

CHAPTER 15

Sustainable Communities and Social Infrastructure Strategy



15.1 Introduction

The development of sustainable communities in the county's urban and rural areas lies at the heart of the vision for the county. Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, offer equality of opportunity and good services for all¹.

The Council, as a planning authority, has a significant role to play in facilitating the development of sustainable communities. Spatial planning ensures that physical environments are high quality, well-planned, accessible to all and safe. The Planning Authority can also ensure that employment, retail, recreation, social and community facilities are developed in the right places which all contribute to the development of sustainable, inclusive communities.

This role complements and supports the Council's enhanced responsibilities in promoting local and community development. Community development, through its core values of social inclusion, equality and respect for diversity, helps to build strong, healthy sustainable and inclusive communities.

This chapter sets out the spatial planning strategy and objectives to achieve the development of sustainable communities and to guide community facilities to appropriate locations in the county, either directly by the Council or by the relevant State agencies or local community development groups.

15.2 Climate Action and Sustainable Communities

The spatial planning of our communities can play a significant role in climate action. In this regard, the planning authority will, inter alia:

- Ensure childcare, education, health care, specialist residential and community facilities are developed in settlements so as to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by allowing people to travel to these facilities by sustainable transport modes where possible e.g. public transport, walking and cycling.

¹ Manual for Local Area Plans - A companion document to the Guidelines for Planning Authorities, (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2013, page i).

- Avoid locating these vulnerable developments in areas at risk of river or coastal flooding and/or coastal erosion.
- Require the roll out the EV charging network to new developments and promote the retrofitting of existing developments.
- Ensure these new developments are NZEB standard and ensure the design and layout of sites and buildings have regard to climate change impacts.
- Encourage the retention and expansion of green infrastructure in these developments.
- Through the Public Participation Network (PPN), raise awareness and assist our communities to become climate resilient.

15.3 Policy Context

The preparation of this chapter had regard to a suite of national, regional and local policy and guidance.

The NPF, through NSO 10, seeks to ensure access to quality childcare, education and health services. Good access to a range of quality education and health services, relative to the scale of a town, neighbourhood or community is a defining characteristic of attractive, successful and competitive places. Compact, smart growth in urban areas and strong and stable rural communities will enable the enhanced and effective provision of a range of accessible services.

This is reinforced in the RSES in which it is a key objective (No. 10) to achieve improved education, health and public services and facilities for all citizens and communities. This will be enabled by investment in public services to tackle legacies, support planned population and employment growth, provide education, health, transport, community and social services and infrastructure.

With regard to tackling legacies the RSES highlights the persistent nature of social deprivation in locations across the region, where low educational attainment, high levels of unemployment, poor health and housing, addiction and elevated crime rates result in high levels of people living in persistent poverty, often in a poor physical environment. The RSES is committed to improving quality of life for all and places a

high priority on tackling these legacies through targeted policies including RPO 175 which supports targeted investment in social infrastructure provision and job growth.

The RSES also advocates for universal health services with RPO 178 seeking the delivery of better universal health services including mental health, at all levels of service delivery. RPO 179 supports a diverse and socially inclusive region, recognising the positive contribution of migrants and asylum seekers to multi-cultural communities and the economic life of an area. This policy also prioritises parity of opportunity and improved well-being and quality of life for all citizens in the region.

RPO 181 promotes equal access for all through universal design for public transport access, housing, social, cultural and recreational facilities and the public realm to improve quality of life equally for abled and disabled citizens.

The RSES supports the development of age-friendly communities including independent living and community facilities. RPO 182 supports our ageing population, in particular, Smart Ageing and ensuring that local planning, housing, transport/accessibility and leisure policies meet the needs and opportunities of an ageing population. The RSES, through RPO 183, also highlights the importance of local authority Digital Strategies and developing new technologies that address the challenges faced by older people and allowing greater access to services for all citizens regardless of their age and technological competency.

There is also an important focus on education in the RSES, acknowledging the significant role it plays in promoting social inclusion, a healthy, sustainable society, economic growth and public safety. There is a focus on developing new schools across the region (RPO 185), developing new third level facilities including the development of the South East Technological University (SETU) with a specific mention of the campus at Wexford (RPO 184), the importance of lifelong learning (RPO 186) and further education and training (RPO 187, 188 and 189).

The RSES also introduces the concept of Smart Cities and Towns which deploy digital technologies. It recognises that Enniscorthy Town has taken the initial steps towards the achievement of Smart Town Status with the establishment of the FAB LAB in 2017, the development of a Technology Park for smart business and the establishment of the NZEB training centre.

