

Draft County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030

Including Area Plans for:

- Buncrana
- Ballybofey/Stranorlar
- Bundoran

August 2023

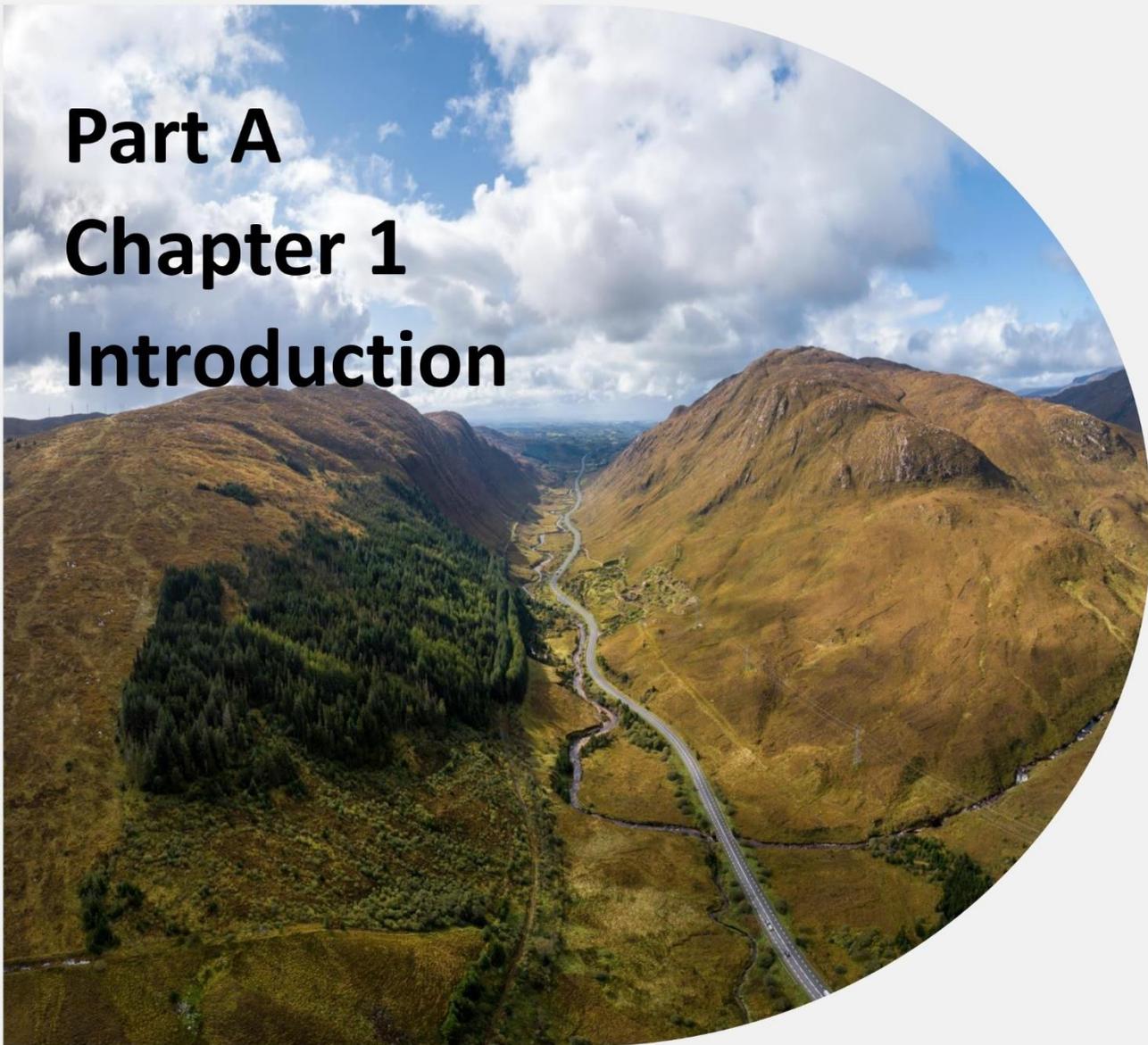


**Comhairle Contae
Dhún na nGall**
Donegal County Council

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Part A
Chapter 1
Introduction



Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Background

The County Development Plan is the principal land use planning strategy document for County Donegal and sets out a vision for the sustainable future development of the County together with objectives and policies designed to achieve this vision. The key roles of the Development Plan are summarised in Fig. 1.1 below.



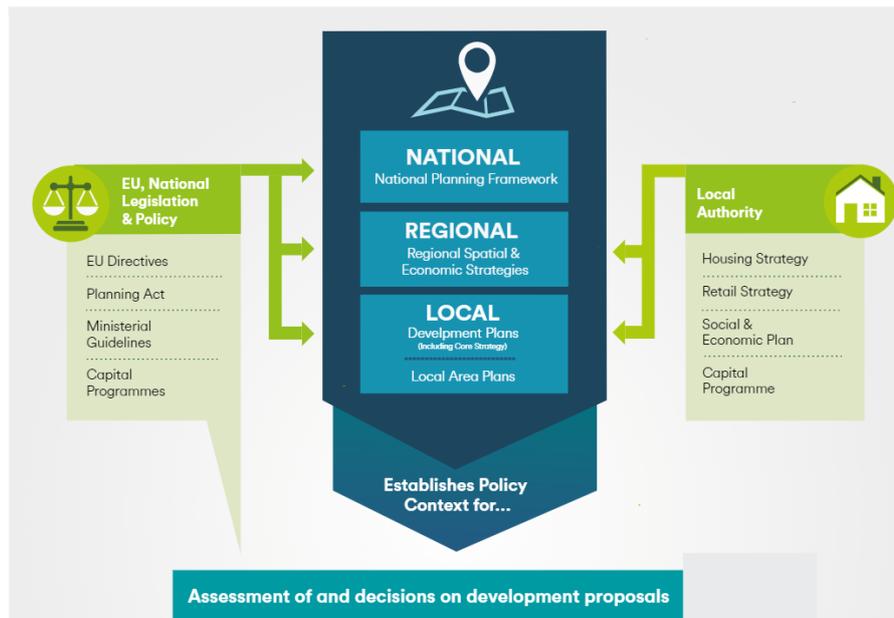
Figure 1.1 - Key roles of County Development Plan (reproduced from Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2022)

The Plan must incorporate a Housing Strategy and Retail Strategy, align with the Council's Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), and have regard to and help shape the capital programmes of both the Council and Irish Water.

This County Development Plan incorporates detailed plans for the towns of Buncrana, Ballybofey/Stranorlar and Bundoran (see Part B, Chapters 17, 18, 19, and 20). These Plans are consistent with the objectives of the County Development Plan but allow for more detailed consideration of local-level issues within the settlements concerned.

The Plan must demonstrate strong alignment with European policy and national and regional policy, most notably the National Planning Framework (NPF) and Ministerial Planning Guidelines issued under Section 28 of the Act, and the Northern and Western Regional Assembly's Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES). Where relevant, the Chapters of the Plan identify the most pertinent policies/requirements contained in these documents including:

- at the national level, NPF National Planning Objectives (NPO's) and 'Specific Planning Policy Requirements' contained in Ministerial Section 28 Guidelines; and
- at the Regional level, Regional Policy Objectives (RPO's).



Source: National Planning Framework

Figure 1.2 – Planning Policy Hierarchy and Key Inputs (reproduced from Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2022)

The statutory period of the Plan is a maximum of six years in accordance with Section 9 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (As Amended) [‘the Act’]. For this reason, the Core Strategy identifies sufficient lands to accommodate projected housing need for the six-year horizon. However, Donegal County Council has longer-term strategic ambitions for the County beyond this statutory six-year period and the Plan therefore also supports these ambitions in broad terms without exceeding the aforementioned statutory parameters in terms of housing land supply and so on.

Chapter 2

Vision and Ambition



Chapter 2 – Vision & Ambition

2.1 Strategic Ambition

The ambition of Donegal County Council is to grow the population of the County to upwards of 200,000 people by 2040. This ambition is framed in the context of the recognition in the NPF and the RSES of the critical role the north-west of the island of Ireland has to play in achieving balanced regional growth. Two overarching strategies are identified as being key drivers of such growth.

2.2 North-West City Region

The North-West City Region is a cross-border partnership between local and central government in both Ireland and Northern Ireland realising the full development potential of the region and acting as a strong driver of economic growth reflective of the regional the priorities of the North West Strategic Growth Partnership. The North-West City Region identifies the following three regional pillars of growth that are reflected in the objectives and policies of the Plan:

- i. Economic Growth and Investment
- ii. Physical and Environmental Development
- iii. Social and Community Cohesion and Wellbeing.

Donegal has a unique geopolitical position sharing 90% of its land border with Northern Ireland yet maintains strong and essential economic, workforce, infrastructural, health, educational, community and environmental cross border linkages.

The shared region has Letterkenny, Derry and Strabane at its core supported by several smaller towns and villages. The wider functional region has the 4th highest population concentration of 350,000 and 193,106 of these within Letterkenny, Derry and Strabane. There are over 35,000 in higher education, and 39% of the work force have a level 3 or above qualification rising to 43% when those with apprenticeships are included.

The importance and primacy of the strategic growth of the North-west City Region is reflected in the following Policy Objectives of both the National Planning Framework and the Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy for the Northern Western Border Region.

National Policy Objective 45

In co-operation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, support and promote the development of the North West City Region as interlinked areas of strategic importance in the North-West of Ireland, through collaborative structures and a joined-up approach to spatial planning.

RPO 9.1

Build Inclusive and Compact Places by:

- a) Planning for Inclusive Communities through regional cooperation and collaboration, to support the wider economic and social development agendas of the region and integrating health and wellbeing outcomes across all activities, ensuring that spaces are made available for community use.
- b) Accommodating Growth and Delivering Housing through compact growth where housing opportunities are close to schools, community facilities, health facilities, shopping, and employment; Prioritising the (re-)use of existing underutilised land and buildings, and other infill opportunities.
- c) Accessing Quality Services by maximising the use of transport and digital infrastructure to ensure people can access quality education and health services, building on the quality health and education infrastructure that exists on a cross-border basis and building more shared services and nurturing greater collaboration between actors and agencies in the co-design of new services.
- d) Valuing Cultural Heritage by creating appealing places through attractive and imaginative building design, street layout, civic space and public realm design; Developing new offerings in support of existing ventures in the tourism sector, such as greenways, walking trails and other inter-urban connections, based on the wealth of natural and cultural heritage assets and providing links to the Wild Atlantic Way and the Causeway Coast.

RPO 9.2

Invest in Accessible and Connected Places through:

- a) Donegal County Council, Derry City and Strabane District Council and transport providers working together to deliver programmed and future investment for strategic internal and external transport improvements. This to include consideration of cross-border connectivity – with a particular emphasis on provision of high-quality TEN-T routes, maximising the level of accessibility to the urban core for all sectors of the community and all abilities, with a focus upon supporting a modal shift to walking, cycling, public transport, whilst embracing disruptive technologies to augment the shift to electric vehicles and other modes of transport.
- b) Encouraging active travel with a clear focus on place building and connectivity and promoting active mobility through soft measures including information and awareness-raising campaigns to complement hard investments in routes and support activities, including activity-based recreation resources.
- c) Strengthening Digital Infrastructure by supporting the expansion and investment in third-level education and leveraging cross-border knowledge networks to strengthen access to skills and talents that support a digital economy, nurtures entrepreneurship, anticipates and responds to the demand for innovative services that are socially inclusive, attractive and supportive of the local workforce, and contributes to quality public realm.

RPO 9.3

Planning for a vibrant economy through:

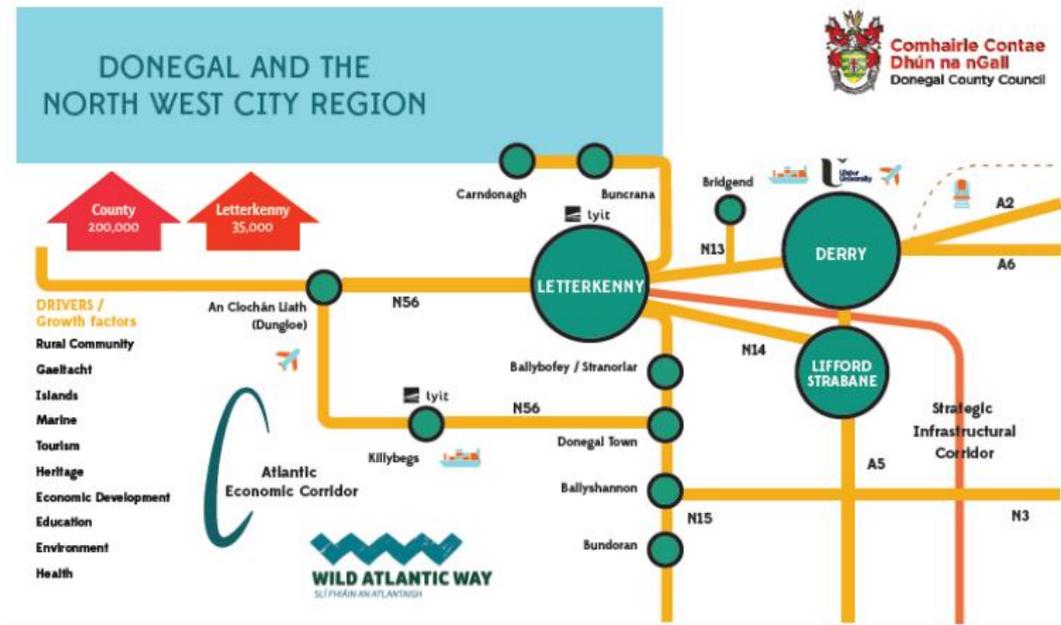
- a) **Fostering Enterprise and Innovation** by identifying the critical linkages between place-making and business investment, utilising the North West Strategic Growth Partnership in realising the economic potential of the region in priority areas ensuring they are supported by our third level institutes and our R&D institutions of excellence and that further spaces are developed to nurture and catalyse the region's most innovative entrepreneurs with the area's strong network of experienced business leaders and cutting edge research and development institutions.
- b) **Nurturing the rural economy** through protecting and promoting the sense of place and culture and the quality, character and distinctiveness of the rural landscape, whilst facilitating the appropriately-scaled development of rural enterprise initiatives, including the appropriate development of tourism, delivering business start-up programmes and development support to rural communities experiencing economic disadvantage, whilst also meeting appropriate rural housing need having due regard to all material considerations.

RPO 9.4

Create Resilient Places and Low-Carbon Infrastructure by:

- a) **Managing Natural Resources** through adhering to the principles of the circular economy, monitor air quality through the use of smart technologies, with the overall aim of improving air quality and to protect local ecosystems through the management of our natural capital
- b) **Transitioning to a Low Carbon Economy** through a presumption against development in areas vulnerable to flooding and rising sea levels, continuing to assess the probability of risk from all sources of flooding, and working with relevant stakeholders in both the assessment and delivery of any mitigation responses required; Furthermore, pursue the generation of renewable energies and their local applications through, for example, green infrastructure planning, innovative design solutions, the promotion of energy-efficient buildings and homes
- c) **Diversifying Energy Resources** by promoting and facilitating the development of the wider North West region as a Centre of Excellence for renewable energy and innovation and establishing a sustainable energy strategy for the City Region that pursues continued investment in the resilience and security of electricity networks and infrastructure, and the development of a diverse energy portfolio, harnesses the expertise of technological research and training among the region's institutions of higher education, growing the development of a skilled workforce in all aspects of energy generation including linking employment opportunities in the emerging renewable energy field to workers displaced from other economic sectors.

Despite the economic challenges posed by Brexit, the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement and associated Northern Ireland Protocol (and related Windsor Framework political agreement) have allowed a softer trade border with NI than might have otherwise occurred and, combined with support from the Brexit Adjustment Reserve Fund, will facilitate further enhancement of the existing strong cross border economic linkages in the North West City Region.



2.3 Atlantic Economic Corridor

The NPF describes the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) concept as: ‘a term applied to a linear network along the Western seaboard, stretching from Kerry to Donegal, which has the potential to act as a key enabler for the regional growth objectives of the National Planning Framework. The corridor straddles parts of both the Northern and Western Region and the Southern Regions, with the potential to further extend its scope by building on the cross-Border relationship between Letterkenny and Northern Ireland, and into Cork City and County to the south.’



Figure 2.1 – Atlantic Economic Corridor (reproduced from NWRA RSES)

The NPF goes on to note that: '*... the overarching objective of the AEC initiative is to maximise the infrastructure, talent and enterprise assets along the western seaboard and to combine the economic hubs, clusters and catchments of the area to attract investment, improve competitiveness, support job creation and contribute to an improved quality of life for the people who live there. The lack of high-quality connectivity between the regions within the AEC has been a major impediment to its development as a counter-balance to Dublin and the East coast. The improvement of regional connectivity along the Western seaboard, linking together the major urban areas to allow the AEC achieve its potential, is a major priority.*'

Donegal County Council will continue to campaign for the realisation of the potential of the region, and its ambitions for the County, through its participation in the North West Strategic Growth Partnership, the Shared Island initiative and other relevant forums. This is reflected in the 'Key Strategic Objective' below.

2.4 Key Strategic Objectives of the County Development Plan

S-O-1	To plan for population growth to 183,500 people by 2031 in line with the NPF, and to seek to realise a further population uplift of upwards of 200,000 people by 2040.
S-O-2	To assert County Donegal as having a key role within the area of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly, including realising the potential of the North-West City Region and the Atlantic Economic Corridor.
S-O-3	To support growth of the County through an 'All of County Strategy' in order to ensure effective development and to harness particular strengths and opportunities that exist within the different areas of the County.
S-O-4	To support the development and implementation of a sustainable economic model for County Donegal embracing growth in areas such as innovation, research and development, rural diversification, tourism initiatives, energy advances and the promotion of sustainable start up enterprises as an integral component of accelerating socio-economic growth throughout the County and in a Regional, Cross Border and National context.
S-O-5	To prioritise regeneration and renewal of the County's towns, villages and rural areas in order to support vibrant and strengthened communities and drivers of economic growth.
S-O-6	To protect, enhance and appropriately harness the unique quality and diversity of the environment in the County, through a wide range of measures, supported by proper planning and sustainable development.
S-O-7	To progress and ultimately carry out/implement the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal (TEN-T PRIPD) as one of critical strategic importance to Donegal subject to the granting of the required statutory approvals for same and the terms and conditions of any such approvals (if granted).

Chapter 3

Core Strategy



Chapter 3 – Core Strategy

3.1 Background and Legislative Context

The Core Strategy gives spatial expression to the housing, population and employment parameters of the Development Plan and identifies a settlement hierarchy for the purposes of distributing the quantum of the land requirements for these uses across the County.

Consistency between the core strategy and regional and national policy is mandatory and in this regard Section 10(1A) of the Planning Act 2000 (as amended) [‘the Act’] requires that the Development Plan includes a core strategy which: *“shows that the development objectives in the development plan are consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and with specific planning policy requirements specified in guidelines under subsection (1) of section 28”*.

The required elements of a Development Plan core strategy are specified in Section 10(2A) of the Act, thus a core strategy must:-

- a) Demonstrate the consistency of the housing strategy and the development plan with national and regional spatial strategy and policy;
- b) Take account of national and regional housing and population targets;
- c) Provide details of areas already zoned for residential use or mixed-use that includes residential development, in hectares and housing unit numbers;
- d) Provide details of areas proposed to be zoned for residential use or mixed-use that includes residential development, in hectares, together with details of how such proposals accord with national policy for phased development;
- e) Demonstrate that in setting out retail objectives, the planning authority has had regard to any statutory guidelines under section 28 that relate to retail development; and
- f) Set out a settlement hierarchy that includes details of projected population growth of all urban and rural settlements and rural areas together with details of road and rail infrastructure.

In addition to the foregoing, Section 10(2B) of the Act requires that certain roads infrastructure and rural areas in respect of which planning guidelines relating to sustainable rural housing issued by the Minister under section 28 apply, be represented in the core strategy by a diagrammatic map (see map 3.3 below).

