjoining local authority areas

Objectives for Inland Waterways

Objective 117 Maintain and preserve the aesthetic value of inland waterways and the waterway corridors in the county from the impacts of dispersed and highly visible development, whilst discouraging speculative development and protecting water quality.

Objective 118 Seek to enhance public access to inland waterways as a condition of any development granted along inland waterways.

⁹ A Methodology for the Preparation of County Heritage Plans, The Heritage Council 2001

6.2.9 Alien Species

There are many alien species of plant and animal, now common in Ireland, which are not actually native, but were introduced in the past. Invasive alien species are those whose introduction threatens native biological diversity.

Specific habitat types currently under threat in Ireland from invasive species include freshwater river systems, ponds, mesotrophic lakes, native woodland, lowland heath, coastal floodplain, coastal saltmarsh and coastal sand dunes. A variety of native species are also threatened by invasives, including red squirrels, whiteclawed crayfish, red deer and earthworms¹⁰. The threat to biodiversity in County Roscommon by invasive species is real. One invasive species, Japanese Knotweed, for example, is found in several locations around the county. Earth from areas infested with Japanese Knotweed should never be moved, as this is the main cause of its spread. Roscommon County Council recognizes the threats posed by invasive species and supports, amongst others, the work of the Western Region Zebra Mussel Control Initiative, based in Galway County Council. Roscommon County Council will support other initiatives to raise awareness of the dangers of the spread of invasive species. Further information on this issue is available on www.alienspecies.ie.

Objectives for Alien Invasive Species

Objective 119 Support initiatives, which reduce the risks of invasions, help control and manage new and established invasive species, monitor impacts, raise public awareness, improve legislation and address international obligations.

Objective 120 Implement conditions as appropriate, as part of a grant of a planning permission or a waste permit, to prevent the spread of invasive species.

Objective 121 Encourage the use of native species in amenity planting, stocking and related community actions to reduce the introduction and spread of non-native species.

6.2.10 Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is a study of a given landscape to ascertain its ‘character’. Landscape character is the combination of physical, as well as, perceived aspects of the landscape. The aim of the County Roscommon LCA is to provide a tool for decision making regarding development control and to influence landscape policy at Local Authority level. In addition, it should be noted that in considering landscape character in the area, RCC acknowledges the importance of taking into account adjoining landscape character, landscape features and designations, including those in adjoining Counties.

Section 10 of the Planning and Development Act 2000¹¹ requires that all Local Authorities consider ‘*the character of the landscape*’ when drawing up objectives for their new county development plans, in the interests of proper planning and sustainable development. The European Landscape Convention (ELC), which Ireland ratified in 2002, requires signatories to assess and map their landscapes in the interests of wider European landscape planning and sustainable development. An important aspect of the ELC was to engage in widespread public consultation when assessing landscape value, which is a key component of the Roscommon LCA.

The Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area falls within two Landscape Character Areas (see Map 8b).

¹⁰ Ref: Stokes, K., O'Neill, K. & McDonald, R.A. (2004) Invasive species in Ireland. Unpublished report to Environment & Heritage Service and National Parks & Wildlife Service. Quercus, Queens University Belfast, Belfast.

¹¹ Part II, s10(e) of the Local Government Planning and Development Act 2000

Landscape Character Areas are unique, geographically-specific areas of a particular landscape type. Each has its own individual character and identity, even though it shares the same generic characteristics with other areas of the same type. This distinction is reflected in the naming of types and areas: landscape character types have generic names, but landscape character areas take on the names of specific places. Examples might be the south Leitrim drumlins and the Wicklow mountain moorlands¹².

The character areas are as follows;

- Roscommon LCA 8: Lower Lough Ree and Athlone Environs
- Roscommon LCA 35: Brideswell Esker Belt

Roscommon LCA 8: Lower Lough Ree and Athlone Environs

Key Characteristics

The Lower Lough Ree and Athlone Environs character area stretches southwards from Hudson's Bay to north of the village of Cornafulla. The western boundary is delineated by the zone of visibility from the River Shannon. This low lying area is predominantly made up of dry grassland and raised bog, most of which is reclaimed, as well as smaller pockets of wet grassland and wetland. There is a large coniferous plantation just west of Athlone Town. Two esker ridges run through the area, one running in a northerly direction towards the Hudson's Bay peninsula, the other running in a westerly direction from just outside of Athlone Town, part of which is currently a mineral extraction site. The former esker remains in a very intact form whereas the latter has been substantially altered due to encroachment of development. Although this character area is adjacent to Athlone Town (in neighbouring Westmeath) the amount of road infrastructure is quite low with the N61 running diagonally northward linking Athlone with Roscommon Town and the M6 heading southwest towards Ballinasloe in County Galway. The main development pressure from Athlone spreads westward along the R362.

The overall image of the Lower Lough Ree and Athlone Environs character area is of a peri-urban lakeshore area experiencing increasing development pressure.

Landscape Value

The Lower Lough Ree and Athlone Environs character area is of Very High Value reflecting the presence of the Shannon river corridor. The public consultation during the LCA process which formed part of the RCDP process identified an area of Beech woodland just north of Athlone to be as valuable. Much of the shoreline of the area is designated as an NHA, SAC and SPA.

Forces of Change

Development pressure is evident along the shores of Lough Ree north and south of Athlone town along the Shannon Callows, as well as along the small roads leading into the Callows. This is of concern not least because of the potential negative impact on the ecology of the flood plain, but also because of the negative impact such development will have on the visual amenity on the Shannon river corridor.

Key Recommendations

It should be an objective of the council that development along the shores Lough Ree and the River Shannon south of Athlone should be prohibited in order to protect the **visual amenity** and the natural habitats of the water corridor.

¹² Ibid

Roscommon LCA 35: Brideswell Esker Belt**Key Characteristics**

This landscape character area is located in the south of the county and has been defined to the north and south primarily on the basis of land cover and to the east and west primarily on the basis of subtle enclosure by landform. The area is predominantly low lying and flat with just a few low hills located to the west and east. The flatness of terrain has had a significant impact on drainage of the LCA, creating extensive areas of raised bog and reclaimed raised bog throughout. The predominance of bogland tends to dissipate towards the east of the LCA, being replaced by dry grassland, reclaimed raised bog and some patches of wet grassland. In contrast to the planar bogs, there are a series of ridges located in the northeastern end of the LCA. These eskers fan out from the Athlone environs to the north and west. Land cover in the northeastern corner is complex, combining a mix of both wet and dry environments. There are three regional roads which pass through this LCA and the Dublin to Galway railway line also passes through this LCA running in a straight line from east to west. The overall image of this landscape is one of bogs and eskers experiencing localised development pressure from nearby urban area.

Landscape Value

This landscape is of moderate value. There are two areas of NHA and cSAC in the eastern part and one small NHA in the southwest. Castlesampson esker is in this LCA and has been identified as being of particular value as an NHA for its geological significance.

Forces of Change

There has been considerable quarrying activity in the esker belt of this LCA, adjoining the boundary of LCA 34. This has brought about considerable landscape change. While the quarry pits themselves might be screened from public roads, the dust created by vehicles emerging from the quarry is clearly evident and creates an adverse visual impact.

The proximity of this LCA to the large town of Athlone brings with it pressure for development, involving both single dwellings as well as commercial buildings.

Key Recommendations

- It should be an objective of the council to give special recognition to the esker area in LCA 35 and the inter-related geo-morphological landscape of archaeological significance.
- In assessing planning applications for quarrying the Council will have regard to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government Quarries and ancillary activities Guidelines 2004
- It is recommended that a study of the eskers in County Roscommon be undertaken to identify those which are most sensitive to development and to thereafter prioritise those which warrant protection from development.

6.2.11 Natural Heritage Strategy

The **Natural Heritage Strategy** aims to;

- Protect and conserve existing environmental designations,
- Protect, conserve and enhance the biodiversity of the LAP area
- Identify, protect and conserve sites of natural heritage importance, in co-operation with the relevant statutory authorities
- Provide for the passive and active recreational needs of users
- Provide for high quality landscaping and open space areas on developed lands

Natural Heritage policies and objectives are included in their respective sections above.

CHAPTER 7: SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The building of strong and inclusive communities is a key element in achieving sustainable development. Access to cultural, social and community facilities is central to promoting a sense of community and social inclusion. In addition to economic development, sustainable communities require the provision of, and access to, education; health; childcare services; recreation and leisure amenities; community support services; and, a good quality built environment.

In addition, for some members of the community there are more barriers in accessing the same opportunities, facilities and services, whether through age, gender, disability, unemployment, location, origin or language barriers. **Social inclusion** refers to the manner in which all members of the community are integrated in an equal manner, and it seeks to reduce barriers such as those mentioned above. Specific policies and actions are required for these people, in order to enable them to obtain the same quality of life as the remainder of the community, which is crucial to a strong and inclusive community. Many of these policies are contained within the RCDP 2008 – 2014.

7.2 POLICY CONTEXT

A myriad of statutory and policy documents address the issue of the provision of social and community facilities;

- **Planning and Development Act (2000 as amended)** includes the requirement to include objectives relating to social infrastructure within CDPs and other plans
- **National Spatial Strategy (NSS) (2002-2020)** emphasises the importance of developing strong, vibrant and sustainable communities and sets out considerations for enhancing quality of life and places emphasis on the quality of open spaces, public parks and amenity areas as features that can positively contribute to a good quality of life.
- **Regional Planning Guidelines for the West (2004-2016)** call upon Planning Authorities to adopt objectives that provide for community, cultural and social needs of all persons and communities through the provision of satisfactorily dispersed and easily accessible social and community infrastructure. Such objectives are seen as vital contributory factors in ensuring the delivery of a high quality of life.
- **National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (2007-2016)** provides greater emphasis on services and activation of these as a means of tackling social exclusion.
- **Roscommon Common Vision, County Development Board Strategy (2002 – 2012)** aims to develop an integrated, sustainable and people-centred framework for the development of the county. Developing and implementing the Ten Year Strategy which includes economic, social and cultural development began in 2002 and will continue until 2012.
- **Other Relevant Documents/Policies:**
 - National Development Plan, 2007
 - National Disability Strategy, 2004
 - National Health Strategy: Quality and Fairness – A Health System for You, 2000 – 2005
 - Department of Health and Children – Statement of Strategy, 2003-2005
 - National Children's Strategy, 2000
 - Department of Education & Science - Statement of Strategy, 2003-2005
 - Childcare Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2004
 - Roscommon Common Vision – a ten year strategy for economic, social and cultural development, 2002-2012

7.3 PHYSICAL CONTEXT

The community in the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area believe that their greatest strength lies in the people of the area whom they characterize as “vibrant, new and young”.

In terms of **weaknesses** in the LAP area, the following was identified at the community meeting;

- Lack of educational facilities for an increasing population. Many young couples in the area will be starting families and therefore will require additional primary school places
- There is a need for a Garda Station in the area
- There is a general lack of services and infrastructure in the area
- There is a need for a park with playground and other recreational facilities in the area
- There is only one graveyard – there is no replacement for it

In addition to these, the community identified **additional community facilities** which are required within the LAP area;

❖ **In terms of community facilities:**

- One group identified that the following are required;
 - A church
 - Schools
 - School parking
 - Graveyard
 - Play areas
 - Garda barracks
 - Public park and pitches
- **Handball Alley** (at the back of the school) – is not in use at the moment as it is overgrown with weeds etc
- The Ball Alley in Bellanamullia is in a state of disrepair and it is recommended that this one be refurbished and possibly a new one constructed where new pitches are developed
- The Ball Alley requires public lighting and security
- The LAP area needs **street names**
- There is potential for the further development of **Gaelic games** within the area. Money is available from Croke Park for the development of Gaelic Games within Roscommon.
- A possible recreational facility has been indicated in the lands to the north of Larkfield House. Activities on offer could include Basketball, Handball, and Squash
- Astro turf pitch should be developed at the Cushlea pitches
- The Cushlea Pitches are quite far removed from the centre of the area and recreation and amenity areas should be developed at the core of the area. The pitches are also situated on wet enough land
- A new community centre / modern **sports complex** should be developed with the likes of handball, squash, basketball, a football pitch, Astroturf etc. Most of these facilities are not available in Athlone and would thus attract people from Athlone to Monksland
- The community have also asked whether the land purchased by the County Council adjacent to the Cloonakille National School can be leased back to the school and utilized for a sports ground
- There are **old fishing styles** along the Cross River, but are also very overgrown with weeds etc – these should be cut back. Fishing used to be very popular in this area

-
- **Walking and Cycle routes** should be developed in the area e.g. in Cloonakille area, along the Cross River, along the Old and New Tuam Roads.
 - More public green areas
 - Woodland walks to Coillte Forest
 - Possible locations for the Public Park e.g.: -
 - Conor Hannon's Gravel Pit
 - Frank Green's field beside Sli an Choiste
 - Lands acquired by NRA
 - Would be good to explore whether **walks** can take place in the forested areas around the Cushlea and Larkfield Bogs
 - Park come playground. A park along the Cross River leading to the Shannon would be preferable.
 - In terms of a walking route, one extending from Monksland to Hodson Bay could prove problematic due to rising water levels. However, the Cross River is much more predictable.
 - There is also potential to have a walking route from Bellanamullia to Summerhill
 - There is a lack of **facilities for teenagers** in the area. Many teenagers hang around the community centre, which has led to graffiti and other vandalism in the area, for example when the younger children come to use the play area in the community centre they are often greeted with broken glass etc
 - The community would like a **full-time garda station**. At present the gardai from Athlone come out on a Tuesday evening for an hour to the community centre
 - A **post office and credit union** are also required in the area. The credit union in Athlone may consider a sub-office in this area – one of the community members indicated that the manager had indicated this.
 - May be good to have a bank branch in area as well as a permanent library
 - The villages of Monksland and Bellanamullia are very distinct and have **two separate community groups**.
 - Focal point 2 at the Mill - Could be village area within the townland
 - Focal point 1 – derelict – lack of proper policing – great potential
 - ❖ In terms of school and educational facilities:
 - As mentioned above, with the expected growth in population in the coming years, further educational facilities such as a national school will be needed in the area. It would not be considered appropriate to develop the required educational facilities as part of a housing development etc. A purpose built school which will cater for the current and future needs of the area over the long term would be considered appropriate.
 - There is a need for a secondary school in the area. Currently there is adequate capacity for girls in the area, but the boys have to go to secondary school in Athlone as there is no school for them in the area. As the population grows further facilities for girls and boys will be needed in the area.
 - ❖ In terms of health:
 - A primary health care centre is required in the area which could cater for, amongst others, the needs of elderly people who have to travel to Roscommon and Ballinasloe hospitals for treatment regularly
-

❖ In terms of churches and burial grounds:

- Discussion as to whether a church is needed in the area, one person felt it was and others felt that travelling into St Peters in Athlone was ok. People felt that they may like to have their own identity, “if Coosan can do it so can we”.
- A proper cemetery at Cloonakille is required as it is still active.

❖ In terms of what was identified by the community on the mapping:

- Walking route identified along the Cross River from the New Tuam Road to the railwayline and out on the old N6
- Potential park opposite the Mill Pub
- Walking and Cycle routes should be developed in the area e.g. in Cloonakille area, along the Cross River, along the Old and New Tuam Roads
- Existing open space to be retained around Summerhill College
- Potential park along the Cross River
- Potential walkway to the Dolmen

7.3.1 Community Facilities (Map 10)

Monksland has a residential population that has grown significantly in recent years. There have been a significant number of private housing developments as well as a small proportion of public housing developments in the area. Concerns have previously been raised regarding the lack of social and community facilities to support the residential growth of the area.

Residents Groups have expressed a need for the following services and facilities in the area:

- crèche facilities;
- facilities for children, including sports fields and leisure facilities;
- open space facilities, including a park;
- and an ambulance and emergency facility.

Roscommon County Council has taken steps over the last number of years and will continue to address the previous shortage of facilities through the following;

- development of the Monksland community centre which the community regard as a strength;
- two new sports pitches and dressing rooms at Cushlea,
- childrens playgrounds adjacent to the Monksland Civic centre; and,
- the provision of footpaths and lighting which will be ongoing with the provision on the New and Old Tuam Roads.

It is important that the needs of **young people** particularly teenagers are also addressed. The Council will seek to provide a range of social, recreational and community facilities including sports and recreational facilities, youth clubs and supervised places to meet. The Council will therefore, where possible, cooperate with community interests in developing additional facilities at appropriate locations in the town. Examples of facilities could include a “skatepark”, basketball courts etc. A recommendation for areas to be identified for this purpose is detailed in Section 7.3.2 below.

In addition, the following **facilities** have been provided through the **private sector**, i.e. neighbourhood shops, a hotel, gymnasium etc. In addition, the Drum Community Sports and Social Centre Ltd. opened in 1988 and is located in Crannagh Beg. The centre includes many facilities including a substantial sports hall (suitable for indoor soccer, basketball, badminton, etc.), meeting rooms, stage, kitchen, and showers/changing facilities. Drum Bingo is held in the community centre every Friday night, and this is a very important social service for the community.

There is also an ongoing **RAPID** (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) programme undertaking community work in the Monksland area. This includes, support for the community centre; small infrastructural works such as the public lighting, drainage and shrubbery to be provided around the civic centre.

In terms of **libraries**, the mobile library calls to the LAP area and parks at the SuperValu.

Athlone Town provides the **Fire Service**, by agreement with Roscommon County Council, in the southern part of the County.

7.3.2 Schools and Educational Facilities

Community facilities, schools and other educational premises represent a valuable resource in terms of land and buildings, which are generally only utilised on a partial basis. The dual use of schools and other educational facilities can contribute towards the provision of community and cultural facilities for the wider community. Roscommon County Council will promote the use of existing buildings and lands to the benefit of the wider community, subject to available resources. Opportunities will also be sought to ensure that proposed new educational and other community facilities within the LAP area are specifically designed to facilitate dual use.

There are currently 2 primary schools, i.e. Bealnamullia NS and Summerhill NS, and 1 post-primary school, i.e. Summerhill, within the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP Area. It was identified within the RCDP that an additional 40 primary classrooms (using a pupil:teacher ratio of 25:1), and 1 new post primary school was needed in the County based on the population projections for the County. Flowing from this, the RCDP indicated that RCC will encourage and facilitate the provision of at least 1 new primary school, an extension of the existing primary schools and the expansion of the existing secondary school within the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) area. It should be noted that the PA will in the first instance consider the expansion of existing facilities on adjacent land.

The Table below details the provision of schools in relation to the phasing of development which is proposed within Chapter 9: Urban Development. New Primary Schools on 3 acre sites are recommended within Phase 1 and 3 and a new secondary school either within Phase 2 or 3 on a 12 acre site.

Table 9: Proposed Educational Provision within the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area

Educational Provision	Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area		
	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Area of land (acres) *	91.2 acres (portion of 19.1) *	132.4*	165.3*
=Additional Dwellings (@19 - 29 dwellings per hectare/ 8 - 12 per acre – 8 is assumed)	542 (already permitted) + 225 = 767	1059	1322
Additional population (@2.6 persons per dwelling – CSO, 2006)	1994	2754	3438
Additional children of school going age (11.9% of population)	237	328	409
Additional Classrooms required (@25 pupils per teacher/class)	9	13	16

Suggested site size (@1.22hectares/3acres for 12-31 classrooms &2.03hectares/5acres for 32 classrooms)	1 new school Extension of existing schools (indicated in RCDP)	Catered for in new school	3 acre site for school
Additional children of post primary age (8.5% of population)	169	234	292
Additional Classrooms required (@25 pupils per teacher/class)	7	9	12
Suggested site size (@4.8hectares/12acres for schools of 600-800 pupils)	Extension of existing school	< 12 acres/possibly new school at this stage	Provide new school if not already provided in Phase 2 – 12 acre site

*** Refer to Phasing Table in Chapter 9: Urban Development**

It is recommended that a minimum of 5 acres be set aside both north (as part of the Cushlea Pitches) and south of the New Tuam Road (SO5 and SO6 within the area designated for New Residential Use) for Recreation, Amenity & Open Space. In addition, at least 3 acres (SO7 within the land designated for New Residential use as well as adjacent to the Cushlea Pitches), for the provision of Community & Educational Facilities. (see Map 13a) The objective for the provision of these facilities will include the provision of appropriate ancillary facilities e.g. club houses, parking areas etc. with appropriate access to the new M6 east and south. It should be noted that these areas reflected on the map are indicative only and would be subject to detailed site investigation. (See Map 13a)

It is noted that schools should be located on easily accessible sites and applications for education developments will be expected to meet the Council's Standards with regard to car-parking, building design, landscaping and access for people with disabilities. These standards will be applicable whether the proposed development is for a new educational facility or an extension to an existing resource. New facilities should be located, where possible, close to or within the main residential areas in order to reinforce a sense of community and to ensure that walking, cycling and public transport are suitable options.

Policy for Schools and Education Facilities

Policy 75 Consult with the Department of Education regarding the location and provision of adequate educational facilities.

Objective for Schools and Education Facilities

Objective 122 Facilitate the expansion and development of schools by the Department of Education within the LAP area within the lifetime of the plan

Objective 123 Consult with the Department of Education and the community regarding the provision of adequate parking, pick up and set down areas at Summerhill and Cloonakille National Schools respectively.

Objective 124 Within 2 years of the adoption of the LAP, prepare and present a detailed plan setting out potential suitable sites for the development of Community and Educational Facilities as well as sites for Recreation, Amenity and Open Space and what types of facilities could be developed thereon.

7.3.3 Social Inclusion and Disability

The inclusion of all sectors of society must be considered in planning for open space, sports and recreation facilities. It is also an objective of the Council that all groups should be enabled to participate fully in the life of the community.

RCC has established a Social Inclusion Unit which aims to broaden the role of the Council in tackling social exclusion and poverty in the County and to more fully integrate it into the entire work of the organisation. Its role is therefore to support and facilitate Social Inclusion activities and policies across the entire range of local authority activities.

7.3.4 Childcare Provision

Increasing numbers of people in the workforce and changing lifestyles have increased the demand for childcare facilities in our communities. The provision of childcare facilities is subject to the Child Care Act and the Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations of 1996.

There are approximately 10 childcare services within the LAP area, which are categorised into private and community services and are sessional, full daycare, and child-minding.

Table 10: Community Childcare Facility

Name of childcare facility	Address	Area within LAP boundary
Monksland Afterschool Activity Club	Community Centre	Monksland

Roscommon County Childcare Committee, 2009

Table 11: Private Childcare Facility

Name of childcare facility	Address	Area within LAP boundary
Kids Klub Creche	Monksland Village	Athlone
Early Days Playschool	Clookilla	Bealnamulla / Bellanamullia
Eileen's Preschool	Falty	Oldtown
Happylands	21 Millcross Road	Bealnamulla / Bellanamullia
Wonder Years	Cornafulla	Athlone
Little Peoples Place	Clonark	Cornafulla
O'Reilly Pre-School	Bealnamulla Road	Monksland
Millmount Childcare	Slí an Choiste	Old Tuam Road
Grovelands Childcare	Corran Riada	Monksland
Naíonra Réalta Geala	Drum Community Centre	Crannagh Beg

Roscommon County Childcare Committee, 2009

The Council recognises that the provision of properly run and conveniently located childcare facilities within the LAP area is a fundamental element of social infrastructure and will support the Roscommon County Childcare Committee's Childcare Strategy.

It should be noted that applications for childcare facilities in a residential area will be assessed on the basis of their impact in terms of noise, loss of residential amenity, traffic generation and general disturbance. In general, the factors to be considered in determining a planning application for a childcare facility will include proximity to public transport, the nature of the facility, numbers and ages of children, adequate parking for staff, and set down areas for customers, to name but a few.

Policy for Childcare Provision

Policy 76 Support the Roscommon County Childcare Committee, the County Development Board and the Health Service Executive in formulating policy to ensure the provision of affordable childcare throughout the County and within the LAP area specifically

- Policy 77** Within the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area encourage the provision of childcare facilities as an essential part of residential schemes, places of employment such as industrial/business parks, and in close proximity to schools.
- Policy 78** Support the multi-functional use and provision of buildings and opportunities to maximise the use of existing physical resources / infrastructure within the LAP area
- Policy 79** Support the development of stand-alone, outdoor play areas, in consultation with the County Childcare Committee, subject to funding.

Objective for Childcare Provision

- Objective 125** Implement the Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG, June 2000).

7.3.5 Health

Responsibility for the provision of health-care facilities within County Roscommon lies with a number of public, voluntary and private agencies. The Health Service Executive is the primary agency responsible for delivering health and personal social services.

There is a doctors surgery in the LAP area and the Western Health Boards offices at the Civic Centre has a number of services available including a dentist, health nurse, speech therapy etc.

Roscommon County Council will therefore support proposals for new health centres provided they are located in the neighbourhood centres; are located on sites which permit access for people with disabilities; are accessible to public and private transport; and, are located close to or within walking distance of residential development. The Council will continue to work alongside key health providers to assist in ensuring a greater quality of life for all.

Policy for Healthcare

- Objective 126** Facilitate the accommodation of healthcare functions at suitable locations within the LAP area, when required, in liaison with the appropriate health authorities

7.3.6 Burial Grounds

The LAP area is presently serviced by 3 graveyards which all fall outside the development envelope of the LAP area, namely, the Drum Cemetery, Cloonown Cemetery and the Cloonakille Cemetery (historic). The Drum and Cloonown Cemetery are currently undergoing expansion and are being upgraded to capacity for a twenty year timeframe.

It was indicated within the RCDP process that within two years of the adoption of the CDP, RCC will commission an in-depth survey of suitable lands within Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) for the provision of a cemetery. This may not be necessary with the upgrading of the aforementioned burial grounds. The community has mentioned however that they would like to see Cloonakille Cemetery upgraded.

There are also graveyards which are considered ancient and it is noted that over half the graveyards in the county are on the Record of Monuments and Places. This is important as it means that these are protected under the National Monuments Act 1930-2004. Such historic graveyards are the oldest in the county and contain structures and burials from the earliest phases of Christianity up to the present. Some graveyards also have associated churches, mausoleums, vaults or other structures, which are protected under the Planning and Development Acts, because of their architectural or other value.

Historic graveyards contain within them a wealth of archaeological and architectural heritage - such as churches, bullaun stones, carved stones, rare plants, native grasses and dry stonewalls etc and may be protected under the National Monuments Act or the Planning & Development Acts. The County Roscommon Graveyard survey contains details on the ownership and status of all graveyards in County Roscommon. This can be viewed on www.roscommoncoco.ie or in the County Library, Roscommon.

Objectives for Burial Grounds

Objective 127 Require that all works proposed to be carried out in graveyards, which are Recorded Monuments, are notified two months in advance, to the National Monuments Service of the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government, as required under the National Monuments Acts, and that recommendations regarding the carrying out of proposed works are complied with, as a condition of any grant aid from Roscommon County Council.

Objective 128 Within one year of the adoption of this LAP, RCC will commission an in depth survey of suitable lands within or adjacent to the LAP area for the provision of a cemetery and progress its findings

7.3.7 Community Development Fora

South Roscommon Community Forum

The work of the South Roscommon Community Forum is to;

- Source funding and supports for projects
- Give hands-on assistance
- Give professional support and information to assist groups
- Give groups an opportunity to meet with Community and voluntary organisations throughout the county to share ideas and experience
- Act as a voice and lobby on behalf of the Community and voluntary sector at a county level
- Provide a mechanism for the voluntary and community fora to be represented on the RCDB, the Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) and other structures
- Establish networks with other community fora throughout the country
- Organise training and workshops to help groups in their work

While the South Roscommon Community Forum don't award grants to community groups and volunteer organisations, they are able to provide help and advice when applying for government aid for many projects. Listed below are some projects which have been successful with their assistance in terms of grant aid;

1. Many sports groups have received assistance to apply for funding to develop local sports facilities. Successful projects include the new Fuerty GAA development at Mulhern Park, where the local club were awarded €200,000 through the Sports Capital Programme run by the Department of Tourism and Sport.
2. An area of waste ground in the village of Ballyforan was transformed by the local Tidy Towns Group into an environment Education Park for the local community. SRCF assisted the group to access funding and provided technical assistance.
3. Training courses are also provided to community groups and voluntary organisations.
4. The CAIT Mobile Computer Suite is managed by SRCF and is available to voluntary/community groups who wish to provide IT Training in their local community centre.

The SEED Third Level Outreach Course is a joint venture between SRCF and Waterford Institute of Technology. The aim of the course is to create awareness of sustainability and give participants the knowledge and skills to create environment based educational projects in their own locality.

7.4 SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES STRATEGY

The **Social and Community Facilities Strategy** aims to:

- Ensure the provision of necessary community services and facilities.
- Limit new development in urban areas where necessary social infrastructure including, but not limited to, schools and community facilities are unavailable.
- Ensure the provision of affordable childcare within the Plan Area in consultation with the Roscommon County Childcare Committee, the County Development Board and the Health Service Executive.
- Ensure that large scale residential development provides for, and if necessary leverages, the necessary educational, social, open space and sporting infrastructure commensurate with the scale of development.
- Roscommon County Council will promote the use of existing buildings and lands to the benefit of the wider community, subject to available resources.
- Ensure that all groups should be enabled to participate fully in the life of the community and that language or other barriers should be addressed so that all groups have the opportunity to live full, active lives and to integrate and contribute to community life.

Policies for Community Facilities

- Policy 80** Seek to provide a range of social, recreational and community facilities to meet the needs of all of the areas residents.
- Policy 81** Support the multi-functional use and provision of buildings and opportunities to maximise the use of existing physical resources / infrastructure.
- Policy 82** Ensure that social inclusion is an integral part of the design and delivery of all programmes and services and ensures effectiveness and efficiency in its delivery.
- Policy 83** Facilitate and develop a hierarchy of open spaces throughout the County to provide greater opportunities for recreation and amenity.

Objectives for Community Facilities

- Objective 126** Seek to facilitate the provision of a local centre at an appropriate location in Crannagh.
- Objective 127** Assess the feasibility of provision and facilitate the delivery of a full range of social, recreational and community facilities to meet the needs of all of the areas residents as indicated in this chapter and as identified by the local community. These include, amongst others;
- Another Primary and a Secondary school with associated parking
 - Garda station
 - Public Park with a playground
 - Other recreational facilities including pitches
 - An upgraded or new Handball Alley
 - Street names
 - Astro turf pitches
 - New modern community centre/sports complex with basketball, handball and squash **etc.**

- Walking and cycling routes
- Facilities and services for teenagers
- Post-office, Credit Union and Bank Branch
- Permanent Library
- Primary Health Care Centre
- Church
- “Proper”/Upgraded Cloonakille Cemetery

Objective 128 Explore the possibility of, facilitate and support, together with relevant agencies and government departments, the provision of a permanent Garda station at the Monksland Civic Offices / Community Centre, within the lifetime of this LAP.

CHAPTER 8: RECREATION, LEISURE AND TOURISM

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Recreation, Leisure and Tourism are becoming increasingly important within Local Authority areas and are able to act as key economic drivers within the County.

8.2 POLICY CONTEXT

There is a strong focus on leisure and tourism within the National and Regional Policy documents. The **National Spatial Strategy (NSS)** places County Roscommon in the West Region, which has as its goal to promote economic activity and balanced regional development by building on the dynamic role of Galway as a gateway and expanding its influence. It recommends identifying key assets and presenting or assembling a quality tourism package relying on the natural and cultural heritage of areas, such as those located along the Shannon River, enhancing hotel facilities, improving regional road access and improving awareness through marketing.

“Ireland must continue to trade on its ‘green’ image, a mark of quality, which is attractive for tourism and all investment. Protecting this environmental quality will be crucial”.¹

The rural landscape is also central to Ireland’s Tourism Industry and in response to the decline in agriculture in rural areas it is proposed to support these affected communities through promoting diversification in enterprise, local services and tourism. In developing a tourism product it is important to build the following things; the central locations of the key towns at the intersection of national road and rail routes; the attractiveness of the village structure; and the natural resources of the rural areas.

The **NSS** indicates that tourism potential should not be maximized at the expense of the natural assets of County Roscommon and supports the promotion and marketing of the inland waterways, walking and cycling trails, and the historic assets of the County as well as the provision of the necessary support infrastructure and access.

The **NSS** identifies three broad areas:

- Established tourism areas - containing premier international tourism destinations ranging from cities such as Dublin and Galway, to the highly developed ‘tourism districts’ in parts of County Kerry and the Mid West.
- Developing tourism areas – containing high amenity areas close to the main cities and certain inland areas associated with water-based recreation where tourism is beginning to have a significant effect.
- Undeveloped tourism area – containing inland river valleys, many parts of the canal network like the Royal and Grand Canals, where significant potential for tourism based development exists but has not developed as yet.

The **Regional Planning Guidelines 2004-2016 (RPG’s)** recognise the importance of ensuring that the natural and built heritage is conserved and enhanced, and state that preservation of the quality of heritage is also a major element in sustaining an identity for the region and maintaining biodiversity, educational, amenity, tourism and leisure values. They advocate the importance of encouraging a stronger tourism market; diversified farm production and encouraging large-scale developments such as Lough Key Forest Park development.

¹ National Spatial Strategy

8.3 PHYSICAL CONTEXT

8.3.1 Open Space and Sporting Provision

It is the aim of the Planning Authority to facilitate the provision of improved amenities throughout the LAP area and to promote the renewal and environmental improvement of neglected areas.

Open space is an important consideration in the plan making process, whether it is a regional facility; open space to serve a town; or open space which is provided as part of a residential development. Open space is important for the health and well being of the entire community and particularly youth.

The NSS sets out considerations for enhancing quality of life and an emphasis is given in this context to the quality of open spaces, public parks and amenity areas as features that can make a key contribution to a good quality of life. The Planning Authority supports the provision of high quality sports centres, public spaces and parks throughout the county in order to provide people with opportunities for outdoor recreation within relatively easy reach of where they live and work. The Planning Authority also recognises that public open spaces must be maintained. In addition, green belts and walks along canals, rivers and lakes should be maintained, where appropriate, for their amenity and tourist values and adequate open space and playground facilities should be provided throughout the county. In this regard the Planning Authority supports the development of clear criteria regarding the utilisation of these areas as well as correct servicing.

New urban developments must provide and maintain public open space. Existing healthy trees should be retained where possible and developers are encouraged to plant trees and hedgerows, which are native to the area.

“Roscommon Common Vision”, the County Development Board (CDB) Strategy 2002–2012 encourages the development of all sports activities and new sports facilities. This will be achieved through the Roscommon Sports Partnership Strategic Plan 2006-2011. Roscommon Common Vision focuses on the following aspects:

- Catering for a life long relationship with sport;
- Attending to the needs of high performing sports persons within the county;
- The development of a Sports Partnership and developing a Regional Sports Infrastructure Plan; and,
- The Irish Sports Council, the statutory development agency for sport in Ireland, has as an objective to increase opportunities to participate in sport at local level and to enhance access to sports and recreation for all, with the support of organisations such as local authorities.