The Council's enhanced role in economic and community development is articulated in its Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP). The Wexford LECP 2016-2022 addresses a wide range of community development issues which arose from the socio-economic analysis carried out during the preparation of the Plan. These issues include educational attainment, training and skills, unemployment, disadvantage and social exclusion. High Level Goal 2 in the LECP is to *“support and promote the development of socially inclusive, sustainable communities and ensure that all citizens enjoy optimal health and well-being”*.

There are specific objectives and actions related to the role of the Council as a planning authority to help achieve this goal, including auditing of social and community facilities during the preparation of local area plans and reserving lands for these uses and development management standards relating to the provision of these facilities, open spaces and play facilities.

The Healthy Wexford County Plan 2020-2022 includes six key priority areas and a number of actions to improve the health and wellbeing of all citizens in County Wexford. These include rejuvenating town and village spaces for the enjoyment of the community, providing safe spaces for young people to meet, achieving a culture of educational attainment and lifelong learning and promoting health and physical wellbeing.

The strategy and objectives in this chapter do not duplicate those set out in the Wexford LECP or Healthy Wexford County Plan. This chapter provides the spatial planning framework to support the achievement of those plans.

15.4 Tackling Deprivation in County Wexford

County Wexford suffers significantly from deprivation, ranking the fourth most disadvantaged local authority in the country in 2016 (an improvement of one position in 2011). The majority of Wexford's population live in areas classed as 'Marginally Below Average' (56% or 84,039), this is followed by areas 'Marginally Above Average' (21.2% or 31,703), 'Disadvantaged' (16.4% or 24,612), 'Very Disadvantaged' (4.4% or 6,651) and finally 'Affluent' (1.8% or 2,717).

There is a clear spatial pattern with two affluent areas in close proximity to Wexford

Town and Gorey. Areas recording 'Marginally Above Average' scores tend to be located in and around major urban settlements, extending into rural parts. Areas recording scores classed as 'Very Disadvantaged' are limited to parts of some large urban settlements and smaller settlements distributed throughout rural Wexford.

As discussed previously, the Council and the LECP is focused on tackling deprivation. Spatial planning and this Plan will play an important part in this, in particular, by facilitating social and community developments including health services and education, and facilitating employment and enterprise developments in disadvantaged areas/unemployment blackspots.

15.5 Strategy

The strategy provides a spatial planning framework that places social inclusion, universal design and equality at the heart of all future developments in the county. The strategy will guide the future development of social and community facilities, supporting the delivery of the local and community development elements of the Wexford LECP and the Healthy Wexford County Plan.

15.5.1 Goal

It is the goal of the Council to ensure that County Wexford has a strong network of healthy, socially inclusive sustainable communities, where all residents and visitors enjoy equal opportunities to participate fully in the economic, social and cultural life of the county.

15.5.2 Strategy

The strategic aims to achieve this goal are:

- To ensure that County Wexford is an attractive place to live and work, with a network of strong inclusive communities with accessible social, community and cultural facilities.
- To ensure that all areas in our county, both urban and rural, can be used and

enjoyed to the greatest extent possible, by all people, regardless of age, ability or disability.

- To ensure that the principles of accessibility, age friendly, inclusive and sustainable community development are central to spatial planning and the design of developments in the county.
- To tackle regional disparities and address areas within the county which are affected by higher levels of deprivation where low educational attainment, high levels of unemployment, poor health and housing, addiction and elevated crime rates and often a poor physical environment are evident.
- To work with key service providers to promote healthy communities and to facilitate equal access to health services for all our citizens.
- To facilitate the delivery of social and community infrastructure to meet the needs of the existing and future population of the county.
- To work with key State agencies and local stakeholders including the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), the PPN and community development groups to develop a shared responsibility for social, community and cultural development in the county.

Strategic Objectives

It is the objective of the Council:

Objective SC01

To facilitate the development of healthy sustainable communities where people can live, work and enjoy access to a wide range of community, health and educational facilities suitable for all ages, needs and abilities.

Objective SC02

To plan for a more diverse and socially inclusive society that targets equality of opportunity and a better quality of life for all our citizens, through improved integration and greater accessibility in the delivery of sustainable communities and the provision of associated services.

Objective SC03

To facilitate the implementation of the Wexford Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021, the Healthy Wexford County Plan 2020-2022 and any updated version of these Plans.