3.2 Policy Context

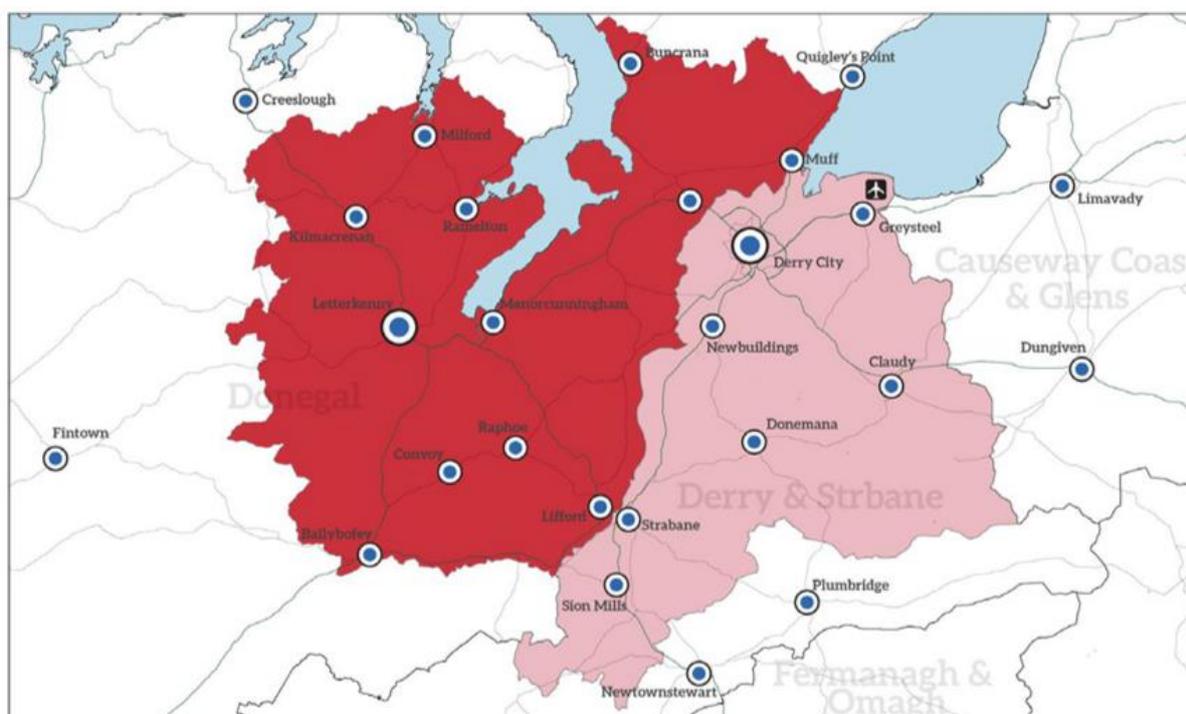
3.2.1 Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework (NPF)

Letterkenny is placed at the top of the settlement hierarchy having regard to:

- the identification in the NPF of Letterkenny as a Regional Centre in the northwest and its function as a key element of the ‘North-West City Region’ in conjunction with Derry City and Strabane;
- its critical mass relative to other settlements in the County.

3.2.2 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2020-2032

In line with the NPF, the RSES places considerable emphasis on the collaborative structures that have been put in place through the 'North-West Strategic Growth Partnership' arrangements between Donegal and Derry City and Strabane District Councils and advocates for the development of the North-West Metropolitan City Region (Letterkenny/Derry/Strabane) as a key enabler of regional growth and prosperity. As part of the development of the City Region, the RSES contains a Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan (RGCS) for Letterkenny but also notes that other significant settlements within Donegal are located within the metropolitan area (see map 3.2 below which shows details of settlements within the metropolitan city region). In addition to the larger or more strategically located settlements, the RSES also makes it clear (RPO 3.13¹) that the role of smaller and medium-sized towns must be supported, given their important role in employment and service provision.



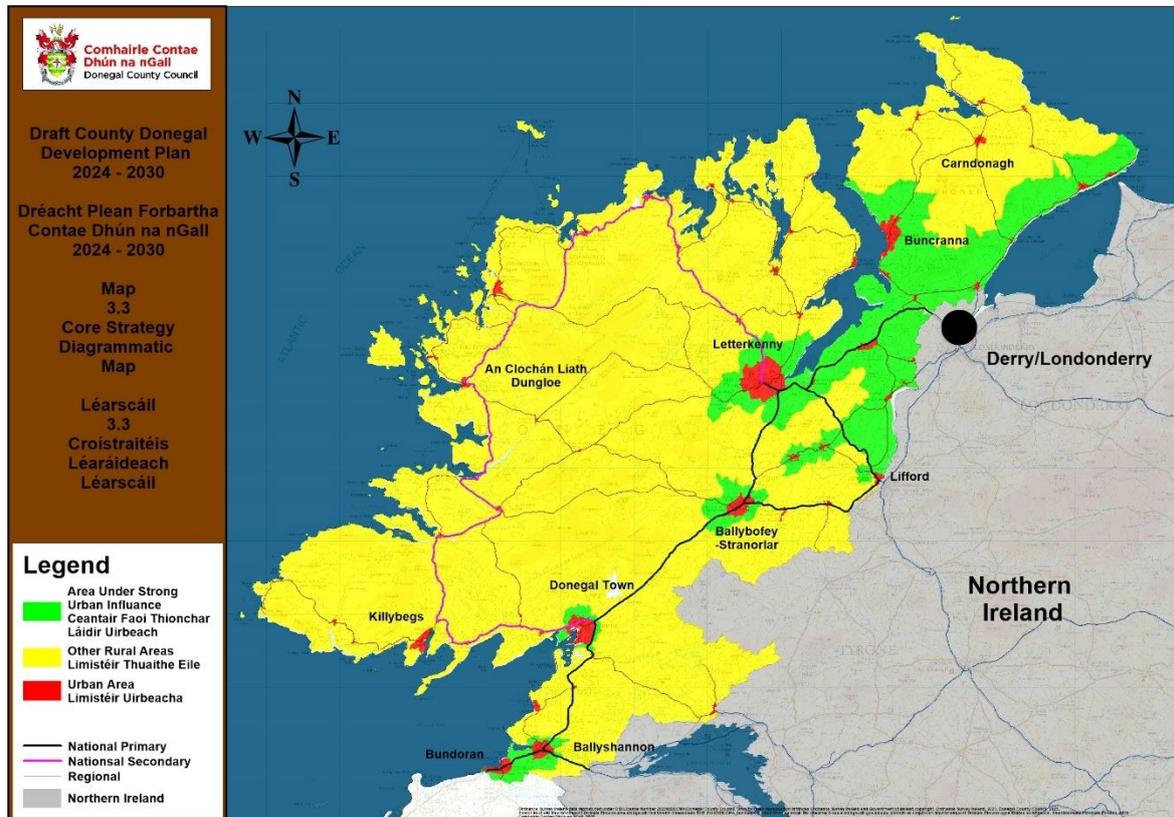
Map 3.1 - North West Metropolitan City Region (Source: RSES 2020-2032)

Having regard to the provisions of both the NPF and RSES, the Core Strategy of this Plan strives to deliver appropriate levels of growth throughout the settlement structure of County Donegal, on a proportionate basis and having regard to the particular characteristics and functions of settlements. The growth targets across the County, informed by (inter alia) the transitional population projections for Donegal as set out in the NPF and the ESRI NPF scenario projected new household demand, are set out hereunder in Table 3.5 – Core Strategy Table.

As an accompaniment to the numerical targets for zoning and population growth set out in the Core Strategy table, the settlement hierarchy set out in Fig 3.1 (and described further in Section 3.3

¹ RPO 3.13 – “To support the role of smaller and medium-sized towns, which demonstrate an important role in terms of service provision and employment for their catchments within the economic function of the county. Such settlements will be identified through the Development Plan process as part of the Settlement Hierarchy and the Core Strategy.”

below) effectively sets out the strategy for growth in Donegal, providing placed-based information and reasoning to inform the Core Strategy projections.



Map 3.2 - Core Strategy Diagrammatic Map

3.3 Settlement Hierarchy

Section 4.3 of the NPF acknowledges the unique and complex nature of Ireland's urban structure and states that in order to achieve more balanced and sustainable development, some settlements will need to attract increased population (such as towns that are strong employment and service centres), whereas others will need more jobs, amenities or better transport links (in effect, a need to reverse the stagnation or decline of many smaller urban centres). The settlement hierarchy below approaches the development of Donegal's urban structure in this manner; recognising that there are clearly defined economic drivers and service centres in the County, but there are also smaller settlements with clearly identifiable strengths and functions that should be built upon over the lifetime of this Plan (e.g. Gaeltacht settlements, settlements with particular opportunities arising on foot of their location proximate to the border with Northern Ireland, settlements located along the Wild Atlantic Way tourist route and settlements that are 'satellites' of larger towns). Furthermore, there is a considerable number of smaller settlements where the focus must be on regeneration rather than seeking to significantly increase population levels. The settlement strategy therefore seeks to approach the urban structure in a balanced and proportionate manner, and the Core Strategy table reflects this.

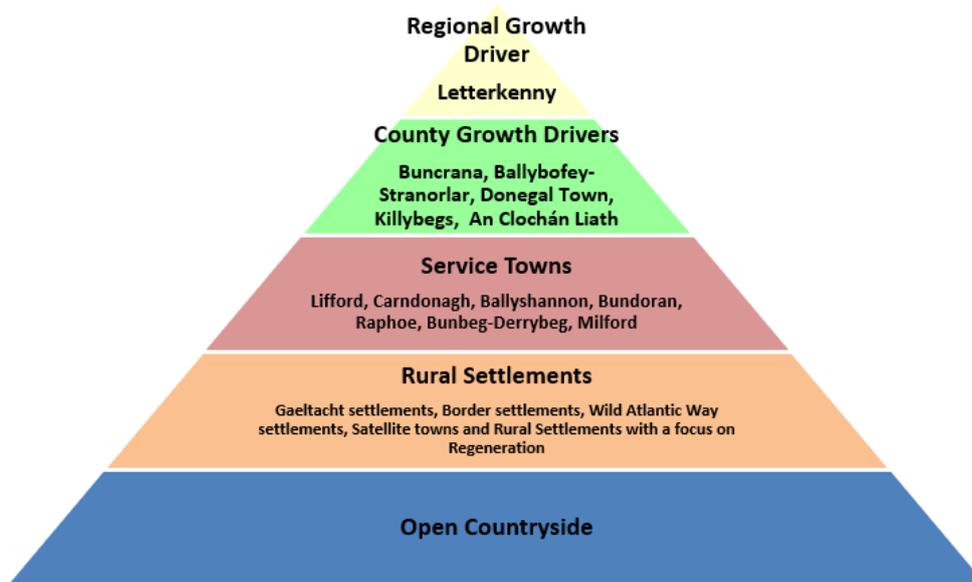


Figure 3.1 - Settlement Hierarchy

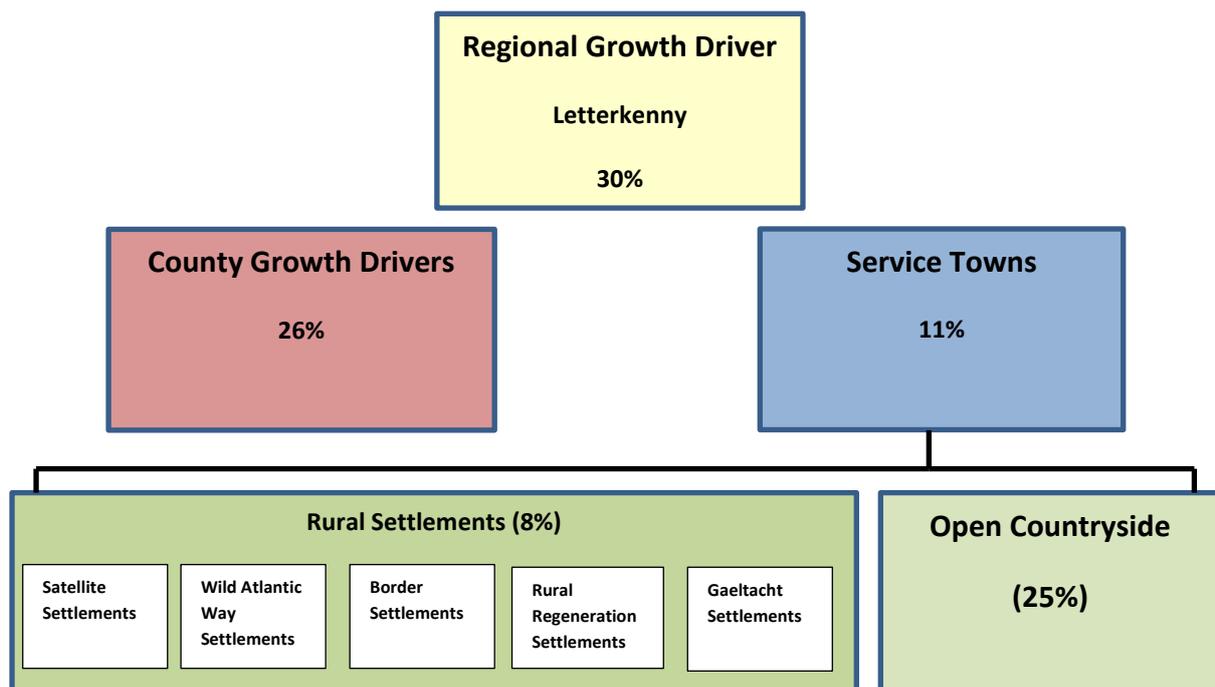


Figure 3.2 – Distribution of Projected Population Growth

3.3.1 Letterkenny Regional Growth Centre

Letterkenny is the economic engine of County Donegal and is designated in the National Planning Framework (NPF) as a Regional Centre. Furthermore, Letterkenny is a key component of the 'North West City Region' (along with Derry City and Strabane in Northern Ireland), the fourth largest urban agglomeration on the island of Ireland, and is thus critical in terms of achieving balanced regional development as envisaged in the NPF. This Core Strategy recognises this opportunity and places Letterkenny at the top of the settlement hierarchy, thereby seeking to consolidate the Regional

Centre and to continue building the critical mass needed to support additional employment, housing and service opportunities. The allocation of 30% of targeted growth to the Regional Centre also has regard to the existing level of population within the town, to employment opportunities therein, and to the extent of available social and community infrastructure, inclusive of schools/third level institutions and the University Hospital.

3.3.2 County Growth Drivers

Donegal is a geographically extensive and predominantly rural County. Whilst Letterkenny is acknowledged as the main centre of employment, the smaller settlements throughout the County play a crucial and oftentimes specialised role. This Core Strategy recognises those important roles and identifies five towns that are key to driving growth in their respective localities and indeed beyond, and having regard also to their servicing capacities. The Strategy allocates over one quarter of the total projected growth to these settlements. The rationale for doing so is set out below.

Name of Settlement and Proposed Housing Allocation	Rationale underpinning proposed Housing Allocation
Buncrana (566 units)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second largest settlement in County • Proximity to Derry and Strategic Position as part of North West City Region
Ballybofey-Stranorlar (566 units)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third largest settlement • Set to benefit from enhanced connectivity (TEN-T) and environmental improvements (SEED project) • Potential for development locally and for town to act as a base for those working in other nearby settlements
Donegal Town (566 units)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant development and investment in recent times – need to build upon this success. • Key service and tourism destination
Killybegs (151 units)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary fishing port in the State • Key role to play in the offshore renewable energy sector and marine resource innovation generally. • Considerable potential as a base for tourism
An Clochán Liath (151 units)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant service town, serving wide hinterland. • Gaeltacht service town • Potential to build on existing investment in the town and further develop the employment base

3.3.3 Service Towns

The service towns of **Lifford, Carndonagh, Ballyshannon, Bundoran, Raphoe, Bunbeg-Derrybeg, and Milford** all provide important local retail and employment functions. This Core Strategy recognises these important roles and, having regard also to their servicing capacities, allocates 11% of the total projected growth to these settlements. The rationale for doing so is set out below.

Name of Settlement and Proposed Housing Allocation	Rationale underpinning proposed Housing Allocation
Lifford (120 units)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All these settlements provide important local retail, service and employment functions • Specialised roles exist within a number of settlements; e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tourism in Bundoran, Carndonagh - Potential to examine cross-border opportunities in Lifford - Focus on business development in Bunbeg-Derrybeg - Heritage and tourism potential of Ballyshannon and Raphoe - Local service function of Milford; Council offices, retail etc.
Carndonagh (120 units)	
Ballyshannon (120 units)	
Bundoran (120 units)	
Raphoe (120 units)	
Bunbeg-Derrybeg (120 units)	
Milford (120 units)	

3.3.4 Rural Settlements and Open Countryside

Donegal is a predominantly rural county and this Plan recognises that there will be a need to accommodate genuine rural housing need whilst having regard to environmental, landscape and technical constraints and also to the viability of our smaller towns and villages. The Core Strategy/Settlement Strategy therefore allocates an appropriate housing target to the smaller rural settlements and open countryside to ensure that rural communities are supported and maintained.

3.4 Housing Need Demand Assessment and the Housing Strategy

National Policy Objective 37 of the NPF requires that a Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA) be undertaken for each Local Authority Area, in order to correlate and accurately align future housing requirements. The HNDA is aimed primarily at informing housing policies, housing strategies and associated land use zoning policies, as well as assisting in determining where new policy areas or investment programmes are to be developed.

Government guidance issued in respect of Core Strategies² notes that the Council's Housing Strategy will remain the vehicle to address overall housing needs within the County; however, the Housing Strategy must be informed by the Core Strategy in terms of overall population and housing land requirements. The Core Strategy presented herein therefore outlines housing delivery targets needed to meet demand over the lifetime of the Development Plan, whilst the detail of the Housing Strategy and HNDA are presented in Chapter 6.1.

² 'Guidance Note on Core Strategies', Dept. of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2010)



3.5 Population Trends

Census 2016 recorded a population of 159,192 in County Donegal. The preliminary results of the 2022 census indicate that the population of the County has increased by 4.5% (7,129 persons), giving a total population of 166,321. This sees a welcome reversal from the population decline recorded in 2016 (see table 3.1 below) and puts the County back on a growth trajectory, albeit at a rate approximately half that seen between 2006 and 2011.

Table 3.1 – Population Change in County Donegal between 2006 and 2022

Year	2006	2011	2016	2022 ³
Population	147,264	161,137	159,192	166,321
Actual Change	-	13,873	-1,945	7,129
% Change	-	9.4%	-1.2%	4.5%

3.6 Population Projections and Housing Supply Target Methodology Guidelines for Planning Authorities

Population projections are a key input into the Development Plan process and provide the strategic context for plan preparation. The National Planning Framework (NPF) and associated 'Implementation Roadmap'⁴ (refer Table 3.2 below) provide projected population targets for County Donegal and in turn these figures inform the population projections in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. Whilst these projections are useful for medium to longer term planning purposes, they are not deemed particularly appropriate for shorter-term Development Plan cycles of 6 years. To address these shorter-term requirements, statutory guidelines for incorporating housing supply targets into Development Plans (entitled the '*Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities*') were issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government

³ Based on preliminary census data for 2022

⁴ Implementation Roadmap for the National Planning Framework, DHLGH, July 2018

and Heritage in 2020 and these guidelines have been used to inform the housing supply targets for the County over the lifetime of this Development Plan, which are set out in Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.2-Transitional County Population Projections to 2031 (Source: Implementation Roadmap for the National Planning Framework)

Regions and Counties	2016	2026	2031
North-West			
Donegal	159,000	173,500-176,500	179,500-183,500

Table 3.3 – Housing Supply Targets for CDP 2024-2030

Donegal County Council		Annual Average Households	Total Households
A	ESRI NPF scenario projected new household demand 2017 to Q4 2030	841	10,929
B	Actual new housing supply 2017 to Q4 2023 (estimated future delivery for Q3 and Q4, 2022 and for all of 2023 based on historical trends)	472 (3302/7, to cover the seven-year period from 2017 to the end of 2023)	3,302
C	Homeless households (latest data), and unmet demand as at most recent Census	N/A	51
D	Plan Housing Target = Total (A-B+C) (Projected ESRI NPF demand – new completions) + Unmet demand	1280 (7678/6, to cover plan period commencing Jan 2024 to end 2029)	7678

The housing supply target set out in Table 3.3 above indicates that there is a need to deliver a minimum of 1280 new units per annum in County Donegal to meet demand. This will require a significant increase in housing output over and above that delivered in recent years (see Table 3.4 below) and this Development Plan has therefore been drafted to ensure that optimal conditions exist for sustainable housing delivery in the County going forward.

Table 3.4 - New Dwelling Completions 2016-2021 (source: CSO)

New Dwelling Completions in Donegal, 2016-2021	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
	289	363	433	432	580	479

Table 3.5 - Core Strategy Table

Population and Housing							Land Zoning Required						
Settlement Type / Layer in Settlement Structure	Settlement Name	Census 2016 Population	Census 2016 (%)	Housing Target (Units)	Population Target 2030	Housing Target (%)	Existing Zoning (Ha)	Remaining capacity of existing zoning(Ha)	Zoned land Required (ha)	Target Residential Density (units per Ha)	Infill Lands provided for ⁵ (ha)	Remaining non-infill lands (ha)	Shortfall/ Excess of Zoned Land
Regional Growth driver (30%) ~2303 units													
	Letterkenny	19274	12	2303	25434	30	70 ⁶	62	57	35	62.51 ⁷	24.57	+30
County Growth Drivers/Self-Sustaining Growth Town: (~26%) ~2000 units													
	Buncrana	6785	4.3	566	8342	7.3	65	53	16.2	35	46.83 ⁸	1.17	+31.8
	Ballybofey-Stranorlar	4852	3	566	6409	7.3	47.36 ⁹	47.36	16.2	35	49.56 ¹⁰	2.63	+35.99
	Donegal Town	2618	1.6	566	4175	7.3	24.96	16	16.2	35	¹¹		
	Killybegs	1236	0.8	151	1651	2	12.98	12.98	4.3	35	¹¹		
	An Clochan Liath (Dungloe)	1164	0.7	151	1579	2	15.41	14.45	4.3	35	¹¹		
	Totals for County Growth Drivers	16,655	10.4	2000	22156	25.9	235.71		114.2	-			
Service Towns: (~11%) ~845 units													
	Lifford ¹²	1626	1	121	1959	1.57	0	N/A	3.5	35	N/A	N/A	-3.5
	Carndonagh	2471	1.6	121	2804	1.57	24.81	22.82	3.5	35	¹¹		
	Ballyshannon	2299	1.4	121	2632	1.57	22.78	22.62	3.5	35	¹¹		

⁵ A minimum 40% infill lands (i.e. within CSO boundary) are required in Letterkenny in accordance with provisions of the RSES

⁶ As per CDP 2018-2024

⁷ As per emerging draft Letterkenny LAP and Local Transport Plan 2023-2029

⁸ As per emerging draft Buncrana Plan and based on first phase residential sites and opportunity sites

⁹ As per Seven Strategic Towns LAP 2018-2024

¹⁰ As per emerging draft Ballybofey/Stranorlar Plan and based on first phase residential sites and opportunity sites

¹¹ To be determined through review of SSTLAP 2018-2024

¹² Given their limited scale and character, these settlements do not contain residential zonings. Rather, the frameworks contain limited opportunities for development that will be managed in accordance with the principles of compact and sequential growth.