RCC supports these initiatives with a view to ensuring that the facilities are there for those who desire to play sports, to encourage more locals to become involved in sports within the County, as well as attracting more visitors to the county.

It is vital that important green areas, open spaces, sports and other recreational facilities be identified and mapped so that they can be protected; and in order that locals and visitors alike may be made aware of them. It is considered that sports and recreational facilities are important for enabling people to live a full and active life and these should therefore be provided in line with population growth and residential development.

The open space system within the LAP area consists of the various open space areas and linkages, such as natural areas, greenbelts, drainage channels, sports fields, transitional agricultural areas, landscaping, etc., that support ecological functioning, recreational activities and visual amenity. The open space system also potentially provides an important structuring element for development.

- The first Greenbelt areas can be considered core open space areas that have a primary role in ensuring ecological functioning. Areas include the Lough Ree cSAC/River Shannon waterway and floodplain in the north-east, the Cross River and floodplain and the Cushlea Bog lands in the north-west.
- The second Transitional Agricultural areas and a Greenbelt area just south and north of the M6 can be considered open space corridors and linkages. These are major and minor open spaces that connect the open space core areas, such as drainage lines, road embankments, tree lines, hedgerows, agricultural lands, etc., and which support ecological functioning by allowing for the movement of species between core areas.
- The third open space “stepping stones” refer to the smaller, more isolated pockets of open space that tend to be interspersed within built-up areas, such as public open spaces, parks, playing fields, private gardens, landscaping, etc., and which provide a further level of support to the ecological functioning of the open space core areas, corridors and linkages.

It is considered that all of the above elements are essential to the establishment of an integrated open space system that protects existing open space core areas from development and agriculture-related impacts and that links these core areas together using landscaping, sports fields, drainage channels, etc. to support biodiversity and ecological functioning, that provides adequate passive and active open spaces to support recreational activities and that includes high quality landscaping to provide visual relief from built developments.

At the community meeting, **existing open spaces and greenbelts** were identified and information provided on how they might be improved;

- Existing open space to be retained around Summerhill – Community / Amenity
- Existing open space indicated at Cushlea Pitches - Football Pitches
- Area behind Ball Alley
- Green area beside Council offices
- There is a pitch and putt area west of Bellanamullia
- To the rear of Cushlea Grove residential estate (beside the sports field). This area needs to be closed off to caravans etc – increasing problems.
- Football pitches – they could be improved by providing running track and astro turf football pitch and remove overhead wires
- Any large green area in housing developments should have play facilities
- There are several existing walkways with the potential to develop a circular greenway throughout the area linking the village of Monksland with the village of Bellanamullia
- There is an existing ‘token’ park and play area beside the community centre. The community centre has potential and could be opened up and redeveloped to increase its use and value to the community.
- There is an old basketball court beside the community centre that could be resurfaced and opened to the community
- The existing GAA/Soccer pitches used to be public but are now fenced off and no longer open to public use
- There is potential to develop a large community park near the Mill Bar adjacent to the Cross River. This area could include a children’s play area, running track, tennis courts etc. and a walkway along the river. This area could also be linked by a greenway to other open space in the area. Gates could be provided and the area could be locked at night to prevent anti-social behaviour
- The GAA/Soccer pitch used to be open to the public, they could go for a run etc. It was initially set up as a public area. The pitch has now been fenced off and is no longer accessible. There is therefore a need for similar facilities elsewhere in the area or for the pitch to be opened and used as it was intended as a public area

- The Cross River has great potential and could be used more to provide a walkway and public open areas/linear park, with walks and kids play area
- The Cross river could be considered an important landscape, particularly if it were developed as a park or greenway
- There need to be facilities for teenagers in the area
- Potential park immediately to the west of the Cross River along the New Tuam Road
- Need to identify park/open space area in and around River Village, the site adjacent to it to the west and incorporating some of the land previously zoned as Neighbourhood Centre at the corner of the New and Old Tuam Roads

In addition, the community identified areas which would benefit from **additional tree-planting/landscaping** etc.:

- Very important that landscaping & tree planting be provided along the road outside the Community Centre. Existing planting was removed by Contractors and was never replaced (area from Cushlea right down to Sli an Cushla)
- Hoarding Boards should be replaced with something better
- Monksland link road needs trees
- Road into Cedarwood Drive – the trees need to be pruned properly
- The new Link Road onto the old N6 should be landscaped
- The area in and around the Community Centre and civic amenity area should be landscaped
- The Oyster Homes development is an eyesore which would benefit greatly from landscaping and tree-planting along the road.
- The Roscommon County Council Depot needs screening in the form of appropriate landscaping and tree-planting
- The trees along the dual carriageway need tidying up as they are covering parts of some signs
- Tree-planting and landscaping would be appropriate along any new footpaths and cycleways located along the main road. This would also help to visually link the villages of Bellanamullia and Monksland creating a very definite area separate from Athlone.
- The landscaping of existing estates is not taking place and these planning conditions should be enforced.
- Town centre/neighbourhood centre will need decent deciduous trees planted in and around it.
- Tree planting schemes should be encouraged and planning conditions in respect of these enforced

The Council will seek to ensure that open space for recreational amenity purposes in residential developments is incorporated. The provision of open space should be suitable for use by all members of the community. Developers may also be required to make a contribution, in terms of land or finance, to the Council. This contribution will be related to the cost to the Council of providing the open space. There is a significant deficit of amenity, recreation facilities and land as well as other Community facilities within the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area. The Council recognises the necessity for the provision of playing pitches and facilities for other passive recreational pursuits. The Council will therefore seek to facilitate the provision of new recreation, leisure and tourism facilities.

The Council will continue to cooperate with sporting bodies and Government Departments in the provision and improvement of sporting facilities in the area. The availability of alternative recreation facilities will be a consideration in the assessment of planning applications on existing recreational land.

In relation to providing facilities, the development contribution scheme will enable some support for the provision of public open space throughout the county.

As a more specific requirement within the LAP area, it is recommended that a minimum of 5 acres be set aside both north (as part of the Cushlea Pitches) and south of the New Tuam Road (SO5 and SO6 within the area designated for New Residential Use) for Recreation, Amenity & Open Space. In addition, at least 3 acres (SO7 within the land designated for New Residential use as well as adjacent to the Cushlea Pitches), for the provision of Community & Educational Facilities. (see Map 13a) The objective for the provision of these facilities will include the provision of appropriate ancillary facilities e.g. club houses, parking areas etc. with appropriate access to the new M6 east and south. It should be noted that these areas reflected on the map are indicative only and would be subject to detailed site investigation. (See Map 13a)

Three special objectives should be included within the LAP which address the need for Community & Educational Facilities as well as Recreation, Amenity & Open Space.

CE Community & Educational Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for health, welfare, community, education and institutional uses including schools, childcare, community meeting areas, churches, etc. in close proximity to existing and planned residential communities as well as other ancillary services such as public services and recycling facilities. • Provide for dual use of community facilities where possible and appropriate
RA Recreation, Amenity & Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve and improve active and passive recreational public and private open space and provide for new leisure & amenity facilities in the area e.g. a Major Sports Facility • Provide for local amenities and recreational facilities including playing fields and dedicated amenity areas. • Protect the natural amenity, including waterways. • Prevent the loss of existing open space, recreation and sporting grounds.

Policy for Open Space and Sporting Provision

- Policy 84** Develop a hierarchy of multi-functional active and passive recreational spaces and facilities to serve all ages.
- Policy 85** Strengthen, extend and consolidate green belts at both strategic and local levels.
- Policy 86** Consider the community's overall need for open space provision and take this into account in relation to its zoning functions.
- Policy 87** Ensure that public open space provided as part of new development is of high quality and designed and finished to ensure its usability, security and cost efficient maintenance.
- Policy 88** Provide for the needs of young people at suitable locations through supporting youth groups, youth sports and arts activities and providing facilities to encourage the involvement of young people in activities and gatherings.
- Policy 89** Promote the development of an integrated open space system, consisting of open spaces, vegetation, drainage channels, etc., that will protect and conserve existing environmental designations, fauna and flora and landscape character. It will also ensure an adequate level of biodiversity and ecological functioning; will provide for the passive and active recreational needs of users; will provide high quality landscaping and open space areas on developed lands to structure; and, provide visual relief from the built environment.

Policy 90 Ensure that the different environmental/greenbelt zones identified are adequately protected and that developments respond appropriately to the sensitivities and significance of the zones

Objectives for Open Space and Sporting Provision

Objective 129 Support the implementation of the County Play Policy in providing for and facilitating play throughout the County.

Objective 130 Implement the Council's Development Contribution Scheme as it relates to the improvement of existing recreation and leisure facilities and the funding of new recreation and leisure facilities in tandem with new developments.

Objective 131 Ensure that fully equipped playgrounds to appropriate standards are provided within all new housing developments of in excess of 20 units. In addition, a hierarchy of useable open spaces and the provision of recreational facilities appropriate to the size of the estate or taken in combination with a number of estates are provided e.g. seating areas, landscaped open spaces, basketball courts, skatepark areas, public parks and playing pitches.

Objective 132 Support the provision of a linear park along the Cross River within the LAP development envelope (see Map 13a).

Objective 133 Maintain free of development all those areas designated as greenbelts within the LAP area.

Objective 134 Support the development of the SO5 and SO6 for Recreation, Amenity & Open Space and SO7 for Community & Educational Facilities, indicated on Map 13a.

Objective 135 Establish open space linkages and 'stepping stones' between larger open space areas which will facilitate ecological functioning, accommodate adequate surface water drainage and provide adequate screening and visual amenity.

Objective 136 Ensure that adequate internal open spaces and landscaping are provided within developments, including the following:

1. Retain existing mature and semi-mature trees and hedgerows on undeveloped land, where practicable and incorporate into the layout and design of developments. If retention is not possible replacement proposals will be required.
2. Provide landscaped open spaces and parking areas within developments to provide visual relief from the built development, spaces for relaxation for staff, adequate lighting into buildings, space for parking, etc.

Objective 137 Ensure a high quality urban environment which takes the following into consideration;

1. Retention and augmentation of mature vegetation – especially in roadside areas.
2. Improving vegetative screening of the Lough Ree and Cross River systems and associated wetlands.
3. Improving public amenities – by good design and provision of facilities in the public domain.
4. Control and monitoring of material used for fill in authorised development sites.

5. Prevention of unauthorised ‘reclamation’ of wetlands.
6. Prevention of unlicensed discharges – direct or indirect – to surface water systems.

Objective 138 RCC shall work together with community sporting bodies, including the GAA, private developers and relevant government agencies in facilitating and supporting the development and delivery of sporting facilities within the LAP area within the lifetime of this LAP, via public – private partnership, within 1km of the Old and New Tuam Road junction.

8.3.2 Integrated Tourism and Recreation Development

Integrated Tourism encourages tourism that is based on local physical, economic, social and cultural resources and local relationships so that tourism experiences are place specific. It is also sensitive to scale, which is appropriate to local circumstances and supports sustainability of resources and activities in ecological, economic and cultural terms.

Roscommon has a long-established tourism industry that displays integration with the natural and cultural environments. RCC recognises the need to build on the facilities already present in the area and support niche markets for example, cycling holidays, archaeological and nature tours, English language learning tours, and specialist markets such as activity holidays, environmental or cultural based tourism.

Policy for Integrated Tourism and Recreational Development

Policy 91 Provide for the sports and recreational needs of the LAP area, by upgrading and maintaining existing facilities and providing for new facilities as required. Facilities provided should be designed with flexibility in mind so that they are multifunctional and ensure maximum usability by a variety of groups and members of local communities. Facilities should be widely accessible to ensure that sports and recreation may provide a forum for social inclusion and integration and the Council will work with sporting organisations and clubs to achieve widespread availability of facilities.

Objective for Integrated Tourism and Recreational Development

Objective 139 Identify strategic locations where public open space and parks should be provided, so that they may be useable by a large proportion of the local community and so that they may facilitate the enjoyment of other amenities such as rivers, lakes, canal, picturesque landscapes, views or features of our natural heritage, or to retain areas of ecological interest and biodiversity value. Within the LAP area (Map 13a) these could include;

- The creation of a linear “greenbelt” park along the Cross River
- Areas to the north and south of the Old and New Tuam Roads for pitches, playgrounds, a skatepark, basketball courts etc

1. Walkways/Cycleways

An important component of an integrated tourism strategy is sustainability and the use of more sustainable forms of transport. There are a number of walking/cycling routes as well as walking clubs throughout the County.

Slí na Sláinte is a health promotion walking initiative which was introduced in 1996 and aimed at encouraging people of all ages and abilities to walk for pleasure and good health. There are four main Slí na Sláinte trails in County Roscommon, none of which fall within the LAP area.

In terms of cycling, there are three which would occur in proximity to the LAP area;

1. **The Green Heartlands Cycle Route** from Roscommon town to Athlone.
2. **The Táin Cycling Trail.**
3. **The Lough Ree and the Shannon Cycling Tour.**

There is a need to recognise the importance of walking and cycling in County Roscommon from a local as well as tourism perspective. RCC supports the development of local and tourist walks and cycle routes which consider local requirements as well as economic potential and endeavor to meet these needs on an ongoing basis. Ways should be examined to improve access to the countryside (as promoted in the European Charter of Pedestrian Rights) for informal recreation purposes such as walking, cycling and horse riding, as well as areas of open space, recreation and sports facilities, especially in urban areas within easy access by walking and cycling. Improvements need to be made to walking routes throughout the county and cycle paths need to be provided along public roads where possible. As mentioned in the infrastructure section of this plan, there are two types of cycleways;

- those for the commuter where cyclists ride on the roadway and there may be no clear distinction between the roadway and “cycle path”; and,
- those for the recreational cyclists where raised paths are created adjacent to footpaths and the same rules apply for cyclists and pedestrians.

It is also worth considering that the “cycleways” developed on the main routes could be utilised for the triAthlone. The cycle race went from Athlone town to as far as Brideswell Village in 2008 and 2009 and this could prove to be a regular feature. The boost to tourism for the area has been incredible.

Walking and cycling routes should be designed to incorporate current thinking and best practice from experience in other locations in order to create more people friendly places. Road safety for pedestrians and cyclists is an important issue in tourist areas and lower speed limits and priority over motorized transport should be provided, where appropriate.

The community have indicated that there are plans devised to provide extensive walking routes in the Coillte owned forested area of Monksland. This has the potential to become an area of high amenity value in the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area and should be pursued.

Policy for Walking and Cycling Routes

- Policy 92** Facilitate the development of walkways and cycleways within the LAP area and beyond. Routes should take full advantage of existing amenities such as riverbanks and lakeshores so as to facilitate their enjoyment and exploit their tourism value.
- Policy 93** Support the investigation of the potential for off-road walking and cycling trails surrounding the LAP area; and for the development of linkages between existing trails and others in adjoining counties; and support national trail development policy including the Irish Trails Strategy.

Objective for Walking and Cycling Routes

- Objective 140** Promote walking, rambling and cycling as appropriate recreational and tourism activities within the LAP area.
- Objective 141** Establish walkways and cycle routes on a legal and permanent basis to include heritage and other attractions including accompanying signage.
- Objective 142** Seek the co-operation of Coillte and other agencies and landowners where appropriate, in the establishment of access ways, bridle paths, nature trails and other recreational facilities within forest and woodland areas.

Objective 143 Assess the feasibility of the provision of walking/cycling routes in the following areas (these are in addition to those mentioned on Map 3b);

- along the Cross River to the River Shannon
- from Bogginfin to Hodson Bay
- into the forested area around Larkfield Bog
- walk along the Mihanbee Road to the Dolmen and Bridle Path
- a circular route from Bogginfin to Hodson Bay to Barrymore across the N61 and then through the Cushlea and Larkfield Bogs to Monksland

2. Arts and Theatre

The County Arts Plan 2003-2009 sets out policies and objectives for the promotion of a wide variety of arts and encourages participation in the arts. Its four strategic objectives are as follows:

1. Awareness and appreciation – Promote public awareness and appreciation of the value of the arts.
2. Access – Provide access to the arts for the entire community.
3. Participation – Promote and enable participation in the arts for the entire community.
4. Professional Development – Develop the capacity and capability of the arts sector.

Policy for Arts and Theatre

Policy 94 Support the development of artistic tourism throughout the County and within the LAP area including the facilitation of new festivals and other events including ‘rainy day’ events for visitors such as exhibitions, musical entertainment and theatre.

Policy 95 Provide for artistic elements in new and existing development by encouraging the use of the “percent for art schemes” and other initiatives.

Objectives for Arts and Theatre

Objective 144 Work with Fáilte Ireland, the Arts Council and other relevant bodies to promote and develop the arts and tourism sectors within the County. Within the LAP area this could include;

- The provision of a arts / theatre / cinema space similar to that within Roscommon Town

3. Access to recreational lands

The issue of access to recreational lands is becoming of increasing importance.

Policy regarding access to recreational facilities

Policy 96 It is the policy of RCC to preserve and enhance the existing public rights of way to recreational areas including upland areas, lakeshores, river-bank areas and heritage sites, in accordance with the sustainable management practices and the overall amenity of these areas and where necessary to establish new ones in co-operation with landowners and the local community.

8.3.3 Tourism

Sustainable tourism provides a high quality product based on, and in harmony with, a high quality natural environment. Adverse impacts upon local communities, built heritage, landscapes, habitats and species are minimised while the economic benefits accruing to local communities are maximized. Tourism is continually evolving and the product offered must reflect this evolving market.

County Roscommon possesses extensive natural resources and an environment of nationally significant scenic value. This, combined with its attractive towns and vibrant cultural heritage, provides a major opportunity for the development of tourism.

It is the aim of the Council to ensure that the full potential of tourism as an economic and social force is achieved in a sustainable manner with due regard to the impact on local communities and the natural environment.

County Roscommon contains several developing tourism areas such as areas along the River Shannon. The NSS advocates the enhancement of already successful areas by building up their tourism capacity. It also promotes the development of tourism potential in undeveloped areas by encouraging strategic opportunities in tourism niches, for example new tourist centres, heritage and natural landscapes, inland waterway circuits, tourism clusters and urban generated rural recreation.

Tourism in Roscommon tends to be a relatively underdeveloped resource and relies heavily on natural resource based tourism, especially waterways and their inland location. Tourism is small-scale and based on limited and special interest markets mainly inland cruising, angling and to a lesser extent walking.² The county has seen recent investment in recreational facilities with the County Council's development of the water based activity centre at Hodson Bay and investment in the private sector in new spa and hotel accommodation developments.

Key issues affecting tourism in the county are; a lack of investment; difficult access; national and international marketing and promotion of tourism in the county; and a lack of countrywide; and cross-country co-operation.³

Policies for Tourism

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Policy 97 | Encourage and assist development and tourism bodies in the provision of adequate recreational and tourism infrastructure as well as tourist oriented facilities in and surrounding the LAP area. |
| Policy 98 | Support the sustainable increase in the volume of visitors, revenue per visitor, their average length of stay and seasonal spread; whilst protecting and conserving those natural, built and cultural features that form the resources upon which the County's tourism industry is based. |
| Policy 99 | Support the promotion and marketing of tourism within the county, nationally and internationally in order to encourage increasing numbers of visitors. |
| Policy 100 | Support the development of tourism related facilities particularly river and boating related tourism at calling points along the River Shannon. |

² Teagasc-An approach to developing tourism in rural areas: Lessons learned from a regional case study

³ Roscommon County Retail Strategy 2002-2008

-
- Policy 101** Influence, facilitate and encourage tourism product development through;
- Attractions, events, sports and entertainment
 - Upgrading of existing properties and infrastructure by both private and public sectors
 - Working closely with Fáilte Ireland and private enterprise to create an environment for investment in new and existing tourist development
 - Marketing Roscommon to its own community
 - New product development
 - Special events and festivals such as sporting, cultural and arts
- Policy 102** Support the development of eco-farming, organic products and markets, eco-tourism, walks within areas of natural heritage in line with the development of health and well-being facilities
- Policy 103** Facilitate the provision of increased mooring facilities at 4/5 chosen locations along the Shannon and allow select types of commercial/tourism development along the riverside to provide for an economic gain from the Shannon.
- Policy 104** Actively support the implementation of the Roscommon Tourism Strategy, recommendations contained within the Lough Ree and Mid Shannon Tourism Study, and support the development of an Integrated Sustainable Regional Tourism Strategy in consultation with relevant statutory / non-statutory bodies and local authorities

Objectives for Tourism

- Objective 145** Identify, target and provide support to “Champions” and entrepreneurs who could drive and become involved in tourism related projects in the short, medium and long term.
- Objective 146** Together with Failte Ireland, explore opportunities for the establishment of the following within the LAP area and surrounds;
- the provision of medium and long-distance walking routes in collaboration with land owners;
 - the provision of accommodation including self catering and local services;
 - the provision of key infrastructure including parking, public facilities and access to scenic areas;
 - further flagship enterprises;
 - ecologically-sensitive access to the county’s lakes and rivers which could include the development of marinas;
 - improved access into the county;
 - the development and expansion of existing and new tourist routes throughout the County, to include historical and cultural elements, environmental and recreation, general interest and amenities, which will satisfy the needs of the domestic and international visitors;
 - the development of cycle and walking routes; and,
 - outdoor activity-based tourism.
- Objective 147** Support the encouragement of public and private investment in such tourism facilities
- Objective 148** Support and promote, with the co-operation of private landowners, public access to heritage sites and features of archaeological interest, rivers, lakes and other natural amenities.

Objective 149 Participate in the development of a series of brochures and a website for Roscommon, which are information rich; build on its uniqueness; and, focus on aspects such as heritage, archaeology, water-based tourism etc.

Objective 150 Facilitate and be involved in the upgrading of all infrastructure, including the provision of facilities within tourist areas, within the sub-region in proximity to the LAP area

Objective 151 The Council shall restrict development which might be detrimental to scenic and heritage assets in cSAC's , pNHA's & SPA's and within areas designated Sensitive Rural Landscapes as proposed in the Landscape Character Assessment which forms part of the RCDP 2008 – 2014.

Objective 152 Due regard shall be had to the policies and objectives as outlined within the Landscape Character Assessment contained within the RCDP 2008 - 2014

1. Tourist Facilities and Infrastructure

County Roscommon has significant natural and cultural heritage attractions such as landscape, inland waterways and historical artifacts. The County has many tourist facilities such as fishing, boating and swimming and cultural infrastructure as well as beautiful countryside and natural amenities. Roscommon's low lying nature allows for the development of golf courses of which there are several within the County, none of which fall within the LAP area.

The tourism industry is based upon products which are marketed and sold to visitors. As well as accommodation and transport (and arguably landscape and culture) these may include: "paying" attractions such as museums; and recreational facilities such as walks and cycle tracks, which are also used by the local community. New and repeat visits are encouraged by ensuring that the quality of the tourism product remains high and diverse. It is also essential that visitors are aware of the products on offer and that signage is appropriate and reliable.

Objectives in relation to Tourist Facilities and Infrastructure

Objective 153 The Council shall facilitate the creation of golf courses, pitch and putt courses and driving ranges in the countryside provided that such development does not contravene any other policies or objectives of this LAP and the RCDP 2008 - 2014

Objective 154 Facilitate the provision of facilities for tourism i.e. swimming, fishing and small boating as well as washrooms and toilets, seating and benches along the shoreline of the lakes.

RCC supports the upgrading of facilities, where appropriate; the promotion and marketing of the area within the county, nationally and internationally; the development of new tourism facilities and services that enhance the natural and unique qualities of the area, promotes health and well-being; and the regeneration and conversion of buildings along rivers for tourism related uses should be encouraged. The Council also supports the development of sustainable tourism within the region through initiatives such as the Greening Irish Hotels Programme, which aims to develop and implement environmental best practice structures across the hospitality industry by encouraging hotels etc. to become greener by saving energy and making better use of their resources such as waste energy and water conservation.

Roscommon is an agricultural County with a beautiful natural landscape, which encourages the visitor to relax and pursue healthy aims. RCC supports the development of health and wellness facilities such as day and overnight spas as well as health farms and yoga and meditation centers within the county. There needs to be a focus on new products, new activities and events, new links to culture and unique homegrown products in order to attract national and international appeal. The Council supports the

development of eco farming, organic products and markets, eco tourism, walks within areas of natural heritage in line with the development of health and well-being facilities.

Public Transport is important with regard to bringing visitors into the County from the rest of the Country. There are bus links to Belfast, Dublin and Galway. The introduction of new trains in 2008 and plans to increase the frequency of service on the line to a minimum of two hourly will create the potential for more visitors from Dublin and Sligo. Knock International Airport is located close by with Shannon and Galway Airports accessible, but further away. There is a need for the improvement and upgrading of transport links to and within the county. The RPG's suggest that there may be potential for an airport in South Roscommon, which requires further investigation and a feasibility study.

At the community meeting, the following potential was viewed for the sub-region in terms of tourism;

- With the area expanding so much and tourism coming into the area with the Hotel and local B&B's we see the need for a park and development of the river
- There is a lot of through traffic in the area but very little stops. In order to develop the tourism potential of the area there needs to be something in the area to attract tourists. The Mill Bar's location beside the Cross River could potentially draw tourists if it was to be developed correctly, perhaps a good restaurant/café/beer garden. The addition of a park and river walks to this area and linking it to a greenway would also help.
- The dolmen on the Drum Road has the potential to draw tourists. However, currently the area has only 1 parking space, is woody and muddy, and is fairly well hidden from one side of the road. Proper signage and development of the site could help attract visitors to the area
- Both in terms of tourism and amenity, we need to explore whether mountain biking/off road biking trails can be developed in this area. The muddy tracks are ideal.
- Explore opportunities for adventure tourism, biking, paint balling etc
- Tourism signposting is important

The community also identified the following views as being important;

- All views of the Cross River should be maintained
- Views exist from rifle range hill, hill at the water tower area, and the Coillte Forest

Table 12: Places of interest/visitor attractions in the sub-region of County Roscommon in proximity to the LAP area (see Map 11)

Places of Interest/Visitor Attractions	Examples in County Roscommon
Amenity Areas (open space amenity areas utilized for recreational purposes)	Hodson Bay Amenity Area Portrunny Amenity Area Galey Bay Lecarrow Harbour
Places of Interest	St Brigid's Well, Brideswell Tisrara, Four Roads Mote Park Historical Complex Suck Valley Way Lobinroe Windmill, Lackan
Abbey/Castle	Rindoon Castle, Lecarrow Galey Castle
Archaeological/Monastic Site	The Drum Monastic Settlement, incorporating St. Brigid's Holy Well Clonmacnoise Monastic City The Remembrance Park/Wake House at Nure Thomastown Ancient Cemetery Shannonbridge Fortifications

	Castlestrange and Le Tain Lough Ree Islands Nellies Rock, Lecarrow Bridle Path, Drum Dolmen in Drum Underground Cell at Cushlea	
Heritage Centers/Museum	Drum Heritage Visitor Centre Derryglad Folk Museum, Curraghboy Claypipe Visitors Centre, Knockcroghery Athleague Angling and Visitors Centre, Athleague Curraghaleen Restored Hedge School	
Important Flora/Fauna	Shannon Callows Lough Ree Lecarrow Feacle Turlough Lough Funshinagh Ballynamona Bog & Corkip Lough Castlesampson Esker Cranberry Lough	
Golf Course	Woodview Country Club Athlone Golf Club, Hodson Bay	
Pet/Animal Farm	Glendeer Pet Farm, Athlone	
Cross/Stone/Grave	Castlestrange Decorated Stone, Athleague	
Cathedral/Church	Summerhill	
Forest/Woodland	St Johns Wood, Lecarrow Larkfield Bog Cushlea Bog Mote Park Heritage Walkway & Forest	
Water-based Activity/Activities	Cruising, Fishing, Watersports: Lough Ree River Shannon River Suck Hodson Bay Lecarrow Portrunny Bay Bay sports, Hodson Bay TriAthlone, River Shannon, Athlone National Finals of Community Games	
Viewing Points (from Landscape Character Assessment for County Roscommon, 2008)	R8	Elevated, panoramic scenic route overlooking Lough Ree and stonewalled field patterns. Athlone and Rindoon archaeological site in distance.
	V19	Elevated views of surrounding stonewall farmland landscape with Lough Ree in distance.
	V20	View over Lough Ree from crest of hill along third class road.
	V21	View from R366 overlooking Suck River and low undulating farmland.

	V22	View from third class road overlooking Lough Funshinagh and mature woodland on the opposite side of the lake.
	V23	View from third class road across the Shannon callows.
	V24	View from third class road across the Shannon callows and esker ridge in County Offaly.
	V25	Elevated view from third class road overlooking the Shannon callows to the south/southwest, with undulating farmland and mature trees. View to north/northwest overlooking flat raised cutover bog.

2. Tourism Signage

Tourist signage is important with regard to the development of tourism in County Roscommon. Many tourists visit County Roscommon each year and even more pass through the county on their way to the West Coast. The wealth of natural and built heritage in the county should encourage passing visitors to stop a while and sample the delights of the county. This does not happen at present because there is little tourist information to be gathered by visitors while wandering around the countryside and towns of Roscommon. Tourism potential in County Roscommon could be aided significantly by the production of a comprehensive tourist map and the introduction of information boards at all heritage sites indicating important local as well as countywide sites. Uniform signage with one clear design format and a unique county logo, like the familiar Fáilte Ireland shamrock logo, should be produced and marketed at home and abroad.

Tour organizers and locally approved guides should be considered the ‘gatekeepers’⁴ of local amenities. RCC encourages the recruitment of local tour guides and establishing trails including river tours as well as the development of facilities such as restaurants on boats and barges along the river to cater for river tours and visitors to the area. Many tourists use the Internet to gather holiday information and the updating and upgrading of existing tourism websites for the county should be a priority.

Access to heritage sites is a major issue in County Roscommon. Not all of the sites included in the audit have public access and improvements could be made at some of the sites. RCC supports the initiatives of the County Roscommon Heritage Forum and other agencies involved in heritage throughout the County.

It is an objective in “Roscommon Common Vision” to increase and promote knowledge of Roscommon’s local history and heritage among the public agencies and visitors to the county by developing a policy on traditionally accepted, original and historical place names. RCC supports the initiatives of this strategy. Structures of architectural/archaeological significance should be named, developed, clearly signposted and protected.

Signs that are designed as guides to the location of tourist facilities and attractions will be permitted under license outside built up areas subject to:

- Compliance with the Traffic Signs Manual produced by the DoE (1996)
- Being limited in number to the minimum required for that purpose
- Subject to the provisions contained within the PDA and Regulations, 2000 and 2001 respectively, as amended

Policy in relation to tourism signage

Policy 105 Remove illegal signage, repair and replace existing signage on tourist routes and paths such as cycle paths.

⁴ Teagasc-Integrated rural tourism development in the west of Ireland: Learning from tourists and tour organisers

- Policy 106** Encourage and support the improvement of access, signage and tourist information services including integrated welcome, directional and interpretative signage
- Policy 107** Work with Fáilte Ireland, the NRA, and other bodies to develop standardised and branded signage for tourism facilities and tourist attractions in the County.
- Policy 108** RCC will endeavour to provide adequate access and signage facilities to all publicly owned heritage sites, where appropriate and funds permit.

3. Tourist Accommodation

RCC recognises that tourism must be developed as one of the key sectors within the County. Key towns and villages act as tourist centers and the facilities and services they provide are crucial to the development of the tourist potential of the County. Appropriate tourist accommodation and facilities must be provided throughout the County for this purpose.

In addition, it is noted that the Athlone Springs Hotel and the Hodson Bay Hotel market themselves as within County Westmeath. This is a serious disadvantage for the tourism profile of County Roscommon and RCC will support Fáilte Ireland in its endeavours to work towards marketing Roscommon more effectively and encouraging hotels to indicate their status as County Roscommon enterprises.

At the community meeting the Athlone Springs Hotel and the Mill pub were indicated as strengths for the LAP area.

Policy in relation to Tourist Accommodation

- Policy 109** Encourage tourism in the county through effective location of a full range of tourist accommodation.
- Policy 110** RCC supports Fáilte Ireland in marketing Roscommon more effectively, including in print and via digital means, and encouraging hotels to indicate their status as County Roscommon enterprises.
- Policy 111** Ensure high standards of architectural and urban design in all new tourist accommodation and facilities.
- Policy 112** Encourage hotels and guesthouses to save costs and minimise environmental impacts through membership of an eco-labelling scheme such as EU Flower Eco-label

4. Retail Tourism

The retail element is one of the key factors in the development of tourism throughout the County and the continued vitality of established tourist destinations.

There is a commonly held view that a retail element can downgrade the value of cultural attractions. This is a perception that needs to be changed. A retail element can enhance a cultural experience as well as bring economic benefits to an attraction. The RPG's advocate a focus on tourism, retail development, enterprise parks, roads and food production in North Roscommon including the towns of Strokestown, Boyle, Ballaghaderreen and Castlerea. County Roscommon must look to tourism as a source of potential retail income.

County Roscommon is fortunate in its location close to Galway, Sligo, Athlone and within reasonable reach of Dublin and the North. Improved connectivity and infrastructure from these cities and towns will help develop the tourism economy of County Roscommon. It is important to provide for the

requirements of tourists from home and abroad. To encourage international visitor expenditure in appropriate shops and services should be facilitated, to enable the County to better exploit its tourism potential. These may include hotels, arts and crafts galleries, craft outlets/villages, tourist shops at important tourist destinations, local markets and shops specialising in outdoor pursuits, such as angling and water sports.

Events such as festivals, fairs and concerts present enormous opportunities for retailers and consideration should be given to this in encouraging the development of new events and developing a countywide programme of activities for visitors. The TriAthlone provides an excellent opportunity to take advantage of the presence of large numbers of tourists traveling through the LAP area. Environmental enhancement schemes, such as improvements to streetscape and pavement, should be introduced to upgrade and enhance the public realm⁵.

Policy for Retail Tourism

Policy 113 Promote collective public and private sector marketing of County Roscommon as a leisure and retail tourist destination, within Ireland and abroad.

Policy 114 Encourage the establishment of new events such as festivals; fairs etc., in appropriate locations, to promote increased retail tourism throughout the County.

Objectives for Retail Tourism

Objective 155 Facilitate the production of a programme of activities for tourists and visitors to the County and LAP area. This could be distributed to visitors during events such as the TriAthlone.

Objective 156 Facilitate the establishment of Environmental Improvement Schemes to upgrade and enhance the public realm within the LAP area.

5. Marine Tourism

“Ireland's natural endowment of marine and water-based resources is strategically important to the tourism industry, as many commercial and leisure opportunities are dependent on it. The water-based tourism and leisure sector makes an essential contribution to the overall quality and experience of the holidaymaker in Ireland, and the strength of our island image and culture is often utilised as a key attractor in overseas marketing and promotional campaigns.”⁶

Marine tourism accounts for a great proportion of the numbers of visitors to the county each year. Visitors flock to areas such as the River Shannon to enjoy the beauty of the lakes and rivers and to take part in many of the activities on offer, such as walking, fishing, boating and swimming. The development potential of marine resources in the context of marine tourism, marine sports and recreational activities will promote economic development at LAP, County as well as Regional level.

