Chapter 1  Introduction to the Local Area Plan

1.0   Introduction

Waterford County Council is the Planning Authority for Portlaw Town and its environs. The Waterford County Development Plan was made by the Elected Members of Waterford County Council on 11th February 2011 and it is in this context that the review of the Portlaw Local Area Plan was undertaken. The Portlaw Local Area Plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended).

The Local Area Plan sets out the overall development strategy and framework for the proper planning and sustainable development of Portlaw for the period 2014-2020.

This Chapter provides a brief review of the Portlaw Local Area Plan 2007-2013, the legal context within which the Plan was formulated, the purpose of the Plan, the processes involved in its preparation, and also the structure, context and duration of the Plan.

1.1   Review of the Portlaw Local Area Plan 2007-2013

1.1.1   Residential Development

There was new housing estate development granted permission in Portlaw during the last Plan period. This is located to the north of Talbot Terrace and to date only the dwellings at the entrance to the estate have been constructed. There is a need to ensure that residential development which commenced during the last Plan period is completed to a satisfactory standard. Works are ongoing by the Council in this regard.

1.1.2   Retail Development

Portlaw is designated as the District Service Centre in the Waterford County Development Plan 2011-2017. The Town has a limited retail offer which results in local people travelling to other centres such as Carrick-on-Suir and Waterford City to fulfil the majority of their
shopping and services needs. The main convenience shopping is provided in the Square with additional outlets on Brown Street and Bridge Street.

To assist Portlaw in achieving its retail potential, the roles and functions of the existing Town Centre were examined, and leading from this process the retail policies as set out in Chapter 4 and the land use zoning maps provide for the delivery on this issue and for the future planned sustainable development of the Town.

1.1.3 Economic Development

Historically, industry and manufacturing played an important role in the shaping of the Town and the community. However, analysis of the 2011 CSO Census statistics illustrates that the professional services industry is now the largest employment sector for persons resident in the Town accounting for 44% of the workforce. It is also noted that over 69% of the workforce travel outside of the area for work with an average journey time of 23 minutes. Having regard to this journey time and the high unemployment rate of 27.7% it is clear that there are limited employment opportunities in the Town. Through the appropriate zoning of lands in the Town and the introduction of progressive economic policies the Plan seeks to redress this trend.

1.1.4 Infrastructure

The wastewater treatment plant at Knockane is currently at capacity and will require upgrading. The upgrade of the treatment plant has been identified in the Water Services Investment Program Assessment of Needs.

1.2 Legal Context

The Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires that the Portlaw Local Area Plan 2014-2020 be consistent with the objectives of the County Development Plan. It states that the Plan shall consist of a written statement and a plan or plans indicating the objectives for the proper planning and sustainable development of Portlaw, including detail on community facilities and amenities, and also development management standards for the design of developments and structures.

In addition to these requirements the Plan also has regard to the policies and provisions of National, Regional and local planning policy and planning guidance documents.

On 17th May 2013 Circular Letter PL7/13 was issued by the Minister for Housing and Planning under Section 31 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). This
letter was issued to remind planning authorities to take sufficient account of statutory submissions /observations of the Department in relation to Development Plans and Local Area Plans.

1.3 Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of this Local Area Plan is to establish physical development policies for Portlaw up to the year 2020 and to identify specific objectives for the achievement of those policies. The Plan is ultimately guided by the 2011-2017 County Development Plan but has a local focus and is a medium for fostering and guiding future developments and meeting local needs. The Plan sets out the general nature, location and extent of development and provides a framework for public and private sector investment relating to land use.

This written document with accompanying maps comprises the Portlaw Local Area Plan 2014-2020 (hereinafter referred to as the Plan). The Plan will replace the Portlaw Local Area Plan 2007-2013.

1.3.1 Preparation of the Local Area Plan

With the enactment of the Planning & Development Act 2000, Local Area Plans (LAP’s) were placed on a statutory footing. The Planning Act 2000 (as amended) states that:

“A Planning Authority shall take whatever steps it considers necessary to consult the public before preparing, amending or revoking a local area plan including consultations with any residents, public sector agencies, non governmental agencies, local community groups and business interest within the area”.

Public notice was given by Waterford County Council on 30th April 2013 that a new Local Area Plan was to be prepared for Portlaw. Pre-draft submissions and observations from the general public including local residents, children or groups representing children, public sector agencies, non-governmental agencies, local community groups and local commercial / business interests within the Plan area were invited.