	Bundoran	1963	1.2	121	2296	1.57	22.93 ¹³	22.93	3.5	35	5.2 ¹⁴	0	+1.7
	Raphoe ¹²	1089	0.7	120	1419	1.57	0	N/A	3.5	35	N/A	N/A	-3.5
	Bunbeg-Derrybeg ¹²	1491	0.9	120	1821	1.57	0	N/A	3.5	35	N/A	N/A	-3.5
	Milford ¹²	1037	0.7	121	1370	1.57	0	N/A	3.5	35	N/A	N/A	-3.5
	Totals for Service Towns	11976	7.5	845	14301	10.99	70.52	68.37	24.5	-			
Rural Areas (Settlements): (~8%) ~610 units													
Open Countryside: (25%) ~1920 units													

¹³ As per CDP 2018-2024

¹⁴ As per emerging draft Bundoran Plan and based on first phase residential sites

3.7 Retail Objectives

Refer Chapter 7, 'Economic Development'.

Objectives

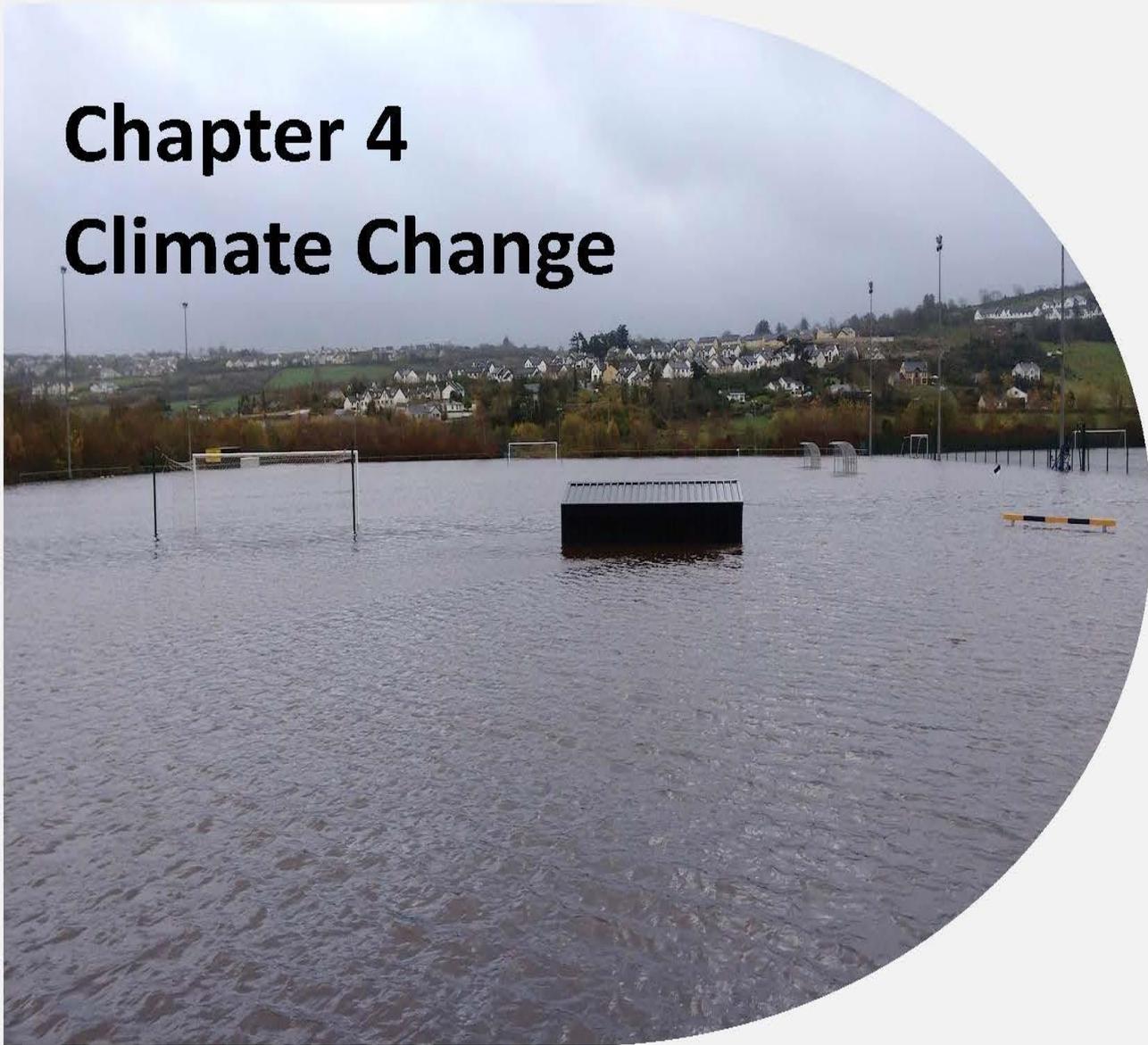
CS-O-1	To support the growth of Letterkenny and its metropolitan area as the key driver of population and economic growth in the County.
CS-O-2	To support the growth of a network of 'County Growth Drivers and 'Service Towns' as key locations of population growth (providing for an additional approximate 5500 persons by 2030.
CS-O-3	To support vibrant 'Rural Settlements' and 'Open Countryside' by providing for an additional population of approximately 7000 persons by 2030.
CS-O-4	To seek alignment of investment in infrastructure with the priorities for growth established in the settlement structure unless, in specific instances, environmental constraints prevent such investment, environmental issues demand investment elsewhere or innovative opportunities arise for strategic investment of regional significance at alternative locations.
CS-O-5	To pursue opportunities for further investment in essential infrastructure.
CS-O-6	To coordinate and promote the delivery of key roads and access infrastructure (including the A5 Western Transport Corridor and A6 road projects, the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal and improvements to the TEN-T network generally and the Bridgend Bypass Project) with the other relevant authorities including partners in the North West Strategic Growth Partnership and within the Northern and Western Regional Assembly so as to result in effective strategic connections to and throughout the County.
CS-O-7	<p>To support economic growth throughout the County through:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The establishment of Letterkenny as a centre for economic growth across the sectors, in particular through the promotion of the existing business park, consolidation of the town centre including the prioritising of improvements to public realm, the delivery of key road and access infrastructure, through a proactive approach to enable the delivery of key regeneration sites. To continue to support 'County Growth Drivers and 'Service Towns' as critical drivers of growth outside of Letterkenny. To continue to support the regeneration, renewal and development of the County's towns and villages over the life of the Plan. To continue to identify and harness opportunities arising as a consequence of the impact of Brexit for new economic investment particularly within the border region.

Policies

CS-P-1	That within the boundaries of settlements identified Settlement Framework boundaries, applications for development will be assessed in the light of all relevant material planning considerations including any identified land use zonings, availability of infrastructure, relevant policies of the Development Plan/Local Area Plan as applicable, other regional and national guidance/policy and relevant environmental designations
CS-P-2	To guide development of towns in a sequential manner, outwards from the core area in order to maximise the utility of existing and future infrastructure provision, promote the achievement of sustainability, avoid 'leap- frogging' to more edge-of-centre and edge-of-town areas and to make better use of under-utilised land. This policy shall not apply to small-scale business enterprises (excluding retail development) of circa 1 to 5 employees.
CS-P-3	To support and facilitate the provision of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. additional wastewater treatment capacity and water supply upgrades b. public realm improvements, c. new/enhanced civic, cultural, green, amenity, and recreational infrastructure, d. initiatives to tackle vacancy and dereliction e. active and sustainable transport infrastructure and visitor facilities in our coastal/Wild Atlantic Way settlements.

Chapter 4

Climate Change



Chapter 4 – Climate Change

4.1 Introduction

Climate change refers to the change in climate patterns that can be attributed largely to the increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂). The causes of such increases have been well documented at international and national level and are generally attributed to the use of fossil fuels. The effects of climate change have been witnessed locally with several extreme events in recent years. Notable examples include: the Letterkenny University Hospital flood (2013); and the Inishowen Peninsula Floods (2017). The climate projections for the next century indicate that observed climate trends will continue and intensify over the coming decades.

For Ireland, the key long term climate change trends are:

- Temperatures are increasing and are expected to continue to increase everywhere and across all seasons;
- When compared with temperature, projections of precipitation are less certain. However, significant reductions in levels of average precipitation are expected in Summer and Autumn while projections indicate the increased occurrence of extreme precipitation events, particularly during winter; and
- Sea levels will continue to increase by up to 0.81m by 2100.

Ireland can also expect to see:

- Increases in the frequency and intensity of summer heatwaves, extreme temperatures and drought;
- Reductions in the frequency of frost and snowfall;
- An increase in the duration of the growing season (phenological cycle).

4.2 Legal and Policy Context

Ireland has international, European and national commitments to put in place a decarbonisation pathway to 2030 consistent with the adoption of a net zero carbon emissions target at EU level by 2050. This multi-faceted policy framework is set out in tables 4.1 to 4.4 inclusive at the end of this Chapter. Section 10(2)(n) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (As Amended) [‘the Act’] mandates all planning authorities to include an objective in development plans for the promotion of sustainable transportation strategies in urban and rural areas. The Development Plan has an important role to play in the achievement of the national and international objectives. It can do so by both supporting development that helps to mitigate climate change (eg. renewable energy) and ensuring that development adapts to the effects of climate change (eg. ensuring that vulnerable developments are not allowed to proceed in flood risk areas).

Mitigatory measures in this Plan include:

- Allocating 64% of the Core Strategy projected growth to built-up areas comprised of Letterkenny (30%), 5 County Growth Drivers (26%) and Rural Settlements (8%);
- Prioritising compact growth in the preparation of town plans and general policy;
- Identifying active travel requirements in the preparation of town plan development zoning and in general policy;
- Supporting sustainable transportation eg. in policy support for EV charging points and town centre parking policy;
- Facilitating renewable energy;
- Promoting regeneration of towns and villages and the reuse of vacant and derelict buildings;

- The integration of sustainable water management solutions such as Water Sensitive Urban Design and Nature Based Solutions into developments (e.g. green roofs, porous pavements/green surfaces, rainwater harvesting, planted areas, rain gardens, swales, filter strips, detention basins/ponds, constructed wetlands); and
- Promoting mainstreaming of climate change in decision making.

Adaptation measures in this Plan include the following:

- Flood risk management
- Promotion of nature-based systems for water management services
- Enhancement and protection of green infrastructure and biodiversity

As well as the above-noted policy measures contained in the rest of this Plan, the following general objectives are included to underline the Authority's broad approach to this issue.

4.3 Objectives

CA-O-1	To promote sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas including the promotion of measures to— <ol style="list-style-type: none"> reduce energy demand in response to the likelihood of increases in energy and other costs due to long-term decline in non-renewable resources, reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions; and address the necessity of adaptation to climate change, taking account of Donegal County Council's Climate Action Plan (within the meaning of section 14B of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015). <p>in particular, having regard to location, layout and design of new development.</p>
CA-O-2:	To support and implement: the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); the relevant National Planning Framework climate change National Policy Objectives (NPOs); the national climate change objectives contained in the Climate Action Plan 2023; and the Overarching Environmental Regional Policy Objectives and relevant Regional Policy Objectives of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy; and the actions contained within Donegal County Council's Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 (or any updates of any of the foregoing).

Table 4.1: International and European Climate Change Policies and Agreements

International and European Climate Change Policies and Agreements
<p>United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)(1992) The framework's objective is 'to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system'</p>
<p>Kyoto Protocol 1997 The Protocol is based on the principle of common responsibilities: it acknowledges that individual countries have different capacities in combating climate change owing to varying levels of economic development</p>
<p>EU Adaptation Strategy The strategy aimed to make Europe more climate resilient. By taking a coherent approach and providing for improved coordination, it aimed to enhance the preparedness and capacity of all governance levels to respond to the impacts of climate change. The strategy has been a reference point to prepare Europe for the climate impacts to come, at all levels</p>

Paris Agreement

The Paris Agreement entered its implementation phase in 2020, and in doing so replaced the 1997 Kyoto Protocol as the framework for achievement of the objective of the UNFCCC. The Paris Agreement established goals relating to temperature, climate resilience and financial flows. Specifically.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2015

The 17 SDGs, adopted by all United Nations member states, at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, address the environmental, economic, and social challenges that all countries need to tackle by 2030 to achieve inclusive, people-centred, and sustainable development with no one left behind. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests. SDG 13 refers to the need to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

EU Climate and Energy Framework 2021 to 2030

This includes three components to enable progress on the mitigation of emissions: the EU Emissions Trading System, the Effort Sharing Regulation and the Land use, land use change and forestry regulation. Each component covers specific activities leading to GHG emissions and removals. These three pieces of climate legislation are to be updated with a view to implementing the net greenhouse gas emissions reduction target set out in the 'EU Green deal'.

EU Green Deal (2020)

The European Green Deal is a set of policy initiatives by the European Commission with the overarching aim of making Europe climate neutral in 2050. First climate action initiatives under the Green Deal include:

- A proposal to introduce European Climate Law to enshrine the 2050 climate-neutrality objective into EU law.
- European Climate Pact to engage citizens and all parts of society in climate action.
- 2030 Climate Target Plan to further reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% and towards 55% by 2030 (as opposed to 60% by 2050 under the Paris agreement)

REPowerEU Plan (2022)

Proposed by the EU to increase the resilience of the EU-wide energy system. REPower EU is based on two pillars:

- Eliminating dependence on Russian gas before 2030; and
- Diversifying gas supplies, via higher Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and pipeline imports from non-Russian suppliers, and larger volumes of biomethane and renewable hydrogen production and imports; and, reducing faster the use of fossil fuels in our homes, buildings, industry, and power system, by boosting energy efficiency, increasing renewables and electrification, and addressing infrastructure bottlenecks.

Table 4.2: National Climate Policy Context

National Climate Policy Context**National Policy Position on Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (2014)**

Enshrines in legislation the requirement to transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity-rich, environmentally-sustainable and climate neutral economy by 2050, the. The Act requires local authorities to prepare individual Climate Action Plans to include both mitigation and adaptation measures, and for these to be updated every five years. It provides for annual reviews of the National Climate Action Plan and the development of a national long term climate action strategy every five years.

Climate Action Plan 2023

Commits Ireland to a legally binding target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions no later than 2050, and a reduction of 51% by 2030 (compared to 2018 levels). It includes an overall renewable energy target of 80% by 2030.

Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment Act) 2021

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 requires us, in law, to pursue and achieve no later than 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity-rich, environmentally-sustainable and climate neutral economy. The Act requires local authorities to prepare individual Climate Action Plans to include both mitigation and adaptation measures, and for these to be updated every five years. It provides for annual reviews of the National Climate Action Plan and the development of a national long term climate action strategy every five years.

Project Ireland 2040 (National Planning Framework and National Development Plan)

The National Planning Framework's national strategic outcomes of a Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society (NSO 8), Compact Growth (NSO 1), Sustainable Mobility (NSO 4), and the Sustainable Management of Water, Waste and other Environmental Resources (NSO 9) ensure that climate action is enshrined in spatial planning to enable a national transition to a competitive low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. These outcomes are supported by National Planning Objective 54 – an objective to reduce our carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives, as well as targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

Programme for Government 2020

Strong focus on climate action including a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 7% a year on average over the next 10 years.

Table 4.3: Regional Policy Context

REGIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

The Northern and Western Regional Assembly

The Northern and Western Regional Assembly RSES accords with the European Growth Strategy, PO2-" *A Greener, carbon-free Europe, implementing the Paris Agreement and investing in energy transition, renewables and the fight against climate change.* ", achieved through a suite of Regional Policy Objectives.

Climate Action Regional Office

The Atlantic Seaboard North CARO is one of 4 regional offices and is mandated to:

- Drive Climate Action & Build Capacity within Local Government Sector;
- Coordinate Engagement across Various Agencies and Government Departments;
- Translate Sectoral Efforts to Local Level;
- Build on Climate Action Experience & Expertise

Table 4.4: Local Authority Policy Context

LOCAL AUTHORITY POLICY CONTEXT

Climate Ready Donegal, Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019

Sets out the strategic priorities, measures and responses for adaptation in County Donegal over a 5 year period until 2024, as required by the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015.

Chapter 5 Towns and Villages



Chapter 5 – Town and Villages

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 3: 'Core Strategy' identifies the importance and key role of Donegal's rural communities in contributing to positive growth and economic development throughout the County. County Donegal's rural communities are an asset to be valued and nurtured. The diversity in the opportunities that our rural communities give rise to is significant and has the potential to differentiate the County from other places, particularly in terms of the quality of life offering that is available.

The County's towns and villages are at the centre of rural communities because they are important locations for service delivery, gathering, expression of identity, rural enterprise and social and community supports. This Plan recognises the importance of rural towns and villages in supporting the wider rural community and therefore seeks to enable their revitalisation and regeneration as a key strategic intervention. To this end, the Core Strategy targets some 50% of the projected population growth towards the smaller settlements of the County. This approach is consistent with national policy as contained in the NPF and 'Our Rural Futures, 2021-2025' (Chapter 5: Revitalising Rural Towns and Villages') and regional policy as contained in the RSES (RPO 3.4).

National Policy Objective 18a

Support the proportionate growth of and appropriately designed development in rural towns that will contribute to their regeneration and renewal, including interventions in the public realm, the provision of amenities, the acquisition of sites and the provision of services.

RPO 3.4

To support the regeneration and renewal of small towns and villages in rural areas.

RPO 3.13 supports the role of smaller and medium-sized towns as set out below and requires the identification of in the Development Plan of such settlements in the Core Strategy.

RPO 3.13

To support the role of smaller and medium-sized towns, which demonstrate an important role in terms of service provision and employment for their catchments within the economic function of the county. Such settlements will be identified through the Development Plan process as part of the Settlement Hierarchy and the Core Strategy.

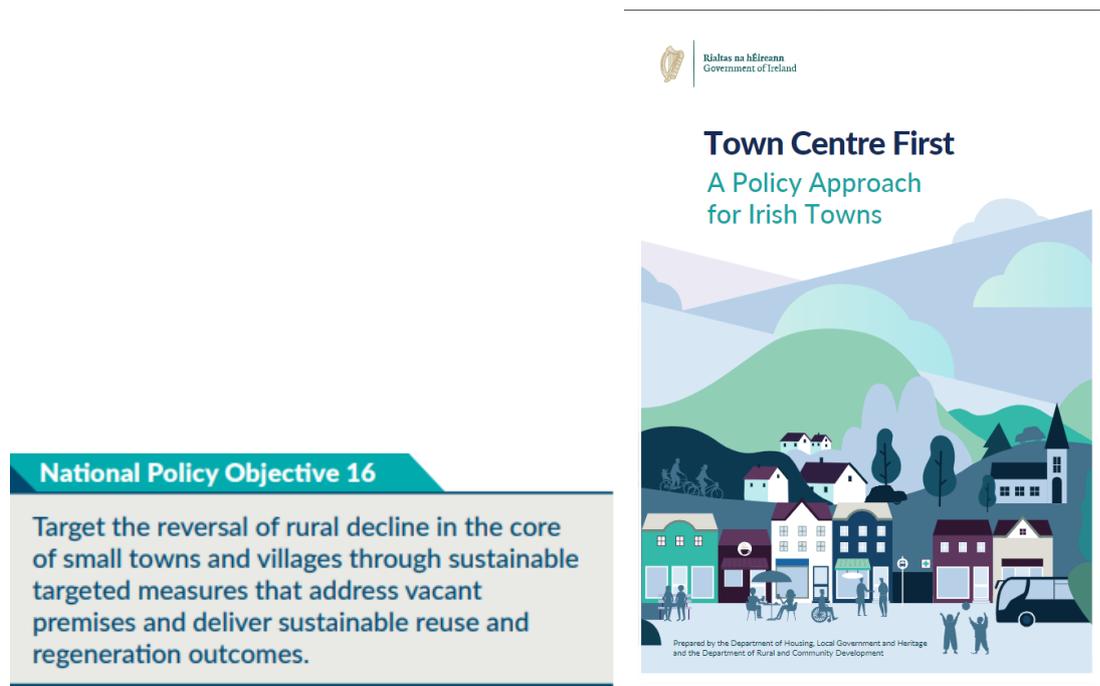
The Core Strategy identifies such settlements in the 'County Growth Drivers' and 'Service Towns' layers of the settlement hierarchy. For clarification, the following settlements also merit recognition in the context of RPO 3.13:

Ailt an Chorráin (Burtonport)	Tourism and Wild Atlantic Way Marine Identified as having a particular potential for town enhancement scheme to strengthen communities.
An Charraig (Carrick)	Tourism and Wild Atlantic Way (including proximity to Sliabh Liag Signature Point).
An Fál Carrach (Falcarragh)	Tourism and Wild Atlantic Way. Irish language. Identified as a having particular potential for appropriate town enhancement scheme to strengthen communities.
Ardara	Tourism (and linked to Glenties) and Wild Atlantic Way. Heritage town with significant built heritage resources.
Ballyliffin	Tourism and Wild Atlantic Way. Identified as having particular potential for appropriate town enhancement scheme to strengthen communities.
Bridgend	Proximity to Northern Ireland border and associated cross border context.
Dunfanaghy	Tourism and Wild Atlantic Way.
Glenties	Tourism (and linked to Ardara). Heritage, Recreation and Culture.
Greencastle	Tourism and Wild Atlantic Way. Marine.
Malin	Tourism and Wild Atlantic Way (including proximity to Malin Head Signature Point).
Moville	Tourism and Wild Atlantic Way. Heritage town with significant built heritage resources. Marine (linked with Greencastle)
Gleann Cholm Cille (Glencolmcille)	Wild Atlantic Way Key town in relation to the Irish Language

Each of the towns identified will present with differing strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats and in many cases, it is recognised that physical infrastructure in terms of water services will represent a challenge to be addressed. The achievement of tangible outcomes in respect of the towns identified will require the buy-in of, and close working relationships between, a range of public, private and community sector organisations on a settlement-by-settlement basis. Notwithstanding, Donegal County Council is committed to these more rural parts of the County and therefore a programme to examine opportunities for appropriate strategic interventions in these areas will be initiated in consultation with all relevant stakeholders including local communities, the private sector and other public sector agencies.