The RCDB supports the development of a National Strategy on Marine Tourism and in association with Fáilte Ireland West promotes the Marine Sector -Travel, Stay, Fish, and Play. RCC recognises the potential value to the tourism industry of features such as rivers, lakes, and canals. River systems and lakes provide potential for an extensive network for inland travel by water. RCC supports the development of marina facilities at key locations, particularly along the Shannon.

⁵ Chapter 10 Policies and Actions, Draft Roscommon County Retail Strategy 2007

⁶ Speech by John O'Donoghue, T.D., Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism, at the opening of 24th Dublin Boat Show, RDS Simmonscourt, on Wednesday, 14th February 2007, <http://www.arts-sport-tourism.gov.ie/publications/release.asp?ID=1872>

Policy in relation to Marine Tourism

Policy 115 Promote the Marine Sector and all agencies, national, regional and local involved in water-based tourism.

Policy 116 Support the development of lake management plans

Objective in relation to Marine Tourism

Objective 157 Facilitate the development of a National Strategy for Marine Tourism in conjunction with key stakeholders and the Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism, Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland.

Objective 158 Support tourism type development including appropriate infrastructure and ancillary services in areas with significant tourism amenities such as Athlone and Lough Ree.

Roscommon's network of piers, slipways and marinas are an essential part of local infrastructure and serve many sectors of the economy. There needs to be a focus on developing new facilities in key locations and upgrading existing facilities to maximise the range of marine leisure activities that can take place at each site.

The Waterways Corridor Study 2004/2005 consists of a study of three areas, the area surrounding the river from Lanesborough to Shannonbridge, from Roosky to Lanesborough and the Upper Shannon including the Boyle River, Lough Allen, Lough Key and the Carnadoe Waters. The Heritage Council has identified projects for the regeneration of the waterway corridor and actions, which can be realised over a ten-year period. RCC supports the regeneration of waterway corridors throughout County Roscommon and the promotion of the unique ecology and wildlife, and activities associated with these waterways, in co-operation with organisations such as the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland, The Heritage Council and the Royal Canal Amenity Group.

Policy in relation to the Waterway Corridors

Policy 117 Support the regeneration of Waterway Corridors throughout the County.

6. Environmental Considerations

In pursuit of sustainable tourism it is imperative that the high quality landscape and environment which attracts visitors to Roscommon is undiminished by future development. A high quality product must be developed in harmony with a high quality natural environment, minimizing adverse impacts upon local communities, built heritage, landscapes, habitats and species. Tourism related enterprises should be encouraged to reduce their impact upon the environment by reducing their energy demand, increasing recycling and utilizing best practice procurement policy.

Policy in relation to environmental considerations

Policy 118 Ensure that the facilitation of tourism and development related tourism does not impact negatively on the environmental quality or result in the deterioration of the quality of the tourism product.

Objective in relation to environmental considerations

Objective 159 Promote the development of tourism in a sustainable manner and encourage the provision of a comprehensive range of tourism facilities, subject to location, siting and design criteria, the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and other planning considerations.

There is an abundance of natural heritage with tourism potential throughout Roscommon and within and surrounding the LAP area. These include raised bogs, which though plentiful in Ireland are unique in Europe and should be protected with regard to this 'bigger picture'. Raised bogs are a flat landscape and provide views for miles with the potential for attracting tourists through unique initiatives such as turf cutting and painting weekends etc. Other natural features in the landscape include Callows, to the south east of the LAP area along the Shannon and Turloughs, which are uniquely concentrated in Roscommon, these disappearing lakes are a haven for birds and other wildlife. Roscommon is a low county and its many, slow, meandering rivers and lakes provide opportunities for tourism related activities such as boating, fishing and other water related activities. Its low-lying flat farmland and undulating eskers and drumlins provide a unique landscape for tourists and visitors. Tourist initiatives could include organic farming workshops, wetland flora and fauna identification, hedgerow history and management as well as other workshops, which introduce the visitor and locals to the beauty, history and culture of the Roscommon countryside.

RCC is dedicated to the protection of the unique natural heritage of County Roscommon through the designation of NHAs, protection of SACs, SPAs and Areas of High Amenity, through restricting inappropriate development in areas of high ecological, scenic and environmental importance, such as Lough Key and environs, and through the development of sustainable tourism initiatives. RCC supports the production of comprehensive lake management plans in order to analyse the carrying capacity of the County's lakes and their immediate environs.

The Council also encourages building design, which is sympathetic to the natural environment in areas along riverfronts, canals or parklands. The EU adopted the Energy Performance in Buildings Directive in 2002, in an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. RCC supports the development of low energy buildings within the County particularly those located in areas of natural amenity.

The unique natural and built heritage of County Roscommon must be preserved mindful of the need to facilitate the enjoyment of places of interest, natural beauty and tourist potential. Access to amenities, signage and the provision of facilities, such as toilet facilities and accommodation will be provided, where appropriate and without impacting negatively on the natural amenities of the area. The Council aims to balance protecting and enhancing such natural assets while also developing appropriate access and facilities.

Policy with regard to heritage and environmental aspects of tourism

Policy 119 Protect and conserve for current and future generations those natural, built and cultural heritage features that form the basis of the County's tourism industry, including areas of important landscape, lake and river scenery, areas of important wildlife interest, historic buildings and structures and the traditional form and general appearance of towns and villages.

8.4 RECREATION, LEISURE AND TOURISM STRATEGY

The **Recreation, Leisure and Tourism Strategy** aims to;

- Promote the development of tourism in the LAP area and surroundings in a sustainable manner and encourage the provision of a range of tourism facilities, subject to location, siting and design criteria, the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and other planning considerations.
- Protect from development the existing public and recreational open space in the area.

Policies for Recreation, Leisure and Tourism

Policy 120 Facilitate the development of appropriate new recreation, leisure and tourism facilities and ensure access for all groups of the community.

Policy 121 Improve existing local authority recreational and amenity facilities in addition to providing new facilities.

Objectives for Recreation & Tourism

Objective 160 Implement, where financial resources permit, proposals to improve and maintain amenity, tourism and recreation facilities, carry out amenity improvements and protect the environment of the LAP area.

Objective 161 Support other organisations, bodies and local groups that promote tourism and community development in area.

CHAPTER 9: URBAN DEVELOPMENT

9.1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Urban areas act as vital economic, social and cultural hubs and the continuing challenge is to sustain and enhance the viability and diversity of these settlements through appropriate development and growth.

9.2 POLICY CONTEXT

➤ National Spatial Strategy, 2002

The NSS places County Roscommon in the West Region, which has as its goal to promote economic activity and build balanced regional development by building on the dynamic role of Galway as a gateway and expanding its influence. Aims within the Strategy include the achievement of more cohesive and integrated local urban communities. The NSS broadly sets out the range of services and facilities that contribute to the attractiveness of the various settlements within the country. It is acknowledged that there is a strong relationship between settlement size and the levels of service that can be supported.

Similarly to other areas, the NSS notes that it is important to build on the central locations of the key towns at the intersection of national road and rail routes, the attractiveness of the village structure and the natural resources of the rural areas.

The NSS, especially in the development of gateways and hubs, identifies for local authorities where major future housing needs are likely to arise. This will allow for timely, comprehensive and sustainable planning responses that integrate housing provision with employment, services, transport and the local environment.

Through combining the location of housing, employment and other services with good transport facilities, especially public transport, more effective and sustainable mobility within Ireland will be achievable.

Housing availability requires close monitoring to ensure that, within agreed spatial frameworks, whether at national, regional or local levels, housing requirements are matched by the supply of zoned and serviced land.

The development of socially balanced communities can be supported through catering for social and affordable and other housing market needs in an integrated way.

Local authorities, under the provisions of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, are obliged to prepare detailed estimates of housing demand for all sectors – private, social and affordable housing – through the preparation of housing strategies as part of the development plan process. It is vitally important that both housing strategies and development plans take account of the spatial framework provided by the NSS.

In addition, it will be critical to provide for an adequate supply of land in line with assessments of housing land needs, through the development plan system. Such provision will require

- strategic reservation of land through the development plan process, coupled with ensuring timely and sequential release of land, to avoid delays in the availability and servicing of land on the one hand and premature release of zoned land on the other
- broad evaluation frameworks such as that suggested in Box 5.2 as an aid to the most appropriate spatial locations for housing land.

Box 5.2

Housing Location in Urban Areas	Evaluation considerations
The Asset Test	Are there existing community resources, such as schools etc., with spare capacity?
The Carrying Capacity	Is the environment setting capable of absorbing development in terms of drainage etc.?
The Transport Test	Is there potential for reinforcing usage of public transport, walking and cycling?
The Economic Development Test	Is there potential to ensure integration between the location of housing and employment?
The Character Test	Will the proposal reinforce a sense of place and character?
The Community Test	Will the proposal reinforce the integrity and vitality of the local community and services that can be provided?
The Integration Test	Will the proposal aid an integrated approach to catering for the housing needs of all sections of society?

Sustainable provision of housing in urban areas also involves;

- Concentration of development in locations where it is possible to integrate employment, community services, retailing and public transport
- Mixed-use and well-designed higher density development, particularly near town centres and public transport nodes like railway stations.
- The efficient use of land by consolidating existing settlements, focusing in particular on development capacity within central urban areas through re-use of under-utilised land and buildings as a priority, rather than extending green field development. See the suggestions in this regard in Box 5.3 below.
- Ensuring that new housing development in or at the edges of villages and small towns is of a quality of design, character, scale and layout that is well related to the character and form of the village or small town in question at its particular stage of development.
- Avoiding environmentally sensitive areas in developing proposals for major extensions to built-up areas.
- Placing a high degree of emphasis on creating living environments of the highest quality through attention to detail in urban design, integration of amenities, facilities for children, older persons and sections of the community with special needs.

Box 5.3

Urban Consolidation Priorities	
1. Identify opportunities for re-use	Through the development plan process, identify under-utilised, derelict or undeveloped lands within towns and villages.
2. Realise options for re-use	Realise identified opportunities using, for example, the Derelict Sites Act and acquisition of key sites.
3. Identify extension options	Where sufficient development opportunities within the urban area are not available, consider appropriate extension options to the village or town.
4. Realise extension options	Follow up on options for extensions to the built up area using the tests on Box 5.2.

Towns and villages in some areas are declining in population, resulting in under-utilisation of serviced land, dereliction and consequent impacts on the quality of places. This cycle can be broken by a more positive approach to urban consolidation through the housing strategy process. In particular, such strategies should consider

- realistic targets for the location of housing within existing built up areas of villages, towns and cities

- policies to support the achievement of such targets, including interventions designed to ensure the availability of under-utilised or derelict land in urban areas through the use of the various local authority powers referred to in Box 5.3 above
- evaluation of progress to inform review of future strategies.

Socially diverse local communities located in well-planned development can foster a sense of place, pride, security and neighbourliness. It is important that new housing development secures a good social mix. Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 provides mechanisms to assist the achievement of this objective.

Housing strategies are the prime vehicle for better integration at local level and in particular for;

- assessing the range of housing needs
- matching housing needs with supply and identifying necessary measures such as aids to affordability where local circumstances require this
- meeting particular housing needs such as those of smaller households, vulnerable sections of society and the Travelling community.

Within the above considerations, it will be vital to ensure the highest standards of design and layout by availing of professional design advice and supervision to create a high quality living environment.

➤ **Regional Planning Guidelines for the West, 2004 - 2016**

In terms of development within urban areas the RPG's highlight the following;

In South Roscommon:

Key towns: Roscommon, Ballinasloe, Mountbellew, Ballyhaunis, Monksland (Athlone)

Potential:

- Decentralisation will greatly benefit a number of towns in this zone, this gives them potential to achieve a higher level of critical mass for many developments.

Needs (or Requirements for Change/Development):

- The orderly growth of all settlements in this zone should be facilitated
- Greater levels of industrial and services employment need to be generated in the key towns
- Increased provision must be made for commercial activity and the provision of increased numbers of services in the smaller settlements in this zone.

➤ **Retail Planning Guidelines for Local Authorities, 2005**

The Retail Planning Guidelines (RPGs) seek to provide the policy framework to enable future retail development demand to be provided in a way that is "efficient, equitable, and sustainable". The guidelines emphasise the need to protect and enhance the vitality and viability of town and district centres. The RPGs recognise that the detail and complexity required to address retail planning issues varies depending on the extent of urbanisation, population density, and number of centres. The guidelines acknowledge that the town centre is the focus of a range of commercial and community activities, resulting in a mix of, often interdependent, land uses which contribute to a sense of place and identity. It also has a high level of accessibility to employment, services, and facilities for all the community.

➤ **Energy Performance in Buildings Directive, 2005**

Arising from the Kyoto Protocol, the EU has set the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions as an important objective. The most significant greenhouse gas is CO₂, primarily from energy use, and over 40% of such emissions derive from energy use in buildings, including 27% from housing. (The energy used in buildings could be reduced by having more energy efficient design and construction.) The EU

adopted the Energy Performance in Buildings Directive in 2002 and it has since been transposed into Irish legislation. Legislation requires:

- the energy rating of newly constructed buildings, existing buildings (when existing buildings are let or sold) and of public service buildings;
- improvement of the energy efficiency of certain classes of boilers and heating installations; and
- inspection of air-conditioning systems.

Energy rating requires that in the design of a building a performance target must be set out and when the building is completed it must perform as well as or better than the target.

➤ **“Action on Architecture, 2002 – 2005”, Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands.**

The Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands published “*Action on Architecture, 2002 – 2005*”. The aim of the policy was to place architecture higher on the political and cultural agenda, focusing on three central themes:

- Promoting awareness and understanding of architecture;
- Leading by example; and,
- Strengthening the architectural input in the planning process.

➤ **Development Plans: Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DEHLG, June 2007**

The 2000 Act provides that a planning authority **may** prepare a local area plan for any area within its jurisdiction for which it considers such a plan to be suitable, and in particular for those areas that require economic, physical and social renewal, and for areas likely to be subject to large scale development within the lifetime of the development plan.

In providing development frameworks for particular areas, or parts of an area, local plans should address relevant issues in greater detail than in the development plan, but on a basis consistent with the approach of the development plan for the overall area.

The development plan is thus the ‘parent’ document, which sets out the strategic framework within which the zoning and other objectives of the local area plan must be formulated. For example, the zoning of lands for use solely or primarily as residential development should have regard to the Council’s housing strategy.

Section 10(2)(a) of the 2000 Act requires that a development plan shall include objectives for:

“the zoning of land for the use solely or primarily of particular areas for particular purposes (whether residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational, as open space or otherwise, or a mixture of these uses) and to such extent as the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, in the opinion of the planning authority, requires the uses to be indicated.”

Following the approach set out, a county development plan should ensure that enough land will be available to meet anticipated development requirements and will be developed in a sequential and co-ordinated manner. This will avoid, for example, a situation where housing estates are built beyond the outer edges of existing built-up areas while intervening lands lie undeveloped resulting in deficiencies in terms of footpaths, lighting, drainage or adequate roads infrastructure.

The overall approach to the zoning of land in development plans may vary between authorities depending on whether their functional area is, for example, largely urban or largely rural and the size of that functional area.

Planning authorities may need to consider the need to zone more extensive areas for development around certain towns and cities designated as growth centres in the National Spatial Strategy or in Regional Planning Guidelines. On the other hand, and in the interests of sustainable development, excessive areas of land around small towns and villages should not be zoned for development.

Factors in determining Zoning

To support public confidence in the planning system and the development plan, decisions to zone land must be made in an open and transparent manner, must be clearly justified on the basis of established need and must support the aims and strategy of the plan.

Under Section 95 (1) of the Act, planning authorities are obliged to ensure that sufficient and suitable land is zoned for residential, or for a mixture of residential and other uses, to meet the requirements of the housing strategy and to ensure that a scarcity of residential land does not occur at any time during the period of the plan. The Part V Housing Supply Guidelines set out how planning authorities can meet their obligations in this regard.

In addition to the above, when considering the suitability of specific lands for development within the process of preparing zoning objectives in making a development plan, the members are restricted to considering the proper planning and sustainable development of the area to which the development plan relates, statutory obligations and Government policy. Matters typically relevant to the proper planning and sustainable development of areas, *inter alia*, include:

- Need
- Policy Context
- Capacity of Water, Drainage and Roads Infrastructure
- Supporting Infrastructure and Facilities
- Physical Suitability
- Sequential Approach
- Environmental and Heritage policy, including conservation of habitats and other sensitive areas.

(a) Need

The amount of land to be zoned for any particular land-use must be clearly based on, and justified by, a realistic assessment of need. The survey and analysis stage of plan preparation should provide the baseline data to determine future land requirements. A number of factors need to be taken into consideration when determining the location and quantity of land to be zoned. The Regional Planning Guidelines provide regional population growth and target projections. The assessment of need for additional residential land will be set out in the local authority's housing strategy and calculated in accordance with the recommendations of the Housing Supply Guidelines.

With regard to other land-uses it will be necessary to estimate likely future requirements based on past trends, outstanding planning permissions, expected take-up rates, availability of suitable services and infrastructure, projected population levels and economic context. This process should assess the capacity of existing built-up areas to accommodate additional development, either by facilitating increased density or by securing redevelopment of areas in need of renewal. As has been noted, land is a finite resource. It is important therefore to ensure its efficient use by maximising the re-use of previously developed land and the conversion and reuse of existing buildings.

Planning authorities should take all reasonable steps to ensure that sufficient zoned residential land is available throughout the lifetime of the development plan and beyond to meet anticipated needs and allow for an element of choice. In particular, to ensure continuity of supply of zoned residential land, planning authorities should ensure that at the time they make a development plan, enough land will be available to meet residential needs for the next nine years. In this way, **development plans will provide for sufficient zoned land to meet not just the expected demand arising within the**

development plan period of six years, but will also provide for the equivalent of 3 years demand beyond the date on which the current plan ceases to have effect.

In relation to uses other than residential, planning authorities should endeavor to make reasonable and logical estimates of anticipated needs and zone sufficient land to meet such needs. In the case of all zoning of land, the location of such lands, particularly in the case of residential, should also take account of the location policies in section 5.3 of the NSS. The demands of individual landowners should not distort the preferred amount and location of lands to be zoned. Regard must also be had to section 10 (8) of the Act, which states that there can be no presumption that any land zoned in a particular development plan will remain so zoned in any future development plan.

(b) Policy Context

Both the amount of land to be zoned for development and the proposed location of that land will also need to be influenced by other plans and strategies, from national and regional to local levels so that local authorities play their full part in supporting the implementation of those national and regional strategies. Particular regard must be had to the National Spatial Strategy (particularly section 5.3 of the NSS which details the housing development issues), Regional Planning Guidelines and the infrastructure plans and programmes of State and semi-state bodies.

(c) Water, Drainage and Roads Infrastructure

When making decisions to zone land, regard must be had to the existing and future availability of, or the capacity to provide, infrastructure. Where services are not available there should be a reasonable expectation of their being provided in the plan period. Land should not be zoned if there is no reliable prospect of providing key physical infrastructure, within the plan period or a reasonable time period thereafter, such as improved roads, footpaths, drainage and lighting to serve likely future development.

(d) Supporting Infrastructure and facilities

Consideration must be given to the future availability of, or the capacity to provide, supporting infrastructure, such as community facilities, health-care, schools, public open space, retail and other service provision and public transport when allocating land for development. There should be a reasonable expectation that these can be delivered in the lifespan of the plan. The nature of the proposed land-use and the extent of zoning designation will determine what facilities are necessary, when and to what scale. Also, regard should be had to the outcome of the current review and updating of the 1999 Residential Density Guidelines, wherein there will be a central focus on delivering integrated, quality new developments which facilitate sustainable communities.

(e) Physical Suitability

The development plan should strive to ensure that the form and location of new development offers the best “value for money” in terms of efficient use of existing infrastructure, while minimising the need for costly new infrastructure. Where land in green-field locations is to be zoned, account should be taken, in considering the different options available, of the land’s capacity for development by way of the most cost effective means of providing the necessary infrastructure. An example in this regard would include lands for housing development giving rise to costs arising from pumping of wastewater where other lands could be developed in the vicinity on a gravity-based drainage system. It is also vitally important to take account of the physical suitability of lands for development, notably lands subject to, or with potential impacts on, flood risks.

(f) Sequential Approach

In order to maximise the utility of existing and future infrastructure provision and promote the achievement of sustainability, a logical sequential approach should be taken to the zoning of land for development:

- (i) Zoning should extend outwards from the centre of an urban area, with undeveloped lands closest to the core and public transport routes being given preference (i.e. 'leapfrogging' to more remote areas should be avoided);
- (ii) A strong emphasis should be placed on encouraging infill opportunities and better use of under-utilised lands; and
- (iii) Areas to be zoned should be contiguous to existing zoned development lands.

Only in exceptional circumstances should the above principles be contravened, for example, where a barrier to development is involved such as a lake close to a town. Any exceptions must be clearly justified by local circumstances and such justification must be set out in the written statement of the development plan.

(g) Heritage Policy

Zoning should take account of built and natural heritage designations.

➤ Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, DEHLG, December 2008

These statutory guidelines aim to assist planning authorities, developers, architects and designers in delivering quality residential development. They update and revise the 1999 Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Residential Density and build upon the extensive experience gained over recent years - reflecting the changing economic, social and environmental patterns around the country. Importantly, specific guidance is provided for the first time on residential development for smaller towns and villages, acknowledging that different solutions are required to meet different scales and patterns of urban development.

The objective is to produce high quality – and crucially – sustainable developments:

- quality homes and neighbourhoods,
- places where people actually want to live, to work and to raise families, and
- places that work – and will continue to work - and not just for us, but for our children and for our children's children.

A series of high-level aims for successful and **sustainable residential development** in urban areas are provided. Housing developers, their design teams, the planning system, and the community they serve, share a common goal to create high quality places which:

- Prioritise walking, cycling and public transport, and minimise the need to use cars;
- Deliver a quality of life which residents and visitors are entitled to expect, in terms of amenity, safety and convenience;
- Provide a good range of community and support facilities, where and when they are needed and that are easily accessible;
- Present an attractive, well-maintained appearance, with a distinct sense of place and a quality public realm that is easily maintained;
- Are easy to access for all and to find one's way around;
- Promote the efficient use of land and of energy, and minimize greenhouse gas emissions;
- Provide a mix of land uses to minimise transport demand;
- Promote social integration and provide accommodation for a diverse range of household types and age groups; and
- Enhance and protect the built and natural heritage.

Developing sustainable neighbourhoods should be guided by the principle of **universal design**. Universal design is the design 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 disability. By considering people's diverse needs and abilities throughout the design process, which reflects the life cycle

approach, environments that meet the needs of all can be achieved. In this way, sustainable design and universal design are inextricably linked and sustainable design when incorporated from the early stage of planning integrated neighbourhoods, will reduce the need for costly and wasteful retrofits over the medium to long term.

The Planning and Development Act 2000 introduced a more tiered and **plan led system**, cascading from national strategies to local area plans. The development plan is at the heart of the system, transposing national and regional policies and setting the strategic context for local area plans. The scale, location and nature of major new residential development will be determined by the development plan, including both the settlement strategy and the housing strategy.

Fundamental questions to be addressed at the outset of the planning process include:

- The amount and type of new housing required to meet the needs of the wider area, including the provision of social and affordable housing, and the range of different dwelling types and sizes;
- The need to adopt a sequential approach to the zoning of residential lands, extending outwards from the centre of an urban area, as recommended in the development plan guidelines (DEHLG, 2007);
- Adequate existing public transport capacity available or likely to be available within a reasonable development timescale;
- The relationship and linkages between the area to be (re)developed and established neighbourhoods, including the availability of existing community facilities, and the provision of pedestrian and cycle networks;
- The need to create an overall urban design framework for the (re)development area, and the potential for non-statutory guidance – such as design briefs – to supplement the local area plan (see Chapter 3);
- The scale, location and type of public open space (see Chapter 4);
- The setting of appropriate density levels within the area (see Chapter 5);
- Adaptation to impacts of climate change; and
- The avoidance of natural hazards such as flood risk, and
- Avoidance of increased flood risk for downstream areas.

When land is zoned in a development plan without the benefit of a more detailed local area plan designation, the development plan should identify where practicable the **sequential and co-ordinated manner in which zoned lands will be developed**, so as to avoid a haphazard and costly approach to the provision of social and physical infrastructure. The **sequential approach** as set out in the Department's Development Plan Guidelines (DEHLG, 2007) specifies that zoning shall extend outwards from the centre of an urban area, with undeveloped lands closest to the core and public transport routes being given preference; encouraging infill opportunities; that areas to be zoned shall be contiguous to existing zoned development lands; and, that any exception must be clearly justified in the written statement of the development plan.

The provision of water and sewerage investment programmes by planning authorities must also be related to the sequencing of residential lands and must also be integrated with the provision of public transport, schools, community and leisure facilities etc. This will involve keeping up the close contact with other agencies, which would have occurred during the plan making period.

Some of the larger LAP areas will be developed over a longer period of time, and where this happens it is important that a **phasing programme** is put in place. The purpose of phasing is to ensure that the physical and social infrastructure required is provided in tandem with the residential development. The phasing programme will indicate the number of phases proposed and the enabling works that are required in each phase before being able to move onto the next phase. The programme will also specify the amount of residential development that should take place in each phase, integrated with the provision of the appropriate social facilities (such as schools, childcare and health facilities), transport access etc.

Where there is a substantial amount of zoning proposed relative to the size of the existing town or village, or where it is felt that the existing physical and social infrastructural services will be inadequate, **planning authorities should develop the lands through an LAP and consider indicating, along with the sequencing and phasing parameters, the minimum services that are required for the development of the zoned land, and when these are likely to be provided.** This highlights for service providers, developers, future residents, what services are readily available and what is required and when they are likely to be provided. On approval of the plan, the planning authority should take a proactive approach by informing the service providers of the situation, giving clarity to all involved of the role they play in the quality development of the lands. The service providers have now the planning information required to enable them to include the necessary proposals in their work programmes.

➤ **Urban Design Manual: A best practice guide (Parts 1 and 2) DEHLG, December 2008**

The *Urban Design Manual: A best practice guide (December 2008)* clearly illustrates the twelve criteria for sustainable residential development in both new locations and within existing urban areas. The many illustrations, photographs and diagrams presented in this manual cover the broad range and scales of developments and clearly demonstrate that, through early pre-planning consultations between the key parties, good planning and architectural design and efficient use of space, more compact and higher density at appropriate locations can enhance and enrich an existing urban area and can provide a user-friendly and sustainable environment for its residents.

The Design Guide accompanies the Department's guidelines '*Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas*'. The two documents are intended to be read together and one complements the other. The Guide focuses on the issues presented in housing schemes in the 30-50 units per hectare density range but will also address some of the specific issues generated by higher and lower density schemes in urban areas.

The Guide is based around 12 Criteria that have been drawn up to encapsulate the range of design considerations for residential development. They are, in essence, a distillation of current policy and guidance and tried and tested principles of good urban design.

The **12 Criteria** are sub-divided into three groups: **Neighbourhood / Site / Home**, reflecting the sequence of spatial scales and order of priorities that is followed in a good design process.

1. **Context** (Neighbourhood): How does the development respond to its surroundings?
2. **Connections** (Neighbourhood): How well connected is the new neighbourhood?
3. **Inclusivity** (Neighbourhood): How easily can people use and access the development?
4. **Variety** (Neighbourhood): How does the development promote a good mix of activities?
5. **Efficiency** (Site): How does the development make appropriate use of resources, including land?
6. **Distinctiveness** (Site): How do the proposals create a sense of place?
7. **Layout** (Site): How does the proposal create people friendly streets and spaces?
8. **Public Realm** (Site): How safe, secure and enjoyable are the public areas?
9. **Adaptability** (Home): How will the buildings cope with change?
10. **Privacy & amenity** (Home): How does the scheme provide a decent standard of amenity?
11. **Parking** (Home): How will the parking be secure and attractive?
12. **Detailed design** (Home): How well thought through is the building and landscape design?

➤ **Traffic Management Guidelines, 2003**

This joint publication, the Department of Transport and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the DTO and the NDP notes;

Higher densities cannot be achieved using conventional road layouts. Streets as living space; streets in urban areas serve many different needs: access to property; areas to socialise; leisure and play for children; shopping; through -traffic and servicing.

It is only in the last few decades that the car has come to dominate every street. Streets are (or ought to be) living spaces, an integral part of the community and the focus of many activities that link together people's lives. The way in which streets are managed and used promotes or discourages a sense of community and makes them an attractive or unattractive place to live.

Layout and design in residential areas: design consideration for motor vehicles has come to dominate the shape and layout of developments. This has often been to the detriment of other road users and there are many examples where the road design and speed of traffic has discouraged pedestrian and cycle movement because of concerns over safety. It has also led to the creation of areas that are too similar and lack their own sense of local identity.

Developments should encourage walking, cycling and easy access to good existing or improved public transport links. Minor access roads - these generally serve small groups of houses, up to 50 dwellings. The document paves the way for the more innovative layouts sought, by describing roads which should be designed for speeds of 30km/h – below the legal limit.

➤ **Road Traffic Act, 2004**

This act states that;

9.—(1) A county council or a city council may make bye-laws (“special speed limit bye-laws”) specifying in respect of any specified public road or specified part of a public road or specified carriageway or lane of a public road within its administrative area the speed limit (“special speed limit”) which shall be the speed limit on that road or those roads for mechanically propelled vehicles.

(2) The special speed limits that may be specified in bye-laws under this section are—

(a) 30 kilometres per hour, which shall only be applied in respect of a road or roads (other than a motorway) in accordance with guidelines issued by the Minister under this section.

➤ **Guidelines for the Application of Special Speed Limits under S 9 (9) of the Road Traffic Act 2004 – issued DEHLG, April 2005:**

In applying special speed limits, these guidelines state that;

1. The 30km/h speed limit would normally be applied to a zone or area but may sometimes be applied in respect of a single road;
2. The permanent 30km/h speed limit must not be applied to a national road;
3. The area should not include any road that has a distributor function – i.e. all of the roads in the area should have a traffic function that is limited to the area itself.

➤ **The Planning System and Flood Risk Management, DEHLG, Draft Consultation, September 2008**

Refer to information contained within Chapter 4: Infrastructure and Services.

➤ **“Roscommon Common Vision”, County Development Board Strategy, 2002 - 2012**

The County Development Board Strategy sets an overall framework within which public bodies in the county will deliver their range of services over the next decade. One of the three Strategic Goals is;

- To develop and enhance the economic well-being in County Roscommon so as to facilitate existing and future economic growth, in line with balanced regional development.

The Strategy highlights a number of key issues, together with objectives and strategic actions to address them with co-ordinating agencies listed, in relation to;

1. Planning

Objective: To ensure progressive and transparent planning systems in the county. To ensure future development plans, housing strategies and other Local Authority strategies take account of the environment and sustainable impacts of development.

Strategic Actions include: Prepare local area plans to encourage the development and revitalization of towns, villages and small settlements; seek to ensure disabled access to all buildings, where practicable; develop County Council planning guidelines in consultation with the CDB with regard to rural development; preserve the character and identity of towns and villages in housing and other developments while allowing for appropriate levels of growth; and, identify suitable locations for industrial development and business parks / enterprise space for FDI and indigenous industry.

2. Accommodation

Objective: To ensure the provision of quality accommodation for every person in the county suitable to his or her needs, in a pleasant environment and at a price or rent they can afford

Strategic Actions include: Ensure the development of appropriate housing in the county with diverse housing type and design, to meet the needs of the different family types and individuals; develop and implement a Local Authority estate management plan.

➤ Roscommon County Development Plan, 2008 – 2014

The Roscommon County Development Plan 2008 – 2014 provides the overarching policy and development framework under which this LAP falls.

The following factors were taken into account in the development of land use zoning principles and objectives detailed within the RCDP 2008 – 2014:

- Current development and trends in the County
- Current Land use zoning objectives contained in the Roscommon County Development Plan 2002 – 2008, town development plans and other local area plans
- The amount of developed and undeveloped zoned and serviced land within the County
- Accessibility, availability and location of land for development
- Existing and proposed services such as schools, community facilities, etc.
- Existing and proposed infrastructure such as public transport, water, wastewater etc.
- The scale and pattern of existing development within each town
- The natural and built environment and amenities of each town
- The principles of proper planning and sustainable development

9.3 PHYSICAL CONTEXT

9.3.1 Housing Strategy and Residential Development

The LAP takes a detailed look at Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West), identifying and analysing the various issues of relevance, before establishing and setting out principles for the future development of the area. The purpose of this LAP is to set out objectives for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. It sets out a framework for the optimal development of the land within the envelope taking into consideration the requirements for residential development, social and community infrastructure, physical infrastructure, economic and industrial development and the needs for greenbelt/environmental corridors to link various uses.

The *Housing Strategy for County Roscommon which formed part of the RCDP 2008 – 2014* indicated that based on the population projections for the County, 2455 additional households would be formed from 2008 – 2014. An indicative distribution of new household formations was also provided for various settlements which indicated that 425 households would be formed in the Athlone Environs area. It was stressed that this figure would require flexibility to address the changes in current, emerging and future local circumstances.

The DEHLG publication, *Development Plans: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (June, 2007)*, indicates that;

“Planning Authorities should take all reasonable steps to ensure that sufficient zoned residential land is available throughout the lifetime of the development plan and beyond to meet anticipated needs and allow for an element of choice. In particular, to ensure continuity of supply of zoned residential land, planning authorities should ensure that at the time they make a development plan, enough land will be available to meet needs for the next nine years.” (p 34)

This effectively means providing 50% more land than is required for the development plan period of 6 years. The average dwellings per acre in the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area have rarely exceeded 10 and if the lowest figure recommended within the Residential Density Guidelines (1999) of 8 dwellings per acre were to be applied, the 637.50 additional households (425 + 212.5) could be accommodated on 79.7, say **80 acres of land**. These 637.50 households would account for a population of 1658, at 2.6 persons per household (CSO, 2006 Roscommon County Persons per Aggregate Town Area).

The land zoned for New Residential development as part of the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) Area Plan incorporated into the Roscommon County Development Plan 2008 – 2014 was far greater than the 80 acres, at 478.6 acres of land i.e. 6 times the amount. The level of residential zoned lands based on an average density of 8 – 12 units per acre, 19 to 29 per Ha would allow for approximately 3824 – 5736 units over the lifetime of the plan.

Considering the implications this is likely to have, if it were to be zoned in a similar manner as part of this LAP, in terms of servicing, roads and transportation, and social and community facilities it is likely to have significant environmental effects. In addition, if these units were to be built, during the lifetime of the plan the population in the areas zoned for New Residential development at 2.6 persons per household (CSO, 2006 Roscommon County Persons per Aggregate Town Area) will bring an additional 9942 to 14914 people into the area, i.e. well over the 10,000 population limit for the preparation of an SEA. It could also lead to a tendency for haphazard and sporadic development over the full area.