Objective SC04

To tackle regional disparities and address areas within the county which are affected by higher levels of deprivation. This will be achieved through a number of approaches including providing social and community infrastructure, facilitating jobs growth and providing economic assistance, working with other service providers to target education and training programmes, the provision of necessary social supports such as childcare to facilitate participation in education and employment and the promotion of healthcare and well-being.

Objective SC05

To ensure the balanced and equitable provision of social and community facilities including education and health services throughout the county and ensure that these facilities are located in areas that are easy to get to by either public or private transport, and are universally accessible.

15.6 Social Inclusion

Social inclusion is about ensuring that everyone has equal opportunity to participate in and contribute to, community life regardless of their age, ability, nationality, religion or any other of the many characteristics that contribute to diversity in our communities and society and plays an important part in tackling legacies and deprivation. As a planning authority, the Council has a significant role to play in creating built environments that promote and facilitate social inclusion, in particular, in the areas of housing, employment, public transport, tourism and social and community facilities.

15.6.1 Groups with Specific Design/Planning Needs

There are a number of groups with specific design and planning needs that must be considered in the planning and design of the built environment and in the location of social and community facilities. These groups include children and young people, people with disabilities, older people, ethnic minorities and the Traveller community.

Children and Young People

Census 2016 indicates that the county has a relatively young people with 27.5% of the population under the age of 18. This increased by 6.1% (2,364 persons) on the number recorded in Census 2011. A young population requires childcare facilities, schools, play areas for children, recreational places for young people, sports facilities and safe walking and cycling routes.

Older People

The population of the county is growing older. In 2016, 21,985 people were 65 years or older (14.7% of the county's population). This increased from 11.6% in Census 2011. The quality of life of older people can be improved through planning and design of the built environment, particularly, housing, community and care facilities, accessible transportation including public transport and footpaths.

The first County Wexford Age Friendly Strategy 2017-2021 aims to ensure that the county is a great place in which to grow old. The Strategy is based around nine themes: outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing, social participation, respect and socialisation, civic participation and employment, communication and information, community support and health services and safety and security.

The strategy and objectives in this chapter provide the spatial planning framework to support the implementation of the Age Friendly Strategy.

People with Disabilities

In 2016, 22,650 people in the county (15.1% of the population) had a disability. This was the second highest rate in the State and much higher than the State average

of 13.5%. The planning related issues relevant to people with a disability include the need to facilitate independent living, access and mobility. As many people with a disability are of working age, there is a need to ensure access and proximity to employment opportunities.

Ethnic Minority Groups

County Wexford is becoming more culturally diverse. Certain areas of the county have a more ethnic or culturally diverse population than others and service provision and community facilities in these areas should reflect the varying needs of the community.

The Traveller Community

In Census 2016, 1,508 of the county's population were from the Traveller Community. This accounted for 1% of the overall population, which is above the State average of 0.7%. There are distinct spatial patterns across the county. In Clonroche, 20.5% of the local population is from the Traveller community. In Taghmon, 14.1% of the local population are Travellers and in Bunclody, the Traveller community make up 11.1% of the local population. In New Ross Town and Enniscorthy Town the Traveller community is much smaller and comprises 3.5% and 2.5% respectively of the local population. Service provision and community facilities in these areas should reflect and respect the varying needs of the Traveller community.

15.6.2 Universal Access and Design

It is important that our built environment is designed to create an accessible environment for everyone in the community, ensuring ease of access and use by all, especially groups with specific planning/design needs. This can be achieved through the removal/designing out of potential physical barriers to access and movement and creating a safe environment.

In this regard, the Council will require the application of universal design in all developments. Universal design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people, regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. An environment (or any building, product, or service in that environment) should be designed to meet the

needs of all people who wish to use it. This is not a special requirement, for the benefit of a minority of the population. It is a fundamental condition of good design. Everyone benefits if an environment is accessible, usable, convenient and a pleasure to use.