5.2 Prioritisation of Town and Village Cores

As well as broad national and regional policy support for towns and villages generally, national policy also places particular focus and priority on the centres (or cores) of these towns and villages. This approach is encapsulated in the NPF and *Town Centre First – A Policy Approach for Irish Towns* (DHLGH and DRCD, February 2022) and prioritises the regeneration of the centres of town and villages.



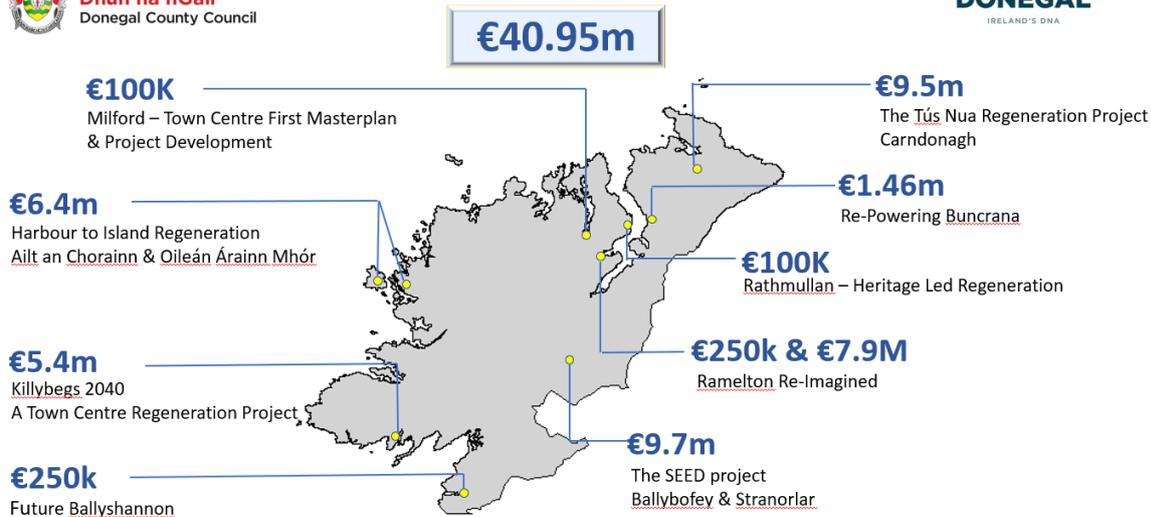
5.2.1 Regeneration Projects

Reflecting the national policy direction, the Council has set up Regeneration and Implementation units respectively in order to drive this programme. Significant progress has already been made in delivering meaningful and transformative projects in the towns and villages of the County.



Comhairle Contae
Dhún na nGall
Donegal County Council

RURAL REGENERATION WORK PROGRAMME



In particular, Donegal County Council has been successful in securing significant funding under the Government's 'Rural Regeneration and Development Fund' for a total of 8 different regeneration projects as set out in the table below and the diagrams at the end of this Chapter. The Council have during 2023 appointed a Town Regeneration Officer and a Vacant Homes Officer as further enhancements of its regeneration focus.

Project Name	Partners	Category	Value	Status
Killybegs 2040	DAFM, Killybegs Tourist Information Centre	Category 1 (Capital)	€6.4m	Construction
Harbour to Island Regeneration (Burtonport & Aranmore)	Comharchumann Oileán Árann Mhór	Category 1 (Capital)	€4.1m	Construction
Burtonport Harbour Redevelopment (Phase 2)	Donegal 2040 DAC, Community, Piers & Harbours Section, DCC	Category 1 (Capital)	€2.3m	Detailed Design
Tús Nua Regeneration Project (Carndonagh)	Spraoi agus Spórt	Category 1 (capital)	€9.5m	Detailed Design
The S.E.E.D Project (Ballybofey & Stranorlar)	B.A.S.I.C.C	Category 1 (Capital)	€9.7m	Detailed Design
Future Ballyshannon	Erne Enterprise Development Co. Ltd & Ballyshannon Regeneration Group	Category 2 (Project Development Work)	€250k	Acquisition & Planning
Ramelton Re-Imagined	Ramelton Regeneration Group & Georgian Society	Category 2 (Project Development work)	€250k	Complete
		Category 1 (Capital)	€7.9m	Construction Tender Stage

Repowering Buncrana	Bunrana Tidy Towns, Derry City & Strabane District Council, RNLI	Category 2 (Project Development Work)	€1.46m	Acquisition & Tender Stage (Design Services)
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***These project are all funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF).**

Donegal County Council has also been regularly successful in securing funding under the Government's 'Town and Village Renewal Scheme'. The latest projects to successfully secure funding were announced in December, 2022:

Carndonagh €121,230: An accessible sheltered space for all the community including families with children of all ages to meet and for older and less mobile members of the community to socialise; sited in Barrack Hill Town Park.

Convoy €435,204: The development of the 'Railway Park' along the former and now disused railway line in Convoy for a wholly accessible inclusive green space and recreational amenity in the centre of the village.

Dungloe €121,905: An upgrade and enhancement of the town centre improving biodiversity, accessibility, walkability, adding colour and vibrancy thereby improving visual amenity and associated public realm.

Manorcunningham €144,900: The upgrade and enhancement of the village centre increasing biodiversity, improving accessibility, adding colour and vibrancy thereby enhancing visual amenity and associated public realm.

Lifford €100,000: Funding under the Streetscape Enhancement Measure in Lifford

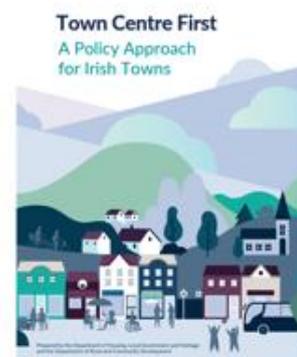
Ballybofey Stranolar – Drumboe woods €49,995: To procure Landscape Architect led integrated design team to develop concept designs (as outlined in feasibility study) and secure requisite and statutory approvals for potential nature based play space and multi-functional outdoor space.

The Town Centre First initiative has provided funding for the commencement of an important regeneration project in **Milford**:



Milford

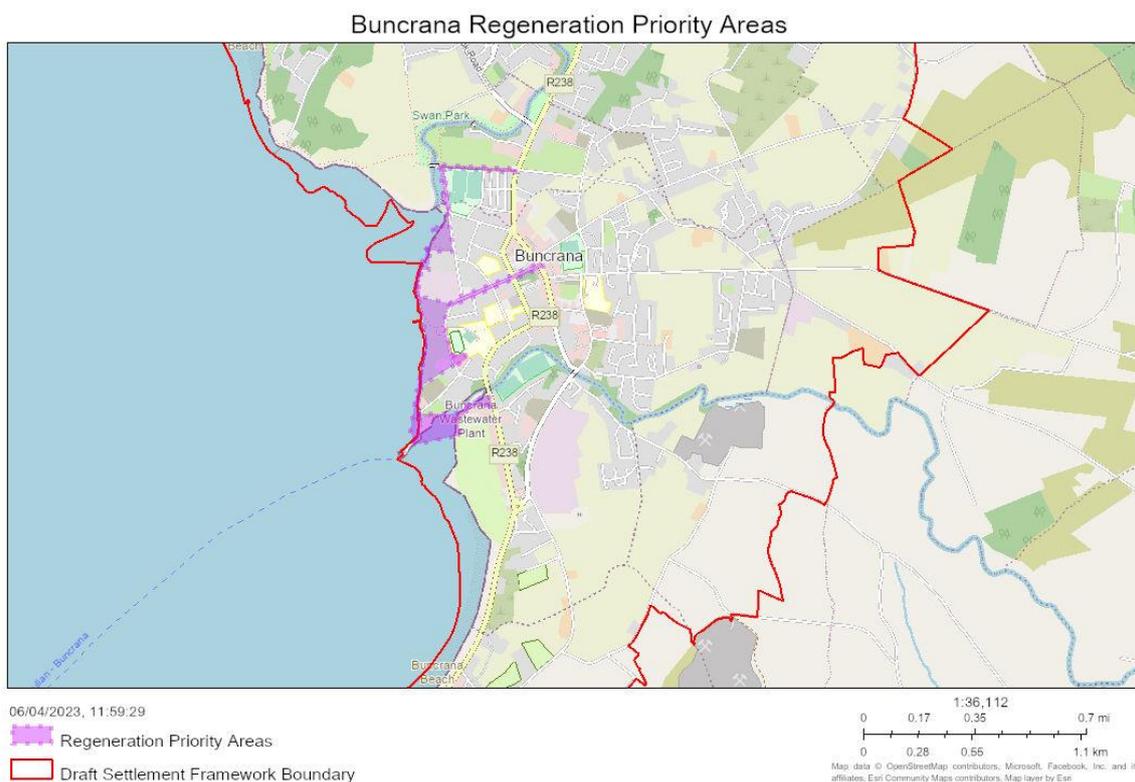
Value: €100k
Funders: DRCD/DCC
Community Partners



Town Centre First MP & Project Development

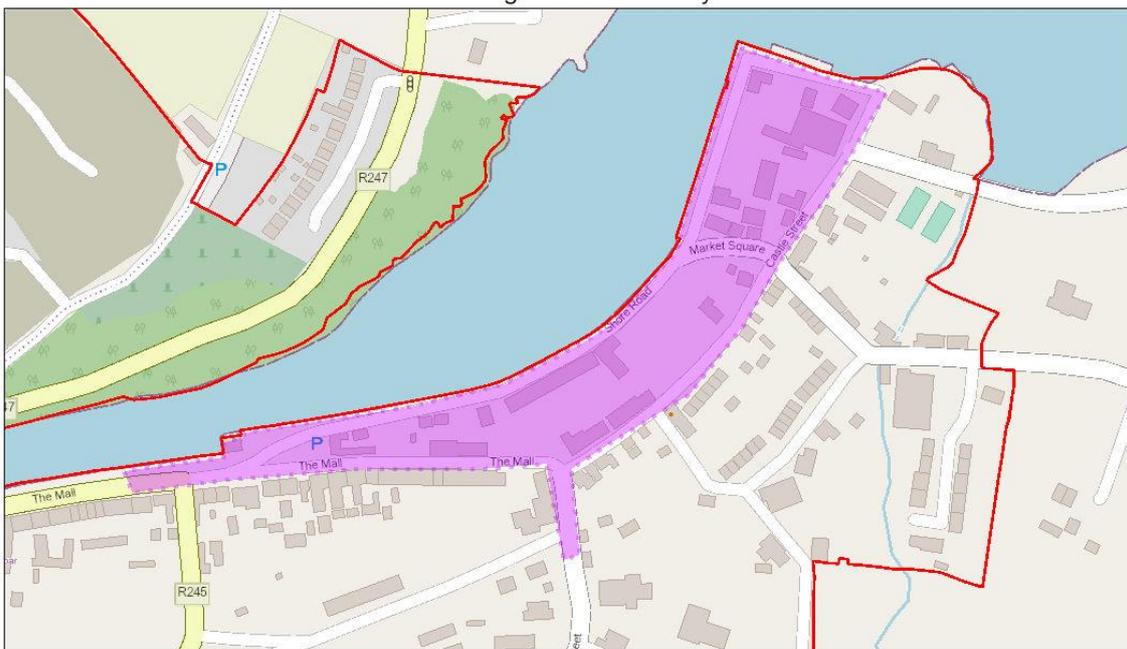
Seven other towns/rural areas of smaller scale have also been identified for and with a focus on regeneration and renewal, primarily through enhancement schemes that will strengthen communities: Churchill, Convoy, Dunkineely, Kilmacrennan, Mountcharles, Newtowncunningham, and St. Johnston.

The figures below identify the broad areas of focus of the key regeneration projects currently being progressed by Donegal County Council in conjunction with partners. The boundaries are not definitive. They are intended to illustrate the key areas of focus but it should be noted that the projects may extend beyond the identified areas.



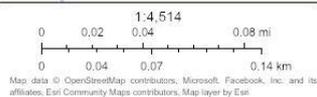
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Ramelton Regeneration Priority Area



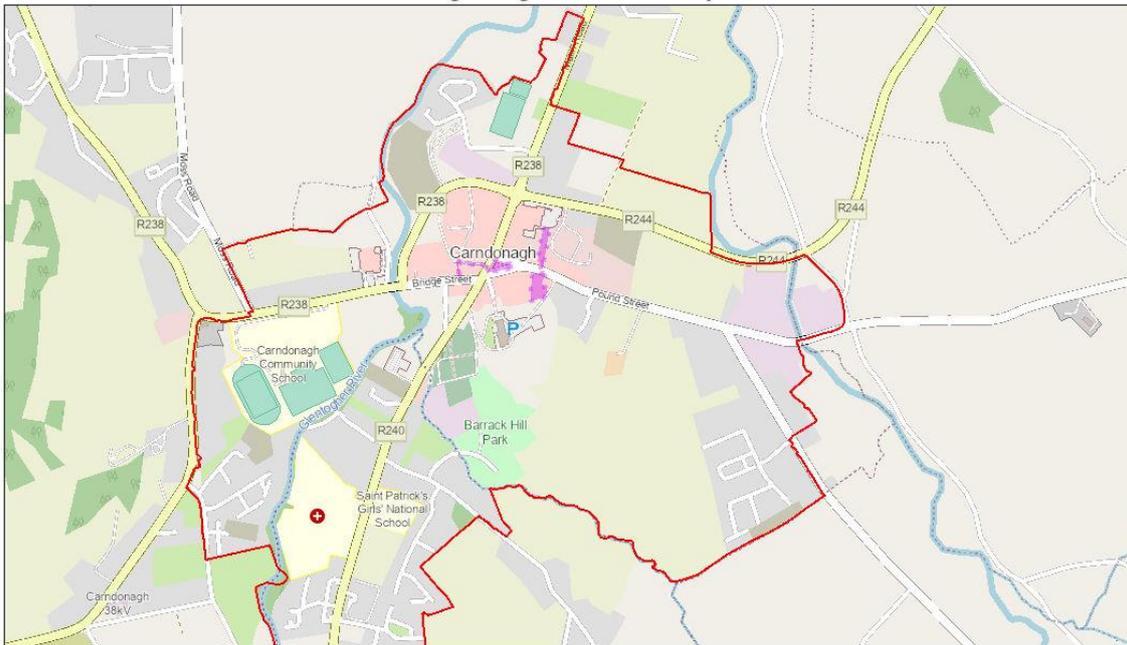
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- Draft Settlement Framework Boundary
- Regeneration Priority Areas



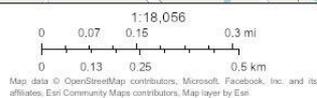
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Carndonagh Regeneration Priority Areas



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- Regeneration Priority Areas
- Draft Settlement Framework Boundary



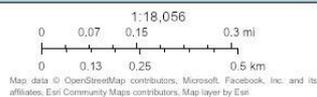
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Rathmullan Regeneration Priority Areas



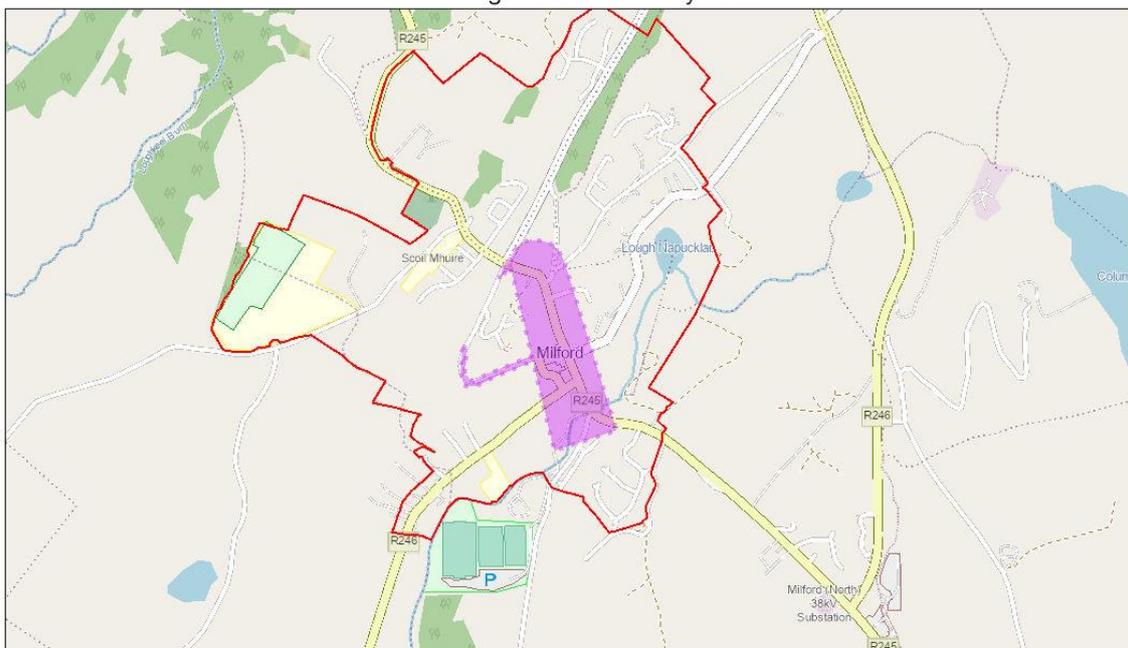
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- Regeneration Priority Areas
- Draft Settlement Framework Boundary



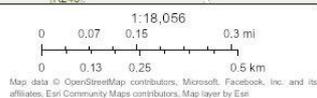
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Milford Regeneration Priority Area



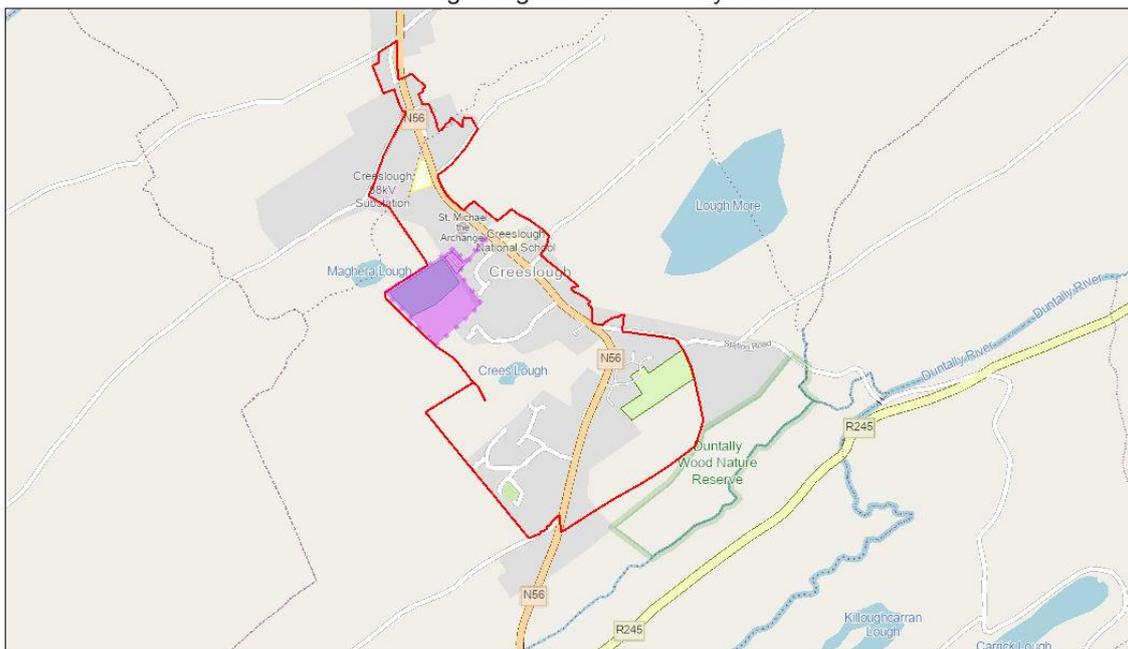
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- Regeneration Priority Areas
- Draft Settlement Framework Boundary