For this reason, as recommended within the guidelines, Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (DEHLG, Dec 2008), a phasing programme is proposed to “ensure that the physical and social infrastructure required is provided in tandem to residential development” and the backlogs now evident in the area, particularly in terms of community facilities and services, are addressed.

In order to establish the phasing, it is important to ascertain what is existing development, what is permitted residential development and where the pockets of land exist which are suitable to be developed in the future. As a matter of clarity;

- **existing residential development** i.e. residential units which are constructed or in the process of being constructed;
- **permitted residential development** i.e. where planning permission is in place for development which has not as yet commenced;
- **new residential development** i.e. land which is suitable for residential development but has no planning permissions registered on it or building started

Map 12a indicates the permitted development in the area which totals approximately 25.5 Ha or 63.13 acres and represents approximately 542 units. According to the Housing Strategy for Roscommon and in line with the Guidelines for Development Plans, this would cater for the residential development requirement for the Plan period.

It is therefore recommended that permitted development in the LAP area would constitute the 1st phase of the phasing programme and this represents sites 1 to 10 permitted development on Map 12a. In addition, five other sites have also been identified for Phase 1, namely, sites 5, 7, 16, 18 and 28 of the New Residential land (12.59 Ha/ 31.1 acres). The reason for their inclusion is provided in Table 14.

The subsequent phases should follow the sequential approach i.e. it is envisaged that those areas closest to the established residential areas, for example, north of the Old Tuam Road, which have ready access to public services and facilities and would consolidate development in the area, should be developed next.

Those which are more remote and do not have direct access to a public sewer system should be developed over the medium and longer term. It should be noted that planning permissions will only be approved within the LAP boundary once it is proven that sewerage with adequate capacity is available for the development. Preference will be given to areas that can avail of existing sewerage by gravity flow. The use of further private pumping stations will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and should be sized and located to optimise the level of service in the immediate area. Planning applications for developments which do not have access to the public sewer system will need to be accompanied by Appropriate Assessments in terms of the Habitats Directive which demonstrate that they will not have adverse impacts on the environment and the Cross River which leads into the Shannon Callows SCA and SPA. Therefore, the following specific Phasing Programme is recommended (see Table 13 and Map 13a).

The principles of this phasing programme will take precedence in the determination and consideration of in depth planning applications. Tables 13 to 16 below outline a phased schedule of residential development for Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West). It is desirable that each phase would be fully developed before development in another phase commences, this, however, is not realistic and the Planning Authority will expect **70% of a preceding phase to be developed** before contemplating significant development in a succeeding area. In addition, RCC will favourably consider planning applications within Phase 2 for development within the lifetime of this LAP, providing that the lands are serviceable; satisfy the criteria for proper planning and sustainable development; and are located within a radius of 1km from the junction of the Old and New Tuam Roads (considered the centre of the LAP) area. In year 3 of this LAP, RCC will conduct an interim review to assess the “take-up” of Phase 1 lands and consideration will then be given to the phasing plan.

In terms of population numbers, the population of the LAP area has been calculated using a number of methods which all put the current population at over 4500 people. Utilising the An Post Geo-Directory database, approximately 1761 households (March 2010) are resident within the area and if one were to apply the figure of 2.6 persons (CSO, 2006) as the average number of people per household in the aggregate town areas for County Roscommon, the **current population for the Monksland / Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area is 4579**. This figure would need to be reviewed on an ongoing basis as Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) continues to grow and develop.

If one were to add the population expected within each phase of development (calculated at 8 units per acre) the population numbers per year would be as follows;

-
- Phase 1: years 1 to 9: $542 + 225 = 767 @ 2.6 \text{ persons} =$ 1994 persons
 - Phase 2: years 6 to 15: $1059 @ 2.6 \text{ persons} =$ 2754 persons
 - Phase 3: years 12 to 33: $1322 @ 2.6 \text{ persons} =$ 3438 persons

Therefore, the population would be around 6573 for years 1 to 9; 9327 for years 6 to 15; and, 12765 in years 12 to 33. Therefore, in terms of population threshold, it is unlikely that an SEA assessment will be required until years 12 to 33, which will be well beyond the life of this LAP. This would require review however should land in Phases 1 and 2 be developed within the lifetime of this LAP.

Table 13: Recommended Phasing within the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) Local Area Plan

	Term	Years	Area	Comments
Phase 1	Short Term	1 - 9	63.13 + 28.07 = 91.1 acres / 36.89 Ha¹ (portion of 19.1 acres/ 7.7 Ha)²	Phase 1 lands include sites 1 to 10 permitted development on Map 12 which already have the benefit of planning permission for approximately 542 units on 63.13 acres (25.5Ha of land) . The land has been deemed suitable for residential development and granted permission on the basis of ready access to the water, sewerage (whether private or public pumping station) and road network (see Infrastructure Maps – 3, 4, 6 and 7). In addition, five other sites have also been identified for Phase 1, namely, sites 5, 7, 16 ³ , 18 and 28 of the New Residential land (31.1 acres/12.59Ha).
Phase 2 ⁴	Medium Term	6 - 15	132.4 acres / 53.57 Ha	Phase 2 lands consist of pockets of land between the existing and permitted development along the Old and New Tuam Roads (sites 2 to 4, 6, 8 to 13 - new residential) as well as adjacent to the Athlone Town boundary in the east (site 1). Also an infill pocket in Bellanamullia (site 14), an infill pocket between lands zoned as Existing Residential and Industrial development off the Monksland Industrial Estate Road (site 15), and lands to the rear of Phase 1 lands on the Crannagh Beg Road (Site 19). ⁵ These sites would have access to water, sewerage (private or public pumping stations) and roads infrastructure to service them even if this requires extension from adjacent estates (see Infrastructure Maps 3, 4, 6 and 7).
Phase 3	Long Term	12 - 33	165.3 acres / 66.91 Ha	Phase 3 lands consist of the following pieces of land; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lands in and round Summerhill school (sites 17 and 20) 2. Infill lands along the Crannagh Beg Road (sites 21 to 27) 3. Lands to the south-west of the Cross River (site 29) <p>Some of these lands have access to water, other portions will need to access it. Some lands have access to sewerage and roads infrastructure but others will require connections to the sewer system and upgraded or established roads infrastructure. (see Infrastructure Maps 3, 4, 6 and 7)</p>

¹ Calculations based on population projections from the RCDP 2008 – 2014. These are assumed consistent but would need to be reviewed with the preparation of each new LAP.

² It should be noted that lands zoned for District Centre at the junction of the Old and New Tuam Road could include a residential component and should be developed in Phase 1 i.e. portion of the **8.25 acres / 3.3 Ha**. In addition, lands to the south east of the District Centre at the junction of the Old and New Tuam Road which are zoned as New Residential (see no. 5 New Residential on Map 12a) would be appropriately developed within Phase 1. This total site amount is 2.569 acres / 1.04 Ha. In addition, areas **1 (1.091 acres / 0.4417 Ha); 2 (5.713 acres / 2.312 Ha) and 3 (4.105 acres / 1.66 Ha)** indicated for Mixed Residential and Commercial development could also include a residential portion. Lands to the rear of the Mixed Residential and Commercial zone (Site 3) known as Site 6 is now highlighted for Phase 2 New Residential Development.

³ Site 16 can be developed in Phase 1 on the proviso that the lands are accessed directly onto the existing roundabout on the R466.

⁴ In year 3 of this LAP, RCC will conduct an interim review to assess the “take-up” of Phase 1 lands and consideration will then be given to the phasing plan.

⁵ RCC will favourably consider planning applications within Phase 2 for development within the lifetime of this LAP, providing that the lands are serviceable; satisfy the criteria for proper planning and sustainable development; and are located within a radius of 1km from the junction of the Old and New Tuam Roads. In year 3 of this LAP, RCC will conduct an interim review to assess the “take-up” of Phase 1 lands and consideration will then be given to the phasing plan.

Justification of Phase 1 lands

Table 14: Determining Factors for Phase 1

	Determining Factor	Assessment
1	Need	<p>The Housing Strategy for County Roscommon indicates a figure of 425 new household formations for Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) over the period of the Plan. The Development Plan guidelines suggest that the Planning Authorities should ensure continuity of supply of zoned land and that “enough land is available for the next nine years”, which means provided 50% more than is required. Land which is identified has the benefit of Planning permission for approximately 542 units.</p> <p>In addition, five other sites have also been identified for Phase 1, namely, sites 5 (which is land adjacent to the District Centre which is hoped will be developed in Phase 1), 7 (which is an extension of the northern development boundary adjacent to Phase 1 permitted development land), 16⁶, 18 (which provide an alternative for lower density housing in Crannagh Beg) and 28 (which is viewed as an extension of an already existing development along the R466) of the New Residential land (31.1 acres/12.59 Ha).</p>
2	Policy Context	In line with all policies outlined in this Plan.
3	Capacity of Water, Drainage and Roads Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <u>Water</u>: Of adequate capacity (see Chapter 4: Infrastructure and Services) ➤ <u>Sewerage</u>: Of adequate capacity and infrastructure, approved as part of planning permissions for some of the land (see Chapter 4: Infrastructure and Services). Extensions of infrastructure could be considered for the remaining pieces of land. The assimilative capacity of the Cross River cannot be exceeded. The Local Authority will continue to monitor both the River and the discharges to ensure that the development is sustainable in relation to the river and environmentally sensitive areas. ➤ <u>Roads</u>: Adequate roads infrastructure, approved as part of planning permissions. The development of Site 7 will require an upgrade of the existing public road in this area. The development of Site 16 can be developed in Phase 1 on the proviso that the lands are accessed directly onto the existing roundabout on the R466. The development of Site 18 will be conditional on the upgrading of a portion of the Drum Road, which may be required.
4	Supporting Infrastructure and Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <u>Education</u>: the RCDP indicated that RCC will encourage and facilitate the provision of at least 1 new primary school, an extension of the existing primary school and the expansion of the existing secondary school within the Monksland / Bellanamullia area. (9 additional primary classrooms and 7 additional secondary classrooms were required – see Chapter 7: Social and Community Facilities). It should be noted that the PA will in the first instance consider the expansion of existing facilities on adjacent land. An indicative area of at least 3 acres (SO7 within the land designated for New Residential use as well as adjacent to the Cushlea Pitches), within the land designated for New Residential use, has also been indicated for the provision of Community & Educational Facilities ➤ <u>Childcare</u>: Additional childcare facilities will be provided as part of permitted residential development. In addition, local recreational facilities will be provided as part of any housing development greater than 20 units. ➤ <u>Community Facilities</u>: Indicative areas of a minimum of 5 acres each have been set aside both north (as part of the Cushlea Pitches) and south of the New Tuam Road (SO5 and SO6 within the area designated for New Residential Use) for Recreation, Amenity & Open Space. The objective for the provision of these areas is to provide facilities e.g sports pitches, youth facilities such as a basketball courts, a

⁶ Site 16 can be developed in Phase 1 on the proviso that the lands are accessed directly onto the existing roundabout on the R466.

		<p>skatepark etc. and appropriate ancillary facilities e.g. club houses, parking areas etc. with appropriate access to the new M6 east and south. (see Chapter 7: Social and Community Facilities).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <u>Healthcare</u>: Additional healthcare facilities need to be provided within the lifetime of this Plan, preferably in areas designated Neighbourhood Centre or Local Centres. ➤ <u>Retail</u>: Additional retail facilities, within the District Centres and Local / Neighbourhood centres need to be provided within the lifetime of this plan.
5	Physical Suitability	<p>The land has been deemed suitable for residential development and granted permission on the basis of ready access to the water, sewerage (whether private or public pumping station) and road network and are not subject to flooding. (see Maps 3 to 7). Additional land has been zoned for Greenbelt adjacent to the Cross River in Crannagh Beg which will address concerns about flooding in the area.</p>
6	Sequential Approach	<p>Phase 1 includes lands which are already considered permitted development, in and around the Old and New Tuam Roads, which have ready access to public services and facilities, and would consolidate development in the area.</p> <p>Land has also been identified which is adjacent to the District Centre which is hoped will be developed in Phase 1; lands which are an extension of the northern development boundary adjacent to Phase 1 permitted development land; lands which provide an alternative for lower density housing in Crannagh Beg; and, lands which is viewed as an extension of an already existing development along the R466.</p> <p>RCC will favourably consider planning applications within Phase 2 for development within the lifetime of this LAP, providing that the lands are serviceable; satisfy the criteria for proper planning and sustainable development; and are located within a radius of 1km from the junction of the Old and New Tuam Roads (considered the centre of the LAP area).</p> <p>In year 3 of this LAP, RCC will conduct an interim review to assess the “take-up” of Phase 1 lands and consideration will then be given to the phasing plan</p>
7	Environmental and Heritage policy	<p>Developing this land will be sensitive to the natural and built heritage and will not have a negative impact.</p>

Justification of Phase 2 lands

Table 15: Determining Factors for Phase 2

	Determining Factor	Assessment
1	Need	<p>These lands consist of pockets of infill land between the existing and permitted development along the Old and New Tuam Roads, as well as adjacent to the Athlone Town boundary in the east. These would be considered infill development and consolidate development in the area. In addition, a portion of land has been identified to the rear of lands identified as Phase 1 development along the Crannagh Beg Road. This land was identified as part of the area plan which forms part of the RCDP 2008-2014. It will not be developed until 70% of Phase 1 lands are developed.</p> <p>RCC will favourably consider planning applications within Phase 2 for development within the lifetime of this LAP, providing that the lands are serviceable; satisfy the criteria for proper planning and sustainable development; and are located within a radius of 1km from the junction of the Old and New Tuam Roads.</p> <p>In year 3 of this LAP, RCC will conduct an interim review to assess the “take-up” of Phase 1 lands and consideration will then be given to the phasing plan.</p>
2	Policy Context	In line with all policies outlined in this Plan.
3	Capacity of Water, Drainage and Roads Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <u>Water</u>: Of adequate capacity ➤ <u>Sewerage</u>: Adequate capacity of the sewerage treatment plant but additional pumping stations or consolidated / amalgamated larger ones required. The assimilative capacity of the Cross River cannot be exceeded. The Local Authority will continue to monitor both the River and the discharges to ensure that the development is sustainable in relation to the river and environmentally sensitive areas. ➤ <u>Roads</u>: Only internal roads infrastructure within developments required, possibly extensions from neighbouring estates (see Map 3a). The provision of footpaths, streetlighting and other road accommodation works will need to be provided.
4	Supporting Infrastructure and Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <u>Education</u>: Taking into account the growth of the existing population in Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West), and the development of approximately 1059 additional households on Phase 2 lands (132.4.9 acres x 8 houses per acre), it will be necessary to provide an additional 13 classrooms at primary level and 7 at secondary level (See Chapter 7: Social and Community Facilities). At primary level the new school catered for in Phase 1 can be extended and a decision would need to be made whether to construct a new secondary school at this stage and grow into it or expand the existing secondary school by another 7 classrooms. These should be sufficient to accommodate this scale of residential development. ➤ <u>Childcare</u>: Additional childcare facilities will be provided by developers ➤ <u>Community Facilities</u>: It is recommended that considering the implication for education facilities mentioned above, an additional 3 (for primary) + 12 (for secondary) acres of land be set aside for Community and Educational purposes (either north or south of the Old or New Tuam Roads) and that another 5 acres be considered, north of the Old Tuam Road for Recreation, Amenity & Open Space. It is recommended that the 3 acres could be optional if the primary school has sufficient space to extend in the site established as part of Phase 1 alternatively an additional 3 acres could be negotiated adjacent to the school site. ➤ <u>Healthcare</u>: Additional healthcare facilities need to be provided in the area. ➤ <u>Retail</u>: Additional retail facilities need to be provided in the area. The provision of local/neighbourhood centres would need to be

		addressed at this stage.
5	Physical Suitability	The lands are made up of Greenfield sites which will have ready access to water, sewerage (whether private or public pumping stations) and road network and are not subject to flooding. (see Maps 3 to 7)
6	Sequential Approach	These lands are contiguous to existing zoned development lands.
7	Environmental and Heritage policy	Developing this land will be sensitive to the natural and built heritage and will not have a negative impact.

Justification of Phase 3 lands

Table 16: Determining Factors for Phase 3

	Determining Factor	Assessment
1	Need	<p>The majority of these lands were zoned as part of the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) Area Plan and consist of;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lands in and round Summerhill school (sites 17 and 20) 2. Infill lands along the Crannagh Beg Road (sites 21 to 27) 3. Lands to the south-west of the Cross River (site 29) <p>These lands will not be developed until 70% of Phase 2 lands are developed.</p>
2	Policy Context	In line with all policies outlined in this Plan.
3	Capacity of Water, Drainage and Roads Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <u>Water</u>: Of adequate capacity ➤ <u>Sewerage</u>: Of adequate capacity if proposed upgrade is completed (see Chapter 4: Infrastructure and Services). Additional pumping stations or consolidated / amalgamated larger ones required. The use of the Shannon River as an outfall for discharges will be considered when capacity of the Cross River is being approached. New development will only be permitted in tandem with the use of the Shannon River. ➤ <u>Roads</u>: Additional roads infrastructure required (see Map 13a) 3.5km @ €1,000,000/km
4	Supporting Infrastructure and Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <u>Education</u>: Taking into account the growth of the existing population in Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West), and the development of approximately 1322 additional households (165.3 acres x 8 houses per acre) on Phase 3 lands, it will be necessary to consider an additional 16 classrooms at primary level and 9 at secondary level (see Chapter 7: Social and Community Facilities). A new primary school would be required and a new secondary constructed if one has not been within Phase 2, to accommodate this scale of residential development. ➤ <u>Childcare</u>: Additional childcare facilities will be provided by developers ➤ <u>Community Facilities</u>: It is recommended that considering the implication for education facilities mentioned above, an additional 3 (for primary) + 12 (for secondary) acres of land be set aside for Community and Educational purposes (either north or south of the Old or New Tuam Roads) and that another 5 acres be considered, north of the Old Tuam Road for Recreation, Amenity & Open Space. If the secondary school is provided in Phase 2 this 12 acres would not be required. ➤ <u>Healthcare</u>: Additional healthcare facilities need to be provided in the area. ➤ <u>Retail</u>: Additional retail facilities need to be provided in the area particularly within local centres.
5	Physical Suitability	These lands are made up of Greenfield sites that require additional wastewater and roads infrastructure to service. These lands are not subject to flooding.
6	Sequential Approach	These lands are contiguous to existing zoned development lands including Phase 2 lands.
7	Environmental and Heritage policy	Developing this land will be sensitive to the natural and built heritage and will not have a negative impact.

In addition to land zoned for residential purposes, it is recommended that approximately 172.2 Acres / 69.7 Ha of land be zoned for Business, Enterprise Park/Light Industry and Warehousing, and 149.9 Acres / 60.7 Ha be zoned for Industrial Uses.

It should be noted that it is envisaged that lands zoned for Industrial uses will develop from east to west, i.e. from the Monksland Industrial Estate Road to the Mihanbee Road, as infrastructure is extended west. Lands to the east of the Cross River should be developed first, where ready infrastructure and services are available, and could take a number of years to expand across the Cross River.

The following are the areas which are proposed to be zoned within the Plan area: (See Map 13a)

Table 17: Proposed zoning areas for the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP

Zoning	Areas	
	Acre	Hectare
Mixed Residential & Commercial	10.90	4.4
Existing Residential	345.5	139.8
New Residential: total	388.9	157.4
Phase 1 – years 1 – 9	91.15	36.89
Phase 2 – years 6 – 15	132.4	53.57
Phase 3 – years 12 – 33	165.3	66.91
Business, Enterprise Park/Light Industry & Warehousing	172.2	69.7
Industrial Uses	149.9	60.7
Community & Educational Facilities	50.23	20.33
District Centre	78.84	31.90
Local/ Neighbourhood Centre	13.01	5.3
Leisure & Amenity	6.4	2.6
Greenbelt	230.7	93.38
Public Utilities, Services & Facilities	9.1	3.7
Transitional Agriculture	173.1	70.04
Recreation, Amenity & Open Space	31.75	12.85

9.3.2 Further development within the LAP area

As mentioned within the earlier part of the LAP, further increases in housing and population within the LAP area will generate considerable demand and need for the provision of an adequate level of community facilities, public transport services, employment opportunities, shopping facilities, road network capacity and general infrastructure in the immediate and broader area. There is also a need for a more attractive and safer pedestrian environment which should include the provision of pedestrian crossings, high quality pavements and cycle paths, street lighting and street furniture in the area.

At the community meeting, the following issues were raised concerning housing and development in the LAP area;

- The issue with unfinished housing developments – Enforcement should be issued on - contractors to return to housing developments and complete same i.e. footpaths, tarmac, etc. – (Take in charge / Bonds)
- Main weakness – unfinished estates. Monksland area “just going to have to be finished off”.
- There are many housing estates left unfinished in the area. A clause should be included in the LAP to ensure that developers cannot build additional housing estates until previous estates are fully completed
- Currently there is no real village centre in the area. There are two very distinct villages, that of Bellanamullia (around the Mill Bar area) and that of Monksland (further along the road). However, there is no real link between the villages. In addition, there is nothing much to distinguish where the villages start or finish and on approaching from either side one gets the

impression that you are still in Athlone. There needs to be a very definite visual impact at either side of the area, possibly in the form of large signs indicating either side of the area, with smaller signs where the villages meet. There also needs to be a visual link along the road so that there is a feeling on entering from either side of being in a village distinct and separate from Athlone. A co-ordinated landscaping plan could be used to create this visual link.

- The issue of large housing developments which have no facilities – There should be a condition on a planning permission for a large housing development for the Contactor to provide the following facilities within the development: green area, playground, crèche, schools.

Roscommon County Council has an ongoing requirement for social and affordable housing in Monksland and will continue to provide this in an orderly manner. This will be achieved through the development of existing Local Authority (LA) housing land as well as through land acquisition, purchase and/or development through the Part V process.

Roscommon County Council, in carrying out its housing functions, will have regard to Government Policy as established in '*Social Housing – The Way Ahead*' (Department of the Environment, 1995) and the Housing Strategy for County Roscommon. These documents set out the broad aim of ensuring that every household has a dwelling suitable to its needs, located in an acceptable environment and at a price or rent they can afford. The Council will seek the inclusion of a significant **social and affordable housing** element in large housing scheme proposals. It remains the policy of the Council to encourage the purchase of public housing units by current tenants.

To ensure the proper planning and development of the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area, the Council will require that housing proposals do not cause traffic or environmental problems or damage visual amenity, and that all new residential accommodation is designed to modern standards of energy consumption, convenience and sanitation.

The provision of a range of housing forms, types and locations will ensure that the needs of persons seeking housing in the area can be met. Where infill housing or higher density development is proposed it should reflect the existing character of the street and/or immediate area in terms of height, proportion and materials used. Generally, proposals will be required to maintain existing building lines and to respect existing roof pitches, fenestration and other details. The Council will also encourage the renovation and re-occupation of derelict and vacant houses in both urban and rural areas.

The Council will seek to minimize ribbon type development of individual houses along roads in the Plan Area. This can result in a loss of visual amenity, traffic hazards, pollution and the demand for uneconomic extension of services along the outskirts of the Plan Area. The Council will therefore seek to ensure that future development is located within serviceable areas. This will aid the proper planning and development of the Plan Area.

Development within areas zoned for Transitional Agriculture will be governed by guidelines contained within the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines, 2004. The Council will only consider granting permission for single dwelling houses in these areas where it is clearly proven that there is a requirement to reside in an agricultural area.

Policies for Residential Development

- Policy 122** Require that new residential accommodation meets the following;
- necessary standards of energy consumption, sanitation and high standards of design;
 - avoiding unnecessary development on floodplains;
 - avoid traffic or environmental problems or damage to visual amenity;
 - encourage suitable infill development on appropriate sites; and,
 - prevent further ribbon development along roads within the development envelope and immediately contiguous thereto.

- Policy 123** Facilitate the Housing Authority's programme for housing, including;
- the provision of new housing,
 - renovation/refurbishment of existing buildings;
 - the provision of suitable accommodation and facilities for the Traveller Community;
 - the provision of suitable accommodation for people with disabilities;
 - the provision of social and affordable housing; and,
 - implementation of the provisions of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended

Objectives for Residential Development

- Objective 162** Development within the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area should take place in accordance with the phasing schedule recommended in Tables 13 to 16 above.
- Objective 163** Assess and ensure that all proposals for housing developments comply with the Development Management Guidelines and Standards section, Chapter 10 of this LAP.
- Objective 164** Prepare a joint Local Area Plan with Westmeath County Council / Athlone Town Council for lands at Bellaugh and including lands outlined as Specific Objective 8 (SO8) (as amended)
- Objective 165** The Planning Authority will facilitate variations of its plan in a timely manner, following the recommendations of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the area.

9.3.3 Land use zoning objectives and matrix

The Land Use Zoning Objectives and Matrix within this section outlines the zoning objectives for each zone identified in the zoning map. It indicates the uses and type of development, which the Council considers to be appropriate for each zone. It is intended to provide guidance to anyone seeking permission for development as well as the general public. The indication that a proposal is 'permitted in principle' in the Matrix does not imply a grant of permission or that a planning application will be successful as each planning application will be determined on an individual basis by the Planning Authority. Equally the indication that a particular type of development is not permitted in any particular category does not rule same out and there may be situations where said could be permitted.

Land uses not listed in the Matrix will be considered on the merits of the individual planning application, the general policies and zoning objectives for the area including the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. Development proposals should be compatible with the Matrix, however, consideration may be given to proposals, which would benefit the local community and are in the interests of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. These proposals will also need to be consistent with the development standards and the requirements on public health, traffic safety, residential amenity, heritage, design and visual amenity.

The following factors have been taken into account in the development of land use zoning principles and objectives.

- Current development and trends in the County
- Current Land use zoning objectives contained in the Roscommon County Development Plan 2002 – 2008, town development plans and other local area plans
- The amount of developed and undeveloped zoned and serviced land within the County
- Accessibility, availability and location of land for development
- Existing and proposed services such as schools, community facilities, etc.
- Existing and proposed infrastructure such as public transport, water, wastewater etc.
- The scale and pattern of existing development within each town

- The natural and built environment and amenities of each town
- The principles of proper planning and sustainable development

Land Use Zoning Objectives

This plan identifies specific areas for specific types of land use in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development. Objectives for each of these land uses are outlined below. It should be noted that there are several which are common and repeated but which are relevant to the landuses proposed. It should also be noted that the objectives as listed are not exhaustive.

Zone	Zoning Description
DC District Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose built group of shops, separate from the town centre • Provide for the development of a mix of commercial/retail uses including a convenience shop such as a supermarket or superstore, comparison shops, non-retail services, such as banks, building societies, restaurants, pharmacies, take away, video/DVD rental, public house, and dental/medical surgery. • Provide for local services such as medical centre, offices, workshops, crèche, petrol station, waste segregation facility (bring bank), launderette, where appropriate, to meet the needs of the community • Where appropriate, provide accommodation over retail/commercial units, grouped small starter/incubator workshops, craft or service units, guest houses, etc. • Strong building design to provide focal points within mixed-use developments that will add legibility and clarity to the physical structure and layout of the development. • The centre could be developed around a public/focal space, where appropriate • Provide sustainable transport linkages such as public transport, adequate cycle and walkways from the district centres to the town centre and surrounding residential areas. • Require the inclusion of appropriate open spaces in development in this zone

As defined in the Retail Planning Guidelines (2005), the District Centres “will consist of a purpose built group of shops, separate from the town centre.” Both District Centres would primarily serve the local needs of residents in the area and would be readily accessible to the pedestrian catchment within a 500m radius of the centres and to a wider residential catchment via private car, public transport (bus) and cycling. The centres would not contain retail units of a size and nature that would compete directly with Athlone Town Centre. The centres may contain a food supermarket or superstore and non-retail services, such as banks, building societies, restaurants, pharmacies, take away, video/DVD rental, public house, and dental/medical surgery.

Mixed-use developments would need to be encouraged in the centres, with the possibility of accommodation over retail/commercial units, grouped small starter/incubator workshops, craft or service units, guest houses, etc.

The following Specific Objectives (SO) define the various land uses within the **DC zoning within the Bogganfin area.**

Specific Objective 1 (SO1): Large scale Hardware

SO1 is a specific objective defined within a District Centre zoning.

SO1 incorporates the existing Ganlys Hardware and associated lands adjacent to the N61. At present the zone is intended to provide primarily for the following types of development:

1. The appropriate extension of existing retail warehousing.
2. Garden centre development and developments selling bulky DIY goods.
3. Ancillary uses or development servicing the mixed use development, which may include canteens, crèche facilities, a railway siding etc.

It should be noted that should the existing business relocate, it would be appropriate that the District Centre uses be associated with this land.

Specific Objective 2 (SO2): Business Park Mixed-Use Development, Commercial Office Development and possibly Hotel/Leisure

SO2 is a specific objective defined within a District Centre zoning.

SO2 is located adjacent to the N61, facing north-east towards the Lough Ree cSAC and the River Shannon floodplain and waterway and at the “Gateway” to County Roscommon. It is accordingly considered that only appropriate developments that are fine-grained, of high architectural merit and well landscaped should be allowed in this zone in order to enhance the “Gateway” to County Roscommon and to guard against visual impact on the River Shannon waterway and Lough Ree cSAC. The zone is intended to provide primarily for the following types of development, although uses specified within the District Centre zoning could also be considered:

1. Business park developments, including corporate headquarters and office accommodation.
2. Regional facilities such as a medical (ambulance and emergency) centre.
3. Petrol filling station with forecourt shop. The petrol filling station would be most appropriately located at an easily accessible location along the N61 and/or at a safe and easily accessible site within the District Centre zoning. The Planning Authority will not allow development of motor fuel filling stations where a proposal is likely to lead to an impairment of the visual or residential amenity of the area through intrusive commercial frontage and signage, nuisance, disturbance or excessive traffic movements.
4. A motor showroom, subject to appropriate design, traffic safety requirements, etc.
5. A limited element of retail warehousing, to be adequately designed and screened as far as practicable from the national road network.
6. Possibly a Hotel/leisure complex, including indoor sporting facilities, and conference facilities. Such a facility could act as a landmark building, although a landmark building could also be corporate headquarters, or an exhibition centre, or a regional medical centre etc, in Bogganfin at the entrance to Athlone Town, County Roscommon and the West Region and should be optimally located to provide maximum visibility and ease of access, such as close to the junction of the M6 and N61. As there are already a number of Hotels within Athlone it would be most appropriate that the market dictate whether such a facility is still viable in this area.
7. Ancillary uses servicing the mixed-use development, which may include restaurants/canteens, crèche facilities, etc.

It is intended to provide sites in a campus or park type setting with the provision of adequate landscaping and open space and the buffering of adjacent, less intensive land uses. Generally, high standards of design will be encouraged, particularly where developments are visible from the N61, the M6 and/or the Monksland Regional Link Road.

LC Local/Neighbourhood Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect, provide for and / or improve local centre facilities serving a localised population • Provide for local services which may typically comprise a newsagent, small supermarket/general grocery store, sub-post office and other small shops of a local nature serving a small, localised catchment population.
--	--

As defined in the Retail Planning Guidelines (2005), a Local centre or neighbourhood centre is characterized by the provision of “Small groups of shops, typically comprising a newsagent, small

supermarket/general grocery store, sub-post office and other small shops of a local nature serving a small, localised catchment population.”

Therefore, this option involves a dispersed pattern of shops and community facilities distributed in local/neighbourhood centres within individual residential areas and serving very localised population thresholds.

The following Specific Objective (SO) defines the various land uses within the **LC zoning within the Bogganfin area**.

Specific Objective 3 (SO3): Office, Community Facilities and Local Centre Development

SO4 is a specific objective defined within a Local Centre zoning.

SO4 is located between land identified for BE and CE close to the existing Cushlea residential area and sports fields. It is accordingly considered that development in this zone should take the form of high quality developments that are scaled down and are intended to provide primarily for the following types of development:

1. Office use, such as corporate headquarters and general office accommodation.
2. Community facilities.
3. An element of small business starter units could also be considered in this zone.
4. Local Centre development, which may include a limited amount of local shopping facilities and some appropriate residential development, in particular “living over the shop”, where it can be demonstrated that such shopping facilities will serve a local residential need and will not impact negatively on the development of local or neighbourhood centres in Monksland.

Zone	Zoning Description
BE Business, Enterprise Park/Light Industry & Warehousing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for light industry, warehousing and enterprise units and ancillary uses such as training, education, childcare, financial, cafés, hotel, petrol station, fitness centre, parking and recycling facilities. • Prohibit heavy industry and incinerators/thermal treatment plants. • Encourage appropriate scale, density, type and location of development to reduce traffic generated and the demand for travel and sustainable modes of transport such as connections to public transport, walking and cycling networks. • Provide transitional areas with appropriate landscaping where this zone adjoins other land uses. • Provide for appropriate advertising and advertising structures. • Provide for construction and demolition waste to be used as fill, with the associated licensing, prior to development of these sites

The following Specific Objective (SO) defines the various land uses within the **BE zoning within the Bogganfin area**.

Specific Objective 4 (SO4): Business, Enterprise Park/Light Industry & Warehousing

SO5 is a specific objective defined within a Business, Enterprise Park/Light Industry & Warehousing zoning.

SO5 is situated between land zoned as District Centre and Greenbelt, Transitional Agricultural and Local Centre. It is considered that this zone is suitable for large, bulky developments that require large sites that are accessible by private vehicles and large delivery vehicles and which demand a high degree of visibility from the surrounding road network. The zone is intended to provide primarily for the following uses;

1. Provide for light industry, warehousing and enterprise units and ancillary uses such as training, education, childcare, financial services, cafés, a petrol station, fitness centre, parking and recycling facilities.
2. Prohibit heavy industry and incinerators/thermal treatment plants.
3. Encourage appropriate scale, density, type and location of development to reduce traffic generated and the demand for travel and sustainable modes of transport such as connections to public transport, walking and cycling networks.
4. Provide transitional areas with appropriate landscaping where this zone adjoins other land uses.
5. Provide for appropriate advertising and advertising structures.
6. Provide for construction and demolition waste to be used as fill, with the associated licensing, prior to development of these sites
7. Allow for the development of a limited element of retail warehousing at appropriate locations i.e. restricted to the sale of bulky comparison goods, including DIY goods, furniture, carpets, motor accessories, garden products, toys and electrical goods, provided there is no conflict with other policies and objectives of this LAP. This is intended to extend the range and choice of shopping available to residents of Athlone Town and Environs and the broader region without diverting trade from existing shops or adversely affecting the vitality and viability of the existing town centre to an unacceptable degree.