All components of a development must therefore be considered in the design process including:

- Access for people with disabilities, older people and others who may be temporarily impaired, must be incorporated into the design of buildings, public spaces, car parking, footpaths and general facilities and services.
- 'End to end' travel, that is, from the door of the accessible dwelling through to parking, street, public realm and the destination building. Access to services such as childcare, community facilities and public transport is also essential and the design of buildings must incorporate measures to ensure accessibility.
- The provision of 'Changing Places Facilities'. Standard accessible toilets do not meet the needs of all people with a disability. Some people often need extra equipment and space to allow them to use toilets safely and comfortably. These needs are met by Changing Places facilities². The provision of these facilities will be required in any new build large building development where the public have access in numbers and/ or where the public might be expected to spend longer periods of time, for example, educational establishments, health facilities, civic centres, public libraries, cultural buildings, motorway services, sport and leisure facilities, including large hotels.
- Baby changing and feeding facilities are also important and should be incorporated into the design of buildings and the layout of developments that people with young children could be expected to have frequent access.
- Unisex family toilets which allow children the right to be accompanied to the toilet by a parent/guardian of a different gender in the interests of the child's dignity and safety³.

All development proposals will be required to have regard to:

- The provisions of the National Disability's Authority document 'Buildings for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach' (2012).

² Changing Places facilities are different to standard accessible toilets (or "disabled toilets") and should be provided in addition to accessible toilets. Volume 2 Development Management Manual provides further details on the type of buildings in which Changing Place facilities are to be provided in and design details.

³ Similar to Changing Place facilities, baby changing/feeding facilities and unisex family toilets should be provided where the public have access in numbers and/ or where the public might be expected to spend longer periods of time. Further design details and the type of buildings in which these facilities should be provided are included Volume 2 Development Management Manual.

- Part M of the Building Regulations and the requirement for Disability Access Certificates (DACs).
- Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas: Guidelines for Planning Authorities and its companion document Urban Design Manual (DECLG and DAHG, 2009).
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, 2019).
- Any such revisions or new versions of the aforementioned guidance which may become available in the lifetime of this Plan.

Applications for significant development should also be accompanied by an Access Statement carried out in accordance with Appendix 6 of Buildings for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach (National Disability Authority, 2012).

Social Inclusion Objectives

It is the objective of the Council:

Objective SC06

To support the entitlement of all members of the community to enjoy a high quality living environment and to support local communities, the Health Authorities and other bodies involved in the provision of facilities for groups with specific design/ planning needs.

Objective SC07

To facilitate the implementation of the Wexford Age Friendly Strategy 2017-2022 and any updated version of this Plan.

Objective SC08

To require Universal Design and Lifetime Housing in accordance with best practice and the policies and principles contained in Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach (National Disability Authority, 2012) and Sustainable Residential

Development in Urban Areas: Guidelines for Planning Authorities and its companion document Urban Design Manual (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009).

Objective SC09

To require an Access Statement to be submitted with planning applications for significant developments in accordance with Appendix 6 of Buildings for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach (National Disability Authority, 2012), demonstrating how access for all has been considered within the proposed development.⁴

Objective SC10

To continue to carry out improvements to the public realm to create a safe and barrier free environment that can be accessed by all members of the community.

Objective SC11

To facilitate the provision of care facilities for groups with specific planning and design needs, including older people, people with disabilities both physical and intellectual. These care facilities include independent living options, sheltered housing, day-care facilities, nursing homes and specialised care units. The preferred location for this type of development is within, or in close proximity to, towns and villages and is subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria.

Objective SC12

To facilitate the provision of community facilities for people with specific planning and design needs, such as family resource centres, Traveller resource centres, youth centres and youth cafés at appropriate locations in towns and villages and subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria.

Objective SC13

To facilitate the design needs of older people and people with disabilities in community facilities, public open spaces and recreational areas.

⁴ As set out in Section 4.5.1 Housing for All of Chapter 4 Sustainable Housing an Access Statement is also required to be submitted with planning applications for residential schemes of five units or more.

Objective SC14

To facilitate the design needs of children and young people including those with disabilities, in community facilities, public open spaces and recreational areas.

Objective SC15

To require 'Changing Places facilities' to be provided in any large building development where the public have access in numbers, and/or where the public might be expected to spend longer periods of time, in accordance with the criteria and design standards set out in Volume 2 Development Management Manual.

15.7 Community Developments

Local services such as schools, childcare, healthcare and community centres are important, not just in terms of the services they provide but also they can be important for social interaction and activity in the community, in particular, for those living in rural areas. The availability of public services and community facilities at a local level is an important factor in supporting quality of life. Furthermore, as outlined in the NPF, strategic planning and investment in the provision of childcare, education and training are central to reinforcing the delivery of sustainable communities, promoting inclusion and offering choice and accessibility to a high standard of education and employment. In this regard, there is a need to align the targeted and planned population and employment growth with educational investment⁴.