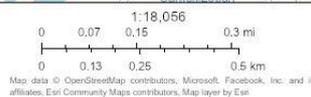
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Creeslough Regeneration Priority Area



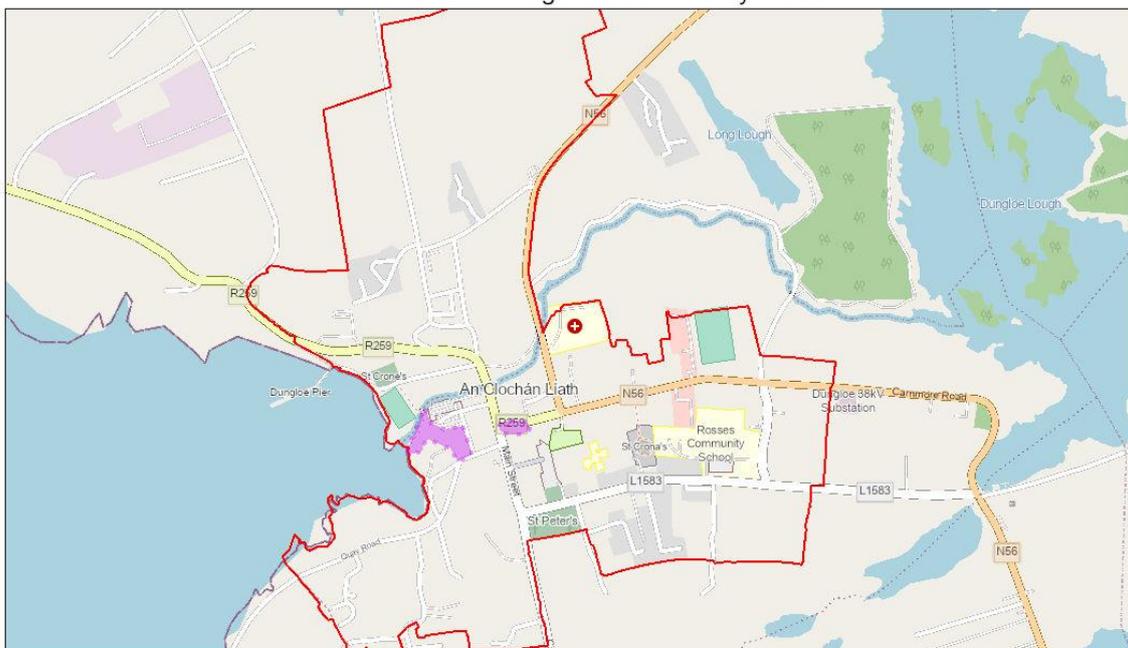
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- Regeneration Priority Areas
- Draft Settlement Framework Boundary



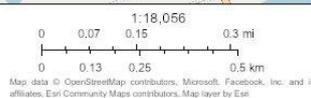
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An Clochán Liath Regeneration Priority Areas

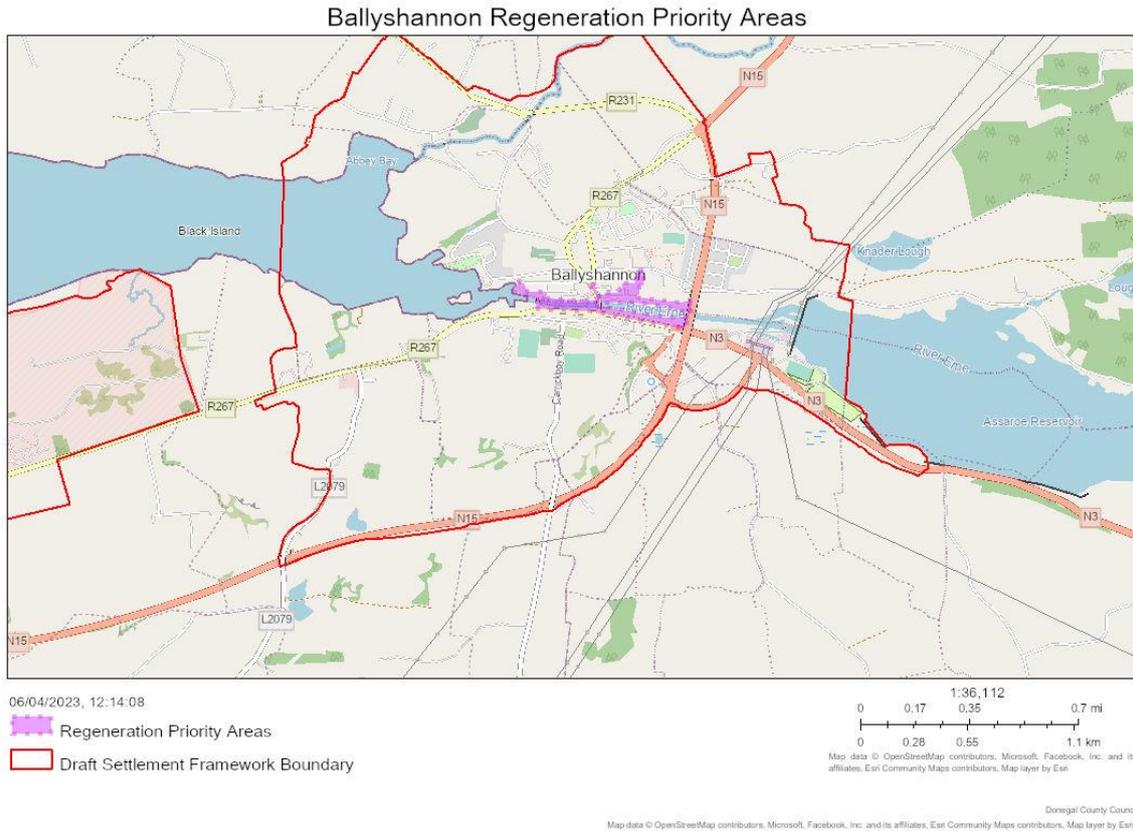


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- Regeneration Priority Areas
- Draft Settlement Framework Boundary



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5.2.2 Town Centre First Development Management Policy

In tandem with the above-noted regeneration implementation projects, national policy also requires the prioritisation of the town centre in the approach of the Planning Authority to the management of development proposals. This approach is embedded in this Plan. Key policies in this regard include: Core Strategy Policy CS-P-2; Economic Development Objective ED-O-10; and Urban Housing Policies UB-P-5 and UB-P-6. In addition, the objectives and policies below also seek to drive higher quality design solutions in the County's towns and villages.

Objectives:

TV-O-1	To identify appropriate regeneration and renewal initiatives, primarily through enhancement schemes to strengthen communities in the County's towns and villages including; Churchill, Convoy, Dunkineely, Kilmacrennan, Mountcharles, Newtowncunningham and St. Johnston.
TV-O-2	To support initiatives, including collaboration across the public, private and community and voluntary sectors, to strengthen and improve the physical environment of towns and villages and encourage positive place-making.
TV-O-3:	To seek innovation in addressing infrastructural constraints in the County's 'Growth Drivers' and 'Service Towns'.

TV-O-4	To identify 'vacant' sites and 'regeneration sites' in urban areas in accordance with the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 and through the review of adopted Local Area Plans.
TV-O-5	To ensure quality design proposals for new development within towns and villages in order to contribute to positive place-making.
TV-O-6	To implement all projects funded under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, Town Centre First, Town and Village Renewal and similar funding schemes, including those identified this Chapter.

Policies:

TV-P-1	To encourage proposals aimed at harnessing particular special economic functions of the County's key settlements subject to other policies of this Plan and subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
TV-P-2	To encourage proposals for small scale residential development, including social housing schemes in towns and villages that will contribute to revitalisation and renewal subject to other policies of this Plan and subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
TV-P-3	<p>To ensure that development proposals within towns and villages centres:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Provide for distinctive buildings of a high architectural quality which contribute to a distinct sense of place and a quality public realm. Create strong street frontage by either, adhering to the established building line in the immediate area or establishing a new building line immediately adjoining the public road where a reasonable opportunity exists to do so. A greater setback will be permitted where the development would provide for the creation a high-quality urban place with sufficient landscaping/planning, street furniture etc. Respect, where appropriate, the context of the adjoining buildings, adjacent streetscape or buildings in the immediate area, in terms of design, height, scale and mass etc. Respect the architectural character (in terms of design/arrangement of fenestration, facia/soffit treatment, general finishes and materials), eaves height, roof pitch, roof line, and overall building form and height, as appropriate, in areas characterised by traditional vernacular or high quality streetscape. Create buildings of a human scale, by providing for a fine grain of development, in terms of overall scale, fenestration, size/proportions, signage, detailing and buildings with a narrow street frontage. Promote, where appropriate, visual interest though modulation and detailing of architectural elements (e.g. detailing/treatments of eaves, windows, frontages, slight variations in roof lines, setback etc.). Utilise, where appropriate, adaptable and accessible design on the ground floor to ensure their future re-use for alternative functions (e.g. retail/commercial etc.).

	h. Avoid the use of industrial type cladding, or the glazing of extensive areas of the proposed development.
TV-P-4	To consider proposals for contemporary architecture within town centres which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide for a high quality design and utilises high quality durable materials. b. Are sympathetic to the overall height, scale, and mass, and would not be otherwise incongruous with, the adjacent buildings or streetscape.
TV-P-5	To ensure that development proposals make efficient use of land and do not otherwise hinder the future development potential of backlands within urban areas.
TV-P-6	That proposals for shopfronts shall, as appropriate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Be of a high-quality design standard. b. Respect the architectural characteristics of the subject building, in terms of scale, proportion, finishes, materials and relationship to upper levels. c. Respect the existing streetscape and traditional shop fronts in the area in terms of scale, proportion, plot width, overall grain of development, arrangements of fenestration, facia treatment, colouring scheme, materials, and finishes. d. Avoids the use of excessively scaled box facias, plastic canopies over shop fronts, external security shutters, brash colours, flashing or neon lighting. e. Otherwise be in accordance with the policies contained within this Plan.

5.3 Settlement-Specific Policies

5.5.1 Barrack Hill, Carndonagh

Current policy for this site, as contained in the Seven Strategic Towns Local Area Plan, restricts the extent of lands available for residential development within this overall site to 1 hectare. Given the heightened housing need situation, and the favourable location of this site, particularly the northern side of the site, the removal of the area restriction is considered reasonable although requiring any residential development to be located on the northern side of the overall site remains sensible in terms of encouraging active travel and also the proximity to the play park, church and other facilities, and the town centre.

5.5.2 Former Bakery Opposite the Mall Quay, Ballyshannon

This small site of approximately 0.2 hectares of land is identified in the Seven Strategic Towns Local Area Plan as Opportunity Site 6. The site is a brownfield site comprising the disused premises of a former bakery. Taken with Opportunity Site 5 (The Mall Quay) it is an opportunity to regenerate disused and infill lands with appropriately scaled and designed built form. The site is located on the edge of the Ballyshannon archaeological complex and adjacent to a Protected Structure and therefore any proposal will be required to address issues arising. Given the proximity of the site to the town centre and the potential to service future marine/leisure/tourism related uses on adjacent lands, this site provides opportunity for a mix of small-scale commercial development integrating limited residential development, or tourist accommodation, or residential development only.

TV-P-7	To consider proposals for appropriate mixed-use development including residential, community uses and light industrial/commercial, but excluding retail
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	<p>within the 'Barrack Hill Opportunity Site, Carndonagh' area. Proposals for residential development must be located on the north-western portion of the lands in order to allow for ease of access and pedestrian movement towards the town centre.</p>
TV-P-8	<p>To consider proposals for development consisting of one of the following scenarios: (i) small scale commercial development integrating limited residential development or tourist accommodation; or (ii) primarily residential development on the site of the Former Bakery opposite the Mall Quay, Ballyshannon (identified in the Seven Strategic Towns Local Area Plan as Opportunity Site 6). Any proposal for development shall be required to adequately demonstrate (i) that there will be no negative impact on material associated with the designated archaeological complex (ii) that the proposal will integrate effectively with the adjoining protected structure (iii) that the proposal will not result in the overdevelopment of the site (iv) that the design is of high architectural quality and of fine grain suitable for the general context of the area and ensuring no negative impact on surrounding residential amenities and (v) compliance with the Habitats Directive.</p>

Chapter 6 Housing



Chapter 6 – Housing

6.1 Housing Strategy

6.1.1 Introduction

National Policy Objective 37 of the National Planning Framework (NPF) provides for a Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) to be undertaken in each local authority area to ensure that long-term strategic housing needs are met.

In April 2021, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage published a new HNDA Tool supported by 'Guidance on the Preparation of a Housing Need and Demand Assessment'. The HNDA Tool assesses housing need using statistics on the economy and housing and has been used to give broad, long-run estimates of housing need for County Donegal.

This HNDA focuses on the period out to 2030 and follows the format as suggested by the aforementioned Guidance and is set out over 5 Sections, namely;

- Housing Market Drivers
- Housing Stock and Housing Need
- Housing Need and Demand Assessment (application of the HNDA Tool)
- Specialist Provision
- Conclusions

6.1.2 Key Housing Market Drivers

This section addresses part 1 of the HNDA analysis in line with the 'Guidance on the Preparation of a Housing Need and Demand Assessment' and relates to the identification of key housing market drivers, including household formation, population, housing affordability, incomes, house prices, rent levels and key drivers of the local and national economy. Following the analysis of the housing market drivers, table 6.6 summarises the key areas that may impact the results of the HNDA. The table is divided into three segments:

- demographic issues
- affordability issues; and
- economic issues for the local housing market.

6.1.3 Population Trends

Census 2016 results showed that Ireland's population stood at 4.76 million. Preliminary results from census 2022 indicate a 8.1% increase in this figure, giving a total population of 5.14 million.

County Donegal recorded a population of 159,192 persons in the 2016 census. Preliminary results for the 2022 census indicate a total population of 167,084 persons (an increase of 7,892 or 5%). This puts the county back on an upward trajectory in population terms, having previously seen a 1.2% decline in population between the 2011-2016 census period.

In terms of trends going forward, the NPF sets out projected population targets to 2040, together with projections for the intermediary years of 2026 and 2031 (see table 6.1 below). A projection for the year 2030 has been interpolated based on the 2026 and 2031 projections.

Table 6.1 - Population Projections for County Donegal

Year	2016	2026	2030	2031
Population	159,192	173,500-176,500	178,300-182,100	179,500-183,500

Table 6.2 below provides details of existing and projected¹⁵ populations in (i.) the regional growth centre of Letterkenny, (ii.) the towns deemed to be growth drivers in the county and (iii.) those towns classified as 'service towns'.

Table 6.2 - Population projections for (i.) Letterkenny, (ii.) County Growth Drivers and (iii.) Service Towns

Settlement	Population 2016	Population Target 2030
Letterkenny	19274	25434 (RSES target)
Buncrana	6785	8342
Ballybofey-Stranorlar	4852	6409
Donegal Town	2618	4175
Killybegs	1236	1651
An Clochán Liath (Dungloe)	1164	1579
Lifford	1626	1959
Carndonagh	2471	2804
Ballyshannon	2299	2632
Bundoran	1963	2296
Raphoe	1089	1419
Bunbeg-Derrybeg	1491	1821
Milford	1037	1370

6.1.4 Household Formation

The headship rate provides one measure of the rate of household formation. The headship rate is the proportion of individuals in an age cohort that list themselves as "head of household" or "principal reference person" in the Census or in the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS). Each household provides one reference person, thus an increase in the headship rate reveals an increase in the number of households.

During the 'Celtic Tiger' years, headship rates had steadily increased across Ireland, with the biggest increases to be seen in the younger age groups. However, data from the 2011 and 2016 censuses show that headship rates in the State declined or otherwise remained static over this period, across all age cohorts. In Donegal, headship rates declined in the 25-39 age group in the period between 2011-2016, whilst headship rates increased in the 60+ age cohorts (see Table 6.3 below). The decline in the younger age cohorts can be partially explained by a decline in population in this group (population in the 25-39 age groups fell by 4217 persons, or 12%, between 2011-2016) but may also point to issues of housing supply.

¹⁵ Population projections based on housing targets set out in the core strategy and an envisaged occupancy of 2.75 persons per residential unit.

Table 6.3 - Headship rates, State & Donegal 2011 & 2016

	2011		2016	
	State	Donegal	State	Donegal
Under 25 years	0.04	0.02	0.02	0.01
25-29 years	0.35	0.34	0.30	0.27
30-34 years	0.47	0.46	0.43	0.42
35-39 years	0.51	0.51	0.49	0.49
40-44 years	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53
45-49 years	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.54
50-54 years	0.56	0.55	0.56	0.55
55-59 years	0.57	0.57	0.57	0.57
60-64 years	0.58	0.56	0.58	0.60
Over 65 years	0.63	0.64	0.62	0.65

6.1.5 Income Analysis

Median Gross Income

Gross income is the income before tax is deducted, while the gross median income is the amount that divides a population into two equal groups, half having an income above that amount, and half having an income below that amount. The gross median household income for County Donegal in 2016 was €32,259¹⁶, lower than the State average of €45,256.

In order to estimate current gross median household income, historic growth in the nominal median household disposable income at State level has been reviewed and it has been noted that on average, there has been a 3.2% annual change in the nominal median household disposable income for the State over the period 2016 to 2022 (see Table 6.4 below). Applying 3.2% annual growth, it is estimated that the gross median household income for County Donegal in 2022 was in the region of €38,967.

Table 6.4 - Median Household Disposable Income (State), 2016-2022 (Source: CSO)

Year	Nominal Median Household Disposable Income (State)	% Change
2016	38,953	
2017	39,499	1.4%
2018	42,865	8.5%
2019	43,552	1.6%
2020	43,915	0.8%
2021	46,471	5.8%
2022	46,999	1.1%
	Average % change year-on-year	3.2%

Disposable Income

Disposable income is the amount of income, after tax is deducted, that is available for spending and saving. It functions as an important measure of housing affordability in an area i.e. the ability of a

¹⁶ Source: CSO, Geographical Profiles of Income in Ireland 2016

household to purchase their own home. The CSO's latest data relating to County Incomes and Regional GDP for 2020 outlines the average annual disposable income at State, Regional and County Levels. The average annual disposable income in County Donegal was €18,322; the lowest disposable income per person in the State at that time and 22% below the state average.

6.1.6 Residential Property Sales

Residential Property Transactions 2022

Property price transaction data in County Donegal for 2022 (obtained from the Residential Property Price Register) has been chosen to reflect the current market context. Table 6.5 below provides details in relation to the price bands for residential property transactions in that year (for the purpose of this exercise, any properties that were sold for below market price have been omitted as they do not give a true representation of market prices). It is noted that 66% of total sales in 2022 related to properties costing €200,000 or less.

Table 6.5 - Property Price Bands in Co. Donegal, 2022 (Source: RPPI)

Price Bands 2022	Number of Transactions	% Total
0-100,000	399	26
100,001-150,000	310	20
150,001-200,000	317	20
200,001-250,000	226	14
250,001-300,000	135	9
300,001-350,000	63	4
350,001-400,000	41	3
400,001+	70	4
Total	1561	100

Price Variability

Figure 6.1 below shows the average sale price of residential properties across the three Eircode output areas within Donegal in December 2022, relative to the state and county averages. The Letterkenny Eircode area is the most expensive place to purchase in Donegal, with an average sale price of €201,739. The Lifford Eircode area is the least expensive, the average sale price of €169,258 being approximately 16% lower than the Letterkenny Area.



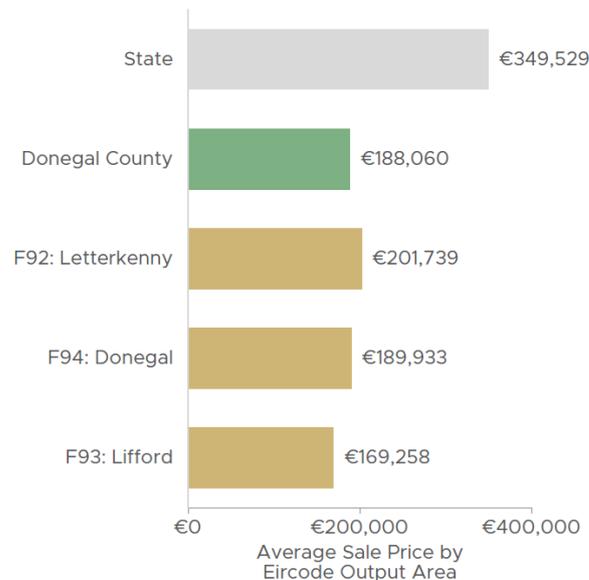


Figure 6.1 - Average Sale Price by Eircode Output Area (Source: CSO)

6.1.7 Housing Affordability

The Central Bank implements measures on mortgages to manage the amount that consumers can borrow to purchase a home. These measures are enforced via the loan-to-value (LTV) and loan-to-income (LTI) limits for mortgages. The LTV limit requires a customer to have a minimum deposit before they can get a mortgage. First-time buyers are allowed up to 90% LTV, meaning they must provide a minimum deposit of 10% upfront for any property. The LTI limit restricts the amount of money a customer can borrow to a maximum of 4 times gross income in the case of first-time buyers and 3.5 times gross income for second and subsequent buyers. The HNDA Tool analyses whether households could qualify for a mortgage that would enable them to purchase a house in the lowest price band under these rules¹⁷. The key variables used to determine whether households in a particular decile can qualify for a mortgage to purchase a house within a given year are:

- Loan-to-Value (LTV) ratio of 0.90;
- a maximum Loan-to-Income (LTI) ratio of 4/3.5; and
- the upper value of the first house price band for that year.