ER Existing Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance the residential amenities of existing and new residential communities and provide a high level of services within walking distances of residential developments. • Provide for infill residential development at a density and design appropriate to the area and needs of the community. • Provide for new and improved ancillary social and community services. • Improve accessibility from these areas to town centers • Provide for the appropriate retail facilities in addition to local community and social facilities for the immediate community • Require the inclusion of appropriate open spaces in development in this zone
NR New Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for new residential development, including a mix of residential options, as well as appropriate local services and community facilities such as recreation, education, crèche/playschool, community buildings, sheltered housing, and corner shops. • Provide for local shopping, amenity, recreation, education, childcare, community and recycling facilities, public services, public transport, tourist accommodation, and renewable energy options. • Preserve the residential amenity of the neighbourhood. • Provide for appropriate retail facilities in addition to local community and social facilities for the immediate local community • Have regard to the overall heritage of the area • Require the inclusion of appropriate open spaces in development in this zone
RC Mixed Residential and Commercial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve the existing, provide for, and facilitate new residential and commercial uses • Improve civic amenity by requiring high standards of urban design. • Provide for infill development at a density appropriate to the area and needs of the community. • Encourage the regeneration of derelict buildings. • Regulate where appropriate the subdivision of existing residential units.

I Industrial Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reserve lands for the provision of heavy industry, incinerators and thermal treatment and employment related uses. • Provide for manufacturing and service industry, and storage facilities as well as ancillary facilities such as training, education, childcare, financial, parking and recycling facilities and waste disposal options. • Provide for appropriate advertising and advertising structures. • Provide for construction and demolition waste to be used as fill, with the associated licensing, prior to development of these sites
CD Construction and Demolition waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide facilities for the recycling of construction and demolition waste
CP Car parking / Transport node	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for car parking as well as other transport facilities such as public transport, tour bus parking etc. at appropriate locations and taking account of through traffic • Ensure that traffic safety and the car parking requirements are fulfilled
PU Public Utilities, Services & Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for and improve public utilities such as electricity, telecommunications, water, wastewater, gas etc to ensure the long-term sustainability of these services and to meet wider regional and national objectives.
CE Community and Educational Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for health, welfare, community, education and institutional uses including schools, childcare, community meeting areas, churches, hospitals etc. in close proximity to existing and planned residential communities as well as the other ancillary services such as public services and recycling facilities. • Provide for dual use of community facilities where possible and appropriate • Childcare facilities would also be easily accessible to employees working within the area and can be considered a safe environment for children.
RA Recreation, Amenity & Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve and improve active and passive recreational public and private open space and provide for new leisure & amenity facilities in the town e.g. a Major Sports Facility • Provide for local amenities and recreational facilities including playing fields and dedicated amenity areas. • Protect the natural amenity, including waterways. • Prevent the loss of existing open space, recreation and sporting grounds.
GB Green Belt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect the setting, character and environmental quality of areas of high natural beauty and safeguard their environmental, archaeological and ecological amenities. • Provide a visual and environmental buffer, where appropriate, to preserve the natural amenity of the area such as alongside waterways, rivers and floodplains. • Ensure this area is not used to satisfy the open space provision of adjoining housing developments. • Prohibit development, which would detract from the visual amenity of the area or result in a loss of recreational open space.

TA Transitional Agricultural Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve the character of rural or edge areas and provide for agricultural development as well as other uses not directly associated with agriculture, such as housing for family members, or those with a housing need, tourist related projects such as caravan parks or campsites, and amenity such as playing fields and parks, in order to avoid a sharp transition between the urban edge and primarily agricultural areas. • Prohibit development that would create premature demand for infrastructural services. • Prohibit new residential development to essential housing need. • Guard against urban sprawl and ribbon development particularly along the national road network
LA Leisure & Amenity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for new leisure and amenity facilities such as bowling, swimming pool and hotel/gym/leisure facilities as well as cinema and theatre facilities. Rivers and lakes may be included in this use.
LT Leisure Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider developments for leisure and recreational based activities including water based activities as well as appropriately scaled coffee shops, hotel, restaurant(s) and public house(s), etc.

ZONING MATRIX

The land use zoning matrix details those land uses permitted in principle, open for consideration and not normally permitted, under each use class. It should be noted that this section should be read in conjunction with Chapter 10: Development Management Guidelines and Standards.

Permitted in Principle = √

A use, which is 'Permitted in Principle', is generally acceptable subject to the normal planning process and compliance with the relevant policies and objectives, standards and requirements set out in the Plan.

Open for Consideration = O

A use, which is 'Open for Consideration', may be permitted where the Planning Authority is satisfied it is compatible with the policies and objectives for the zone, will not conflict with the permitted, existing or adjoining land uses and conforms with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Not Normally Permitted = X

A use, which is 'Not Normally Permitted', is one, which will not be considered by the Planning Authority except in exceptional circumstances. This may be due to its perceived effect on existing and permitted uses, its incompatibility with the policies and objectives contained in this Plan or the fact that it may be inconsistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Other Uses

Proposed land uses not listed in the Land Use Zoning Matrix will be considered on an individual basis with regard to the general policies and zoning objectives for the area including the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. All zones should be considered as mixed development zones with a primary use/uses but not necessarily excluding other development that in the opinion of the Council are necessary for the vitality and proper development of the town.

Established Use

Many established uses exist in locations where they do not correspond to the designated land use zoning objective of the area as set out in the Plan. Improvement works to established premises may be permitted where the proposed development would not be injurious to the amenities of the area and is consistent with proper planning and sustainable development.

Transitional Areas

While the zoning objectives indicate the different uses permitted in each zone it is important to avoid abrupt transitions in scale and use at the boundary of adjoining land use zones. In these areas it is necessary to avoid developments that would be detrimental to amenity, for example in zones abutting residential areas, particular attention will be paid to the uses, scale and density and appearance of development proposals as well as to landscaping and screening proposals in order to protect the amenities of residents. It is particularly important to include buffer zones between land zoned as Existing and New Residential and Industrial or Business, Enterprise Park/Light Industry & Warehousing.

Non-conforming uses

Throughout the Plan area there are uses that do not conform to the zoning objectives. These may include uses that were in existence on 1 October 1964 that subsequently received planning permission or have no permission and may not be the subject of enforcement proceedings.

The extension of premises accommodating non-conforming uses, including residential properties, will be considered on their merits and may be permitted where the development does not seriously injure the amenities of the area and is otherwise in accordance with the proper planning and development of the area.

Land Use Zoning Matrix

DC	District Centre
LC	Local/Neighbourhood Centre
ER	Existing Residential
NR	New Residential
RC	Mixed Residential and Commercial
BE	Business, Enterprise Park/Light Industry & Warehousing
I	Industrial Uses
CP	Car parking/Transport Node
PU	Public Utilities, Services & Facilities
CE	Community & Educational Facilities
RA	Recreation, Amenity & Open Space
GB	Greenbelt
LT	Leisure Tourism
LA	Leisure & Amenity
TA	Transitional Agricultural Use
CD	Construction & Demolition Waste

USE	DC	LC	ER	NR	RC	BE	I	CP	PU	CE	RA	GB	LA	LT	TA	CD
Allotments ⁷	X	X	O	O	O	X	X	X	X	O	O	X	O	O	O	X
Abattoir ⁸	O	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X
Advertisements and Advertising Structures (e.g. permanent large billboards)	√	√	X	X	O	√	√	O	O	O	O ⁹	X	O	O	X	O
Agricultural Buildings	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X
Amusement arcade	√	O	X	X	O	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X
Apartments	O	O	√	√	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X
Bank / Building Society / ATM	√	O	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	O	X	X
Betting Office	√	√	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Boarding Kennels	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X
Bring Banks	√	√	O	O	X	√	√	O	X	O	O	X	X	X	O	X
Cafe	√	√	X	O	√	O*	X	X	X	O	√	X	O*	√*	O	X
Caravan Park-Holiday	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	√	O	X
Caravan Park-Residential	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	O	O	X
Car Dismantler / Scrapyard	X	X	X	X	X	O	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Car Park ¹⁰	√	√	O	O	√	√	√	√	O	O	O	O*	O	O	O	X
Car Park Multi Storey	O	X	X	X	X	O	O	√	O	O	X	X	X	O	X	X
Cash and Carry/ Wholesale Outlet	O	X	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cemetery	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	√	O	X	X	X	O	X
Childcare Facilities (Crèche/ Nursery)	√	√	√	√	O	O*	X	X	X	√	X	X	√*	O*	O	X

⁷ Open for consideration on a temporary basis on undeveloped land

⁸ Must all be small in town centres/district centres where serving a butchers shop

⁹ For sporting clubs

¹⁰ Excluding car parking ancillary to other uses such as employees car parking at office.

USE	DC	LC	ER	NR	RC	BE	I	CP	PU	CE	RA	GB	LA	LT	TA	CD
Cultural/Community Use ¹¹ (e.g. Garda Station, FireStation, Ambulance Service)	O	O	X	O	O	O	X	X	X	√	O	X	O	O	O	X
Civic Amenity Site	X	X	X	X	X	√	√	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	O	O
Conference Centre	√	X	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	O	X	X
Construction and Demolition (C&D) Waste Recycling	X	X	X	X	X	√	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	√
Disco/Nightclub	O	X	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X
Doctor/Dentist/Medical and related consultants/ veterinary surgery	√	O	O	O	√	√	X	X	X	O	X	X	O	O	X	X
Drive-through Restaurant	O	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X
Educational Facilities	√	X	O	O	O	O	X	X	X	√	X	X	O	O*	O	X
Electricity generation/power plant	X	X	X	X	X	O	√	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	O	X
Fuel Depot	X	X	X	O	X	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Funeral Home	O	X	X	O	O	O	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	X
Garden Centre / Shop	√	O	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	√	X
Guesthouse/Hostel	O	X	O	O	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	√	O	X
Halting Sites/Group Housing	X	X	O	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hazardous Waste Depot	X	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Heavy Vehicle Park	X	X	X	X	X	O	√	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	O*
Holiday Homes – short term letting	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X
Hospital	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hotel/Motel	√	X	O	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	√	X	X

¹¹ Includes Class 10 & 11 uses, page 199, Planning and Development Regulations 2001

USE	DC	LC	ER	NR	RC	BE	I	CP	PU	CE	RA	GB	LA	LT	TA	CD
ICT Masts	X	X	X	X	X	O	√	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Industry-Extractive	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Industry-General ¹²	X	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O
Industry-Light	X	X	X	X	X	√	√	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	X
Leisure Centre/Health Spa	√	X	O	O	O	O	X	X	X	O	O	X	O	√	X	X
Mart /Co-op	X	X	X	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X
Motor Sales Outlet/Showroom	√	X	X	X	X	√	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Municipal Waste Incinerator	X	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O
Offices less than 100m ²	√	√	O	O	√	O	O*	X	X	O	X	X	X	O*	X	X
Offices 100m ² to 1000m ²	√	X	X	X	O	O	O	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	X
Offices over 1000m ²	√	X	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	X
Open air market	O	O	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	O	O	X	O	O	X	X
Park and Ride Facility	X	X	X	O	X	√	√	√	X	O	X	X	X	X	O	X
Petrol Station	√	√	X	X	X	√	√	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X
Place of Public Worship	√	√	√	√	O	X	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	O	X
Plant/ tool hire	O	O	X	O	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X
Public House	√	√	O	O	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X
Recycling Facility e.g. composting, waste recovery etc.	X	X	X	X	X	O	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O
Residential	√	O	√	√	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	O***	X

¹² General Industry uses include all industrial manufacturing, processing and storage outside the definition of light industry.

USE	DC	LC	ER	NR	RC	BE	I	CP	PU	CE	RA	GB	LA	LT	TA	CD
Residential (Institutional)	O	X	O	√	√	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	X
Restaurant	√	O	O	O	√	O*	X	X	X	O*	X	X	O*	√	X	X
Retail Warehouse e.g. furniture	O	X	X	X	O	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rural Industry-Food processing	X	X	X	X	O	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X
Science and Technology Based Enterprise (Large scale)	X	X	X	X	X	√	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Service Garage <100m ² excluding sales and storage	O	O	X	X	X	√	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Shop (comparison)	√	O	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	O	O	X	X
Shop (convenience)	√	O	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X
Shopping Centre	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Shop (neighbourhood)	√	√	O	O	O	O*	X	X	X	O*	X	X	X	O	X	X
Small Scale Manufacturing (e.g. framing)	O	O	O	O	O	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	O	X
Sports Fields	O	X	O	√	O	O	X	X	X	√	√	X	O	O	O	X
Supermarket	√	O ⁷	X	O	O ⁷	O ¹³	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X
Take-away (not drive thru)	√	O	X	X	O	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	O*	X	X
Transport Depot	X	X	X	X	X	X	√	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Waterbased recreational/cultural activities	O	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	X	√	√	X	O	√	O	X
Wholesale Warehousing	X	X	X	X	X	√	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Note:

*If ancillary to main use, will be permitted in principle.

** Exclusively residential proposals in Core Town Centre zones will not normally be permitted.

*** Open to consideration in accordance with the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines (2005)

¹³ Only permitted if a suitable site is not available on lands zoned for town centre/district centre uses

9.3.4 Urban Development within LAP area

Town centres give us a sense of place and a sense of identity; they have a history both archaeologically and architecturally and their street patterns and built form have become familiar to us and have a value for that reason alone. The Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area does not have a centre per se and relies on Athlone to fulfil town centre functions. This LAP area does however have a large residential population, a number of industrial and light industrial enterprises and a hotel but lacks a sense of place and identity which a commercial/retail core could provide. It is important to note that the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area is functionally linked to Athlone and can be considered part of the linked Gateway of Athlone-Mullingar-Tullamore.

The following options have been considered for the form of commercial and community facilities that could be provided within the LAP area:

❑ Form Option 1 : District Centre Option

The Retail Planning Guidelines (2005) defines a District Centre as the following:

“District centre – Either a traditional or purpose built group of shops, separate from the town centre and either located within the built-up urban area or in a suburban location on the edge of an urban area, usually containing at least one food supermarket or superstore and non-retail services, such as banks, building societies and restaurants.”

Therefore, this option involves the provision of a district centre/s to service the local shopping and community needs. This could take the form of 1 or 2 such centres to serve the Monksland / Bellanamullia (Athlone West) area. A network of local/neighbourhood centres could then serve the remainder of the area.

❑ Form Option 2 : Local/Neighbourhood Centre Option

Retail Planning Guidelines (2005): “Local centre or neighbourhood centre – Small groups of shops, typically comprising a newsagent, small supermarket/general grocery store, sub-post office and other small shops of a local nature serving a small, localised catchment population.”

Therefore, this option involves a dispersed pattern of shops and community facilities distributed in local/neighbourhood centres within individual residential areas and serving very localised population thresholds.

It is considered that one or possibly two district centres, supported by local/neighbourhood centres as required, would have significant benefits over a large number of dispersed local centres, as outlined below:

- ❑ They would not compete with the existing Athlone Town Centre in terms of retail location, office location, etc.
- ❑ They would be more accessible for residents, particularly for pedestrians who would generally be within easy walking distance. This would reduce the need to travel and the resultant dependence on private motor vehicles.
- ❑ They would provide a more balanced land use distribution pattern, with the result that traffic flows would be more evenly distributed.
- ❑ They would provide focus, legibility and structure to residential areas that would help to establish a sense of place and identity that is currently lacking in Monksland.

The majority of commercial and community facilities should accordingly be concentrated into one or two district centres to serve the surrounding residential population. In addition smaller local/neighbourhood centres can be provided (e.g. Summerhill) or existing ones enhanced (e.g. Bellanamullia) where they service the needs of the population.

Location options

The following options have been considered for the location of commercial and community facilities that could be provided within Monksland (additional local/neighbourhood centres could also be considered for Bogganfin, Crannagh Beg/Summerhill and Bellanamullia):

❑ Location Option 1: Bogganfin

This area is considered a highly strategic location at the junction of two national routes, on the edge of Athlone Town and in close proximity to the River Shannon/Lough Ree cSAC amenity area. It is therefore envisaged that this strategic location would provide a focus for new commercial mixed-use development and could act as a employment and service node for the surrounding residential areas that will complement existing and future development in Athlone Town and the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) Area.

To complement proposed zoning in this area it is envisaged that two specific objectives on different land parcels guide the form of development within it, i.e. Specific Objective 1 (SO1): Large scale Hardware and Specific Objective 2 (SO2): Business Park Mixed-Use Development, Commercial Office Development and possibly Hotel/Leisure (See Land Use Zoning Objectives for description).

❑ Location Option 2: Lands along the New Tuam Road

With the development of the centre which includes SuperValu, the residents of the LAP area have indicated a preference for a district centre located on lands adjacent to this centre, to the east, due to its convenience and accessibility to them. The future expansion of the development envelope is likely to take place to the south and this land is therefore centrally located in proximity to the main residential areas as well as easily accessible for the workforce centred around the industrial and retail warehousing units adjacent to it. In addition, the residents (as expressed at the community meeting) view this side of the New Tuam Road as the core development area.

It should be noted that the development of the restaurant, furniture shop and units containing the doctors surgery etc across the New Tuam Road, adjacent to the light industrial and warehousing units, acts as a commercial/retail/service hub and could be linked to a District Centre across the road from it.

❑ Location Option 3 : Old Tuam Road/New Tuam Road West Junction

This junction has associated undeveloped land that could be developed in association with other lands for a new district centre and is well located within the Monksland / Bellanamullia residential areas. The construction of a new roundabout and Monksland regional link road from this junction to the lands at Bogganfin would increase the attractiveness of this location for a linked district centre. The land is surrounded by existing residential development and the scale and density of the development proposed should take this into account.

❑ Location Option 4 : Existing Monksland Community Centre

The existing Monksland Community Centre has an important civic function and has available space for a number of small shops and/or community facilities. This area does not have adequate space to develop into a district centre but is an important location for local facilities.

❑ Location Option 5 : Existing Bannons shop

The existing shop and petrol filling station provides a local centre for the surrounding community. This function could be strengthened and enhanced.

❑ **Location Option 6 : Lands along the Crannagh Beg road opposite the Summerhill school**

There are no existing facilities for the community in this area and considering the presence of the National and Secondary School as well as the amount of land designated for future residential development, it would be prudent to allow for the provision of a local centre in this area.

Drum Community Sports and Social Centre Ltd. opened in 1988 and is located in Crannagh Beg. The centre includes many facilities including a substantial sports hall (suitable for indoor soccer, basketball, badminton, etc.), meeting rooms, stage, kitchen, and showers/changing facilities. Drum Bingo is held in the community centre every Friday night, and this is a very important social service for the community.

❑ **Location Option 7 : Eastern side of Monksland in proximity to the Cushlea sports fields**

This land is in close proximity to the Cushlea pitches and land proposed for Community and Educational facilities. It is only slightly removed from the residential development in the area and would therefore provide services for a localised catchment population as well as service the lands identified for Community and Education as well as Recreation and Amenity purposes.

Preferred form and Location option

Two District Centres are proposed within the LAP area. The preferred options for their location are listed below for the reasons outlined above;

❑ **Location Option 1: Bogganfin**

❑ **Location Option 2 and 3: Lands along the New Tuam Road and at the New and Old Tuam Road Junction**

This could be supplemented by local centres within Monksland, Bellanamullia and Crannagh/Summerhill.

The proposed new **District Centre at Bogganfin (Option 1 above) and linked District Centre on the New and Old Tuam Roads (Option 2 and 3 above)** would primarily serve the local needs of residents in the area and would be readily accessible to the pedestrian catchment within a 500m radius of the centres and to a wider residential catchment via private car, public transport (bus) and cycling. The centres would not contain retail units of a size and nature that would compete directly with Athlone Town Centre. The centres may contain a food supermarket or superstore and non-retail services, such as banks, building societies, restaurants, pharmacies, take away, video/DVD rental, public house, and dental/medical surgery.

Mixed-use developments would need to be encouraged in the centres, with the possibility of accommodation over retail/commercial units, grouped small starter/incubator workshops, craft or service units, guest houses, etc.

The **Local / Neighbourhood centres** may contain a newsagent, sub-post office, and small shops serving a small, localised catchment population.

The **District Centres** could be supplemented by improvements in the existing facilities and the provision of new local facilities in suitable locations for residents in Monksland, including community facilities, local shopping facilities, public transport facilities, etc. This includes reinforcing the existing Athlone Area Office/Monksland Community Centre and establishing new local nodes of activity in close walking distance of residential areas to provide an attractive set of facilities for local residents. The junctions between the proposed new link roads and the existing road network can also be utilised as possible locations for the provision of localised, low order community facilities, corner shops, etc.

It should be noted that under the EIA and Planning and Development Regulations certain projects that may arise during the implementation of the Plan may require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

There are also requirements with regard to EIA for sub-threshold development. Information regarding EIA can be found in the following publications, amongst others:

- “Guidelines on Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements” EPA, 2002.
- “Advice Notes on Current Practice in the preparation of Environmental Impact Statements”, EPA 2003.
- “Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidance for consent Authorities regarding sub-threshold development”, DEHLG, 2003.

In addition, it should be noted that the projects would also be required to be screened with respect to the requirement for Habitats Directive Assessment / Appropriate Assessment as required by Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. Potential applicants are advised to contact the Planning Authority prior to lodging a planning application particularly in the case of large developments and those requiring an Environmental Impact Statement. Prior consultation with the Planning Authority can reduce delays in the planning process.

Policies for urban development

- Policy 124** Provide an appropriate mix of facilities and services for the population living within the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP Area. These include; commercial, recreational, civic, cultural, leisure, and residential uses.
- Policy 125** Ensure that businesses and services with a high potential for public transport utilisation by employees and visitors are sited at locations that can be made easily accessible by public transport.
- Policy 126** Consider good urban design principles in the development of the LAP area, require new development to enhance the existing urban areas and improve pedestrian priority.
- Policy 127** Facilitate the development of a high quality mixed-use development within the District Centre zone within Bogganfin that would benefit the relatively flat lands and that incorporates existing natural features, particularly the existing trees and hedgerows, wherever possible; and provides additional open spaces and landscaping to structure these lands and enhance visual amenity. A high standard of urban design is essential in order to create an environment of high quality with a definite sense of place. It is accordingly proposed to create a network of high quality spaces formed by quality buildings, paving and landscaping.

Objective for Urban Development

- Objective 166** Ensure that there is a high standard of building, road and paving treatments that will create a high-quality environment with a distinctive and coherent character.
1. Generally keeping the scale of buildings as compact as possible, apart from any landmark and gateway buildings, which could be more dramatic in scale subject to high standards of design.
 2. Avoiding large, undifferentiated expanses of walls and/or roofs and instead introducing design, colour or material features to provide interest and variety.
 3. Paying particular attention to the design treatment of the ground floor of buildings to respond appropriately to the human scale through different colour or material treatments, more responsive design features such as canopies at entrances or over pathways, etc.

9.3.5 Architecture and Urban Design (To be read in Conjunction with Chapter 10. 3 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT)

1. Building Height

One of the common perceptions in relation to higher densities is that they promote taller buildings. High buildings do not necessarily mean higher densities. Highest densities are generally achieved in medium rise buildings, three to four stories high.

The Residential Density Guidelines view in relation to high buildings is that: in general, low rise buildings which respect the scale and character of Irish towns and cities are appropriate, save for particular cases such as those outlined below.

Higher buildings, i.e. those which are significantly higher than neighbouring or surrounding development, incorporating increased densities may be appropriate in;

- locations specifically identified in Development Plans as being appropriate for higher buildings;
- locations close to an expanse of water or public parkland where a building of greater scale is more appropriate; or,
- a central district, town or city centre location where an increase in massing and height in the form of a contemporary and stylish building, could make a positive contribution to the skyline.

Where buildings of significant height are proposed, however, it is important that the following factors will be taken into consideration:

- The quality of the overall design
- The degree of overshadowing and consequent loss of light caused to surrounding property
- The degree of overlooking (particularly of residential property) and consequent loss of privacy
- The extent to which there is a disruption to the scale of an existing streetscape or landscape, save in cases where this may be intended for civic design reasons
- The extent to which the building detracts from structures or spaces of architectural or historic importance or important landmarks
- Any attractive views from significant vantage points that would be obscured or intruded upon by the building
- The degree of obtrusion of the skyline, save for those in appropriately planned locations
- The scale of the building in relation to surrounding open space, together with the effect of the building on the quality of the space
- The avoidance of local, undesirable micro-climates at ground level

Policy on High Buildings

In general heights should respect local streetscapes; with exceptions which reinforce the urban form or are designed as landmark structures in relation to their particular setting, being acceptable.

High buildings in the right place can have a role; in acting as landmarks that signify urban renaissance and enhancing local identity; in forging a new and exciting image for the regeneration sites; and in delivering more sustainable working and living environments. Care needs to be taken to protect the historic built environment and unique landscape. The objective should be to respect heights and patterns of existing buildings. A high buildings policy should consider topography; urban structure, movement corridors and transport nodes, public spaces, historical assets, prominent landmarks/structures, the identification of important views/vistas in the towns (including panoramic views into and out of the town, views within the town and skyline features) and their vantage points. When locations that would be appropriate for tall buildings are identified; development approaches for these locations (including building size, shape, silhouette, site coverage, relationship to streets and public spaces) and general design issues must also be considered.

It is considered that as the Monkland/Bellanamullia LAP area is largely residential, buildings which are too high would detract from the amenity within the area. It is therefore recommended that a single structure representing a civic building of sorts would be no higher than 4 storeys. Two storey residences only, adjacent to the DC zoning, will be permitted across the road from the single storey dwellings, along the Old Tuam road. Buildings in the **central** LAP area would not exceed two or three storeys, however, in areas such as Bogganfin, taller commercial buildings could be considered where they do not impact upon residential amenity.

2. Architecture and Urban Design/Building Design

Good urban design is essential if we are to produce attractive, high-quality places in which people will want to live, work and relax. It can be achieved by the way we arrange streets and spaces and how we plan the mass, scale and position of buildings within the landscape. The result is all the things we love about our best neighbourhoods – a clear centre, a place that is easy to walk around and also feels safe, high quality buildings and attractive spaces between buildings. Good design can give us a clear and distinct sense of place in which we take pride.

RCC will support the establishment of buildings of a particularly high quality and unique design at key locations within the area zoned as District Centre. These buildings will be characterised by a strong building design to provide focal points within mixed-use developments that will add legibility and clarity to the physical structure and layout of the development. Buildings on corner sites will generally be encouraged to ‘turn the corner’ by fronting onto two streets.

Policy 128 Ensure that adequate open spaces and landscaping are established to structure developments, provide visual relief to built areas and to ensure adequate aspects and natural lighting to buildings. This landscaping will soften the impact and setting of development, provide a limit to its extent, a buffer between the development and adjacent land uses.

Objective 167 All planning applications that involve site and/or building development works within the District Centres shall be accompanied by a design statement and landscaping plan to ensure consistent, high-quality developments on the site and to enable the Planning Authority to assess applications accordingly.

Urban Design focuses on how urban areas best respond to people’s needs and the manner in which they best respond can be broken down into;

1. the **character of the area** – a place with its own identity; ease of movement – a place that is easy to get to and move through;
2. **continuity and enclosure** – a place where good public and private spaces are clearly distinguished;
3. **quality of public realm** – an appealing place with attractive and successful outdoor areas;
4. **legibility** – a place that has a clear image and is easy to understand;
5. **adaptability** – a place that can change easily and incrementally;
6. **diversity and a mix of uses** – a place with diversity and choice;
7. **sustainability / balance with nature** – a place where a balance has been achieved between the natural and built environment;
8. **value** - a place where value can be created to sustain the desired mix of uses and quality of townscape; and,
9. **inclusivity** – a place which has something for everyone and where a diverse range of user needs are met.

Policies and objectives associated with some of the abovementioned aspects of **Urban Design** are as follows:

1. Character of the Area

Policy 129 To promote character in “townscape” and landscape by development that responds to and reinforces local distinctive patterns of development, landscape and culture.

Objective 168 To require designers to identify and recognise the essential elements of quality which determine the character of an area and then reinforces, or develops it in the proposed development.

2. Continuity and Enclosure

Policy 130 To promote the continuity of street frontages and the enclosure of space by development, which clearly defines private and public spaces and has a hierarchy of open spaces: private, semi-private and public.

Objective 169 To require designers to demonstrate that the proposed development has continuity and enclosure of spaces and that public and private spaces are defined.

3. Quality of Public Realm

Policy 131 To promote development whose public spaces and routes are attractive, safe, uncluttered and work effectively for all in society, including the elderly and people with a disability.

Objective 170 To require designers to demonstrate the quality of the design of roads, pedestrian ways, public squares and open spaces as these are as critical in importance as the design of buildings that surround them.

4. Legibility

Policy 132 To promote legibility through development that provides recognisable routes, intersections and landmarks that help people to find their way around.

Objective 171 To require designers to demonstrate the ease with which the observer can read the relationship between structures, the landscape and the spaces between them as well as the objects within those spaces.

5. Adaptability

Policy 133 To promote development that can respond to changing social, technological and economic conditions.

Objective 172 To require designers to demonstrate the adaptability of the proposed development

6. Diversity and a Mix Of Uses

Policy 134 To promote development that has diversity and choice.

Objective 173 To require designers to demonstrate the diversity and mix of the proposed development

7. Ease of Movement

Policy 135 To promote accessibility and local permeability by developments that connect with each other and are easy to move through, putting people before traffic and integrating land uses and transport.

Objective 174 To require designers to demonstrate that main routes have been distinguished by exploiting vistas, key buildings and landmarks and the activities and functions of the places made visible, thus bringing a sense of liveliness to spaces.

In addition, the following **principles** are relevant in terms of the design of buildings and structuring of developments;

Responsive Building Design:

- Orientate buildings towards public roads and other public spaces and open space so as to provide a 'face' to development, to create a more vibrant street front and to ensure natural surveillance and a safe environment.
- Design and orientate buildings proposed adjacent to the M6 Motorway to minimise the effects of traffic noise and pollution and to present a high standard of design to M6 road users. The provision of roof-mounted plant rooms should be strongly discouraged, particularly where building rooftops are visible from the M6 or other higher lying areas, and plant rooms should be incorporated into the roof profiles and design of buildings.

Landscaped Street Treatments

- Establish tree-lined avenues along all the principal roads and entrances serving the large tracts of development land within the LAP area; particularly Bogganfin, so as to provide clarity and legibility showing what are the main circulation routes and entrances serving each of the development cells.

High-Quality Street Furniture

- Ensure that there is a high standard of street furniture that will create a coherent character for the development. This would include park benches, bus shelters, cycle storage facilities, refuse bins, signage, street sculpture, etc.

Design Statement

A design statement should be provided with development applications and the following should be considered;

1. High quality architectural treatments.
2. Details of materials and finishes to be used in the scheme.
3. Details of the design approach to the provision of signage, including both information and commercial signage.
4. Proposals for the massing and height of the units proposed so as to ensure compatibility with existing nearby development and the existing scale of Athlone Town urban fabric.
5. Details as to how the proposed land use, layout and design of the development complies with the site's zoning and the objectives and proposals of the Local Area Plan.

Landscaping Plan

A landscaping plan should be provided with development applications. The landscaping plan should provide the following information:

1. Overall landscape design with details of both hard and soft landscaping.
2. Survey of all existing planting and drainage lines on the development site.
3. Details of the location, number and species names of all planting proposed to be retained, removed and/or planted on the site. All proposed planting should be suitable to the site and soil conditions.

Environmental Considerations

It is the policy of the Planning Authority to minimise the threat of air, land, water or other environmental pollution by use of the statutory powers of the Local Authority.

Landscape Considerations

Landscaping is an integral part of any development and there is a need to ensure that existing trees are protected and integrated into the development and that new planting is well designed and adequately carried out. The potential of existing site features should be fully explored and planning applications should include an accurate landscape survey plan. Wherever practicable, existing healthy trees should be protected and retained. A tree survey shall normally be required and healthy specimens shall be preserved. Where other trees need to be removed, these shall be replaced at a ratio of 3 semi-mature trees of similar, indigenous species for each tree removed.

All new developments and extensions or alterations to existing premises shall incorporate suitable site landscaping plans showing existing planting to be retained or removed and additional planting suitable to the site and soil conditions to be planted. Other measures to reduce or ameliorate impacts on surrounding land uses, including residential areas, may also be required where necessary.

3. Urban Design and Residential Density

In residential areas the emphasis must be on good design and achieving safe residential environments where public open space is overlooked and therefore more useable; layouts where road design discourages high-speed traffic and allows for greater community interaction; where built form comes first and road layout second – so that these areas are more visually pleasing; and where densities are higher with all the necessary safeguards to protect amenities of residents. It has also been found that sprawling suburban development does not create a sense of identity and community; does not contribute to community interaction; is difficult to provide with public transport; involves roads which may be unsafe for pedestrians and cyclists and encourages the use of cars and high-speed traffic. It is also wasteful of serviced land.

As part of this Plan policies are proposed which recognise that roads fall into different categories and perform different functions: some roads need to be designed for the free flow of traffic and with the needs of motorists to the fore and some need to be designed to inhibit the free flow of traffic and with the needs of other users to the fore. Most residential roads should be designed for slow traffic.

Design and density are inseparable concepts. It is relatively easy to lay-out a housing scheme based on the standards contained within 'Recommendations for Site Development Works for Housing Areas', but to achieve density and provide for good residential amenities – avoidance of overlooking of private open space/back gardens and avoidance of overlooking by opposing windows; creation of more useable public open space; providing for buildings to be positioned to calm traffic, etc. requires that more effort be put into design.

There is a distinction between the densities which are suitable in town centres and at transport nodes - where higher densities should be achieved, having regard to accessibility to services; and outer urban areas where medium densities are expected. Residential layout and density policies must consider the issue of sustainability and affordability. Also completion of residential estates is an essential factor to ensuring consistency and quality in development.

It is recognised that a good mix of accommodation type, size and tenure provides for the needs of modern communities more appropriately. In this respect quality urban design is considered vital to achieving places that work as well as development that complements its context and contributes to visual amenity. These aspects are further explored in Chapter 10: Development Management Guidelines and Standards.

The Planning Authority will consider Phase 1 lands and lands shown shaded on Map 12b to be inner suburban/infill lands and in assessing new applications in these areas take the recommendation in the document “Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas” (May 2009) into account.

4. Traffic Management in Urban Areas

Road safety for all road users is an important issue and in town centers and residential areas the needs of pedestrians and cyclists should have priority over motorised transport. The Traffic Management Guidelines, 2003 and the Road Traffic Act 2004, provide for the use of lower speed limits in certain areas, for example, town centres, residential areas and in the vicinity of schools; and for the design of roads to provide for such lower speeds.

Policy 136 During the lifetime of this LAP the Council will consider the introduction of reduced traffic speed limits in certain town centre areas, in residential areas and in areas in the vicinity of schools.

The way in which streets are managed and used promotes or discourages a sense of community and makes them an attractive or unattractive place to live, work, shop etc. Travel need can be reduced by land use policies which facilitate mixed uses and closely grouping different uses.