To assist in this public consultation process an Issues Paper was prepared which sought to identify the key planning issues that the Local Area Plan could address. The Issues Paper was made available at the Library and Council Offices in Portlaw and was also available online. A public information open day was held in the Portlaw Library on Lismore Council Offices on 27th June 2013. In conjunction with the Issues Paper public consultation period, two further periods of public consultation took place between 10th June to 23rd July (draft Plan) and 04th November to 02nd December 2013 (amended draft Plan). Manager’s Reports
were prepared on the submissions received and all submissions received were material considerations in the formulating of the Plan.

1.3.2  Strategic Environmental Assessment

Under the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment)(Amendment) Regulations 2011, the Planning Authority is obliged to prepare a determination as to the need for an environmental assessment of a local area plan with a target population greater than 5,000 persons or where the area covered by the local area plan is more than 50 square kilometres. A SEA Screening was carried out on the potential for significant environmental effects arising from the Portlaw Local Area Plan based on the criteria in Schedule 2A to the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations 2004. Following the screening process, whereby the specific context of the Local Area Plan has been assessed against the environmental significance criteria as contained in Schedule 2A of the Regulations, it was concluded that a Strategic Environmental Assessment was not required for the Portlaw Local Area Plan.

1.3.3  Habitats Directive Assessment

The Habitats Directive was transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997 as amended. Under this Directive, the Planning Authority is obliged to carry out an appropriate assessment screening of the ecological implications of the Plan on the Natura 2000 sites within the Plan area as part of the Local Area Plan process. Natura 2000 sites consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and provide for the protection of Europe’s most valuable and threatened species and habitats.

The strategic nature of many of the policies and objectives contained in this Plan will require an Appropriate Assessment screening to be carried out at individual plan and project level to ensure there is no negative impact on the integrity and conservation objectives of Natura 2000 sites and that the requirements of Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the EU Habitats Directive are fully satisfied. Support of policies contained in other policy/strategy and guideline documents shall be subject to AA screening where required, prior to implementation by the Local Authority.

1.3.4  Vision

The Vision Statement of the County as set out in the Waterford County Development Plan 2011-2017 is as follows:
“To develop Waterford as a County, where the wellbeing of the community is enhanced through balanced economic development, the creation of attractive places to live and work and through the sustainable management of our natural assets as we strive to become a Green County.”

In achieving this vision, the following goals have been set:

- Support and facilitate the development of sustainable vibrant communities and the provision of necessary supporting services and amenities;
- Promote sustainable economic development through the development of key strategic sites, supporting and fostering entrepreneurship and building the foundations for a knowledge based economy;
- Sustain rural communities by supporting rural diversification and sustainable tourism development;
- Protect, enhance and promote access to the County’s Built, Natural and Linguistic heritage;
- Manage the challenges of climate change and increased flood risk;
- Develop County Waterford as the leader of the green economy by facilitating renewable energy infrastructure and promoting use of renewable energy among businesses and households throughout the County; and
- Create an inclusive society by encouraging a partnership approach between statutory bodies, community groups and all other relevant stakeholders.

Portlaw as the District Service Centre has a significant role to play in the achievement of this vision. In conjunction with the above Vision Statement the specific Vision for the Town is as follows:

To make Portlaw a more attractive, vital settlement with a sense of place, striking a balance between preserving architectural and archaeological character, facilitating the requirements of modern day living, improving accessibility and determining suitable land uses for the Town.

1.4 Plan Period

The Plan relates to the development of the defined area over the period 2014-2020, and shall be taken as 6 years from the date the Plan was made, or until it is subsequently reviewed or another Plan is made.
1.5  Structure and Format

This Plan consists of a written statement containing policies, objectives and development standards, and accompanying maps and appendices. Each chapter deals with a topic and the Council’s policy in respect of each topic is clearly identified.

The zoning maps provide a graphic representation of the proposals of the Plan illustrating the various landuses for Portlaw. Should a discrepancy arise between the maps and the statement, the statement shall prevail.

The supporting documents are set out in the appendices and include the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report.

The format and content of each Chapter is outlined as follows:

**Chapter 1** highlights the legal context of the Local Area Plan, and outlines its format.

**Chapter 2** outlines the development context of the Town and the framing documents which have informed the Plan.

**Chapter 3** sets out the statistics relating to population and demographics, and, in the Core Strategy illustrates how the Plan is consistent with National and Regional policies and strategies.

**Chapter 4** consists of the policies and objectives with respect to economic development and tourism for Portlaw.

**Chapter 5** relates to infrastructure, and includes information on future Council investment proposals and schemes.

**Chapter 6** examines the issues relating to the built and natural heritage of Portlaw and outlines the policies and objectives for the preservation and enhancement of these resources during the Plan period.

**Chapter 7** looks at Social and Community Development, examines issues relating to social exclusion and the provision of community facilities.

**Chapter 8** provides information relating to development management and outlines the definitions and permitted uses classes across the various land use zonings.