If a household does not have sufficient income to meet the Central Bank rules (i.e. 4/3.5 times their gross income being less than 90% of the purchase value of a house in the lowest projected price band for that year), they will not qualify for a mortgage that would enable them to purchase a home in their relevant area.

The NWRA has undertaken analysis examining how affordable the average First Time Buyer (FTB) priced property would be for a couple earning the average FTB disposable income, for each year between 2016-2020. The data (see Fig. 6.2 below) shows that on average, a FTB couple in Co. Donegal, on average disposable income levels, would typically have paid between 17-21% of their joint monthly disposable income on their mortgage instalments on the average priced FTB property in the county, which is below the standard affordability mark of 30%.

¹⁷ The Central Bank increased the LTI limit for 1st time buyers to 4 times gross income in late 2022; however, the HNDA Tool, which was developed earlier, is configured with the 3.5 gross income limit.

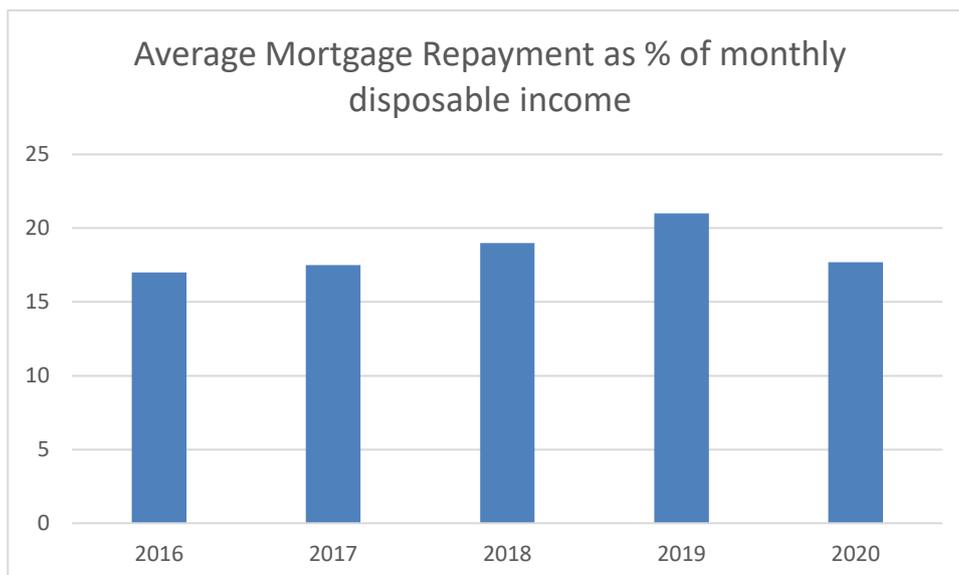


Figure 6.2 - Mortgage repayments as % of monthly income in County Donegal, 2016-2022 (source: Regional Development Monitor)

Since July of 2022, European Central Bank interest rates have increased significantly, and further increases are expected. These rate rises are being passed on to mortgage customers, thus potentially resulting in a decrease in home buying demand and consequentially, a potential fall in house prices.

6.1.8 Rent Levels

Average Rent Levels

The RTB Rent Index is produced by the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) and the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and provides rental indicators generated to track price developments in the Irish market. During Q2 of 2022, the Index indicates that the standardised average rent¹⁸ for new tenancies in County Donegal was €782.59 per month.

Figure 6.3 details the average rental price increases in County Donegal from Q1 2016-Q2 2022 and shows a very significant 54% increase in the average rental price over this period, from €467 to €721. Figure 6.4 breaks down the average rental price by local areas.



¹⁸ Standardised average rent is a mix adjusted rent that takes account of the changing mix of properties in an area.

Rental Price Time Series 2016 - 2022

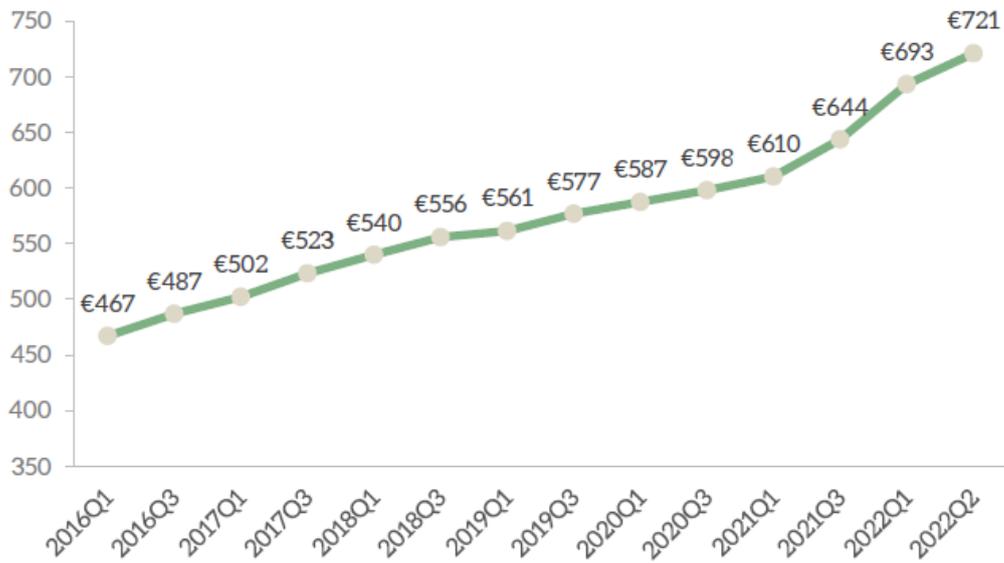


Figure 6.3 - Donegal Average Rental Price Time Series 2016-2022 (Source: CSO)

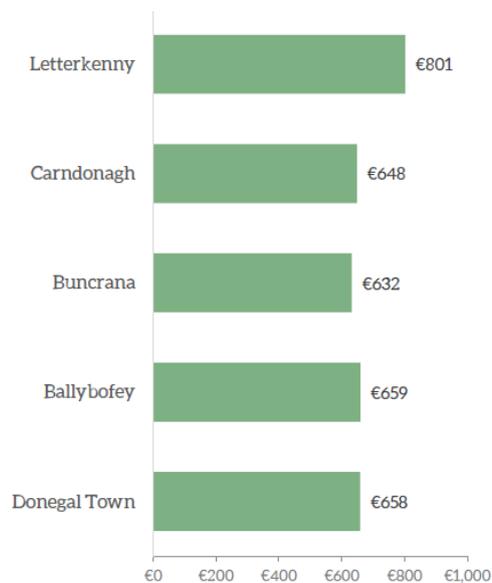


Figure 6.4 - Average Rental Price by Local Area, Q2 2022

Rent Affordability

The Northern and Western Regional Assembly have undertaken analysis¹⁹ to examine how affordable the average monthly rent would be for a couple earning the average county income for each year between 2016-2020, with this ratio expressed as a percentage (i.e. average monthly rent as a percentage of the average monthly disposable income of renters) – see Figure 6.5 below.

¹⁹ Source: Regional Development Monitor - <https://rdm.geohive.ie>

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Rent as % of disposable income	24.6	23.9	26.1	24.7	23

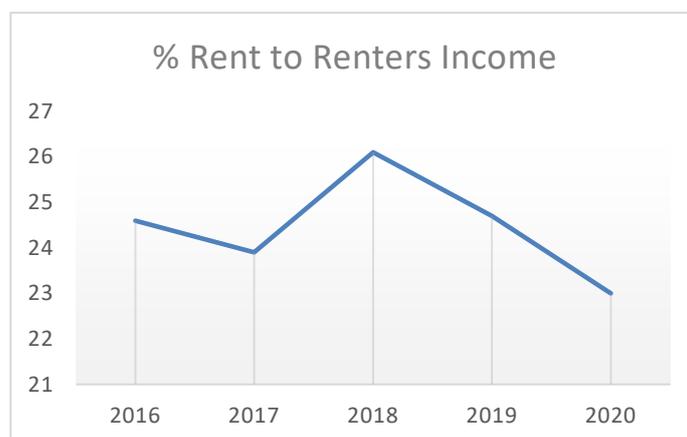


Figure 6.5 - Rent as % of monthly disposable income (source: Regional Development Monitor)

The data indicates that rent levels are within, but close to, the standard affordability mark of 30% (i.e. a general rule of thumb that suggests housing costs should be below 30% of disposable income).

6.1.9 Local and National Economy

National Outlook

The European Commission's 'Economic Forecast for Ireland'²⁰ notes that real GDP (Gross Domestic Product) grew by 2.3% quarter-on-quarter in the third quarter of 2022, which was much stronger than anticipated. Investment increased by 92% quarter-on-quarter, driven by multinational corporations' investment. Exports of both goods and services kept on expanding robustly and private consumption grew despite downbeat consumer sentiment. The Economic Forecast refers to an improving outlook as we move forward, partly driven by an expected fall in inflation towards the end of the year. The Irish labour market continues to perform very well, with the unemployment rate at 4.3% in December 2022. Energy remains the main driver for inflation, although it has started moderating. By contrast, growth in food prices reached double digits in the final quarter of 2022. Inflation is expected to remain high in the early part of 2023 and to gradually subside thereafter, to 4.4% in 2023 as a whole and 2.1% in 2024. Ireland's economic outlook remains subject to uncertainty due to trade developments related to the implementation of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. Furthermore, the performance of multinational corporations could swing growth in either direction.

²⁰ Source: https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/economic-surveillance-eu-economies/ireland/economic-forecast-ireland_en

Local Circumstances

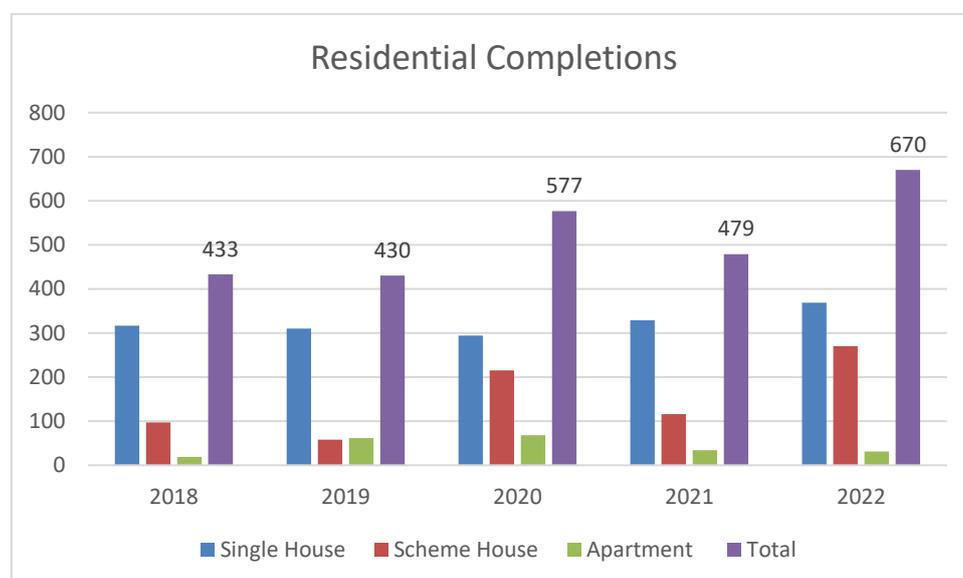
Employment Rates

County Donegal had the second highest unemployment rate in the State in 2016, standing at 18% (for comparison, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown had the lowest rate at 7.4%).

New Dwelling Completions in Donegal

Figure 6.6 below provides details in relation to dwelling completions in County Donegal for the period 2018-2022. Single house completions remain the largest contributor to the overall numbers of housing units whilst apartment units number least amongst the overall completions data.

Fig. 6.6 - Residential unit completions 2018-2022 (source: Regional Development Monitor)



Vacancy

The preliminary results from Census 2022 indicate that County Donegal has a total housing stock of 86,489 units. Of these, 10,861 were stated to be vacant. The stated reasons for vacancy, as expressed through the census, are set out in Table 6.7 below. (NB – it should be noted that the CSO figures for vacancy differ markedly from those provided by Geodirectory in Q2 of 2022, which indicated a residential vacancy level of 5,608 units at that time. This disparity is understood to be due to the way in which vacancy is classified by the relevant agency²¹).

Table 6.7 - Reasons for Residential Vacancy (source: Census 2022 preliminary results)

Reason for Vacancy	Rental Property	Renovation	With Relatives	Deceased	Nursing Home/Hospital	For Sale	Farmhouse	Emigrated	New Build	Other reason/Not Stated
(%)	24	10.7	3.3	22	4.6	9	7	1.8	3.9	13.7

Potential Housing Demand Arising from Ukraine War

Latest figures from the CSO suggest that there are approximately 5,000 refugees currently living in Donegal. Many have been accommodated in tourist accommodation (hotels etc.) and there is some

²¹ The NWRA's 'Regional Vacancy and Dereliction Analysis' (2022) surmises, based on analysis from Geodirectory, that the census results include properties that would not be normally classified as vacant, but represent more of a transition or temporary vacancy rate, e.g. properties for sale or rent, properties where renovation work is underway etc.

uncertainty around how long such arrangements may last as operators gear up for the tourist season. Allied to this is the uncertainty as to how many refugees may decide to stay long-term or permanently in Ireland, potentially resulting in the need for additional, well-located housing stock.

6.1.10 Key Issues

Table 6.6 - Key Areas that may impact HNDA

Area of Interest	Key Issues Identified
Demographic issues for the local housing market	1. Need to consider impacts of immigration on housing demand, including impact of Ukraine war.
Affordability issues for the local housing market	1. Housing supply needs to be maintained to avoid adverse impacts on affordability.
	2. Low levels of disposable income relative to other parts of Ireland; may affect access to finance.
Economic issues for the local housing market	1. Uncertainty in national economic outlook will have effects on local economic circumstances.
	2. High unemployment levels need to be addressed to maintain a working age population in the county, which would in turn feed into the housing market.
	3. Rising interest rates may affect consumer demand and may impact on house prices going forward.

6.1.11 Housing Stock Profile and Pressures

This section addresses Section 2 of the HNDA analysis in line with the Guidance on the Preparation of a Housing Need and Demand Assessment' (DHLGH, April 2021). Key outputs from this stage include: an analysis of the entire housing stock (owner occupied, private rented and all social) by, for example, size, condition, tenure and turnover; analysis of the Council's own stock, the location of areas where there is undersupply or low demand; opportunities for more effective use of the housing stock.

6.1.12 Social Housing Trends

Social housing support is housing provided by a local authority or an Approved Housing Body to people who are assessed as being unable to afford housing from their own resources. Housing support can be provided in a number of ways:

I. Local Authority Housing Stock and Construction

Local authorities are the main providers of social housing support in Ireland and have a statutory obligation to provide suitable, cost effective, quality accommodation and housing support for people

in need of housing. The Council currently has a housing stock of 5,010 housing units. A tenant of a local authority will pay an income related differential rent.

The Donegal Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022 – 2026 sets out a target to deliver 1,354 housing units over the lifetime of the Plan.

II. Approved Housing Body Accommodation

Approved Housing Bodies have become a significant provider of social housing support. There are over 500 Approved Housing Bodies in Ireland providing over 35,000 homes across the country. The housing provided by these bodies includes:

- General housing,
- Older persons accommodation,
- Housing for people with disabilities including mental health issues, and
- Homeless accommodation.

To avail of Approved Housing Body owned accommodation an individual/ household must qualify for social housing support with the local authority. The local authority will then put forward applicants to the Approved Housing Body in line with their allocation policy. Approved Housing Bodies provide accommodation through new build, purchases, and leasing in the private market. In Donegal, 1,300 units of housing are being provided through the Approved Housing Body sector with plans for future developments incorporated into the Council’s Housing Delivery Action Plan (see table below).

MD	No. of AHB Units
Donegal	143
Glenties	196
Inishowen	298
Letterkenny-Milford	419
Lifford-Stranorlar	244
Total:	1,300

III. Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)

The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is available to any household that is qualified for social housing support and who find their own accommodation in the private rental sector. The local authority will make payments towards the rent on behalf of the household to the landlord and the household will pay an income-based rent to the local authority.

In Donegal, there are currently 1,735 applicants in receipt of the HAP which represents 62% of the total housing waiting list (2023).

Table 6.7: Social Housing Need

Year	Net Need	Gross Need	Source
2023	1076	2,777	iHouse @ 04.04.2023
2022	940	2,638	SSHA
2021	860	2,580	SSHA
2020	926	2,584	SSHA
2019	927	2,488	SSHA
2018	927	2,488	SSHA
Percentage Increase 2018 to 2023			9%

Gross need = net need and applicants in other forms of social housing support who are on the transfer list.

IV. Tenant Adaptation Works

The scheme is available for local authority tenants who require adaptations to be carried out to their local authority home to assist with their disability needs. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage fund 90% of the cost of the eligible works subject to overall maximum of €75,000 in each individual case with a contribution of 10% required from the Council's own resources. In 2022, the Council's allocation under this Scheme was €753,000.

V. Social Leasing/Rental Accommodation Scheme

The Social Housing Leasing Initiative and Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) provide an additional source of rented accommodation for eligible persons through the private rental market. The statutory basis for the (long-term leasing schemes) and the RAS is provided for within the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2009. Leasing introduces greater flexibility in the composition of the housing stock and local authorities can provide more homes than could be delivered through construction and acquisition alone.

The Rental Accommodation Scheme is a social housing support which caters for the accommodation needs of certain people who are getting long-term Rent Supplement for a minimum period of 18 months and be assessed as having a long-term housing need. The total number of properties providing social housing under the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) is 186 and under the Leasing Scheme is 157.

VI. Vacant Housing Repair and Leasing Initiative

Repair and Lease aims to increase the supply of social housing by bringing vacant private properties in need of refurbishment back into use and to bring vacant properties into compliance with the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2019. To help with the cost of carrying out the works required to refurbish a home, a local authority or Approved Housing Body (AHB) can initially pay for the necessary works (as agreed). The property owner agrees to enter a lease with the housing authority or AHB for a length that is linked to the value of the repairs, subject to a minimum of 5 years. The scheme has been expanded to include:

- vacant commercial properties;
- vacant units associated with a commercial property (e.g. over a shop);
- vacant former institutional buildings and
- unfinished developments where these have been vacant for a significant period of time.

Repair and Lease is part of the National Vacant Housing Reuse Strategy 2018 – 2021.

VII. Traveller Accommodation

The current Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 – 2024 outlines projects, commitments and targets in the delivery of a range of accommodation for the Traveller community throughout the duration of the programme. In terms of social housing, these targets have been met and substantially exceeded. The current programme expires on 30th June 2024.

VIII. The Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability

The Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability assists disabled people in having adaptations carried out to make their house more suitable for them to live in. The types of works covered include the fitting of access ramps, grab rails, downstairs toilet, stair-lifts, level access showers, changes to allow wheelchair access, extensions, and any other works which are reasonably necessary to make a house more suitable to live in and covers works in privately owned houses for eligible applicants.

There has been a significant increase in demand under the Housing Grants for Older People and People with Disabilities during 2022. The Department provides 80% funding towards these grant schemes with a Local Authority contribution of 20%. In 2022, works to the value of €3.3m were approved.

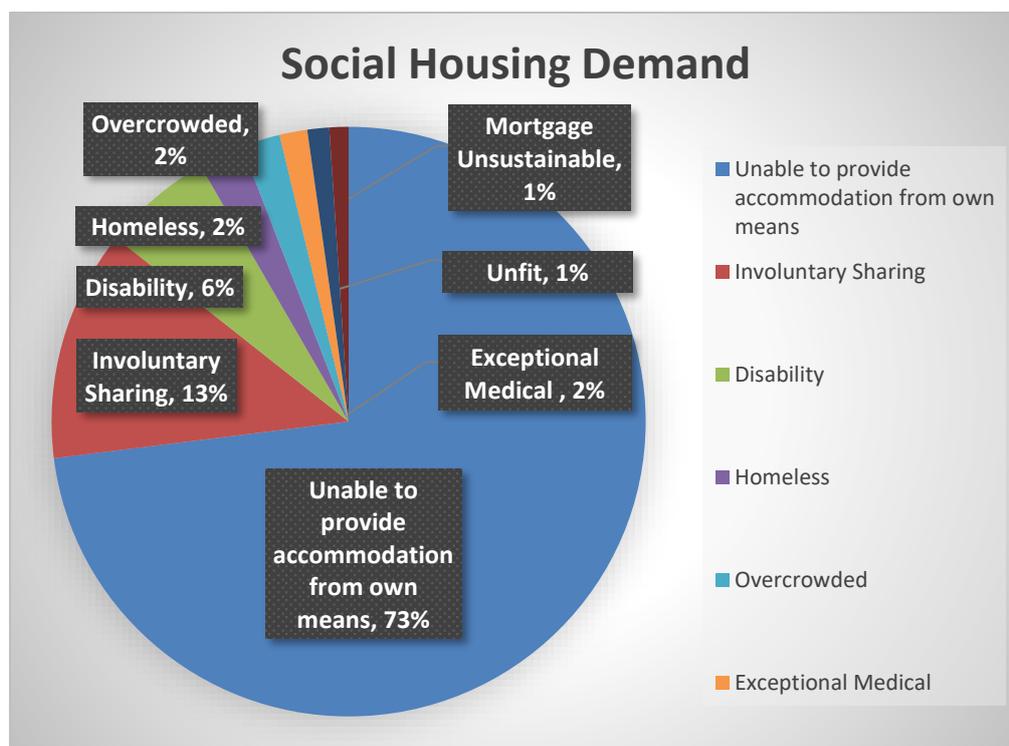
IX. Local Authority Home Loan.