Parking policy is an important element in planning and transport policy. The level of car parking provided, its location, fee structure and enforcement levels can all have a considerable effect on car use and traffic flow patterns. The availability of convenient and affordable parking in an area can influence people’s decision on their mode of travel and in certain circumstances a reduction in the number of parking spaces may be desirable in congested urban areas. However, this can only be utilised where public transport provides a viable alternative.

Car parking policies must consider various needs such as people with disabilities, commercial vehicles, taxis, motor cycles, etc; as well as the conflicts between all day parking and short stay; and the need for good advance signage. In addition, a reduction in parking standards in town centres encourages development in such areas which might otherwise be forced to locate where land has lower value. These aspects are further addressed in the car parking standards set out in Chapter 10: Development Management and Standards.

5. Design Guidelines for Residential Estates (see also Section 10.3.3)

The Council will have regard to the following considerations in the assessment of all residential proposals:

- the need for land to be used economically;
- the capacity of the infrastructure to cater for future population;
- the adequacy of present and future community facilities;
- appropriate density;
- adequate privacy for individual houses, flats etc.
- the safety of proposed layouts and the capacity of existing roads to absorb future development;
- adequate provision for car parking, open space, landscaping and planting; and
- integration with existing development and the preservation of attractive features on site.

Good urban design is essential if communities are to be achieved where people want to live and work. It can be achieved by arranging spaces, streets, densities, scale and detailing that combine to create a sense of place and community. The basic principles of good design include:

Character:	A place with its own identity, the character of an area refers to its existing layout, form, content and fabric,
Enclosure:	A place where public and private spaces are clearly defined,
Legibility:	A place that has a clear image and is easy to understand,

Permeability:	A place that is easy to get to and move through,
Quality of Public Spaces:	A place with attractive and successful outdoor spaces. The treatment of surfaces, landscaping and street furniture must be an integral part of the overall design.
Diversity:	A place with variety and choice, containing a mix of compatible developments,
Adaptability:	A place that can respond to changing social, technological and economic conditions.

Furthermore, the Council will continue to seek to facilitate the improvement of visually obtrusive and derelict sites within the Plan Area. This will assist to improve the overall appearance of the streetscapes, therefore contributing to environmental improvements in the main urban areas.

The design of residential layouts can give a sense of identity to an area, provide for safe outdoor spaces and facilitate community interaction; conversely poor design can allow the development of anti-social behaviour. New development should therefore be responsive to local character and respect the visual context of the area rather than becoming extensions that lack character. Successful developments can be achieved by careful integration with the landscape or built environment using the right materials, forms and landscape elements for the locality relating to the existing built fabric and settlement structure.

Policies for design for residential estates

- Policy 137** Ensure high quality in the design of buildings and promote the development of buildings that are accessible, energy efficient and sustainable and that integrate well with and complement surrounding buildings and landscape.
- Policy 138** Ensure that all new residential units meet minimum standards of space, room size and storage provision, in so far as is practicable.
- Policy 139** Future housing layouts and design must be adaptable to change over time with a variety of accommodation types, sizes and tenures, in addition to designing for future transportation links. Accessibility of public facilities and public transport will determine whether the site is appropriate for higher density development.
- Policy 140** In order to achieve sustainable urban areas which serve the needs of communities any residential development proposal which does not provide an appropriate quality of design will not be granted permission, even if identified as land for residential use.

6. Sustainable Energy and Design

Ireland is currently more dependent on imported oil for its energy requirements than almost any other European country and it will take up to 10 years to significantly reduce this dependence. Therefore, it is essential that we now begin to prepare for this challenge. The promotion of renewable energy throughout County Roscommon is important both for economic and environmental reasons. Environmentally, the harnessing of renewables for energy production releases no harmful greenhouse gases, reduces local air pollution and produces little or no waste. In addition, renewable energy can contribute to employment generation either directly in the renewables industry or indirectly in the supply industry. Renewable energy comes from natural, inexhaustible sources such as the sun (solar), wind, falling water (hydro), oceans (wave), plants (biomass and biofuels) and the earth (geothermal heat pumps).

Renewable energy can also be derived from a range of waste products (sewage, municipal solid waste and agricultural waste). The Council recognises the significant environmental and economic benefits associated with energy production from renewable resources, as well as the importance of reducing our CO₂ emissions and our dependence on oil in an uncertain global market. The technology of

renewable energy is well advanced and widely available. Grants are now available to householders to provide systems in existing or new housing.

The Council will encourage more sustainable development through energy end use efficiency, increasing the use of renewable energy, and improved energy performance of all new building developments throughout the County.

With regard to building construction and energy use the Building Control Bill 2005 is intended in part to implement certain provisions of European Parliament directive 2002/91/EC on the energy performance of buildings. Following the enactment of this Bill, in January 2007 any new dwelling that applied for planning permission on or after the 1st of January 2007 requires a BER before they are offered for sale or rent. This requirement was extended to all new non-residential buildings in July 2008 and to existing buildings offered for sale or rent in January 2009. In addition, all public buildings with a floor area of 1,000 square metres must display a building energy rating BER certificate; and proposals for buildings exceeding 1,000 square metres, must consider the technical, environmental and economic feasibility of using alternative energy systems in the proposed building, and use of such systems have to be taken into account, as far as practicable, in the design of the proposed building. The alternative energy systems to be considered are:

- Decentralised energy supply systems, based on renewable energy,
- Combined heat and power systems,
- District or block heating or cooling, if available, or
- Heat pumps

All houses being offered for sale or letting must produce details of this energy rating. The requirement that building designs will have to be energy rated for building regulation compliance reasons, facilitates the Council in setting energy requirements for new buildings by giving the means for creating or specifying benchmarks for all buildings based on these national methodologies.

Further information regarding sustainable energy and design, and building construction and energy use is contained in Chapter 4 of this LAP and in Chapter 5 of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2008-2014.

Policy for sustainable energy and design

Policy 141 Improve qualitative standards of sustainable design in proposed developments in line with the detailed recommendations contained within this LAP and the Roscommon County Development Plan, 2008 – 2014.

9.4 URBAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The **Urban Development Strategy** aims to:

- Secure the proper planning and development of the area by ensuring that there is adequate zoned land in appropriate locations available for housing.
- Consolidate residential development in the area and minimise further ribbon development.
- Limit new development in areas where necessary physical infrastructure (public sewerage/water supply, public street lighting/public footpaths) and social infrastructure including, but not limited to schools, and community facilities are unavailable.
- Seek an acceptable balance and mix in the provision of social/affordable and private housing in order to promote an appropriate social and demographic balance.

Policies and Objectives for Urban Development are contained within this Chapter.

CHAPTER 10: DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

10.1 INTRODUCTION

It is an obligation of the Council to ensure that planning permissions granted under the Planning Acts are consistent with the policies and objectives set out in the Roscommon County Development Plan 2008 – 2014 (RCDP) and any Local Area Plan (LAP) for the area, and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. These standards are intended to give information and a general guideline as to the Planning Authority's requirements regarding particular aspects of proposed developments but they are not intended to be inflexible. The standards are intended to give an indication of the criteria the Council will take into account when assessing applications for new developments. These standards and guidelines are complimentary to the overall development strategy and the individual objectives and policies of the RCDP 2008 – 2014 and the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP.

Potential applicants are advised to contact the Planning Authority prior to lodging a planning application particularly in the case of large developments and those requiring an Environmental Impact Statement. Prior consultation with the Planning Authority can reduce delays in the planning process.

10.2 GENERAL DEVELOPMENT

Roscommon County Council (RCC) shall look to maintain a clear distinction between towns, villages and their surrounding countryside, and discourage ribbon development and the non-sustainable use of land and resources, which means consolidating existing towns and villages. Good urban design is essential if communities are to be fostered where people want to live and work. It can be achieved by arranging spaces, streets, densities and scale, that combined, can create a sense of place and community.

10.2.1 Building Lines

The building line required will relate to the nature and design of the buildings being proposed, and the nature of the layout of the area. The function of building lines in the **urban environment** is to:

- Provide protection from the noise and fumes associated with traffic;
- Allow for the provision of off-street car-parking;
- Allow for future road development; and,
- Ensure that new development is consistent with neighbouring development and appropriate in the context of the surrounding streetscape.

However, in certain circumstances it may not be in the interests of the proper planning and development of an area to enforce a rigid figure for building lines, for example, where the introduction of a pre-set building line would disrupt the continuity and flow of the streetscape. Therefore, in respect of appropriate building lines for specific areas and in the interests of maintaining good townscapes, the Planning Authority will examine each application on its own merits.

In **rural areas**, development should be set well back from the road. Whilst no specific setback is required, it is unlikely that a development closer than 20 metres from the nearest edge of carriageway will be allowed. Where development is proposed which involves the infill or extension of an existing cluster of buildings, the existing building line will normally be required to be retained. For **high-density urban developments**, buildings will be permitted at the inside edge of footpaths in suitable circumstances. Where buildings are proposed in proximity to scheduled maintainable water channels/stream a minimum set back of 10 metres is required on either side of the channel.

10.2.2 Access for Persons with Disabilities and the Mobility Impaired

All new developments shall have access for persons with disabilities and those who are mobility impaired. Such access will be incorporated into the design of the building as an integral part of the proposal. Part M of the Building Regulations (1997) as revised and any other updates, sets out the design requirements of persons with disabilities. These design requirements relate, in particular to access, internal circulation, parking and sanitary facilities. These have to be taken into consideration in the design of new and existing structures that allow public access to, for example, schools, libraries, shops etc.

The Planning Authority is committed to facilitating the provision of a range of house designs to meet with the requirements of the housing needs of people with disabilities. There is a need to ensure a variety of housing types to provide accommodation for people who have disabilities. In order to improve the supply of suitable housing choice for the future, accommodation for people with disabilities should be included in all housing estates of 10 dwellings or more. Further detailed information regarding building design and publicly accessible outside areas can be found in “*Building for Everyone*” published by the National Disability Authority, 2002 and further guidance contained within the Disability Act 2005.

10.2.3 Light Pollution

There has been an increased tendency to illuminate buildings to an excessive degree incorporating lighting that gives rise to glare on public roads. It shall, therefore, be a policy of the Council to minimise light pollution. Details of any external lighting scheme intended as part of any new development shall be submitted as part of the planning application. Applicants will be required to demonstrate that the lighting scheme proposed is the minimum needed for security and working purposes.

10.2.4 Noise

The Council will seek to ensure that new development does not cause an unacceptable increase in the noise and pollution levels affecting surrounding properties. In considering planning applications for residential development in areas adjoining major roads, the Council will have regard to any Noise Maps and Noise Action Plans relating to the site location in accordance with the EU Directive on Assessment and Management of Environmental Noise as implemented by the *Environmental Noise Regulations* (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2006).

It should be noted that there is a noise Action Plan in place for the LAP area for the stretch of the M6 road between the bridge over the Shannon River and the N61 Interchange. The M6 constitutes a major road which has more than 6 million vehicles using it per annum. The stretch of road in question is 930m between the county boundary with Westmeath and the N61 interchange.

10.2.5 Drainage

Developers will be required to provide efficient systems of drainage with separate surface water drains, taking account of flood levels and of possible increased precipitation arising from climate change. Where development is proposed in proximity to a scheduled maintainable channel, provision must be made to ensure that the effectiveness of the existing embankment system is not impaired. In particular, provision should be made to ensure that the existing embankment system will not be adversely affected by the discharge of run-off either directly or indirectly to the back drains of the embankments unless appropriate provision is made to accommodate such run-off.

10.2.6 Conservation of Water

The Council recognises the need to protect or conserve high quality drinking water within the County. In accordance with the Council's Conservation/Leak Detection Programme, where new residential development is proposed a boundary box will be required with the facility for installing a flow meter. In the case of non-residential development, all new development will be required to install a flow meter prior to connection.

The Planning Authority will require the installation of economy/double flush type water closets in all dwellings. Premises with public toilets and urinals will be required to have a flow control device to prevent continuous flushing and operation during periods when the premises are not in operation. The use of low flush toilets, grey water systems, low flow tap and showerhead fittings and rainwater recycling measures are also encouraged.

10.2.7 Wastewater Treatment

The Council recognises that large areas outside the mains sewerage system are dependent on individual wastewater treatment facilities. Where such systems are used it is important that they are installed and maintained to the highest possible standards and that they conform to the requirements set out in the EPA Waste Water Treatment Manual and more up-to-date standards if issued. Individual treatment systems will only be permitted in serviced areas under the most exceptional circumstances.

10.2.8 Flood Risk and Protection

This section should be read in conjunction with the guidelines produced by the DEHLG and the OPW, The Planning System and Flood Risk Management. New development will be required to meet the following criteria;

- Development, which is sensitive to the effects of flooding, will not be permitted in flood prone or marginal areas
- Appropriately designed development, which is not sensitive to the effects of flooding, may be permissible in flood plains provided it does not reduce the flood plain area or otherwise restrict flow across floodplains
- Development must so far as is reasonably practicable incorporate the maximum provision to reduce the rate and quantity of runoff.
- For developments adjacent to water courses of a significant conveyance capacity any structures must be set back from the edge of the watercourse to allow access for channel clearing/maintenance. This would usually be a minimum of 10 metres.
- Any new development must be designed and constructed to meet the following minimum flood design standards
 - For urban areas and where development (existing, proposed or anticipated) are involved - the 100 year flood
 - For Rural areas or where further developments (existing, proposed or anticipated) are not involved – the 25 year flood
 - Where streams open drains or other water courses are being culverted – the minimum permissible culvert diameter is 900mm

10.3 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT (*To be read in conjunction with Chapter 9: Urban Development*)

This section should be read in conjunction with the guidelines produced by the *DEHLG, Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (December 2008)* and *Urban Design Manual: A best practice guide (Parts 1 and 2) (December 2008)*.

10.3.1 Residential Development (Qualitative)

It is the policy of Roscommon County Council to encourage the establishment and maintenance of high quality sustainable residential communities. The creation of residential areas with a “Sense of Place” should be the priority. In the making of places, road layout and the movement of vehicles should not dictate the internal layout of a housing scheme. The design of new residential development should provide for a network of functional and aesthetically pleasing public, semi-private and private spaces rather than merely a hierarchy of roads. The Council will seek to ensure that new housing development incorporates the principles of urban design and that future developments are well integrated with the form and framework of the existing town or village. New housing development will be required to meet the following criteria:

- It will be a satisfactory residential environment which meets the needs and as far as possible, the preferences of residents and fosters the development of community.
- It will integrate new housing into the natural and built environment in a manner that makes a positive contribution to the overall environment in the locality.
- It will encourage energy efficiency both during the construction phase and during the lifetime of the development by sensitive design and layout as well as taking into account the topography, orientation, and, surrounding features of each site.
- It should be of a scale and layout appropriate to the size and form of the town and village.
- It will not have an adverse impact on areas or buildings of historic or architectural interest, or on sites of nature conservation or archaeological importance.
- It will provide attractive conditions for walking and cycling with linkages to adjoining residential areas, town or village centres, amenities and open space areas. Pedestrian and vehicular movements within housing areas should be convenient, safe and pleasant. Within larger estates a clear hierarchy of spaces and roads should be apparent. Priority should be assigned to the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.
- It will provide for adequate functional open space areas linked to adjoining open space areas, where practical. Open space should be located at accessible points within the development. In particular, the layout of roads, footpaths and open space should facilitate children to move freely and safely around their neighbourhood, and to be able to play in front, or within sight of their homes i.e. where practicable public open spaces should be overlooked by residential development. Movement through estates should be guided by principles of security, with opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour minimized e.g. pedestrian alleyways should be well lit, overlooked and provide sufficient space for pedestrians and cyclists between estates or between parts of estates.
- Residential areas should be designed to reduce traffic speeds where appropriate as under the *Traffic Management Guidelines and the Road Traffic Act 2004* to provide a safe environment for children to play, with traffic calming measures being considered. Roads in residential estates shall be laid out so as to discourage the incidence of through-traffic. Long straight roads which tend to encourage speeding shall also be discouraged on safety and environmental grounds.
- Promote natural surveillance. Properties should face the street and address corner sites- no rear gardens should back onto roads or open space. This should help promote a sense of ownership, territorial responsibility and community.
- A detailed landscaping plan must be prepared as an integral part of the overall development of the estate and submitted as part of the planning application for the development. Planting will need to be carefully considered in communal areas and overshadowing of public lighting and footpaths should be avoided.

- Consideration should be given to the growth rate of the species and also to the level of maintenance required for the landscaping. The lowest level of maintenance should be required particularly in housing estates. The developer will be responsible for the laying out and planting of all landscaped areas.
- Car parking should generally be provided within the curtilage of the proposed dwellings. Where this is not possible, rear parking courts or on-street parking can be provided if this can be viewed from the dwelling. Large parking courts will not be permitted. Underground parking will also be an option subject to acceptable access, circulation and parking space dimension standards, provision of good ventilation and standards of personal safety.
- In all estate and apartment development proposals, provision shall be made for a secure, and well-screened, refuse storage and collection point area. A minimum space sufficient for 3 wheelie bins will be required for each residential unit. Roads and access to these areas should be suitable for easy servicing and turning by emergency vehicles. Provision should also be made for a 'Bottle-Bank' facility. Proposals for terraced housing developments must provide adequate storage space for bins if external access to the rear gardens is not proposed.
- Bicycle Parking: Well-designed and secure bicycle parking areas should be provided for terraced housing.

The Council may require prospective developers of housing estate developments (especially in some of the smaller settlement areas) to submit a report that provides an assessment of the likely impact of their development in relation to (amongst others);

- Architectural Integrity and historic identity;
- The need for community / health facilities;
- Accessibility to community facilities and services;
- Public transport facilities and services;
- Crèche/ childminding facilities;
- Educational facilities and provision;
- Recreation and sport facilities and provision;
- Environmental, sociological and privacy needs of residents

The successful design of residential development will depend on a coherent and unambiguous design brief. In dealing with applications for residential development over 0.2 hectares (0.5 acre) or for more than 15 residential units, the Planning Authority will require the submission of a design brief as part of the application documents. The principal functions of a design brief will be:

- To ensure that the key characteristics of the local context are taken into account from the outset.
- To establish the overall form of the development based on the density and layout of buildings and spaces.
- To indicate how the layout of roads, streets and open spaces contribute to the spatial hierarchy, as well as linking the development to the rest of the vicinity.
- To indicate how the quantitative and qualitative criteria, which inform the design have been adhered to.
- In housing developments containing 15 or more units a mix of house types and sizes should be provided. Variety in design, within a unified concept, is desirable.
- This may be achieved through scale and massing, roof profiles, materials and decorative details. In smaller schemes, i.e. less than 15 houses, uniformity in design and finishes may be desirable and necessary.

10.3.2 Residential Development (Quantitative)

All houses should have an area of private open space, exclusive of car parking. Details of this shall take into consideration the following *DEHLG guidelines: Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (December 2008) and Urban Design Manual: A best practice guide (Parts 1 and 2) (December 2008)*. Good design in housing layouts, the configuration of houses and their relationship to each other, to open spaces and roads should aim to provide layouts with adequate private open space and screening so as to achieve freedom from observation and have adequate amounts of daylight.

The Residential Density Guidelines (1999) indicate that whilst 22.0 metres distance between opposing first floor windows is an accepted minimum in new residential design, the council at its discretion allow situations where this is not rigidly enforced. In cases of innovative design where overlooking into living areas does not occur and required levels of open space are met, this figure may be reduced. A separation distance of 35 metres should be considered in the case of overlooking living room windows and balconies at upper floors. The following should also be taken into account in the design of housing schemes:

1. The use of adequate screening devices and landscaping elements is permitted where appropriate to ensure that private space is free from undue observation.
2. Where proposed development of significant height is located close to existing development, the Planning Authority may require daylight and shadow projection diagrams to be submitted. The recommendations of ‘Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice’ (BRE 1991) or B.S. 8206’ Lighting for Buildings Part 2 1992: Code of Practice for Day lighting’ should be followed in this regard.
3. The Council will take a more flexible approach to quantitative open space standards and put greater emphasis on the qualitative standards. Open space should be located in a central position and act as a focal point for the estate and retain where possible, existing site features. The Council will not accept adequate amounts of open space being poorly located or unsuitably shaped. This results in underused spaces and in some cases spaces which encourage anti-social activity. The design and layout of the network of public open spaces shall take into account, and make provision for, the need for level areas of sufficient size to accommodate informal sports activities for children. However, to ensure that there are adequate safeguards in place to avoid over-development and to assist the planning authority in their assessment of planning applications, in general the following standards are recommended. In greenfield sites or those sites for which a Local or Action Plan is appropriate, public open space should be provided at a minimum rate of 15% of the total site area. This allocation should be in the form of useful open spaces within residential developments and, where appropriate, larger neighbourhood parks to serve the wider community. In all other cases, public open space should be provided at a minimum rate of 10% of the total site area.
4. The council requires that the space between dwelling houses and lateral boundaries is 3 metres or greater or at minimum 3 metres between each house, pair of semi-detached houses or terrace of houses for maintenance purposes. Where development has been established the existing building lines shall be maintained. The council also requires that housing developments over 20 units shall have a formal fully equipped children’s play area, the design of which will be agreed with RCC and comply with relevant national and european standards. Lighting will also be a consideration.
5. The Council may require the submission of a Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) as part of an application where new developments might have a significant impact on the safety and capacity of the road network. The TIA shall be prepared in accordance with the *Traffic Management Guidelines Manual* published by Department of Transport with the DTO in 2003.

10.3.3 Residential Density

Strict adherence to maximum density standards is not recommended. Regard should be had to the following *DEHLG guidelines: Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (December 2008) and Urban Design Manual: A best practice guide (Parts 1 and 2) (December 2008)*, or any updated versions, as well as, the *Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for Apartments (DEHLG, 2007)*. The Planning Authority in assessing planning applications for residential development will have regard to the policies and objectives outlined in these Guidelines. The emphasis should be on providing quality housing environments based on innovation and a design led approach with proposals appropriate to each site and location. The aim is to make the most efficient use of land and infrastructure and to protect urban green spaces and the quality of life.

The Planning Authority will consider Phase 1 lands and lands shown shaded on Map 12b to be inner suburban/infill lands and in assessing new applications in these areas take the recommendation in the document “Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas” (May 2009) into account.

The Council recognises that there are locations within the county where increasing the density of residential development may be appropriate within town areas. Such an approach would encourage a more sustainable form of urban development through the avoidance of excessive suburbanisation and consumption of Greenfield lands, and, ensures a more economic use of existing infrastructure and serviced lands. A further benefit would be the reduction in the dependence on the use of the private motor car. It is also recognized that the fall in average household size coupled with the growth in overall population levels means that there will be greater promotion of the need for a more varied range of dwelling types and sizes than has been provided.

The use of zoned and serviced land to its maximum will assist in achieving the objective of satisfying housing demand as will the provision of a greater proportion of dwellings more suitable to alteration and smaller household sizes. It is acknowledged that inappropriate high density housing has adverse effects and it is essential in the provision of high density development that a high quality of design, layout and a good quality living environment, including the availability of shopping, transport, community, recreational and leisure infrastructure is available.

Higher density will not be encouraged in rural villages where the car is the dominant form of transport and where employment, community and education facilities within the villages are restricted.

In providing for a range of residential densities, consistent with the need to ensure high quality residential environments, it will be the policy of Roscommon County Council to actively encourage the use of acknowledged “best practice” design guides from Ireland and the UK and to consider the approaches in such guides as a reference point for qualitative assessment of such schemes.

10.3.4 Residential Site Development Standards

1. Services and Infrastructure

In general, applications for in-depth housing development on unserviced and unzoned lands will be regarded as premature. Where water and/or sewerage infrastructure is privately provided, the type and design shall be in compliance with the standards set by the Planning Authority. All sewerage systems shall conform to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and public health standards as well as have regard to the EPA Wastewater Treatment Manuals-Treatment Systems for Small Communities, Business, Leisure Centres and Hotels (1999). Individual and/or group schemes will be required to connect up to the public sewerage scheme once it is provided.

All services, including electrical, television, telephone and broadband cables, shall be laid underground. Provision shall be made for the siting of transformer stations pumping stations and other

service buildings in unobtrusive locations. The developer shall also ensure that footpaths and lighting are in place by the time of occupancy. For guidance on services associated with residential developments, refer to *Recommendations for Site Development Works for Housing Areas*, DEHLG (1998).

2. Art Work

Proposals for housing developments of over 20 units shall provide a monument/art feature or similar in a prominent and/or central location in the development to act as a focal point.

3. Naming of Developments

The names of residential, commercial and community developments including roads shall reflect local place names, particularly townlands, or local names which reflect the landscape, its features, culture or history of the area in which the development is located. Also considered will be the names of historical persons associated with the area. The use of Irish names will be encouraged. The applicant shall provide an explanation of the origin/inspiration for the name with the compliance proposal. The Planning Authority shall approve the name chosen prior to the launching of any advertising campaign for a development by the developer. Name plates should be fixed to walls and buildings where they can be seen. All houses within housing estates or comprehensive street developments shall be provided with numbers and/or names, which shall be visible from the adjoining roadway. Each separate road within an estate shall be provided with a distinctive name or nameplate with a range of house numbers at the head of the road.

4. Maintenance and Management

Section 34(4)(I) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 – 2006, provides for the inclusion of conditions attached to a planning permission regarding the maintenance and management of a proposed development. This includes the establishment of a management company or the appointment of a person to carry out such management (including waste management) or maintenance. Once the development is complete, provisions for estate management should be created in order to maintain the amenity, quality and visual quality of a development. Details of the management company, inclusive of the framework of the management company, must be agreed with the Local Authority prior to the commencement of development:

- Establish a management company, with a board, including representatives of the residents, to oversee estate management.
- Develop policies in relation to the overall appearance of the development as well as to maintenance of common areas.

10.3.5 Apartments

Apartment developments have a role to play in meeting the accommodation needs of the young, mobile sectors of the community, small households and as tourist accommodation. Apartments are also important in mixed use developments providing security when located above shops and community facilities and have a valuable role in creating new streetscapes in urban areas. The Council will consider such developments particularly in the towns and larger village centres provided they are compatible with surrounding areas; would not give rise to adverse impacts on the amenities of adjoining properties, or on areas or structures of historic or architectural interest; and, can be provided with adequate car parking facilities. The development of apartments can adversely affect the amenities of the area - increased traffic generated coupled with car-parking requirements; lack of commitment to (public and private) open space maintenance (particularly when residents may not be the home owners); increased noise; nuisance and general disturbance. Applications shall have regard to *DEHLG guidelines: Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (December 2008)* and *Urban Design Manual: A best practice guide (Parts 1 and 2) (December 2008)*.

or any updated versions, as well as, the *Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for Apartments* (DEHLG, 2007). and to the requirements below:

- They may be acceptable within housing developments when planned and constructed as part of such development but will only be permitted where a satisfactory degree of separation from standard suburban housing, in terms of design height and layout is achieved to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.
- The Council will ensure that the standard of accommodation is suitable and will not permit apartment developments where the floor area of the apartment is less than the following minimum requirements:

Table 19: Minimum floor area requirements for Apartments

One bedroom	45 sq m
Two bedroom / 3 persons	63 sq m
Two bedroom / 4 persons	73 sq m
Three bedrooms / 5 persons	86 sq m

Further minimum requirements can be found in the draft *Design Standards for Apartments* (DEHLG, 2007)

- The subdivision of existing dwelling houses into apartments/ flats will not generally be permitted within residential estates designed and developed for single-family occupancy.
- The maximum heights of apartment developments in residential zones or in areas with a suburban residential character will be determined on a site-by-site basis by the Planning Authority and the scale and character of existing developments in the area will be taken into consideration. To this end, it will be necessary to have adequate open spaces in addition to parking space and tree screening so that a satisfactory transition from the scale of any neighbouring buildings of lower height may be achieved.
- In the case of apartment blocks, particular attention must be paid to the location of the communal open space for the residents. This open space should not be unduly overshadowed by the blocks and shall be laid out in such a fashion to provide for ease of maintenance. The issue of public open space is addressed in the *DEHLG guidelines: Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (December 2008)* and *Urban Design Manual: A best practice guide (Parts 1 and 2) (December 2008)*.
- It should be required that, in the case of apartment and duplex style schemes, private open space will be provided in the form of landscaped areas, courtyards, terraces/patios and balconies. Roof gardens should also be considered, provided that they are easily accessible, secure and attractively landscaped. Fuel, recycling and bin storage areas shall be provided at ground floor level.
- Car parking areas should be broken up by planting in an inconspicuous manner and yet provide for reasonable convenience of users. Only minor areas of car parking, primarily for visitors, will be permitted between the block and the road boundary. The form of construction of garages must be considered from the visual viewpoint not only at ground level but also from the upper floors of the flat blocks.
- Car parking spaces will be calculated on the basis of 2.0 spaces per residential unit. Where development is likely to involve significant letting, an innovative car-parking layout should be proposed to accommodate increased car parking within the curtilage of the site, above the standards outlined above. Visitor car parking will be calculated on the basis of 1 space per 2 apartments.

10.3.6 House Extensions

Extending existing dwelling houses to meet changing family needs is an acceptable form of development which is viewed positively by the Council. The design should ensure that the extension forms an integral part of the main dwelling unit capable of reintegration for single family use. Development proposals should have regard to the following:

1. The *DEHLG guidelines: Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (December 2008)* and *Urban Design Manual: A best practice guide (Parts 1 and 2) (December 2008)* or any updated versions, in considering the existing site density and remaining private open space.
2. The size of the extension should be suitably designed, having regard to the size of the existing house and houses in the vicinity;
3. High quality designs for extensions will be required that respect and integrate with the existing dwelling in terms of height, scale, materials used, finishes, window proportions etc.
4. Pitched roofs will be required, where appropriate, except on some single storey rear extensions. Flat roof extensions visible from public areas should be avoided.
5. Dormer extensions should not obscure the main features of the existing roof, i.e. should not break the ridge or eaves lines of the roof.
6. Front dormers should normally be set back at least three-tile courses from the eaves line and should be clad in a material matching the existing roof.
7. The development should not have an adverse impact on the amenities of adjoining properties;
8. Site coverage should be carefully considered to avoid unacceptable loss of private open space or encroachment on wastewater treatment infrastructure.
9. In urban areas the development should not result in the loss of any off street parking
10. In some circumstances a gap of 1.5m to be retained between the extension and the neighbouring site boundary so as to prevent dwellings which were intended to be detached from becoming a terrace.
11. Proposed side extensions must retain side access to the rear of the property.

The Council will consider on their merits, exemptions to the above policy in the case of adaptations required to provide accommodation for people with disabilities.

In dealing with detached units to provide ancillary accommodation for family members (granny flats) the Council shall have regard to the following:

- Vehicular Access to the flat should be shared.
- Required separation distances from wastewater treatment systems
- Garden areas should be shared
- The unit should not consist of more than a combined living/kitchen/dining area, WC bathroom and no more than two bedrooms.
- The unit will be conditioned to restrict the use to the enjoyment of the main dwelling.
- The flat shall not be let or sold, other than as part of the overall property

10.3.7 Backland Development

Development of backlands, including the construction of extra dwellings in back gardens may result in inappropriate and disorderly development and can have an adverse effect on the residential amenity of adjoining properties. This may also result in the overloading of infrastructure and in missed opportunities for integrated renewal. Backland development will be considered if:

- There is no loss of privacy to adjoining dwellings.
- The access arrangements would not significantly increase noise and disturbance to existing dwellings.
- There is adequate off-street parking.
- There is adequate provision of private amenity space.

- The scale and design of the dwelling is compatible with the character of the buildings in the surrounding area.
- There are no issues of overshadowing.
- Existing trees or natural features are retained, where possible.

In the event that a large plot of land, located in a backland location, is the subject of a development proposal, an indicative layout of the overall development intentions for the land will be required.

10.3.8 Use of Upper Floors for Residential Purposes

The Council shall encourage the owners of commercial properties to use upper floors for residential use where a commercial use is not required or feasible. The use for living purposes would contribute to the revitalisation of urban areas. The Council shall also promote new mixed use developments such as “upper floor residential” over “ground floor retail”.

10.3.9 Change of Use of Existing Houses in Existing Residential Schemes

Conversions of houses and apartments to other uses will not normally be permitted, except where specified in zoning matrix. The conversion of houses to apartments in predominantly single family dwellings will not normally be permitted as such conversions would lead to deterioration in the residential amenities of these areas. However, the subdivision of large houses and houses on primary traffic routes in the town centre may be permitted under certain circumstances; where such factors as the extent of open space within the site boundaries, tree planting, car parking spaces, etc. would permit satisfactory conversions. Individual units should be self-contained with their own bathroom facilities, refuse bin storage areas and washing/drying facilities which are accessible to the occupants of that unit.

10.3.10 Derelict Sites

The council will continue to take appropriate action in accordance with the provisions of the Derelict Sites Act 1990, and amendments, to ensure the elimination of dereliction as it occurs. At the community meeting several sites within the LAP area were identified as derelict. The council will encourage re-development of these sites in both rural and urban areas and facilitate well designed new development.

10.3.11 Residential Care Homes

The Council recognises the need to provide for a range of accommodation for those who require supervised care. In considering applications for care homes the Council will have regard to the following:-

- The existing social facilities and demand within the area. In locations where there is a grouping of a particular user, group applications should include an assessment of the impact on local services.
- The impact on the physical character of the area such as car parking levels, private amenity space.
- The impact on noise and disturbance from additional traffic.
- The standard of accommodation and facilities offered. In large developments or developments which are not located adjacent to local facilities, the provision of prayer rooms /chapels, shops etc. will be required.

10.3.12 Parking in Front Gardens

The cumulative effect of the removal of front garden walls and railings damages the appearance of suburban streets and roads. Consequently, proposals for off-street parking needs to be balanced against loss of amenity. Where permitted, driveways should:

- Not have outward opening gates.
- Have a vehicular entrance not wider than 3 metres.
- Have an area of hard standing (per parking space = 2.5 m x 5 m).
- Retain the balance as garden.
- In most cases have gates, walls and railings made good.

Where adjoining householders intend to construct driveways, a more efficient use of garden space can be achieved by the use of a shared vehicular entrance to serve both houses. Alterations necessary to the footpath will be carried out by the County Council at the applicant's expense, or by the applicant at the applicant's own expense, under the supervision of the County Council.

10.4 RETAIL DEVELOPMENT (*To be read in conjunction with Chapters 5, see also Policy 56*)

Having regard to the recommendations of documents such as the *Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities* published by the Department of Environment and Local Government (2000) and the Retail Strategy for County Roscommon which forms part of the RCDP 2008 - 2014, it is generally the objective of the Planning Authority to encourage central locations for new retailing activity and consider the needs of residential neighbourhoods in catering for local shopping needs.

The criteria to be determined in the assessment of significant planning applications for retail development are as follows:

- All applications for retail developments should be subject to the sequential test and alternative locations must be considered. Where an application for a retail development outside of the town centre is lodged to the planning authority, the applicant should demonstrate that all town centre options have been assessed and evaluated and that flexibility has been adopted by the retailer in regard to the retail format;
- Impact on the town centre, including cumulative impact;
- The baseline information and capacity/impact assessment is accurate and transparent;
- There is a demonstrable need for the development;
- Its contribution to town centre improvement;
- Its contribution to site / area improvement;
- The quality of access by all modes of transport;
- Its role in improving the competitiveness of the County;
- Its role in sustaining urban and rural communities;
- Any other CDP or LAP considerations.