15.7.1 Childcare Facilities

The provision of childcare facilities enables parents to participate in the workforce and also make a significant contribution to a child's emotional and educational development in the early years of their life. Childcare is taken to mean full day care, sessional facilities and services, both for pre-school and after school. There are a wide range of childcare facilities in the plan area, both private and community operated.

⁴ National Planning Framework, page 90

The Council will continue to ensure that sufficient childcare facilities are provided alongside new residential schemes and that any new facilities are suitably located, are of a high quality and are inclusive of all children, including children with special needs. Planning applications for such facilities will be assessed in accordance with the Childcare Guidelines for Planning Authorities (Department of the Environment 2001) and any future updates of these guidelines.

The Council will continue to support the Wexford County Childcare Committee in responding to the changing needs of society in terms of childcare demand and services. It is particularly important to ensure that vulnerable or disadvantaged members of the community can access childcare services in order to support social integration and to enable parents to access education or employment opportunities.

Childcare Facilities Objectives

It is the objective of the Council;

Objective SC16

To require the provision of purpose-built childcare facilities in new residential developments in accordance with Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 2001) and 'We Like This Place: Guidelines for Best Practice in the Design of Childcare Facilities' (National Children's Nurseries Association, 2002) and any future update of these guidelines. The indicative standard is one childcare facility, accommodating 20 children, for approximately 75 dwellings. This standard may be modified in any particular case where there are significant reasons for doing so. Criteria that may be taken into account in such an assessment include the existing geographical distribution of childcare facilities and the emerging demographic profile of the area.

Objective SC17

To facilitate the provision of childcare facilities in accordance with Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 2001) and any future update of these guidelines.

- (a) The development of new purpose built childcare facilities will be facilitated on well- located sites within or close to existing built up areas including within new or existing places of work, residential areas, educational establishments, town centres, rural villages and adjacent to public transport nodes. Where these childcare facilities are proposed to be located within established residential areas, applications for such uses will be assessed having regard to the likely effect on the amenities of adjoining properties, the availability of space for off-street parking and/or suitable drop-off and collection points and outdoor playspace.
- (b) In the case of a change of use of an existing dwelling within a housing estate to a childcare facility, the proposal will only be considered where the dwelling house is detached, where there is adequate separation distances between the dwelling house and other dwelling houses in the vicinity, where the use as a childcare facility will not detract from the residential amenities of the estate, where the development will not give rise to a traffic hazard and where the car parking requirements for the childcare facility are provided in addition to the car parking requirements of the housing estate. This will not apply to the use of an existing dwelling for child minding⁵ in accordance with the exempted development provisions of Article 10(5) of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended).
- (c) The development of small-scale rural appropriate childcare facilities associated with an existing residence (where the primary use is retained as the residence of the operator) at locations outside of rural villages will be considered on a case-by case basis having regard to the location of the site, the nature of the road serving the site and traffic safety, residential amenity and environmental considerations.

15.7.2 Education

The provision of high quality education facilities lies at the heart of sustainable communities. It enhances the attractiveness of an area to families and it can encourage businesses and employment to locate in a place.

The preparation of the Wexford LECP highlighted that the county has below average education attainments for primary, post primary and third level education. There were distinct spatial patterns with peripheral, rural areas and all of the main urban

⁵ Childminding means the activity of minding no more than six children, including the children, if any, of the person minding, in the house of that person, for profit or gain.

centres presenting with lower levels of attainment and 'areas of concern'. As a result, High Level Goal 1 in the LECP is to *foster the culture of educational attainment and lifelong learning in County Wexford and provide opportunities to develop educational and workforce skills, to improve work readiness and access to employment*. There is a suite of objectives and actions around this goal and a number of stakeholders and partners involved. The role of education in tackling legacies due to deprivation is also recognised as a key intervention in the RSES.

As a Planning Authority, the Council's role is to facilitate the development of education facilities at appropriate locations and ensure that these facilities are accessible to all to achieve social inclusion.

Third Level, Further Education and Adult Education

One of the areas of concern highlighted in the Wexford LECP was the low level of third level attainment in the county. The absence of a University in the South-East region and a lack of suitable job opportunities was considered a primary factor and resulted in Wexford graduates residing elsewhere in the State. The RSES (RPO 184) fully supports the establishment of the South East Technological University (SETU) including the development of the Wexford Campus and other future collaborations between third level institutions to greatly enhance the quality of regional education and enhance the ability of higher education provision to drive regional development.