Local Authority Home Loan is a Government backed mortgage for first time buyers or other eligible applicants and is for the purchase of new or second-hand residential properties and for self-builds. It also includes the purchase of homes through State schemes such as the Tenant Purchase Scheme and Affordable Housing Schemes. A person can borrow up to 90% of the market value of the property subject to a maximum market value of €250,000 in Donegal.

6.1.13 Social Housing Demand Type

The categories of persons in need of social housing are set out below;

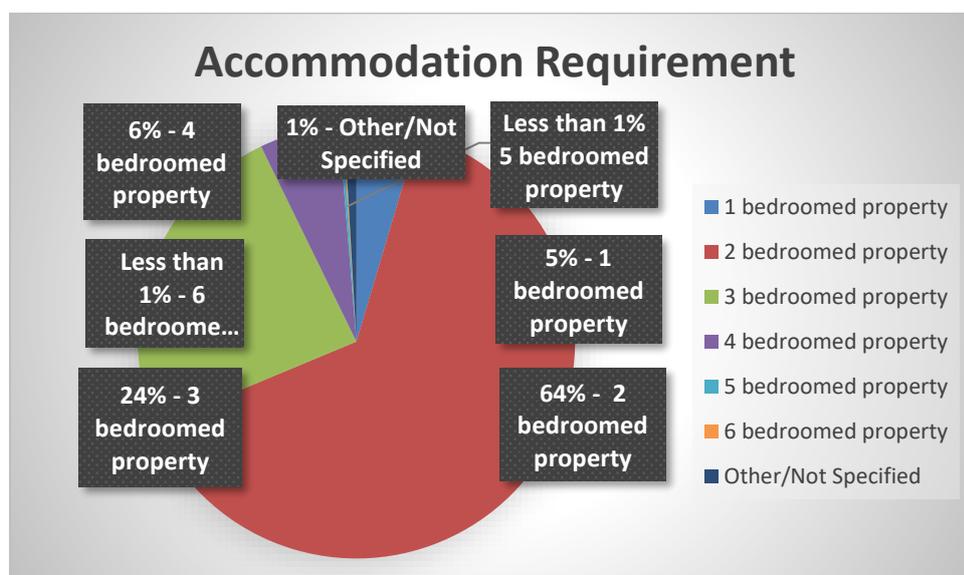
Social Housing Demand	No.
Unable to provide accommodation from own means	2,032
Involuntary Sharing	353
Disability	167
Homeless	68
Overcrowded	59
Exceptional Medical	42
Unfit	33
Mortgage Unsustainable	29
Total	2,783



6.1.14 Household Size

The Social Housing accommodation requirements by size are;

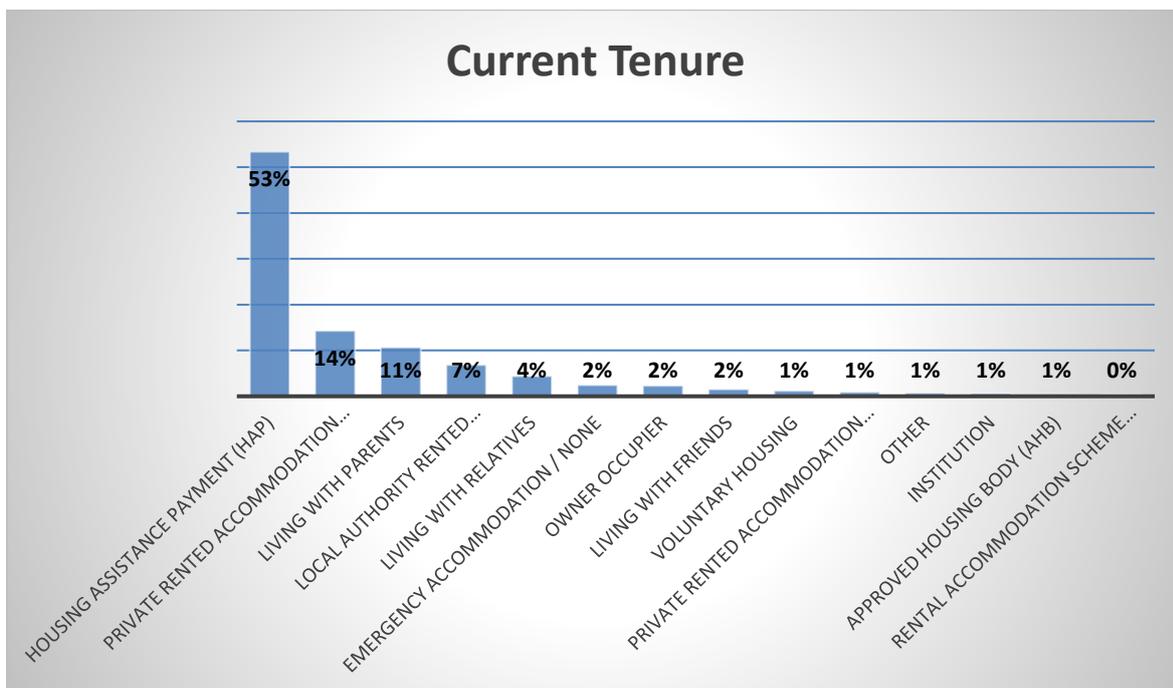
Accommodation Requirement	No.
1 bedroomed property	127
2 bedroomed property	1,784
3 bedroomed property	672
4 bedroomed property	164
5 bedroomed property	8
6 bedroomed property	3
Other/Not Specified	25
Total	2,783



Breakdown of the current tenure.

Current Tenure	No.
Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)	1,485
Private Rented Accommodation (without rent supplement)	397
Living with parents	297
Local authority rented accommodation	189
Living with relatives	121
Emergency Accommodation / None	67
Owner Occupier	64
Living with friends	43
Voluntary Housing	33

Private Rented Accommodation (with rent supplement)	25
Other	19
Institution	17
Approved Housing Body (AHB)	14
Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)	12
Total	2,783



6.1.15 Voids

Minimising housing vacancies is a key action in relation to the Housing for All programme with funding provided by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in order to achieve these outcomes. Voids are categorised as vacant social housing stock in need of substantial refurbishment to bring them to a suitable letting condition and are vacant pending that work. Donegal County Council brought 78 vacant social homes back into active use under the Voids Programme in 2022.

Managing voids is a core function of the Housing Section within Donegal County Council and it is normal for a proportion of the homes to become vacant over time. The current shortage of housing stock available to meet growing demand makes the efficient turnaround of voids a priority area for Donegal County Council and it endeavours to minimise the number of empty properties and the length of time that they are empty.

6.1.16 Serviced Sites

Under the Ready to Build Scheme, local authorities can make serviced sites in towns and villages available to potential individual purchasers (self-builders). These sites are generally available at a discount on the market value of the site for the building of a property for occupation as the principal private residence of the purchaser.

Local authorities can develop existing site(s) in their control or purchase site(s) and make them available for development by providing services and access to the site(s) concerned.

The level of discount to the individual will depend on the level of servicing cost incurred by the local authority before the sale of the site but will not exceed €30,000. The amount of such discount will be reflected in the sale price of the site to the purchaser.

The Fund is focused on home ownership. The buyer of the site must reside in the dwelling built on the site as his or her principal private residence on completion of the dwelling.

6.1.17 Location of Social Housing Demand

AREA OF CHOICE	No.		AREA OF CHOICE	No.
Annagry	20		Glencolmcille	4
Ardara	19		Gleneely	7
Arranmore	1		Glengad	3
Ballindrait	3		Glenswilly	4
Ballintra	11		Glenties	13
Ballybofey/Stranorlar	163		Gortahork	8
Ballyliffin	7		Greencastle	10
Ballyshannon	82		Gweedore	23
Bridgend	20		Inch	2
Bruckless	9		Kerrykeel	10
Bunbeg	1		Kilcar	5
Buncrana	255		Killea	5
Bundoran	96		Killybegs	24
Burnfoot	16		Killygordon	9
Burt	7		Kilmacrennan	57
Burtonport	8		Kincasslagh	1
Carndonagh	113		Laghy	5
Carrick	2		Letterkenny	902
Carrigans	12		Lettermacaward	1
Carrigart	27		Lifford	74
Castlefin	19		Lischooley	1
Churchill	14		Loughanure	4
Cloghan	1		Magheroarty	2
Clonmany	24		Malin	9
Convoy	43		Malin Head	2
Creeslough	16		Manorcunningham	23
Crolly	1		Milford	32
Culdaff	9		Mountcharles	8
Derrybeg	3		Moville	35
Donegal	137		Muff	24
Doochary	1		Newmills	4
Downings	10		Newtowncunningham	43
Drimarone	1		Pettigo	5
Drumkeen	6		Porthall	5

Dunfanaghy	17		Portsalon	1
Dungloe	54		Quigley's Point	4
Dunkineely	7		Ramelton	48
Fahan	7		Raphoe	37
Falcarragh	33		Rathmullan	14
Fanad	5		Redcastle	3
Fintown	2		St. Johnston	21
Frosses	3		Termon	5
Total				2,782

6.1.18 Estimating Future Need.

This section addresses Section 3 of the HNDA analysis in line with the Guidance on the Preparation of a Housing Need and Demand Assessment' (DHLGH, April 2021).

6.1.18.1 Housing Supply Target Methodology Guidelines for Planning Authorities

As noted in Chapter 3, statutory guidelines for incorporating housing supply targets into Development Plans (entitled the 'Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning' Guidelines for Planning Authorities) were issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in 2020 and these guidelines have been used to inform the housing supply targets for the County over the lifetime of this Development Plan (Plan Housing Target of 7678 units to Q4 2029., refer Table 3.3).

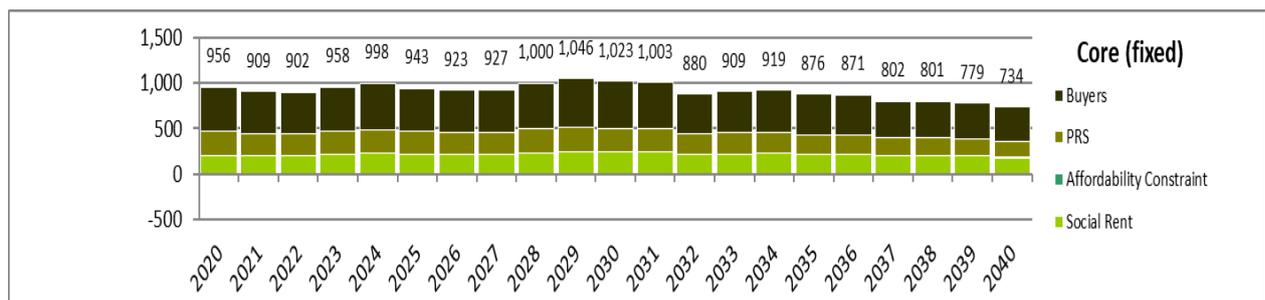
6.1.18.2 Projections Using HNDA Tool

The HNDA Tool developed by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage estimates overall future housing requirements (existing housing need and future additional households), divided into four tenure-based categories on the basis of estimates of housing affordability:

- (1) Owner occupiers,
- (2) Private renters,
- (3) Affordability Constraint; and
- (4) Social renters.

It must be noted that the tool is designed to produce a broad range of housing estimates rather than precise figures for housing demand.

The graph below sets out projections generated by the HNDA tool when using the 'Convergence Scenario' projection (the Department's Section 28 Guidelines in respect of HNDA recommend using this projection, which in tandem with unmet need is methodologically consistent with the Housing Supply Target guidelines for planning authorities).



Based on the figures provided by the HNDA Tool under the convergence projection (which project a housing demand of 6860 units over the period 2024-2030), it is estimated that between 23-24% of housing delivery each year between 2024-2030 must be delivered in the social rent category. However, using the detailed information on social housing need presented in the preceding sections, we can see that the real percentage of housing delivery required in this category is more likely to be in the order of 36% of total housing delivery (i.e. 2783 units out of a plan housing target of 7678 units).

6.1.19 Housing Quality

The development of housing to a high standard and quality underpins the housing objectives and policies contained within this Plan in all its auspices including siting, location and design, and construction materials. In terms of construction materials, it is a statutory requirement that all development be in compliance with the Building Control Acts 1997-2014 and the Building Control Regulations 1997-2021. It is a focus of the Council that all developments (not solely housing developments) are constructed using high specification and certified materials.

6.2 Urban Housing

The housing policies contained herein have been drafted with the aim of placing quality at the top of the housing agenda; securing compact growth and regeneration; and providing for residential environments that are attractive and functional, proximate to employment services, climate resilient, age friendly, safe and desirable.

The Core Strategy sets out the total housing requirements (in hectares and unit numbers) that are required throughout the county in order to satisfy the population growth that is provided for in the Plan to 2030. The spatial strategy to guide the location of new urban housing provides for the county's future supply of larger scale multiple residential development in Letterkenny and in the County Growth Drivers and, to a lesser extent, Service Towns, as these locations have or will have imminently, the suitable capacity in water services to accommodate the relative population equivalents. Rural towns will also provide opportunities for urban housing of a suitable scale having regard to the Core Strategy, the capacity of available water services and the scale and character of the town.

Urban housing has the potential to be a significant contributor to renewal and regeneration and this is a targeted intervention that is prioritised in the Plan. In particular, the development of serviced sites in towns and villages represents an opportunity to support renewal and regeneration. In addition, innovation is to be sought in revitalising town centres through initiatives to reduce vacancy and dereliction and therefore transfer such units to habitable homes. The Housing Strategy supports this approach also and identifies regeneration of vacant and derelict buildings in town centres as a key focus for the future.

In tandem with a targeted focus on the locations for new multiple developments and the role of housing in stimulating renewal and regeneration in smaller towns, the promotion of the design process for residential developments is now a central component of planning policy for urban housing. The promotion of design quality will result in more attractive places to live, provides for greater connectivity and integration of new housing with the existing urban fabric, provides positive spaces, provides innovative design solutions, and assists in developing community spirit and in reducing crime. This strategy is consistent with national policy as contained in NPO4.

National Policy Objective 4

Ensure the creation of attractive, liveable, well designed, high quality urban places that are home to diverse and integrated communities that enjoy a high quality of life and well-being.

Objectives:

UB-O-1	To identify appropriate regeneration and renewal initiatives, primarily through enhancement schemes to strengthen communities in specific Settlement Framework rural towns namely; Churchill, Convoy, Dunkineely, Kilmacrennan, Mountcharles, Newtowncunningham and St. Johnston.
UB-O-2	To deliver serviced sites for housing within towns and villages.
UB-O-3	To seek the effective resolution of unfinished residential development.

Policies:

UB-P-1	It is a policy of the Council that the provision of multiple housing developments (defined as 2 or more units and excluding holiday homes) will generally be acceptable in principle within those towns/settlements identified in the Core Strategy/Settlement Structure, subject in all cases to the principles of quality placemaking, compact growth and the sequential development of settlements from the centre out, the availability of sustainable wastewater treatment solutions and relevant zoning objectives. The scale of any such development shall be in line with the provisions of the Core Strategy, shall have regard to the circumstances of the specific settlement and shall be in accordance with all relevant objectives and policies of this Plan.
UB-P-2	<ol style="list-style-type: none">It is a policy of the Council that multiple (defined as 2 or more units) and single holiday home units will be considered within the towns/settlements identified in the Core Strategy/Settlement Structure, provided that the proposed development would not result in the total number of existing and permitted holiday homes within the settlement exceeding 20% of the total existing and permitted housing stock. Any application will also be assessed in the light of all relevant material planning considerations including land-use zonings, the availability of infrastructure, relevant policies of the County Development Plan and other regional and national guidance/policies and relevant environmental designations. Such developments must have regard to the scale and form of the settlement.It is a policy of the Council that where an applicant can demonstrate that the proposed development would assist with the regeneration or remediation of vacant and/or derelict properties in the centre of the settlement, holiday home development will be considered within the towns/settlements identified in the Core Strategy/Settlement Structure without the application of a restriction in terms of the balance between holiday homes and permanent homes, subject to environmental and heritage designations and amenity considerations.

UB-P-3	<p>It is a policy of the Council to require that 20%²² of -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. land zoned for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses; and b. any land which is not zoned for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses, but in respect of which permission for the development of houses is granted, is reserved for the provision of social and affordable housing.
UB-P-4	<p>To ensure that new residential development is carried out in serviced areas or those areas where the provision of required planned infrastructure (e.g. roads, footpaths, wastewater, water supply social and community infrastructure etc.) is imminent.</p>
UB-P-5	<p>It is the policy of the Council to guide urban residential development in a sequential manner, outwards from the core area in order to maximise the utility of existing and future infrastructure provision, promote the achievement of sustainability, avoid 'leap- frogging' to more remote areas and to make better use of underutilised land.</p>
UB-P-6	<p>It is a policy of the Council to support the principle of new residential development that will result in the regeneration and/or renewal of town centre areas or areas of vacancy and/or dereliction.</p>
UB-P-7	<p>It is a policy of the Council to require that proposals for new residential developments (2 or more units) in settlements demonstrate that the design process, layout, specification and finish of the proposed development generally comply with all relevant Governmental Planning Guidelines/Standards²³ and give due regard to the key considerations of –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Public realm, open space and amenity b. Connectivity and accessibility, having particular regard to active travel and sustainable modes of transport c. High Quality Design - massing, form, scale, density and finishes d. Mix of house types e. Energy efficiency f. Biodiversity considerations g. Climate adaptation and surface water management h. Integration with neighbouring developments and uses

²² Certain transitional arrangements in respect of Part V requirements were introduced following the enactment of the Affordable Housing Act 2021. Readers are advised to consult the full text of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) in this regard.

²³ Such Guidelines/Standards may include, inter alia -

- Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas – Guidelines for Planning Authorities
- Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities
- Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines for Planning Authorities
- Design Standards for New Apartments - Guidelines for Planning Authorities
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets
- Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities

UB-P-8	It is a policy of the Council to determine appropriate residential densities for housing sites having regard to the provisions of all relevant departmental guidelines, the provisions of Circular Letter: NRUP 02/2021, the specific nature of the development proposed and the site location and context.
UB-P-9	It is the policy of the Council both to protect the residential amenity of existing residential units and to promote design concepts for new housing that ensures the establishment of reasonable levels of urban residential amenity.
UB-P-10	It is a policy of the Council to require layouts of residential development to be designed and constructed having regard to best practice in terms of Universal Design, including the guidance for housing development set out in the National Disability Authority publication, 'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach'.
UB-P-11	It is a policy of the Council to require that all new multiple housing developments comprising 7 or more units contain a minimum of 30% residential units that are built to universal design standards, in accordance with the requirements of the National Disability Authority publication 'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach'. Where the total number of units to be constructed is between 2 and 6, it is a policy of the Council to require that a minimum of 1 of those units be built to universal design standards.
UB-P-12	Multiple residential developments shall, in general: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. On greenfield sites, include a minimum of 15% of the overall site area reserved as public amenity area; b. In other cases, such as large infill sites or brown field sites include a minimum of 10% of the overall site area reserved as public amenity area; or c. On lands characterised by a large private or institutional building/s set in substantial open lands, include a minimum of 20% of the overall site area reserved as public amenity area.

6.3 Rural Housing

6.3.1 Permanent Housing

Donegal has a strong rural identification and a tradition of ensuring that every appropriate and sustainable option is available to rural people to continue to live in their own area and to contribute to community life. This principle is fundamentally underpinned nationally by the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines (2005) and NPF NPO19. To reflect this, meeting genuine rural generated housing need will continue to be a central component of Council policy. The Core Strategy 'allocates' 25% (or circa 1,900 houses) of the projected growth in the County to 'Open Countryside'. This is considered reasonable in the context of:

- the Council's own data recording an annual average of 259 one-off rural houses commenced between the years 2015 and 2022;
- the scale of vacant homes generally in the County (rate recorded by Geodirectory as 9.4% in December, 2022), a significant proportion of which are rural homes; and

- the allocation in the Core Strategy of a further allocates 8% of the total housing allocation for the period 2024-2030 to smaller rural towns providing additional choice.



In meeting rural housing need, the NPF identifies two distinct socio-economic areas as the basis of policy:

National Policy Objective 19

Ensure, in providing for the development of rural housing, that a distinction is made between areas under urban influence, i.e. within the commuter catchment of cities and large towns and centres of employment, and elsewhere:

- In rural areas under urban influence, facilitate the provision of single housing in the countryside based on the core consideration of demonstrable economic or social need to live in a rural area and siting and design criteria for rural housing in statutory guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements;
- In rural areas elsewhere, facilitate the provision of single housing in the countryside based on siting and design criteria for rural housing in statutory guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements.