In considering retail developments the Council will require:

- Adequate provision of parking for people with disabilities in addition to parking for parents with young children
- Provision of recycling bring centres to be located in accessible locations
- Provision of covered bicycle parking

It is also recommended that the applicant should address the following criteria:

- Support the long term strategy for town centres as established in the development plan and not materially diminish the prospect of attracting private sector investment into one or more town centres.
- Cause an adverse impact on one of more town centres, either singly or cumulatively with recent development or other outstanding planning permissions, sufficient to undermine the quality of the centre or its role in the economic and social life of the community.
- Diminish the range of activities and services that a town centre can support.
- Cause an increase in the number of vacant properties in the primary retail area that is likely to persist in the long term.

- Ensure a high standard of access both by public transport, foot, and private car so that the proposal is easily accessible by all sections of society.
- Link effectively with an existing town centre so that there is likely to be commercial synergy.

The overall design strategy will normally reflect variety (by the use of differing shop fronts, set back, signs, etc.) within a unified design. The design and layout of buildings, including materials, should discourage graffiti and other forms of vandalism. Service areas etc. should be out of sight of surrounding residential and pedestrian areas. Tree planting and landscaping must form part of the overall design of the shopping centre/s, plans of which must be prepared by fully qualified landscaping architects.

10.4.1 Shop Fronts

Shopfronts are one of the most important elements in determining the character, quality and image of retail streets in County Roscommon. Traditional shop front designs and nameplates over shop windows should, where possible, be preserved and in these situations regard should be had to the *Architectural Heritage Protection - Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (DEHLG, 2005). Contemporary shopfronts shall be designed to traditional principles of scale, proportion and detailing of the existing streetscape.

The following guidance points are intended to assist in the achievement of a higher standard in shopfront design within town and village centres (these may not be as applicable to the Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP area:

- Traditional shopfront designs and nameplates over shop windows should, if at all possible, be retained and preserved.
- Where new or replacement shopfronts are proposed, the use of traditional materials will be favoured. The excessive use of illuminated plastic or neon signs is not considered appropriate.
- The design of new shopfronts should relate primarily to the architectural characteristics of the buildings of which they form part. Shopfronts should also reflect the scale and proportion of the streetscape.
- In developing new shopfronts, the actual building design, materials, colour and detailing of the building should all be taken into account.
- The quality, texture and the colour of materials used are of paramount importance. The painting of natural brick or stone is generally unacceptable. Where elements of the original shopfront framework remain, efforts should be made to retain them in order to assist in integrating the new shopfront with the building as a whole.
- The level of workmanship is a significant contributing factor in shopfront design. High quality detailing is necessary in order to maintain a good appearance in shopfronts.
- Canopies and awnings should be made of durable and, where possible, traditional materials and should not cause a cluttered appearance.
- Security shutters should have, where possible, internal lattice shutters or toughened / laminated glass.

10.4.2 Shopping Centres

Shopping centres must conform to the highest urban design standards. The design must ensure that the proposed centre will be integrated with, and be complementary to, the streetscape where it will be located, or in accordance with detailed urban design framework. It is a requirement of the Planning Authority that proposals for major retail centres such as shopping centres and food outlets are accompanied by specific measures to address the following issues:

- The scale of the proposal in relation to its planned catchment and existing floorspace provision including a Retail Impact Study on established centres.
- The ability of the proposal to be adequately serviced in relation to car parking, public transport and pedestrian and cyclist access and facilities.

- The creation and enclosure of, good pedestrian space at an appropriate scale.
- Activities and uses that keep the centre alive, both during the day and evening, e.g. stalls, cafes and public houses. The inclusion of residential uses, particularly flats and maisonettes, as an integral part of the centre, in order to increase the evening activity and security of the centre.
- The provision, within the overall design of the centre, of public facilities such as childcare facilities, toilets, advice centres, public telephones, etc.
- Service areas should be out of sight of surrounding residential and pedestrian areas. Tree planting and landscaping must form part of the overall design of the centre, plans of which must be prepared by a fully qualified landscape architect.

10.5 OFFICE / INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENTS (*To be read in conjunction with Chapters 5*)

10.5.1 Office Development

The County Council will encourage office development to be located in established centres as well as the use of vacant or under-utilised upper floors for office development. Outside of the town/village centres, applications for office development will be considered within an industrial and business park, on industrially zoned lands or where infrastructure has been provided, in line with the principle of sustainable development.

10.5.2 Industry, Warehousing and Business Park Developments

Industrial and commercial development is favoured in or adjacent to settlements where infrastructure has been provided and in line with the principle of sustainable development. These developments on greenfield sites will be required to satisfy minimum requirements for design regarding location, layout, finishes, access, tree planting and landscaping, boundary treatment, water supply, drainage, and effluent disposal. In addition, sufficient space shall be reserved within the curtilage of the site for parking of all employees' and visitors' cars, for the loading and unloading of vehicles, and, adequate rear access to the business premises is made. Adequately screened on-site storage shall be provided for raw materials, waste products and finished goods.

Other requirements include a high standard of design, finish, layout, and landscaping. All new developments shall be designed to provide access for all and shall include parking areas for people with disabilities at the main entrance, equal access toilets, and, access to floors above ground level. Proposals for developments that would generate a large volume of HGV traffic should not be located where they would encourage movement of such traffic through residential areas. Areas between the building and the road boundary may include car parking spaces, provided an acceptable landscaping scheme is incorporated. Industrial/warehousing/business park developments should present a pleasant aspect helped by tree planting, the careful design of signage, screening of storage space and unobtrusive loading and parking spaces. Various unit sizes shall be provided to cater for the differing needs of potential occupants.

The Planning Authority will require details of the nature of the proposed activities and of the means of controlling effluents, noise, light, solid waste and gaseous emissions from these activities, together with ameliorative measures as part of a planning application. In assessing an application for development, the Planning Authority will weigh the development against its impact on the environment.

10.6 CONVENIENCE FOOD SHOPPING (*To be read in conjunction with Chapter 5*)

Where practicable, new convenience retail development should be located within a town centre or within a designated neighbourhood or district centre serving a large residential community. Accessibility is the key to the success of such developments and such proposals should be accessible by all modes of transport particularly pedestrians and public transport. As large convenience shops attract customers carrying out large weekly shopping, it is important that such development should

also be served by adequate car parking. Out of centre sites for this type of retail development require careful assessment, subject to the sequential test assessment and their potential impact on nearby centres. The maximum size of supermarkets is 3,000 square metres net sales, as defined in the Retail Planning Guidelines.

10.7 DISCOUNT FOOD STORES (*To be read in conjunction with Chapter 5*)

Discount food stores typically have a floor area of approximately 1,500-1,800 sq. metres gross and are served by a surface car park with approximately 80 – 100 spaces. The preferable location for such development is again in the town centre or designated district centre or neighbourhood centre. The potential role that discount food stores have in anchoring small centres or neighbourhood centres is recognised in the Retail Planning Guidelines and thus it is appropriate to permit such development within neighbourhood centres. Such developments are also often suited to brownfield industrial sites located in proximity to residential areas.

10.8 DISTRICT, NEIGHBOURHOOD AND LOCAL CENTRES (*To be read in conjunction with Chapter 5*)

It is likely that as Roscommon continues to grow in population terms, that there may be demand for the development of district, neighbourhood and local centres to cater for newly developing residential estates. District, neighbourhood and local shopping centres can play an important role in the County retail offer, especially in the convenience provision within the county. The development of district and neighbourhood centres should only be developed in areas where large scale residential expansion is envisaged/proposed. The LAP area is suitable for these types of developments.

10.9 RETAIL WAREHOUSE PARKS (*To be read in conjunction with Chapter 5*)

It is recognised in the Retail Planning Guidelines that, in general, retail warehouses do not fit easily into town centres given their size requirements and the need for good car parking facilities. It is therefore, appropriate to group these facilities into planned retail parks on the edge of the town centre if such sites are available or in an out-of-centre site, if the applicant can demonstrate that there are no suitable edge of centre sites available. Criteria for assessing retail warehouse applications include scale and design of the development, appropriate vehicular access and the quantitative need for such development.

As stated in the Retail Planning Guidelines, individual retail units should not be less than 700 sq metres and not more than 6,000 sq metres in size. These figures are gross floor area, including storage and garden centres. In respect of retail warehouse developments outside town centres, it is essential that the range of goods sold is restricted by planning condition to bulky household items such as DIY products, carpets, furniture, and electrical goods. Failure to do so may have a negative impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre area.

10.10 FACTORY OUTLET CENTRES (*To be read in conjunction with Chapter 5*)

It is stated in the Retail Planning Guidelines that the success of these centres depends on drawing customers and visitors from a wide catchment area, including tourists, and there may be implications for existing tourist centres and established town centres, even those some distance from the proposals. Criteria for assessing such development should therefore focus on whether such a development is located in a strategic enough location to capture expenditure from a very wide catchment area. Such a development must be within easy reach of Dublin and in the interests of sustainability, preferably be located adjacent to or even within an existing town centre. Again, as such facilities are primarily geared towards the car borne customer, vehicular accessibility and adequate car parking are key factors.

10.11 RETAIL WAREHOUSE CLUBS *(To be read in conjunction with Chapter 5)*

Retail Warehouse Clubs as stated in the Retail Planning Guidelines share many of the characteristics of large retail outlets and therefore should be treated as any other large retail development. Such development should therefore be located within or on the edge of existing town centres and there should be a demonstrable need for its development both qualitatively and quantitatively. Particular consideration should be given to the design of such developments as often they have a retail warehouse type format and thus may be inappropriate within the traditional town centre. As such facilities are geared towards bulky shopping such facilities must also be served by adequate car parking.

10.12 LOCAL SHOPS & PETROL FILLING STATIONS *(To be read in conjunction with Chapter 5)*

Local shops play an important role in providing for daily top up shopping. They are also often easily accessible to the elderly and disabled. The development of such local shops should be encouraged in the smaller towns and villages in the counties and also in residential areas in the suburbs of the larger estates in the principal county towns. Such developments should be easily accessible to all sections of society.

Local shops attached to petrol filling stations are a growing sector of the retail market. Such facilities do play an important role, particularly in serving some of the more isolated rural communities. However, care should be given to the development of such facilities on the edge of town centres as they may have a negative impact on established convenience outlets within the town centre. As stated in the Retail Planning Guidelines, the size (net sales area) of such retail units should not exceed 100 sq metres.

New petrol stations and refurbished existing stations will be required to have a high standard of overall design and architectural layout to ensure an attractive development that integrates with and enhances its surroundings. The forecourt canopy should be integrated into the overall design and sited so that it does not dominate the surrounding buildings. Applications must be accompanied by detailed landscaping and screening proposals, providing details of the type, location and timescale of planting. Another necessity in applications is the provision of details of signage and their proposed location. Advertising should not interfere with visibility lines; be visually intrusive; or, interrupt the continuity of streetscapes.

Petrol filling stations must be located on the outskirts of the town but inside the 50km or 60km speed limits and the creation of a traffic hazard must be avoided. The preferred location is on the near side of the roadway on the way out of town. However, the Council will seek to avoid the proliferation of such uses along a stretch of road, or within a particular area in a town or village where such development may result in loss of visual and residential amenity. Applications for motor fuel filling stations will not be supported by the Council where a proposal is likely to lead to an impairment of the visual or residential amenity of the area through intrusive commercial frontage and signage, nuisance, disturbance or excessive traffic movements.

Where petrol filling stations are proposed in rural areas, traffic safety will be of paramount importance. They would be best placed in villages or in close proximity to other compatible uses such as shops and post offices etc. The expansion or addition to existing such businesses would be preferable.

A road frontage of at least 21.5 m is required for a new petrol station. The frontage must be kept clear of any structures (with the exception of the boundary wall) for a depth of not less than 4.5 m from the street or roadside boundary of the site. No pump, hose pipe or other service may be situated less than 4.5 m from the street or roadside boundary of the site, nor may it be adapted to serve a vehicle standing on the public street. Where petrol pumps and other services are sited not less than 9m from the street or roadside boundary of the site, the street frontage of the station may be reduced to 12m.

The station should not have more than two vehicular openings onto a street. The width of each opening should not exceed 7.5m. The street or roadside boundary of the station shall be defined, except at openings, by a wall or railing to a height of not less than 0.5m over the level of the adjoining street. Kerbs and footpaths shall be dished in accordance with the detailed requirements of the Roads Authority.

The following standards must be observed in relation to the siting of filling stations near a junction:

- where the street width is greater than 15m a vehicle entrance or exit shall not be sited nearer to a road junction than 33.5m, in the case of a junction with a street 15m in width or over, or 23m in the case of a junction with a street of between 7.5m and 15m in width;
- where the street width is less than 15m a vehicle entrance or exit shall not be sited nearer to a road junction than 23m in the case of a junction with another street 7.5m in width or over;
- where the junction occurs on the opposite side of the street from the petrol station site, no vehicle entrance or exit may be sited nearer than 23m to the junction where the width of the intersecting street exceeds 7.5 m;
- where the street is of a dual-carriageway type, no break in the central strip shall be permitted under any circumstances to serve the petrol station.

Persons intending to seek permission for the development of a new motor fuel station are advised to consult with the Fire Officer in relation to the installations for the storage and distribution of dangerous substances.

10.13 PUBS / NIGHTCLUBS / AMUSEMENTS CENTRES

Applications for the above uses shall be considered with regard to the following issues:

- The amenities of nearby residents, i.e. noise, general disturbance, hours of operation, litter and fumes.
- Prevent an excessive concentration of any of the above uses in a particular area.
- Noise at the boundaries will be carefully monitored and noise insulation measures will be required at the time of the submission of the planning application. An important consideration for the local authority is the number and frequency of events in such facilities.
- The planning authority shall insist that proper litter control measures are in place prior to the opening of any premises.
- The larger leisure complexes which contain a mix of uses, e.g. cinema, bowling, and restaurant, will be treated on their merits

10.14 FAST FOOD OUTLETS/ TAKE-AWAYS (*To be read in conjunction with Chapters 5, see also Policy 56*)

Proposals for the development of these facilities will generally only be acceptable in areas of mixed use activity such as town or village centres. The cumulative impact of a number of take-away restaurants in any particular area will be considered in the assessment of any application. Impacts such as noise, litter, disturbance and traffic, will also be taken into consideration.

Stringent controls will be applied with regard to litter collection and façade design. The latter may necessitate the alteration of corporate images in order to assimilate into the character of the area. The Planning Authority will impose restrictions on opening hours as a condition of planning permission.

10.15 AUTOMATIC TELLER MACHINES

The provision of automatic teller machines (ATMs) will be strictly regulated, having regard to the following:

- The need to protect the character of the building or shopfront they are to be incorporated into, in particular, Protected Structures/Architectural Conservation Areas.

- The design and location must be such that they are accessible to all.
- In general, there should not be more than one ATM in any one shopfront so as to avoid the creation of a dead shopfront.
- The need to control the amount of litter generated by these machines. In principal, shopping streets, where Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas are widespread, electronic receipts only should be available
- Signs and logos shall be discreetly incorporated into the overall design.
- The avoidance of a traffic hazard.
- The operators must control litter to the satisfaction to the County Council.

10.16 ADVERTISING

Outdoor advertisements can play a vital role for both industrial and commercial enterprise as long as it is well located and sympathetically designed advertising, whether attached to a building or free standing. Indeed, they can contribute to the character and vitality of commercial areas, particularly at night. In towns and villages, uncontrolled advertising detracts from the character and identity of settlements and if located at junctions or in competition with traffic signs, can give rise to traffic hazard. Advertisements which are used sensitively and sympathetically and which enhance the appearance and vitality of an area shall be permitted.

The number of signs attached to a building in such areas should be limited and no sign should be excessively obtrusive or out of scale with the building façade. As with shopfront design, the Planning Authority will require commercial interests, especially chain outlets, to restrain the use of their corporate image advertising where these are considered to be too dominant. All advertisements and advertisement structures, other than those exempted under Part II, Second Schedule of the 2001 Planning and Development Regulations shall be the subject of a formal planning application. Commercial signage and advertising will be limited to commercial built-up areas where it is already a feature. Within towns and villages, the following general policy will apply:

- The location of signage should be such as to prevent it leading to obstructions to the visually impaired and should not interfere with access on footpaths.
- The size and scale of signs should not conflict with those existing structures in the vicinity;
- The number and position of signs should not unduly clutter the building façade or streetscape.
- High level advertising will not be permitted; signs should be positioned at or below ground floor fascia level; signs will not be permitted above eaves or parapet levels.
- The following types of advertising will not be permitted by the Council, and will be actively discouraged:
 - the use of plastic, PVC, perspex and neon signs or lettering or detailing on any exterior;
 - internally illuminated box fascia signs;
 - internally illuminated projecting signs, whether fixed or hanging;
 - flashing, reflectorised, neon or glitter-type signs or detailing at any location on the exterior of the building, or so located within the interior as to be intended to be viewed from the exterior;
- Signs shall not exceed 10% of the surface area of the building
- Signs attached to buildings are preferable to those on freestanding hoardings;
- Signs should not interfere with windows or other features of the façade or project above the skyline.
- Signs should not impair the setting of any archaeological or historical site or any protected building or structures or ACAs;
- Signs will not be permitted if they compete with road signs or otherwise endanger traffic safety.
- Free standing signs will generally be resisted.

10.16.1 Advertising Hoardings

Advertising hoardings rely for their impact on size, scale and location and are thus usually detrimental to the character of the area in which they are situated and in some cases contribute to a traffic hazard. However, they can help to screen derelict or obsolete sites awaiting re-development, in certain circumstances.

- Outdoor advertising shall not be permitted on proposed or existing protected structures or within the vicinity of such, in such a way as to detract from the visual quality of their setting.
- In all other cases, regard to the visual impact of a proposed advertising hoarding and potential of traffic hazard arising from same will be imperative.
- The scale of display panels must be related to the scale of the buildings and streets in which they are located.
- Where illuminated hoardings are proposed, their effect on the streetscape during the hours of darkness and on the amenities of the area, will be considered.
- Display panels may form part of the visual screening around building sites or sites awaiting re-development. In such cases, temporary permissions will be considered where appropriately sized panels form an integral part of an overall boundary treatment and do not comprise more than half of the total surface area of such treatment.
- As a general rule, planning permissions for outdoor advertising will be limited to a maximum of three years in the first instance, to enable the position to be reviewed by the Planning Authority in light of changing circumstances at the end of that period.
- The number and scale of hoardings in the vicinity of the site will be a material consideration.

10.16.2 Fingerpost Signage

The erection of fingerpost signs on public roads require a licence or planning permission from the Planning Authority and should comply with the following:

- Directional signs for major tourist attractions and community purposes will be considered but product advertising will not be permitted.
- Signs must have a standard size and colour and be maintained by the owner of the premises advertised.
- Signs which interfere with the Local Authority's directional signs or which contribute to visual clutter will not be permitted.
- Signs will not be permitted where they detract from areas of amenity or interfere with views and prospects

10.16.3 Rural Advertising

No advertising hoardings (billboards) will be permitted in the open countryside. Consideration may be given to the provision of advertising panels at lay-bys outside built up areas, where facilities in these areas can be listed, and the traders can advertise in a fashion that would provide information to passers-by without interference to the amenities of the area. If external illumination is proposed, documentation shall be provided that clearly shows that the blight or glare from such illumination will not adversely affect pedestrian and vehicular traffic or adjacent properties. The use of trailers as advertising signs is considered to be a material change of use of the land and requires planning permission.

10.17 TOURISM (*To be read in conjunction with Chapter 8*)

The Council recognises that tourism development can make an important contribution to the economy of the county. In particular, it is acknowledged that tourism provides jobs and investment in parts of the county that might not otherwise benefit from economic development. The Council will encourage and facilitate in co-operation with relevant agencies involved in tourism, the improvement of the existing amenity and viewing areas as well as the provision of additional areas where required. The Council will protect the amenities of the county from insensitive or inappropriate development, particularly any development that threatens the tourism resources of the county.

The Council will seek to ensure that features that make Roscommon attractive to tourists will be protected not just from other forms of development, but from the adverse effects of the tourist industry itself. The relationship between tourism and the environment must be managed in a way that tourism continues to support local communities and remains viable in the long term.

Tourism developments will need to take the following into consideration:

- The provision of well researched, justified and imaginative integrated projects which include a realistic combination of the following:
 - Hotel facilities including conference and leisure facilities.
 - Indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, e.g. golf, swimming, equestrian activities.
 - European park style caravan / self contained / chalet accommodation.
 - Entertainment facilities.
 - Tourist related leisure facilities including walking and cycling.
- They do not contravene the Landscape Protection Development Policies,
- They relate sympathetically to the scale and level of activity in the locality,
- They will not adversely affect the character or appearance of the countryside,
- They will not result in detrimental impact on road safety or the free flow of traffic and will not require improvements which would detract from the character of rural areas,
- They will not have an adverse impact on the character or siting of settlements or the amenity of existing residents.
- They will not have adverse impact on sites of nature conservation value or archaeological importance or structures of architectural or historic interest,
- Any new dwellings associated with tourism development are of a good standard of design and are sympathetic to the landscape in terms of their siting and materials.

10.17.1 Rural Tourism

While seeking to ensure that most tourism development locates in or close to towns and villages, the Council recognises that by its nature, some tourism development may require other locations. Such development may be acceptable if it accords with Landscape Protection Policies and provides a range of facilities which would also be made available to the local community.

10.17.2 Caravan and Camping Parks

Design and layout must be of a high standard with an emphasis on innovation to provide an integrated design concept linking residential units to well located communal areas, on-site facilities and amenities. Reference should be made to *Bord Fáilte's 'Guidelines for Development of Caravan and Camping Sites'* (1982) and any updates.

Where additions, to or infilling on existing caravan parks or sites are considered, the County Council will apply the following standards:

- a comprehensive landscaping scheme must form an integral part of site development. Sites should be located to take advantage of existing natural screening. New planting should be designed to reinforce existing landscape features including hedgerows, woodlands, trees and

shrubs. Landscaping proposals should provide for generous planting in groups and zones using indigenous species. The scheme should be prepared by a qualified and competent person;

- parks and sites must connect to existing water and wastewater treatment infrastructure where this is available without placing unsustainable demands on these services;
- private wastewater treatment infrastructure must meet the County Council's planning and environmental protection standards and criteria. An adequate daily supply of potable water and water storage must be provided to service each unit. Sanitary facilities and/or permanent dwellings should not be located within 9 metres of any pitch. Sites should be accessible to local utilities and have adequate on-site scavenging services;
- parks and sites should be provided with adequate roads and parking areas with at least one parking space per pitch and an appropriate number of additional spaces for visitors. Clear spacing in all directions must be provided around each pitch. Entrance/reception areas should be provided with adequate parking and turning facilities. Public lighting should be provided at low level and intensity; and,
- developments should not detract from the privacy and amenity enjoyed by local residents. Sites should be designed and laid out so that residential property is not overlooked.

10.17.3 Holiday Homes

In general, proposals should address holiday home and second home development in a positive and sustainable way. Second home and holiday home type development can raise concerns regarding long-term sustainability, effects on the affordability of housing in rural areas for permanent rural dwellers. Therefore, individual holiday homes or cluster of holiday homes will generally not be permitted in the open countryside unless they are attached to a rural leisure resource based at that location. Holiday units should be designed and sited so as not to have an adverse impact on the character or setting of settlements or the amenity of existing residents. Proposals for holiday homes should be located in existing settlements, where they can avail of existing services, or designed as clusters in other appropriate locations, where they can be integrated into the environment. Where permission for holiday homes has been granted and buildings constructed and it is proven to the Planning Authority that this use is not viable within 4 years from the date of completion, the houses may be used for domestic use, subject to satisfactory waste disposal as well as proper planning and sustainable development. Planning permission will be required for such a change of use.

Overall, there should be an emphasis on innovation in design and layout providing for an integrated development linking units to open space and facilities. Suburban style housing estate layouts will not be acceptable. Existing site features including trees and hedgerows should be retained to form part of a comprehensive landscaping scheme, and a management company should be established to manage the overall development, as well as, the repair and maintenance of any private wastewater treatment system.

10.17.4 Tourist Advertisements

Such signs require a licence and shall be sized and colour coded in accordance with the DEHLG Memorandum, '*Criteria for the Provision of Tourist Attraction and Accommodation Signs*' (1998). In addition, such signs shall:

- comply with road safety standards in relation to sight distances, official road signs;
- junction layout and other requirements;
- be constructed of materials approved by the Planning Authority;
- be maintained by the owner of the premises advertised;
- be located on a route to the premises from the nearest town or village; and,
- be limited in number to the minimum required for their purpose.

10.17.5 Diversification

The Council encourages the diversification of the rural economy and for the further development of tourism. There is an existing range of attractions which can be further developed for tourists while also preserving the rural character and amenity of the open countryside, these include farm tourist accommodation, fishing, equestrian pursuits and other secondary activities such as health spas, cooking schools, adventure centres etc. These all encourage people to stay longer in the County. Proposals for such development must be properly located and must not interfere with or detract from areas of special amenity value or nature conservation. The Council will also seek to facilitate and encourage the re-use of redundant farm buildings of vernacular importance for appropriate owner-run agri-tourism enterprises subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

10.17.6 Recreation (*To be read in conjunction with Chapter 8*)

The Council attaches great importance to the retention and creation of areas of recreational and amenity open space. It is important for physical and mental health that everyone, particularly children, the elderly and those with disabilities should have easy access to public open space. Recreation forms an important component of life and encompasses many activities with major land use implications. The Council recognises the increasing concern felt by many communities that open space with recreational and amenity value should be protected from development and adequate provision made for future use.

It will be important to ensure that adequate recreational facilities are available in conjunction with, or even ahead of, new housing development. In particular, provision should be made for both local and regional scale parks, where these do not already exist. In addition to outdoor recreational facilities, there is a demand for high quality indoor recreational facilities both to meet current demand and to facilitate future population growth. The natural environment should be promoted as an accessible amenity for sport and recreational activity having due regard for safety and issues of environmental sustainability.

1. Sports

The Council recognises that sport is an essential component of everyday life, playing a valuable social, cultural and economic role, providing enjoyment for people, a livelihood for some, and promoting a healthy lifestyle. The Council is committed to enhancing the range and quality of sports facilities and to ensuring that there is reasonable public access to sports facilities.

2. Play/ Recreation Opportunities for Children

The promotion and provision of children's recreation facilities is vital in adding to the provision of accessible, local amenity space. The provision of a child friendly environment will be promoted in accordance with the Roscommon County Play Policy 2005-2008 and 'Ready, Steady, Play-A National Play Policy' (2004) by the National Children's Office (see also Section 9.4 Community Facilities which addresses objectives contained within the Roscommon Play Policy 2005 – 2008).

3. Outdoor events

The Council shall promote and facilitate the hosting of outdoor events throughout the county. The Council will ensure that they comply with the provisions of Part XVI of the Planning and Development Act 2000-2004, as amended.

4. Cycling and walking

The County Council will address the need to encourage walking and cycling by ensuring that safe cycle ways and footpaths are provided as part of all new and existing development areas, as resources allow. The Council will also facilitate the improvements which need to be made to the Sli na Slainte

walking routes throughout the county. In addition, through better design incorporating current thinking and best practice from experience in other locations, more people friendly places can be created. In areas already developed which are experiencing traffic problems, it will be necessary to work with existing infrastructure in order to create an improved environment.

5. Swimming Pools/ Leisure Centers

The public swimming pools in Roscommon and Castlerea are important sources of recreational activity. In addition to public swimming pools, many of the larger hotels now have leisure centres which include gym facilities and swimming pools and this offers additional choice to the paying public. These facilities should be of high quality and designed and finished to ensure their usability, security and cost efficient maintenance as well as being highly accessible to all persons.

6. Marinas

New commercial marinas will normally be required to locate in or close to existing centres, such as Boyle, Knockvicar, Cootehall, Cortober, Roosky, Tarmonbarry, Ballyleague, Portrunny, Lecarrow, Athlone and Shannonbridge. This will facilitate the economic provision of onshore facilities and contribute to the expansion of the nearby villages and towns as tourism centres. Smaller marinas for the mooring of boats may be more widely distributed, but will be required to have good road access. The development of single jetties and moorings may be acceptable at some locations, such as picnic or landing areas, where their siting and design is appropriate. However, the Council will monitor the number of such jetties and moorings to ensure that there is not an undue proliferation of these facilities.

7. Private Harbours & Jetties

At existing private dwellinghouse sites where the site forms part of the lake- or river-shore the property owner or a group of individual, immediately abutting, property owners may be permitted to form a small harbour/jetty on his/her/their own lands or on the lake bed subject to consent or license being provided by Waterways Ireland and the DEHLG where these are situated within or adjacent to NHA's, SAC's and SPA's. The size of such developments will be limited to the site owners' needs for their own private boating activities. Such small harbours/jetties will be required to be designed and operated to best engineering standards and designed to prevent the threat of pollution.

Floating jetty type facilities will be encouraged in the first instance, where appropriate and subject to the proper planning and sustainable development.

It will be a requirement of the Planning Authority that the quayside and land around any such harbour or jetty will be kept in a tidy condition and in particular the storage of un-seaworthy boats or unsightly equipment will be prohibited.

10.17.7 Sustainable Tourism Planning Control Checklist

The following checklist is for applications for planning permissions for new development. The list can be applied to all new development including new tourism related development. For most applications a simple but honest assessment – yes or no- is all that is necessary.

Not all questions will be relevant to any particular applications, but some or most will be. If the answers to these questions are mainly “Yes”, then the development proposal is likely to contribute to sustainability. Mainly “No” answers suggest the proposal will conflict with sustainability principles.

1. Land, Buildings, Resources and Waste

- (a) Is the proposal on a “Brownfield” (previously-used) site or in existing vacant building(s)?

- (b) Does the proposal use land, energy, water, soils, minerals and materials prudently? (E.g. Does it minimise land-take; does it incorporate energy/water saving devices; is it orientated to take advantage of sunlight: does it re-use other materials?).
- (c) Does the development avoid floodplain?
- (d) Have opportunities been taken to incorporate the use of renewable energy sources? (e.g. wind, hydro, solar, CHP).

2. Natural Environment – Landscape and Wildlife

- (a) Are valuable wildlife habitats protected or enhanced? (e.g. designated sites, woods, hedges, wetlands).
- (b) Will the proposal increase broad-leaf tree and hedge cover?
- (c) Does the proposal safeguard landscape quality and retain open countryside.

3. Pollution and Climate Change

- (a) Is the quality and volume of water safeguarded? (Ground-water, surface water and drinking water).
- (b) Are air, noise and light pollution prevented in the proposals?
- (c) Has allowance been made for projected climate change impacts? (e.g. more storms, flooding, subsidence)

4. Transport and Access

- (a) Are measures proposed to reduce the number of car or lorry journeys to the development?
- (b) Is the development accessible to all modes of transport? (Incl. Walking, cycling, public transport)
- (c) Is access available for all people? (Incl. Elderly and those with disabilities).

5. The Local Economy

- (a) Does the proposal increase employment opportunities for local people?
- (b) Will local goods and suppliers be used wherever possible so that income is re-circulated locally?

6. Local Needs and Local Views

- (a) Will the development also help to meet other local/community needs (e.g. by supporting services).
- (b) Have local people had a chance to contribute ideas or opinions?

7. Quality, Local distinctiveness and Culture

- (a) Is a high quality of building design and materials incorporated?
- (b) Does the proposed design protect and enhance local heritage, diversity and distinctiveness?
- (c) Will the development assist participation in – or – access to – arts, culture and heritage?

10.18 COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The council shall seek to ensure that community facilities are provided in tandem with housing developments as well ensuring there is an adequate proximity to all essential services, such as convenience shops. Development contributions that have been applied to housing developments could be used to provide extra community facilities.

10.19 SCHOOLS

Sites required for a primary school shall comply with the requirements of the Department of Education and Science publication *Planning Guidelines for Primary Schools* (2000). Provision must be made within the site for adequate car parking (at a rate of 3 per classroom), bus parking, pick-up/drop off areas, informal hard surface play area, and areas for organised sport activities. The County Council in association with the school authorities will endeavour to provide pedestrian crossings, road markings

and footpath provision, where required. Provision should be made in secondary schools for all forms of organized sporting facilities. School buildings should be multi-functional and available for community use outside school hours.

10.20 NURSING HOMES

There is a continuing and growing need for nursing homes and in urban areas such facilities should be integrated, wherever possible, into the established residential areas, where their residents can expect reasonable access to local services. In determining planning applications for change of use of a residential dwelling or other building to nursing/elder care home, the following factors should be considered:

- compliance with the standards as laid down in the Statutory Instrument No. 226 of 1993, i.e. Nursing Homes (Care and Welfare) Regulations, 1993
- the effect on the amenities of adjoining properties
- suitable private open space
- proximity to local services and facilities
- the size and scale of the facility proposed – the scale must be appropriate to the area

10.21 CHILDCARE FACILITIES

The provision of childcare facilities is subject to the Child Care Act (1991) and the Child Care (Pre School Services) Regulations of 1996, and, any relevant updates. The Planning Authority recognises the need for properly run and conveniently located childcare facilities throughout the County. It is the policy of Roscommon County Council to implement the *Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG, 2001)*. Applications for childcare facilities in a residential area will be assessed on the basis of their impact in terms of noise, loss of residential amenity, traffic generation and general disturbance. In general, the factors to be considered in determining a planning application for a childcare facility are as follows:

- (1) Nature of the facility:
- (2) Numbers and ages of children
- (3) Adequate parking for staff and set down areas for customers
- (4) Hours of operation
- (5) Open Space provision and measures for management of same
- (6) Description of cumulative impact when taken together with other childcare facilities in the vicinity.
- (7) Impact on residential amenity and mitigation measures, if appropriate
- (8) Local traffic conditions
- (9) Proximity to public transport

The Council recommends that applicants seek the advice of the Roscommon County Childcare Committee, Health Service Executive, and other relevant bodies in the design of childcare facilities prior to the submission of applications for planning permission.

- In general to discourage the complete conversion of existing semi-detached and terraced dwellings within housing estates to childcare facilities. The childcare use should remain secondary and the bulk of the house should be retained for residential purposes.
- In new housing estates, purpose built facilities are normally required.
- Appropriate provision of at least one childcare facility to cater for 20 places in developments of 75 houses, including local authority and social housing schemes in accordance with DEHLG Guidelines. This standard may be varied depending on local circumstances.