The Wexford Campus of Carlow IT offers a range of full and part time courses from Higher Certificate to Masters Level. Carlow IT has made a substantial investment in the student facilities in its Wexford Campus, and the Council supports its further development.

The availability of further education and adult education centres are important as a tool to encourage and facilitate adults to re-engage with learning, to learn life skills and new skills to either enter the workforce for the first time or to re-enter the workforce. This is an important part of creating a Learning Region, as envisaged in the RSES, and will assist in providing high quality and timely education and training responses to evolving enterprise and skills needs. This is discussed further in Chapter 6 Economic Development Strategy. There are number of these centres across the county which offer a range of further education and training courses.

Apprenticeships offer an alternative to full time education and give apprentices the opportunity to earn while they learn and build valuable work ready skills in their chosen occupation. SOLAS, the further education and training authority, are the lead agency for apprenticeships and they work with industry-led groups to design and develop apprenticeship schemes. Apprenticeships are available across a range of skills including construction, electrical, engineering, finance, motor and hospitality, and are delivered through a range of collaborative providers including Education and Training Boards and Institutes of Technology.

The Council recognises the importance of third level education in contributing to the delivery of a highly-skilled and innovation-based population and laying the foundation stones for well-being and a good quality of life. The Council will therefore continue to facilitate the development of accessible third level, further education and adult education facilities at appropriate locations in the county. These facilities need to be located along sustainable transport corridors in locations that are easy to get to by public transport, walking and cycling. There is also a need to ensure that inter-county public transport systems are developed to allow third level students to easily commute to third level facilities in other counties.

The provision of good quality student accommodation is also an important component of third level education. This is discussed in further detail in Chapter 4 Sustainable Housing.

Primary and Post Primary Schools

There is a network of over one hundred primary schools across the county ranging from large schools in the main towns to very small schools in rural villages and settlements. Each of these schools plays an invaluable role in their local community/ neighbourhood and the Council will continue to facilitate these schools in the improvement and/or extension of the existing school and ancillary facilities.

There are twenty three post primary schools in the county. The majority of these are located in the main towns: Wexford Town (5), Enniscorthy Town (4), Gorey Town (3), New Ross Town (5) and Bunclody (2). The remaining schools are located in Adamstown, Kilmuckridge, Bridgetown and Ramsgrange and each serves a large rural catchment.

The county has, and continues to benefit from, significant investment in education infrastructure with a range of new and extended primary and post primary schools

delivered across the county. The Department of Education has identified the need for a new primary school in Wexford Town and a new post primary school in Enniscorthy Town and has acquired sites for these schools. A new post primary school in Gorey Town opened in temporary accommodation in September 2021. The Council will work with the Department to find a suitable site for this school and any additional schools required during the lifetime of this Plan.

There is however an oversubscription for post primary school places in Wexford Town and Gorey Town with waiting lists in all schools. It has resulted in a scenario where many pupils from the towns and catchment areas are travelling to other towns to avail of school places. This is unsustainable and is contributing to unnecessary stress on parents and students. It is a priority of the Council that this situation be addressed.

The Council will carefully consider planning applications for significant residential developments to identify the demand for school places likely to be generated by the proposal and the capacity of existing schools in the area to cater for this demand. If necessary, these developments will be required to be phased in line with the availability of school places.

Location of New Schools

In line with NPO 31 of the NPF the provision of new and refurbished schools should be on well-located sites within or close to existing built-up areas. The RSES, in RPO 185, requires both proposed school locations and existing schools to be accessible by cycling/walking from the main catchment areas and accessible by public transport.

In line with the Sustainable Development Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009), RPO 185 also requires a robust site selection process in the selection of new school locations taking into account proximity to such as community centres, playing fields and libraries so that the possibility of sharing facilities can be maximised. Multi-campus school arrangements, e.g. two or three primary schools side by side, or a primary and a post primary school sharing a site, is sustainable and a good use of resources and infrastructure and will be encouraged by the Council. The Department of Education also have technical guidance documents for site selection and development. The Council will have regard to these guidelines and documents when zoning lands for Education use in future local area plans.

In the interests of achieving compact growth in line with the NPF and the “10 minute town” concept in the RSES, consideration will be given to the intensification of existing school sites (e.g., higher buildings), where appropriate, subject to adequate amenity and sports facilities being maintained.

Multi-Use of Schools Buildings

The multi-use of school buildings and facilities outside of school hours and during the school holidays will continue to be encouraged where it does not conflict with the delivery of the education service. The Council will encourage the design of new schools and community facilities to facilitate dual usage from the onset.