10.22 NEIGHBOURHOOD FACILITIES

The provision of local neighbourhood facilities is considered essential in all areas of large scale housing development e.g. Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) Area. Their provision helps foster

a sense of community, limits pressure on existing services and facilities, and restricts the potential number of traffic movements. The need for the facilities will be assessed by the Planning Authority and will be dependant on the scale of the development proposed and the existing level of provision of facilities in the area. They should be integrated into the overall design of the scheme, easily accessed and well designed, and should not impact on the amenity of adjoining residents. Where a number of developments are proposed adjacent to each other, developers are encouraged to provide a design solution that integrates the facilities into the overall development of the area. These facilities shall be provided at the expense of the developer.

10.23 CAR PARKING

All developments shall be required to provide adequate provision within the site for servicing of the proposal and for the parking and maneuvering of vehicles associated with it. Parking accommodation will be expected to locate within, or in close proximity to, the site of the proposed development, and will normally be established behind the building lines in each development. The minimum parking requirement shall be calculated in accordance with the standards as laid out in Table 18 below.

The layout and design of roads in housing developments shall have regard to the "Traffic Management Guidelines" issued jointly by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the Department of Transport and the Dublin Transportation Office (2003):

- Requirements for numbers of car parking spaces are set out in Table 18 below.
- In dealing with planning applications for change of use or for replacement buildings, allowance will be made for the former site use in calculating the car parking requirements generated by the new development;
- Where the provision of on-site parking is not possible, the Council may, in exceptional circumstances, accept a financial contribution in respect of the shortfall in the number of spaces. This will however be at the discretion of the Council, and is likely only to apply to small scale town centre locations where the Council has provided, or intends to provide additional public car parking spaces.
- Parking and service spaces must be located on site so as to prevent road/street obstruction, and should be located where possible to the rear and side of buildings and in such a manner to ensure minimal injury to the amenity of adjoining premises;
- Planting and landscaping of all car parks shall be required.
- Parking facilities for mobility impaired drivers and their vehicles shall be provided at the general rate of 2 to 5 per 100 spaces, such spaces shall be proximate to the entry points of the proposed buildings.
- The parking spaces shall be proximate to the entry points of the proposed buildings.
- The parking standards for residential development will be reviewed in town centre locations and where innovative design principles are adopted. In such cases grouped parking will be encouraged
- Where reference is made to Floor Area, it refers to gross floor area, unless otherwise indicated
- Standard/Minimum parking dimensions shall be 2.5 X 5.0 metres
- For Primary and Secondary schools a bus circulation area may be required

Table 18: Car Parking Requirements

Residential	Car Parking Requirements
Dwelling houses	2 per House
Apartment/Flat	2 per apartment / flat
Guest House/ B&B	1 space per bedroom*
Hotel	1 space per bedroom*
Hostel	1 space per bedroom or 1 space per 10 bed dormitory*
Motel	1 space per bedroom or 1 space per 10 bed dormitory*
Caravan/Camping Site	1 space per pitch*

*Facilities are required for the set down and pick up for cars and coaches

Note: Large complex development may be assessed separately with regard to the circumstances

Commercial	Car Parking Requirements
Shops (<250m ² gross)	Retail Floorspace 1 space per 20sq.m
Shops (250 – 1000m ² gross)	Retail Floorspace 1 space per 14sq.m
Shops (> 1000 m ² gross)	Retail Floorspace 1 space per 10sq.m
Banks	1 per 14 sq.
Service Garages	To be determined by PA
Offices (Town Centre) Gross Floorspace	1 space per 25 sq.m
Offices (Office Park) Gross Floorspace	1 space per 20 sq.m
Public Houses / Restaurants/Lounge Bars	1 space per 7 sq.m net floor area
Hot Food Take Aways	Minimum of 10 spaces per unit or 1 space per 10 sq.m of retail space
Dance Halls/ Ballroom/ Disco	1 space per 3 sq.m*
Cinemas, Theatres, Stadia	1 space per 5 seats
Conference Centres: Public Areas	1 space per 25 sq.m
Churches / Church Hall	1 space per 5 seats
Hospitals / Nursing homes	1.5 per bed
Surgeries	2 spaces per consultants room
Petrol Filling Station	2 spaces per pump plus requirement for other uses
Carwash	5 waiting spaces without interference to other spaces or the public road

* For buildings which have mixed use the calculation will be based upon the highest demand

Industrial	Car Parking Requirements
Man. Ind./ Light Ind. Gross Floorspace	1 space per 50sq.m*
Showrooms: Gross Floorspace	1 space per 50 sq.m*
Warehouses: Gross Floorspace	1 space per 100 sq.m*
Garages	1 space per 50 sq.m*

*Facilities are required for the parking and turning of vehicles serving the development

Community	Car Parking Requirements
Athletics Playing Field	20 per track/field
Library	1 space per 25sq.m
Funeral Home	1 space per 5 sq.m
Primary school	3 spaces per classroom
Secondary school	3 car spaces per classroom
Childcare facilities	1 car parking space per staff member + 1 car parking space per 4 children
Golf driving range	1 space per 2m of base line/ per trap

Golf/pitch and putt courses	6 spaces per hole
Sports Clubs incl. swimming pools, tennis courts. Etc	2 spaces per court, 5 spaces per 100m ²
Stadia	1 space per 3 seats
Bowling Alley	3 spaces per Lane
Pool / gym	1 space per 10 sq.m
Community Centre	1 space per 5 sq.m

Bicycle Parking Standards	Relevant Cycle Parking Standard
Dwelling houses and flats	1 unit per dwelling
Shops	1 unit for every 200 sq.m of gross floor space
Supermarkets and large stores	1 unit for every 200 sq.m of gross floor space
Offices	1 stand for every 500 sq. m of gross floor space
Industry	1 stand for every 500 sq. m of gross floor space
Warehousing	1 stand for every 1000 sq.m of gross floor space
Theatre, cinema, church, stadium	1 stand for every 100 seats
Hotels, guest houses	1 stand per 50 bedrooms
Lounge bars	1 stand for every 200 sq.m of public floor space
Restaurants	1 stand for every 200 sq.m of public floor space
Function room, dance halls, clubs	1 stand for every 200 sq.m
Playing fields	4 stands per pitch
Schools	1 stand per 50 pupils
Nursing home	1 stand per 20 members of staff

Note: one stand = 5 units

Where the parking standards shown in the above table do not cover the type of development proposed, the requirement shall be calculated relative to the most appropriate standards.

10.23.1 Loading and Unloading

In addition to the general car parking requirements, service parking space may be required for cars or other vehicles involved in the operation of the business or a particular building, e.g. delivery and collection of goods. In all major developments of an industrial/commercial nature, developers will be required to provide loading and unloading facilities sufficient to meet the likely demand of such development. Off-street loading facilities shall be designed to conform to the following requirements:

- Loading spaces may be enclosed within a structure, and must be if located within 15m of the curtilage of the residence where the use involves regular night operation.
- There shall be appropriate means of access to a street or road as well as adequate manoeuvring space.
- The maximum width of driveway openings at the street boundary shall be 7.6 metres and the minimum width shall be 3.6 metres.

Loading facilities shall be provided and maintained as long as the use exists. All reasonable precautions shall be taken by the owner or occupier to assure availability of required facilities to the delivery and pick-up vehicles. The Planning Authority may modify the requirements of loading and unloading facilities in any specific case where it appears that it would be in the interests of the proper planning and sustainable development of the areas to do so.

It is important to identify areas for loading bay adequate to meet local business requirements and in order to assist with traffic flow in towns such as Castlerea.

10.23.2 Heavy Vehicles

The indiscriminate parking of heavy commercial vehicles or machinery in residential areas detracts greatly from the amenities of these areas and traffic safety concerns. The Planning Authorities will co-operate with all other bodies that exercise control over this type of parking, to eliminate the nuisance created.

10.23.3 Cycle Facilities

Cycle routes and bicycle parking shall be well provided for in new office, residential, retail and employment generating developments. The *National Manual for the Design of Cycle Facilities in Urban Areas (2006)* will be the basis for informing the design of cycle facilities. All long-term (more than three hours) cycle racks should be protected from the weather. From a security viewpoint cycle racks should not be located in out-of-the-way locations and shall be conveniently located, secure, easy to use, adequately lit and well posted.

10.24 TRANSPORT (*To be read in conjunction with Chapter 4 of this LAP and Chapter 6 of the RCDP 2008 - 2014*)

In order for the road network to fulfil its primary function in an era of rapid growth in car ownership and freight movement, it will be necessary to limit the number of accesses and junctions to the network. Failure to do so would result in:

- Traffic hazard and congestion;
- Reduction in carrying capacity;
- High maintenance costs; and,
- Inadequate return on public investment.

The Council will not approve a proposal that will create a serious traffic hazard. The positioning of the access, the ability to obtain adequate sight lines and the number of existing accesses and junctions on the stretch of road will all be taken into account. The standard of sight lines required will vary according to the type of road. In siting and designing the access, existing hedgerows and trees should be retained where possible. The replacement of hedgerows removed with indigenous species will be viewed favorably by the Council. Car parking standards (Table 18) will also be required to ensure that proposals do not result in cars or delivery vehicles parking on the public road.

10.24.1 National and Regional Roads

The National Road network should provide safe and efficient links between the principle towns and villages and thus contribute significantly to the economic prosperity of the county and state as a whole. *Chapter 6 of the RCDP 2008 – 2014* provides specific policies and objectives with regard to development on National and Regional Routes.

The policy relates primarily to proposed developments located on national roads outside the 50 kph speed limit zones for towns and villages, but also addresses development proposals planned for other locations which, because of their potential to generate high volumes of traffic, could have significant implications for national roads in the area concerned. Development control shall seek to channel traffic from new development onto existing local roads and in this way use established access points to gain entry onto national roads and shall have regard to the Policy Statement on Development Management and Access to National Roads published by the NRA (National Roads Authority) in 2006.

10.24.2 Sightlines

As per the current, NRA Road Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, the prescribed sight distance where the maximum speed limit applies, is measured 3 metres back from the carriageway edge and are as follows:

County Roads	90 metres
Regional Roads	150 metres
National Roads	230 metres

Further guidance concerning development on non-national routes is available in the publication “Aspects of Road Safety: A County Engineers View” (IEI)

New houses in rural areas should seek to utilise existing access points onto roads in the interests of road safety to assist in maintaining the rural character of the area.

10.24.3 Public Transport

The council shall fully support the RTI scheme in Roscommon and acknowledges the contribution that the Artbus RTI (Ardcarne Rural Transport) and Aughrim-Kilmore RTI have made to rural communities in the north-west and north-east of Roscommon respectively and will encourage any attempts to expand this scheme to other parts of the county. Proactive efforts will be made by the council to consolidate development in areas which have a close proximity to public transport services

The Council shall encourage developments that attempt to harness the benefits that would be derived from establishing new commuter rail links that may be proposed. The Council supports the creation of a Provincial Bus Service as proposed in the Regional Planning Guidelines for the West 2004 – 2016.

10.25 RENEWABLE ENERGY/EFFICIENCY (*To be read in conjunction with Chapter 4*)

The Council is committed to encouraging the use and development of renewable energy sources in the County. Regard will be had to guidelines in dealing with wind energy proposals in so far as they impact on the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, as detailed in *Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006)*. Regard will also be had to the ‘European Best Practice Guidelines for Wind Energy Development’, (European Wind Energy Association). The development of renewable energy sources, together with measures aimed at a reduction and more efficient use of energy, are priorities, nationally and at European level. The EU Directive on renewable energy requires that Ireland produce 13.5% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2010.

In particular, the following matters will be considered by the Council in the assessment of applications for wind farms.

1. The likely visual impact of the proposal.
2. The likely noise that will be generated by the proposed wind farm (both the mechanical noise from the turbines and aerodynamic noise from the blades).
3. The likelihood of electromagnetic interference with radio transmissions or with telecommunications.
4. The ecology, archaeology, geology and heritage of the area in which the wind farm is proposed.
5. The safety issues associated with the proposal including matters such as clearance from overhead power lines, the location of the site in proximity to roads and so forth.
6. The potential impact of the proposal on surrounding land uses.
7. The impact of the construction of the wind farm on access roads and local amenity.

Any proposals for the development of wind power will need to be supported by both a technical and an environmental statement prepared to an acceptable standard. In this regard applicant’s applying for

wind energy developments are advised to consult with the Planning Authority before detailed proposals are drawn up. Consultations should also be held with the appropriate bodies, such as Department of Transport, Energy and Communications, the Irish Energy Centre and the ESB.

The following are some of the conditions which will apply where Wind Farms are permitted:

- Blades must rotate in the same direction
- Layout should be compact
- Solid towers should be used
- All grid connection within the site to be underground.
- Limited fencing to be permitted on any part of the site
- Access roads to be unsurfaced, where possible
- Structures must be decommissioned at the life expiry of the farm and the site reinstated

Conditions requiring bonds to ensure satisfactory completion will be attached to permissions.

10.25.1 Micro Renewables

Micro-renewables is the term used to describe a non-commercial renewable energy development, which provides heat and/or electricity to a single end user (e.g. a single dwelling house, office or community facility). While micro-renewables generally refer to the actual renewable energy technology/development, micro-generation refers to the production of heat (less than 45 kilowatt capacity) and/or electricity (less than 50kW capacity) from zero or low carbon source technologies. Micro-renewables come in the following different forms.

- Micro Wind Energy
- Heat Pumps
- Solar
- Small scale biomass
- Small scale hydroelectricity

The council shall endeavour to support the utilisation of these technologies particularly considering the current backdrop of increasing energy prices. The power generated and associated carbon emission reductions per turbine are relatively small, but cumulative benefits could be significant. Proposed micro-renewable energies shall have regard to the guidelines set out in the *Micro-Renewables Consultation Paper* 2006 by the DEHLG.

10.25.2 Energy Conservation

Roscommon County Council is committed to encouraging more sustainable development through energy end-use efficiency in all new building projects. Energy conservation measures should be incorporated into new development at a pre-design stage so maximum energy savings are yielded. The list below also contains options for existing buildings to improve the efficiency of their energy consumption. With the European Energy Performance of Buildings Directive coming into force, these measures should be implemented, where appropriate and feasible. The council shall also be looking to the options as a means of meeting the national and international targets with regard to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The following objectives are to be pursued:

- Encouraging responsible environmental management in construction;
- Promoting sustainable approaches to housing developments by spatial planning, layout, design and detailed specification;
- Ensuring high standards of energy efficiency in all housing developments under its remit, and encouraging developers, owners, and tenants to improve the environmental performance of the building stock, including the deployment of renewable energy;

- Anticipating the operational implementation of the EU Directive on the Energy Performance of Buildings (EPBD) by encouraging the energy rating and labelling of building energy performance, so as to give visible recognition to such improvements.

Developers will be required to set a target in association with the following design and technology options, which will include renewable energy technologies as an initial step towards achieving greater environmental sustainability:

- Site layout and associated bio-climatic/ passive solar design measures;
- Enhanced levels of insulation in walls, roofs, floors, glazing and doors;
- Reduced uncontrolled air infiltration losses;
- Use of healthy and controllable ventilation systems;
- Heat recovery systems;
- Use of daylight;
- Water conservation measures;
- More sustainable building materials;
- Improved heat generation appliance efficiency, e.g. condensing boilers;
- Intelligent heating system
- Efficient provision of domestic hot water;
- Fuel switching to low or zero CO₂ emitting fuels;
- Energy efficient lighting systems;
- Provision of appropriate group or district heating systems.

In the case of non-domestic buildings, additional options include:

- Heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems and controls;
- Electrical energy use including motive power;
- Efficient lighting systems and controls;
- Building Energy Management Systems;
- Occupancy controls;
- Monitoring and Targeting systems;
- Combined Heat and Power (CHP).

10.25.3 Planning Exemptions for Renewable Technology

New *Planning Exemptions for Solar Panels and other Micro Renewable Technology* were published in 2007 by the DEHLG . These new proposed Regulations will provide exemptions from planning permission for solar panels, heat pumps, wind turbines and wood pellet burners - subject to certain conditions below as follows:

1. The installation of **solar panels** up to 12 sq. metres aperture area, or 50% of total roof area, whichever is less, will be exempted development subject to the following conditions:
 - A 15cm maximum distance between the plane of a pitched roof and the solar panel
 - A 50cm maximum distance between the plane of a flat roof and the solar panels, and,
 - That panels should be at least 50cm from the edge of the roof.
2. The exemptions provide for the same 12 sq metre aperture area in respect of free-standing arrays as applies to building mounted panels. Therefore, and as is the case with building mounted panels, arrays of this size and under are exempt from planning permission requirements, subject to some conditions. These require that:
 - Stand-alone panels must be no more than 2m in height,
 - Such panels must be located behind the front wall of the house, and
 - A minimum space of 25 sq m of useable space must remain for householders own private use.

3. **Wind Turbines** with a mast height of 10 metres and a rotor diameter of 6 meters will be exempt from planning permission requirements subject to the following conditions:
 - The rotor diameter should be 6 metres or less
 - There should be a 3 metre minimum clearance between the lower tip of the rotor and the ground
 - The minimum distance of a wind turbine from its nearest neighbouring boundary would equal the total height of the turbine plus 1 metre
 - Noise levels at the nearest neighbouring inhabited dwelling should be <43dB(A), or <5d(B) above background noise
 - Only one turbine is permitted within the curtilage of a house.
 - The turbine must be situated behind the front wall of the house.
 - All turbine components shall have a matt, non-reflective finish and the blade shall be made of material that does not deflect telecommunication signals.
 - No advertising or logos may be placed or appear on turbines.
4. In the main, the conditions attached to the exemption for micro wind turbines are designed to ensure their safe installation and use. Issues such as visual amenity, noise, vibration, possible structural damage, safety and poor installation mitigates against the inclusion of building mounted turbines as exempted development. Nevertheless, it will still be possible to apply for planning permission for such turbines in the normal way.
5. The two types of **ground-source heat pumps** currently available are horizontal and vertical closed loop systems. Each system consists of lengths of pipe buried in the ground, either in horizontal or vertical trenches. The Regulations provide exemptions for both types. The only condition attached to the exemption for ground-source heat pumps is that on installation of the apparatus there should be no more than a 1 metre alteration to ground level.
6. **Air source heat pumps** are also exempt provided that:
 - Noise levels at the nearest neighbouring inhabited dwelling are <43dB(A), or <5d(B) above background noise.
 - Air source heat pumps are at least 50 cm from the edge of roof, and
 - The pump is located to the rear or behind the front wall of the house.
7. **Biomass**

Wood pellet boilers and stoves are becoming a very attractive option for householders and it is proposed that they be classed as exempted development. Where a flue is required, it should be constructed in line with existing building regulations. The addition of an extension or ancillary building onto premises to accommodate the biomass heating system is now covered by an amendment to existing exempted development classes.
8. Due to the nature of this micro-renewable technology and its potential impact on water sources, **small-scale hydroelectricity** will not be considered exempted development and such developments will continue to require planning permission. It should also be noted that where an individual wishes to install any class of micro-renewable technology that does not fall within the draft exemptions they may apply, as normal, for planning permission from their planning authority.

10.26 HERITAGE PROTECTION (*To be read in conjunction with Chapter 6*)

10.26.1 Architectural Conservation – Protected Structures

The inclusion of a structure in the Record of Protected Structures does not preclude appropriate use or development. However, no works which would affect the character of the structure, or any element of it, which contributes to its special architectural heritage interest may be carried out to a Protected Structure without planning permission. In assessing proposals for development affecting Protected Structures, it is the intention of the Council to require planning permission for:

- Works, both to the exterior and interior, which materially affect the character of a protected structure or any element of the structure which contributes to its special interest. What might be regarded normally as minor alterations to buildings may not necessarily be regarded as such in the case of protected structures.
- Such works can include:
 - Window replacement and fenestration changes.
 - Wholesale plastering/pointing/painting or painting of previously unpainted elements.
 - Modifications of brickwork and stonework.
 - The removal/alteration of architectural detailing including joinery and decorative plasterwork.
 - Inappropriate interior works including the removal of walls, the creation of openings and partitioning of rooms.
 - Works to roofs and railings involving the removal of original materials and replacement with inappropriate materials.

In considering applications for alterations and/or additions to a protected structure, the Council shall have regard to:

- The various elements of the structure which gives the protected structure its special character and how these would be impacted on by the proposed development.
- In the case of a proposal to materially change the use of a protected structure, the suitability of such use, having regard to its potential impact on the structure including works necessary to comply with Fire & Building Regulations that the proposed use change would give rise to:
 - the reversibility of the proposed alterations; and
 - in the case of buildings within the curtilage of a protected structure whether such buildings are of heritage value or not.

Windows made from aluminium, uPVC or similar material will not be acceptable in protected structures. In twentieth century buildings, the original twentieth century metal windows shall be retained.

A detailed conservation report shall accompany planning applications for works to protected structures. This report shall:

- Outline the significance of the building;
- Include a detailed survey of the building, including a photographic survey;
- Detail the proposed works it is intended to carry out; and,
- Contain a full assessment on the materials and method proposed to carry out these works, their impact on the character of the structure; and, the reversibility of the proposed works.

10.26.2 Development in Architectural Conservation Areas

In Architectural Conservation Areas the Council will have regard to the following:

- The effect of the proposed development on buildings and the surrounding environment, both natural and man-made.

- The impact of development on the immediate streetscape in terms of compatibility of design, scale, height, plot, width, roof treatment, materials, landscaping, mix and intensity of use proposed.
- New alterations and extensions should complement existing buildings/structures in terms of design, external finishes, colour, texture, windows/doors/roof/chimney design and other details.
- In dealing with advertisements in Architectural Conservation Areas, the overriding consideration will be the enhancement and protection of the essential visual qualities of the area.

10.26.3 Development in Areas of Archaeological Potential

Items of archaeological value which are finite, non-renewable resources must be protected and maintained and the planning process is an essential mechanism for ensuring this protection. When considering development proposals within Areas of Archaeological Potential and on, or in close proximity to, sites of known archaeological significance, the Council will have regard to the provisions of Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994, or as may be amended from time to time.

It is the policy of the Planning Authority to ensure that all planning applications for new development, refurbishment and restoration works within identified Zones of Archaeological Potential and within close proximity to individual Recorded Monuments or Sites, are submitted to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG). On receipt, the DEHLG shall provide advice and recommendations regarding treatment of archaeology as an integral part of the development process. The planning decision made by the Planning Authority will have due regard to the recommendations made by the DEHLG.

The Council will also have regard to the nature of sub-surface works that could impact on archaeological remains (e.g. foundation type and design, layout and location of services, road works, landscaping schemes etc.) The Council shall require the developer to submit a report prepared by a suitably qualified archaeologist on the archaeological implications of a proposed development involving works which could impact on archaeological remains. In appropriate circumstances, the Council, when granting permission for development, may impose conditions requiring:

- professional archaeological supervision of excavations.
- funding by the applicant of archaeological assessment, monitoring, testing or excavation of the site and submissions of a report thereon, prior to the commencement of development.
- preservation of all or part of any archaeological remains on site.

10.27 TELECOMMUNICATIONS (*To be read in conjunction with Chapter 4*)

In order to facilitate the evaluation of development proposals for the erection of antennae and support structures with regard to the Department of the Environment and Local Government's *Planning Guidelines for Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures* (1996), an applicant will be required to abide by the following:

- Submit a reasoned justification as to the need for the particular development at the proposed location in the context of the operator's overall plans to develop a network in County Roscommon.
- A minimum distance of approximately 100 meters shall be provided between mobile communication masts/antennae and residential areas/schools/hospitals. This requirement shall not apply in the case of planning applications relating to sites where planning permission for such development has previously been granted.
- Co-location agreements are desirable for the granting of planning permission. Where new facilities are proposed, applicants will be required to satisfy the Council that they have made reasonable effort to share facilities or to locate facilities in clusters.

- Indicate what other sites or locations in the county were considered.
- Telecommunication installations will not be favoured in residential areas, on land where development may be restricted or prevented for amenity reasons or in parts of the town centre which are architecturally important.
- Telecommunications antennae should be located so as to minimise any negative visual intrusion on the surrounding area, especially on landscapes or streetscapes of a sensitive nature. The preferred location for telecommunication antennae is in industrial estates or areas zoned for industrial use or in areas already developed for utilities.
- Submit evidence of consultation with other operators with regard to the sharing of sites and support structures. Where it is not possible to share a support structure, the applicant should, where possible, share a site or site adjacent, so that the antennae may be clustered.
- Submit proposals to mitigate the visual impact of the proposed development including the construction of access roads, additional poles and structures.
- Furnish a statement of compliance with the International Radiation Protection Association (IRPA) Guidelines or the equivalent European Pre-Standard 50166-2.
- Planning permission for telecommunications antennae and support structures shall be for a temporary period of not more than five years.

If the proposal is contrary to the above, the Planning Authority will need to be satisfied that the installation is of strategic importance, if permission is to be granted. The use of tall buildings or other existing structures is always preferable to the construction of an independent antennae support structure. Support structures should be kept to the minimum height consistent with effective operation and should be monopole (or poles) rather than latticed or square structure, unless such structures have a clear and / or simple design or alternatively where it is judged by the Planning Authority to incorporate high sculptural design quality.

10.28 EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY (*To be read in conjunction with Chapter 3 of the RCDP 2008 – 2014*)

In the interests of seeking to maximise economic gain for the operations, the Planning Authority will seek to ensure that at locations where quarries are located, full use is made of the economic potential of these sites through development of value added products such as the manufacture of concrete products and cement, subject to environmental considerations.

The Council recognises that the location of such industries is dictated by the availability of the resource and will consider each proposal on its merits. Where appropriate, the Council will require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement or report and permitted developments will be required to comply with strict environmental, rehabilitation and other conditions, including appropriate bonds to ensure compliance.

The Council recognises the importance of the extractive industry in the economic life of the County, and its importance as a valuable source of employment in parts of the County. It will also ensure that development for aggregate extraction, processing, delivery and concrete production is carried out in a manner which minimises any adverse impacts. In particular, the Council will seek to protect areas of geological or geomorphological interest, groundwater and important aquifers, important archaeological features and Natural Heritage Areas from inappropriate development, and that on completion of operations, sites are left in a satisfactory state and can be of beneficial after-use. All extractive sites shall be subject to rehabilitation and landscaping programmes in phase with the extraction.

The following guidelines govern the activities of this sector; the Quarries and Ancillary Activities Guidelines for Planning Authorities by the DEHLG (2004), Environmental Management in the Extractive Industry by the EPA with the DEHLG (2006). The County Council will ensure the proper planning and sustainable development of the extractive industry through the following;

-
- The Planning Authority will encourage best practice in the quarrying/extractive industries and encourage the production of value added products derived from the raw materials and aggregates within the County.
 - Ensure, as a priority, the protection of the environment, the landscape, residential and tourist amenity;
 - Ensure, where extractive development is proposed in vulnerable and sensitive landscape areas, that protection of landscape character will be a priority, with the onus being placed on the developer to prove that the proposed development can be accommodated in the landscape without detracting from its character;
 - Ensure, where extractive development is proposed in areas or near sites of nature conservation value, archaeological or historic importance, that protection of these environmental assets and resources takes precedence over the need to develop the mineral resource;
 - Ensure that satisfactory provision is made for the acceptable and beneficial after-use of extraction sites and that the landscaping and restoration of sites is carried out in a phased progressive manner to the highest standards in accordance with a scheme approved under the terms of the planning permission;
 - Require the lodgement of security for the satisfactory restoration and after-care of sites and for the maintenance, upgrading, strengthening and repair of an affected road network;
 - Ensure that the full costs of remedial works and road improvements are borne by the developer;
 - Ensure that the extractive industry minimises adverse impacts on the road network in the area and that the appropriate costs of road improvements which are necessary to facilitate extractive industries are borne by the industry itself
 - Ensure that development sites have safe and efficient access to the public road network;
 - Ensure the protection of all watercourses from pollutants associated with developments sites;
 - Control and minimise the cumulative impact of development caused by the merging of contiguous development sites;
 - Require the submission, in conjunction with the planning application, full details in respect of:
 - the exact boundaries of the proposed site and the scale and nature of extraction methods and activities
 - dwelling houses within 1 km of the site
 - contours, depths of excavations
 - access and public road network which it is proposed to use
 - directions and phasing of workings
 - watercourses and water table depth
 - locations of stockpiles
 - restoration, landscaping, proposed after use care and details of phasing of these works
 - blasting
 - fixed and movable plant
 - Facilitate applicants/developers in scoping the Environmental Impact Statement.
 - The PA shall consider the attachment of a planning condition requiring the developer to lodge a financial bond to ensure satisfactory reinstatement of the site following the completion of extraction, or to pay a contribution towards the cost of upgrading or repairing the local road network
 - Ensure that the extractive industry does not adversely affect the environment or adjoining existing land uses
 - Ensure that all existing workings shall be rehabilitated to suitable land uses and that all future extraction activities will allow for the rehabilitation of pits and proper land use management. Depending on the terrain, the existing character of the area, and the nature and scale of the aggregate extraction, a variety of after-uses may be possible. Secondary or recycled aggregates shall be the preferred method for land filling where appropriate. Each planning application will be considered on a case by case basis and where relevant will be dealt with under the Waste Management Strategy.
 - Restrict extraction in close proximity to existing developments where potential sources of nuisance are considered to be incompatible
-

- Ensure that the extraction of minerals or aggregates does not detract from the visual amenity of the landscape. Where possible, existing landscape features such as hills and trees should be used to screen new extractive industry development. Native species of trees and shrubs can be planted to create food reserves for wildlife.
- All proposed extractive development proposals must be accompanied by detailed restoration and after-care plans (although in the case of sites with a long working life, it may be appropriate to establish the need for such plans at the outset, while leaving the details to be agreed either on a phased basis or towards the end of the extractive process). Progressive restoration should be employed where relevant and practicable e.g. for sand and gravel pits
- All buildings, plant, internal roads and paved areas should be removed when extraction is completed, unless otherwise agreed as part of the restoration plan. The PA shall promote a variety of after-uses including farming, forestry, recreation/amenity uses, nature conservation or industry. The acceptability of the proposed after-use shall be discussed with the PA at the pre-application stage. The aspirations of the Local Community shall be taken into account during this process.
- Ensure that adverse impacts of the extractive industry on the road network are minimised and that costs of road improvements necessary to facilitate extractive industries are borne by the industry itself.
- Require the preparation and implementation of Site Restoration Plans, for each extractive operation in the county. These plans are to address issues such as: background to the site, ecology of the site, restoration objectives, detailed method statement for management actions, monitoring and long term management of the site. For successful restoration, steps must be taken at every stage, from design through operation to decommissioning of the facility, to ensure that restoration is integrated into the process

All proposed developments must comply with Environmental Management Guidelines in the Extractive Industry, EPA 2006. Under Section 261 of the Planning and Development Act 2000-2004, registration of all quarries operating in the Country is required. This section commenced with effect from 28th April 2004 and it is intended to bring all quarries - including those that have claimed exemption because they were operating before the 1963 Planning Act - within the planning system and thus deal with concerns regarding unauthorised sand and gravel quarries in the country.

10.29 FORESTRY (*To be read in conjunction with Chapter 6 of the RCDP 2008 - 2014*)

The Council recognises the economic and recreational potential of forestry. Forestry as a land use and its ancillary development will be encouraged in suitable areas subject to such development not interfering with significant views or prospects or being unduly obtrusive in the landscape. The Council will co-operate with the Forest Service in promoting greater recreational use of state forests in the County. In cases where forestry development is likely to adversely affect public roads, charges will be levied on developers to defray the improvement/maintenance of such roads.

The introduction of large-scale forestry areas can have significant negative impacts on an area if they are not in context with the surrounding environment. Forestry activities must be appropriate in terms of nature and scale with the surrounding area, so they are not visually intrusive on the landscape or cause damage to important habitats or the ecology of the area. In order to avoid acidification of our soils and watercourses from coniferous plantations and to promote bio-diversity in so far as it is possible, the Council shall encourage a diversity of species in afforestation proposals. This shall require a proportion of all new forestry development to consist of native hardwood species in order to extend the range of potential end uses and to reduce the potential for adverse impact on the landscape and biodiversity resulting from monoculture.

10.30 INLAND FISHERIES

There shall be an emphasis on precaution for the protection of inland fisheries. Responsibility for the fisheries lies with the regional fishing boards and they shall be consulted for advice and direction during the planning of works in or near inland waters or anything that may affect the aquatic

environment which consists of all streams, rivers and lakes. There is a requirement for the applicant to treat all streams, rivers, water courses and lakes shown on a 6 inch ordnance survey map as important features of the aquatic environment. Once constructed, works that are detrimental to fisheries are often difficult or prohibitively expensive to remedy and the advice of the fisheries shall be taken into account. This applies both to small scale and localized works or projects. It is acknowledged that Local Authorities have statutory powers to carry out work in or near inland water and all reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that fisheries are not damaged.

A good fishery environment requires well oxygenated water with varied flows and depths and clean gravel beds for spawning. Rivers should have well developed riffle (shallow section in the river where the water flows swiftly) and pool patterns and varied bank and stream vegetation which are necessary for successful reproduction, growth and shelter. Canalised rivers with uniform flows and banks devoid of vegetation are the least attractive habitat for fish.

10.30.1 River Drainage

Traditional drainage practices have resulted in the widening, deepening and straightening of rivers or streams and the creation of channels of uniform gradient and sections. This is highly destructive to fisheries and the following shall be taken into account:

- Flood relief can be handled in an environmentally sensitive way by constructing flood berms away from the existing channel or flood bypass channels. These techniques leave the existing channel and bank vegetation intact.
- If it is necessary to drain the existing channel consider a two-stage channel retaining as much bank vegetation as possible and avoiding disturbance of the existing river bed.
- If lowering the existing channel bed cannot be avoided. Maintain the original low flow channel width. Retain existing bankside vegetation on one side if possible. Restore riffles, pools, bed material and bank cover at the new drainage level. Store gravel bed material for reuse if not naturally available in the lower excavated bed.
- Spoil should not be deposited in mounds on the river banks except as a flood berm.

10.30.2 Other Works

Any development of the following works (including ancillary) wherein the aquatic environment may be affected shall have regard to Fishery Guidelines published in 1998 by the Department of Marine and Natural Resources including the following: river diversion / road-works; bridges; culverts; fords; storage of fuels and chemicals; concrete and cement; and, amenity works. Subsequent guidance should also be taken into consideration.

The council shall also have regard to the prevention or mitigation of any impacts that a development may have on the aquatic environment where amenity is impinged on, especially in urban areas.

10.31 BONDING TO SECURE COMPLETION OF DEVELOPMENT

To ensure that permitted development is satisfactorily completed the County Council will require, as a condition of planning permission, that developers give cash deposits or submit a bond from an insurance company or other financial institution acceptable to the Council for the satisfactory completion of developments and their ancillary services. The bond or surety is to be submitted and in place before development is commenced and will be proportionate to the scale of the ancillary works and service works required as part of the development.

10.32 FUTURE PUBLICATIONS, STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

The Council will continue, during the course of the Plan period, to prepare and make available to the public technical and design guidelines on matters affecting the proper planning and sustainable development of the county.