Education Objectives

It is the objective of the Council:

Objective SC18

To support the development of a Learning Region as envisaged in the RSES and further strengthen the higher education and further education and training sector, and support the initiatives of the Regional Skills Fora to ensure that knowledge and skills are spread to all citizens to help address skills shortages and lifelong learning challenges.

Objective SC19

To have regard to the ‘Provision of Schools and the Planning System-Guidelines for Planning Authorities (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Department of Education, 2008) and any future update of these guidelines published during the lifetime of the Plan.

Objective SC20

To facilitate all education providers, including the Department of Education, the Higher Education Authority, Wexford and Waterford Education and Training Board, SOLAS, TÚS and Wexford Local Development in the delivery of high quality, appropriately located education and training facilities and services throughout the county.

Objective SC21

To ensure that sufficient and suitable lands are zoned for Education use in future local area plans.

Objective SC22

To require planning applications for significant residential developments to include an assessment of existing schools in the area and their capacity in accordance with Objective SC37. The assessment shall identify the demand for school places likely to be generated by the proposal and the capacity of existing schools in the area to cater for this demand. If required, the applicant shall include proposals for provision of new school facilities in tandem with the residential development or make a special contribution for the provision of such facilities.

Objective SC23

To encourage multi-campus school arrangements where appropriate and to restrict new developments adjacent to existing schools where the proposed development would conflict with the education use or restrict the future expansion of that school.

Objective SC24

To support the intensification of development on existing school sites, where appropriate, to accommodate additional educational requirements which may emerge over the lifetime of the Plan, subject to the schools maintaining adequate sporting and amenity provision and subject to normal planning and environmental criteria.

Objective SC25

To encourage the multi-use of school buildings and facilities provided that this does not conflict with the delivery of the education service.

Objective SC26

To facilitate the development of Third Level education facilities at appropriate locations in the county, subject to normal planning and environmental criteria. As these facilities must be easy to get to by students these facilities should generally be located in towns and along or close to public transport corridors.

Objective SC27

To support the further development of the Wexford Campus of Carlow IT subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria.

Objective SC28

To identify a location for the Wexford Campus of the South East Technological University.

Objective SC29

To support the development of a Sustainable Construction education campus alongside the planned Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Construction in Enniscorthy Town, subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive and all normal planning and environmental criteria.

Objective SC30

To facilitate the development of suitably located and well-designed student accommodation which will enable and encourage students to attend third level institutions in the county. These facilities should be located along public transport routes, where possible, and in close proximity to the third level facility.

15.7.3 Healthcare Facilities

Healthcare facilities are essential to ensure that the residents of the county have access to the care that they need. Healthcare is provided by a range of State, private, community and charitable service providers. The Health Service Executive's policy approach reflects a shift away from traditional hospital-based care towards more community-based care with increased emphasis on meeting people's needs at local level within primary care teams. Healthcare services enable older people, in particular, to continue to live in their communities, through the range of primary and social care supports.

The Council will facilitate the provision and expansion of facilities to ensure accessible healthcare services are integrated into communities throughout the county. These facilities should ideally be provided within towns and villages and should be easy to get to by a range of transport options. Medical centres/surgeries and local health centres which meet the needs of, and are easy to get to by local service users, will be considered in existing built up areas and neighbourhood centres provided they do not impact on residential amenity and have adequate parking availability. One-stop primary care medical centres and GP practices will be encouraged at locations which are easy to travel to by all members of the wider community including by public transport.

The Council will also facilitate the development of high quality care facilities such as nursing homes, day-care and specialist care units for older people and people with disabilities at appropriate locations in the county. These facilities are well suited to towns and villages as these locations are generally easy to get to by car and, in some cases, public transport, there are existing or planned pedestrian linkages to the town or village, proximity to complementary services including shops, post office and the local church and opportunities to socialise with the local community. Independent living, sheltered housing/nursing homes/retirement villages are discussed in further detail in Chapter 4 Sustainable Housing.

Healthcare Facilities Objectives

It is the objective of the Council:

Objective SC31

To facilitate the development of new and expanded accessible health and medical care facilities at appropriate locations in the county. These facilities must be easy to get to by the persons availing of the service and therefore should generally be located within towns and villages and areas of significant residential development. Isolated rural locations will not generally be considered, except where it is demonstrated that the nature of the facility requires such a location and in the interests of protecting the amenity of the host community.

Objective SC32

To facilitate the development of new or extended hospitals, nursing homes, day care facilities for older people or people with disabilities, hospices, respite care facilities or facilities for those with long term illness at appropriate locations in the county subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria. These facilities should generally be located within towns and villages and areas of significant residential development.

Objective SC33

To facilitate the development of extensions to existing authorised hospitals, nursing homes, day care facilities for older people or people with disabilities, hospices, respite care facilities or facilities for those with long term illness in towns, villages and rural areas subject to compliance with normal planning and environment criteria.

15.7.4 Community Facilities

Community facilities provide opportunities for activities, sports and recreational events, social interaction and meeting spaces, all of which benefit the local community and assist with social inclusion. Community centres in particular perform an important function providing opportunities for indoor active recreation such as bowls, dance, gymnastics and pilates, meetings spaces for various community groups including Active Retirement, ICA and youth groups.

The design of the facilities should provide for multi-users so as to maximise the financial investment and extend the benefits to everyone in the community.

The Council will facilitate the delivery of community facilities through various mechanisms including:

- Zoning land for community use in local area plans to facilitate the development of new or extended facilities. These lands will be identified having carried out an audit of existing facilities in the plan area, the identified need for additional facilities and the location of planned neighbourhoods.
- Require developers to contribute to the cost of providing community facilities through the implementation of the applicable Development Contribution Scheme.
- Facilitate key stakeholders and service providers in the delivery of new community facilities.

Social Infrastructure Assessments

Having regard to the planned future population targets, it is essential that sufficient and suitable community facilities are provided in tandem with new development, where possible. In this regard, it is a requirement of the Council that planning applications for multiple developments (i.e. 100 residential units or greater) be accompanied by a Social Infrastructure Assessment (SIA) undertaken by the developer, to determine if facilities in the area are sufficient to provide for the needs of the future residents (of all age cohorts) and where deficiencies are identified, proposals will be required to either rectify the deficiency (through direct provision or development contributions) or suitably restrict or phase the development in accordance with the capacity of existing or planned services. The assessment should identify membership and non-membership facilities which allow access for all groups. Where facilities are deemed to be required, the means of meeting this requirement shall be determined by the Planning Authority through the Development Management process.

Community Facilities Objectives

It is the objective of the Council;

Objective SC34

To develop, or support the development of, community facilities at appropriate locations throughout the county and require all new community facilities to be accessible to all and designed to facilitate a wide range of uses/users.

Objective SC35

To facilitate the development of new or expanded community facilities of a suitable scale and appropriate location within towns, villages and rural settlements, ensuring that these facilities are adequate to meet the needs of the communities they serve, are physically integrated with residential and employment areas and are provided in tandem, where possible, with new residential development and subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria.

Objective SC36

To consult with local community groups and key stakeholders during the preparation of local area plans for towns and villages to determine if there are any existing deficiencies in the provision of community facilities and needs and to address, where possible and appropriate, in the relevant local area plan.

Objective SC37

To require that all new residential development applications of 100 units or more on zoned lands are accompanied by a Social Infrastructure Assessment (SIA) to determine if social and community facilities in the area are sufficient to provide for the needs of the future residents (of all age cohorts). This should include details regarding the following essential facilities: Playgrounds, parks and other green spaces, education, childcare, health and others such as shops, banks, post offices, community meeting rooms/centres and recreational facilities. The assessment should identify membership and non-membership facilities which allow access for all groups. Where deficiencies are identified, proposals will be required to accompany the planning application to address the deficiency.

15.7.5 Arts, Culture and Library Services

Arts services, library services and cultural facilities all play an important role in aiding local communities to become better places to live, where people feel connected and a part of the broader community. The Council supports the development of the Arts, as expressed in the Council's Arts Plan 2018-2022, and is committed to providing opportunities for all who live in, work in and visit the county. There is a wide range of Arts and cultural services and facilities across the county including the National Opera House and Wexford Arts Centre in Wexford Town, St Michael's Theatre in New Ross Town, Gorey Little Theatre and the Athenaeum in Enniscorthy Town. All of the Council's public libraries serve as key arts and cultural outlets within the county.

Arts, Culture and Library Services Objectives

It is the objective of the Council;

Objective SC38

To facilitate the development of the county's arts services, library services and cultural facilities and to facilitate the objectives set out in Wexford County Council's Arts Plan 2018-2022 and any updated versions.

Objective SC39

To take a lead role in the development of cultural facilities in the county, for example, the redevelopment of Gorey Market House and Wexford Arts Centre.