In preparing the Donegal County Development Plan, 2018-2024 strong urban influence was identified on the hinterlands of Letterkenny and the City of Derry and around certain larger settlements (Donegal Town, Ballyshannon, Bundoran, Ballybofey/Stranorlar). This continues to be the case and these areas are again identified in Map 6.3.1.

6.3.2 Holiday Homes

Whilst the national policy agenda does not address holiday homes, this is a big issue for Donegal. There were 9,373 holiday homes in Donegal in Q4 2022 according to Geodirectory (*GeoDirectory Residential Buildings Report Q4 2022*). This accounted for 24.8% of total holiday homes in the country (37,797). The heatmap below illustrates the greatest concentrations of holiday homes in Donegal. Unsurprisingly, these are to be found generally along and in reasonable proximity to the coast.



This level of demand for holiday homes requires a policy counterbalance to the general approach as set out in NPO19. Map 6.3.2 identifies areas under strong holiday home pressure. Additional restrictions on one-off housing will be applied in these areas but the policy is designed to ensure that genuine local need can still be accommodated (Policy RH-P-2 refers). Furthermore, given the level of housing vacancy that currently exists in the County and the objective to support genuine rural housing need, this Plan focuses on satisfying the opportunity for holiday homes in rural areas only through the use/re-use of the existing housing stock or via the refurbishment of derelict buildings.




Comhairle Contae Dhún na nGall
 Donegal County Council

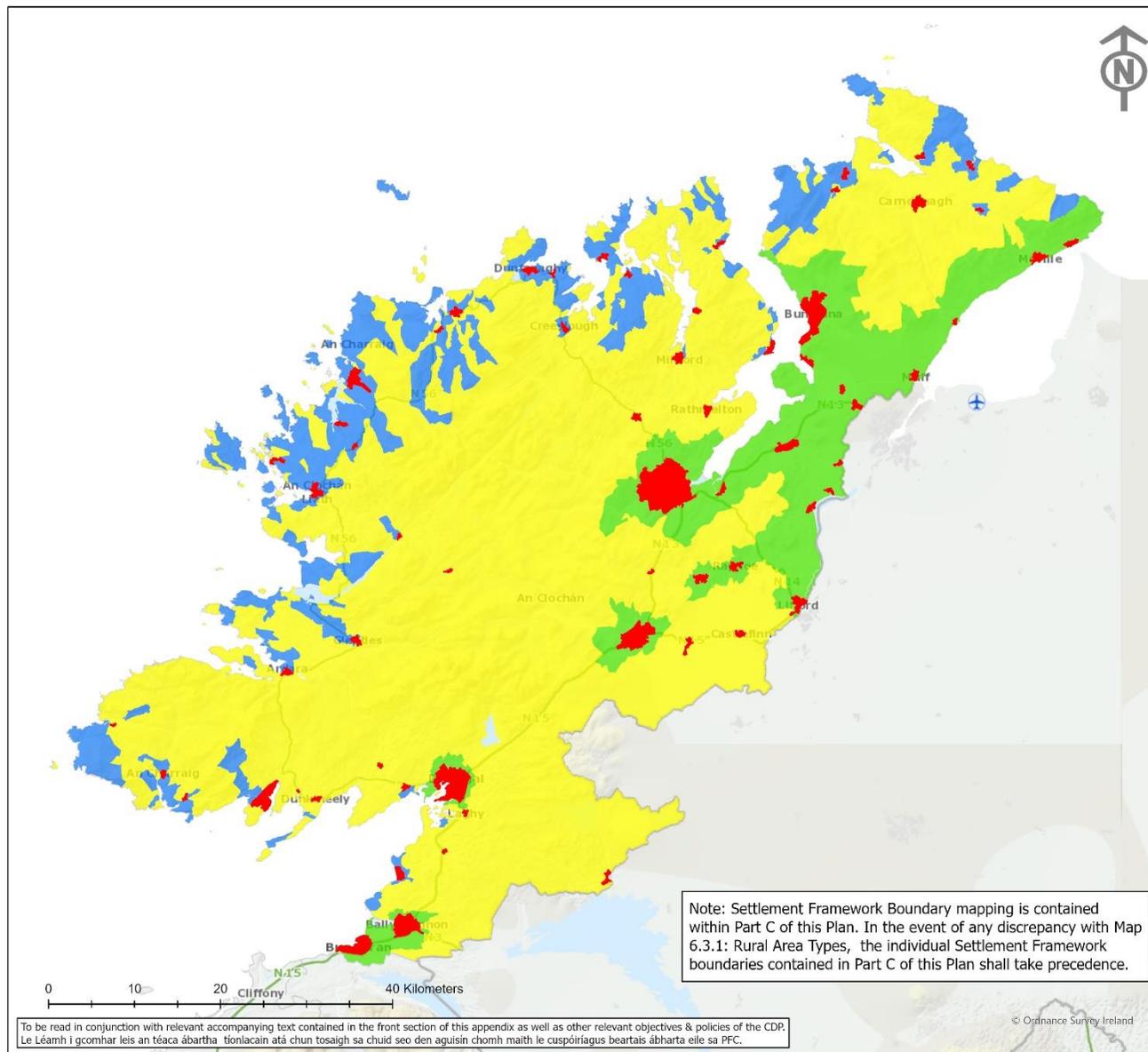
Draft County Donegal Development Plan, 2024 - 2030
 Dréachtphlean Forbartha Contae Dhún na nGall, 2024 - 2030

Map 6.3.1:
 Rural Area Types

Léarscáil 6.3.1:
 Cineálacha Ceantar Tuaithe

Area under strong Urban Influence ~ Ceantair faoi Thionchar Láidir Uirbeach
 Other Areas ~ Réimsí Eile
 Urban Areas ~ Limistéir Uirbeacha
 Areas Under Holiday Home Pressures ~ Brúnna Tithe Saoire

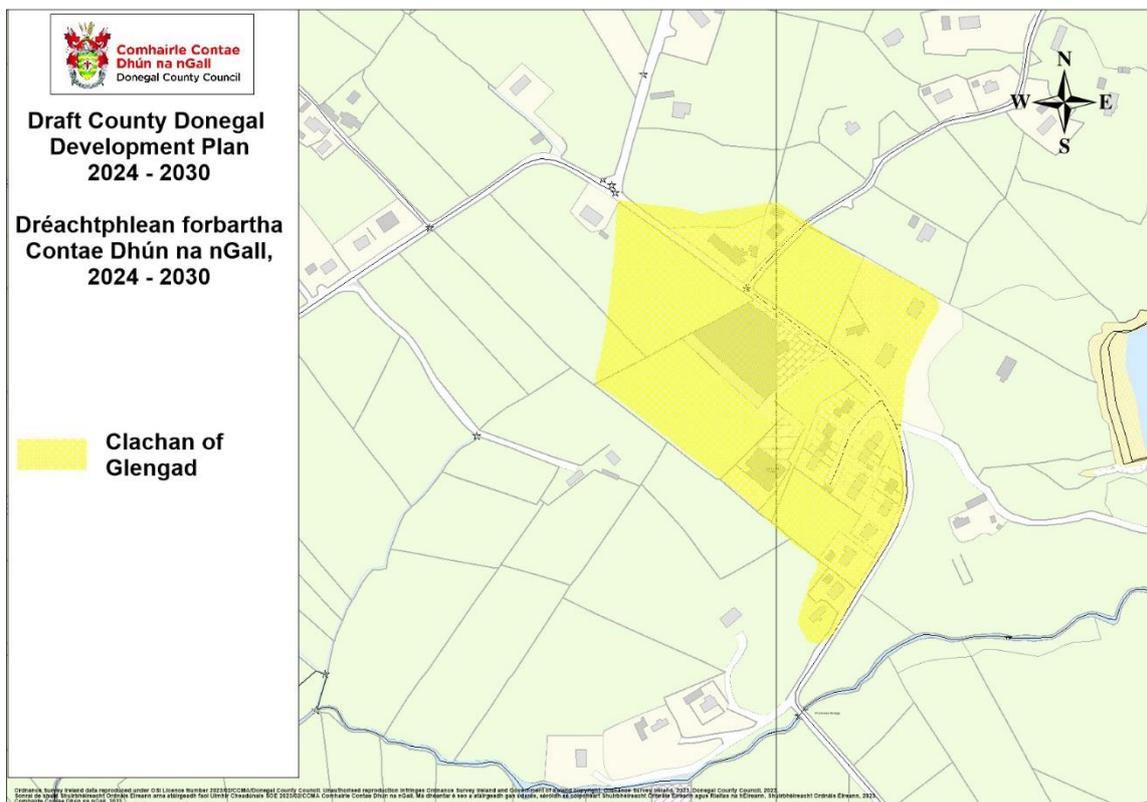
Source - Donegal County Council
 Foinse - Comhairle Chontae Dhún na nGall
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6.3.3 Clachans

This Plan identifies seven clachans comprised of small rural communities located outside of the areas under strong urban influence and holiday home pressure areas. The Plan includes policy support for permanent one-off dwellings without occupancy restrictions with a view to helping stabilise these communities. The clachans are identified in the maps below.

1. Glengad



development within County Donegal) in the context of how rural housing development can be accommodated and facilitated in the rural area, in terms of the provision of the requisite services and facilities for rural dwellings but also with regard to environmental considerations and how the development can be assimilated into the receiving landscape in a manner that does not detract from the character and quality of that landscape. Chapter 11.2 sets out the following three distinct Landscape Character Classifications that have been identified within the county:

- Areas of Especially High Scenic Amenity;
- Areas of High Scenic Amenity; and
- Areas of Moderate Scenic Amenity.

All new development within the County, including rural housing developments, must have regard to the specific landscape classification, in terms of integration and assimilation of development into the receiving landscape. In this context, the policies of this Plan seek to ensure that residential development in rural areas is provided at appropriate locations and in a manner that will sustain rural communities without having a negative impact upon key economic, environmental, natural and cultural heritage assets of rural areas. This rural housing policy framework will provide for sustainable rural communities subject to a number of key policy requirements being met; that the specific requirements that are set out under Policy RH-P-1 and RH-P-2 are complied with; that housing is of an appropriate quality design, integrates successfully into the landscape and does not cause a detrimental change to, or, further erode the rural character of the area as specified under Policy RH-P-9 (* Please refer to *'Building a House in Rural Donegal - A Location, Siting and Design Guide'* available on the Council's website for further information in this respect); and that the applicant satisfies the relevant definition of rural housing need.

OBJECTIVES

RH-O-1	To ensure that new residential development in rural areas provides for genuine rural need.
RH-O-2	To protect rural 'Areas Under Strong Urban Influence', rural 'Areas Under Strong Holiday Home Influence', and rural areas immediately outside towns from intensive levels of unsustainable urban/suburban residential development.
RH-O-3	To sustain identified small clachan-style communities.
RH-O-4	To ensure that rural housing is located, designed and constructed in a manner that does not detract from the character or quality of the receiving landscape having particular regard to Map 11.1: 'Scenic Amenity' of this Plan.
RH-O-5	To facilitate the positive re-use of existing vacant rural housing stock in the County to seek to prevent further deterioration and dereliction.

POLICIES:**Areas Under Strong Urban Influence****RH-P-1**

To consider proposals for new one-off rural housing within 'Areas Under Strong Urban Influence' from prospective applicants that have demonstrated a genuine rural need for a new dwelling house and who can provide evidence that they, or their parents or grandparents, have resided at some time within the area under strong urban influence in the vicinity of the application site for a period of at least 7 years. The foregoing is subject to compliance with other relevant policies of this plan, including Policy RH-P-9.

This policy shall not apply where an individual has already had the benefit of a permission for a dwelling on another site, unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated.

An exceptional circumstance would include, but would not be limited to, situations where the applicant has sold a previously permitted, constructed and occupied dwelling, to an individual who fulfils the bonafides requirements of that permission.

New holiday homes will not be permitted in these areas.

Areas Under Strong Holiday Home Influence**RH-P-2**

To consider proposals for new one-off rural housing within 'Areas Under Strong Holiday Home Influence' from prospective applicants that have demonstrated a genuine rural need for a new dwelling house and who can provide evidence that they, or their parents or grandparents, have resided at some time within the area under strong holiday home influence in the vicinity of the application site for a period of at least 7 years. The foregoing is subject to compliance with other relevant policies of this plan, including Policies RH-P-9.

This policy shall not apply where an individual has already had the benefit of a permission for a dwelling on another site, unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated.

An exceptional circumstance would include, but would not be limited to, situations where the applicant has sold a previously permitted, constructed and occupied dwelling, to an individual who fulfils the bonafides requirements of that permission.

New holiday homes will not be permitted in these areas.

Other Rural Areas

RH-P-3 To consider proposals for new one-off housing within other rural areas from any prospective applicants with a demonstrated rural need for a dwelling house, subject to compliance with all other relevant policies of this Plan, including Policy RH-P-9. New holiday homes will not be permitted in these areas.

RH-P-4 It is a policy of the council to consider opportunities to deliver necessary social and affordable housing at locations around (i) rural schools and; (ii) rural settlements; subject to wastewater services being appropriately delivered and maintained by Donegal County Council as part of a social housing scheme and subject to all other relevant objectives and policies of the plan, including environmental considerations and compliance with the Habitats Directive.

Clachans

RH-P-5 To consider proposals for single dwellings for permanent occupation/family homes within identified Clachans without requiring the demonstration of a rural housing need, subject to the dwelling:

- being sited and designed in a manner that enables the development to be assimilated into the area;
- not giving rise to a road safety hazard;
- complying with public health standards; and
- otherwise complying with the policies of this Plan.

New Holiday Homes will not be permitted in these areas.

Refurbishment/Replacement/Extension of Existing Non-Vernacular Dwellings

RH-P-6 To consider proposals for the refurbishment, or replacement, or extension of an existing non-vernacular habitable dwelling for use as either a permanent dwelling or as a holiday home, subject to compliance with the terms of Policy RH-P- 9 below. The design, size, height and finishes of the finished dwelling must be of a scale and form such that the development integrates effectively into the host landscape.

Refurbishment/Extension of Existing Vernacular Buildings

RH-P-7 To consider proposals for the refurbishment of derelict vernacular buildings (refer to definitions below) within rural areas, for use as either a permanent dwelling or as a holiday home, subject to (inter alia) the following criteria being satisfied:

- The proposed development will provide for the retention of the majority of the existing building.
- Proposals for extensions shall, in general, not exceed 150m² or 50% of the size of the original building. The design, size, height and finishes of the proposed refurbishment/ extension must respect the architectural character of the original building type unless otherwise agreed with the Planning

- Authority, and the finished building must otherwise be of a scale and form such that the development integrates effectively into the host landscape.
- c. Compliance with the terms of Policy RH-P-9 below.

Ancillary Accommodation for Dependant Relatives

RH-P-8

- a. To consider proposals for the provision of ancillary accommodation for dependent relatives within the curtilage of an existing rural dwelling, subject to compliance with the following criteria:
- b. Ancillary accommodation for dependent relatives shall be clearly subservient to the main dwelling house in terms of scale and mass, shall be consistent with the form and appearance of the main dwelling house and shall be designed to integrate effectively within the host rural environment,
- c. Ancillary accommodation shall be served by the existing vehicular entrance to the site and the onus shall be placed on prospective applicants to demonstrate that existing entrance arrangements are safe and fit for purpose,
- d. Adequate provision shall be made for the treatment and dispersal of domestic effluent.
- e. In the event of a grant of permission the Council will attach an Occupancy condition which may require the completion of a legal agreement under Section 47 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

Location, Siting and Design and Other Detailed Planning Considerations

RH-P-9

- a. Proposals for individual dwellings (including refurbishment, replacement and/or extension projects) shall be sited and designed in a manner that is sensitive to the integrity and character of rural areas as identified in Map 11.1: 'Scenic Amenity' of this Plan, and that enables the development to be assimilated into the receiving landscape. Proposals shall be subject to the application of best practice in relation to the siting, location and design of rural housing as set out in Donegal County Council's '*Rural Housing Design Guidelines*' available on the councils website. In applying these principles, the Council will be guided by the following considerations:-
 - i. A proposed dwelling shall avoid the creation or expansion of a suburban pattern of development in the rural area;
 - ii. A proposed dwelling shall not create or add to ribbon development (see definitions);
 - iii. A proposed dwelling shall not result in a development which by its positioning, siting or location would be detrimental to the amenity of the area or of other rural dwellers or would constitute haphazard development;
 - iv. A proposed dwelling will be unacceptable where it is prominent in the landscape;
 - v. A proposed new dwelling will be unacceptable where it fails to blend with the landform, existing trees or vegetation, buildings, slopes or other natural features which can help its integration. Proposals for development involving extensive or significant excavation or infilling will not normally be favourably considered nor will proposals that result in the removal of trees or wooded areas beyond that necessary to accommodate the development. The extent of excavation that may be considered will depend upon the circumstances of the case, including the extent to which

	<p>the development of the proposed site, including necessary site works, will blend in unobtrusively with its immediate and wider surroundings.</p> <p>b. Proposals for individual dwellings shall also be assessed against the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. the need to avoid any adverse impact on Natura 2000 sites or other designated habitats of conservation importance, prospects or views including views covered by Policy L-P-8; ii. the need to avoid any negative impacts on protected areas defined by the River Basin District plan in place at the time; iii. the site access/egress being configured in a manner that does not constitute a hazard to road users or significantly scar the landscape; iv. the safe and efficient disposal of effluent and surface waters in a manner that does not pose a risk to public health and accords with Environmental Protection Agency codes of practice; v. Compliance with the flood risk management policies of this Plan; <p>c. In the event of a grant of permission the Council will attach an Occupancy condition which may require the completion of a legal agreement under S47 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).</p>
RH-P-10	<p>To require new single house development proposals within the catchment area of the proposed sewerage network in An Bun Beg-Doirí Beaga area to make provision for a future connection to the sewerage network, in consultation with Irish Water.</p> <p>Any applications for single rural houses within this area must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. include detail of the proposed means of connection to the proposed network, and b. submit detailed proposals for the interim on-site disposal of effluent to current Environmental Protection Agency standards for the disposal of effluent from single house treatment systems. The catchment area of the proposed sewerage network serving the area is identified on the Settlement Framework mapping for An Bun Beg-Doirí Beaga accompanying this Plan.
RH-P-11	<p>To direct new multiple housing units (defined as 2 or more units) to those towns identified in the Core Strategy/Settlement Hierarchy.</p>

Definitions:

1. Immediate family members are defined as: Sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, grandparents, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, nieces or nephews of the applicant.
2. Permanent House: The principal and main residence.
3. Derelict building: In general this is defined as a building with most external walls intact. Where the external walls consist of low wallsteads within an area of High or Moderate Scenic Amenity, each case will be considered on its merits with regard to location and siting. However, proposals for the refurbishment of low wallsteads will not be given favourable consideration within Areas of Especially High Scenic Amenity (refer to Map 11.1).
4. Rural Areas of Especially High Scenic Amenity: Are sublime natural landscapes of the highest quality that are synonymous with the identity of County Donegal. These areas have extremely limited capacity to assimilate additional development and accordingly development proposals in such areas must be formulated to ensure adequate integration into the receiving landscape and must otherwise comply with all other objectives and policies of the Plan.

5. Existing cluster consists of a number of houses and/or other buildings with adjoining curtilages, or within close proximity to each other, and where additional development does not give rise to ribbon development.
6. Ribbon Development:
In general 5 houses on any one side of 250 metres road frontage.
Whether a given proposal will exacerbate such ribbon development or could be considered will depend on:
 - The type of rural area and circumstances of the applicant.
 - The degree to which the proposal might be considered infill development.
 - The degree to which existing ribbon development would be extended or whether distinct areas of ribbon development would coalesce as a result of the development.
 - The existence of physical and geographical breaks, inclusive of topographical undulations, which may act as a means of extending roadside development in appropriate cases.
 - The degree to which the proposal would form a small cluster with a number of houses or other buildings with adjoining curtilages, this may incorporate backland sites in appropriate circumstances.

The Planning Authority shall take a balanced and reasonable view of the interpretation of the above criteria taking account of local circumstances, the context of the site, including the planning history of the area and development pressures.

7. Holiday Home: A secondary place of residence that does not form a principal and main residence. This excludes second homes occupied on an intermittent basis by persons who are returning emigrants.
8. Brownfield Site: A brownfield site is one that has been previously built upon.

Chapter 7 Economic Development



Chapter 7 – Economic Development

Strategic Objective

To promote and build on the economic strengths and assets of the County as a competitive, innovative and attractive place for a range of sectors to locate and grow, based on the advantages of a robust economic base that is highly appealing to investors and employees

Donegal has a varied economic base with activity across a range of sectors including financial and business technology, life sciences, bio-tech, agriculture, both primary and secondary fisheries, primary and secondary manufacturing, engineering including marine engineering, professional services, tourism, creative industries and a range of other employment bases.

This planning framework recognises the contribution and potential of traditional sectors such as agriculture and fishing, emerging sectors such as the blue economy and growing business capabilities within key clusters such as Fin Tech, InsurTech, Reg Tech, Med Tech and advanced manufacturing with a clear policy base to support their sustainable expansion in Donegal.

7.1. Current and Emerging Issues/Trends/Influences

North West City Region

Donegal forms part of the cross-border North West City Region comprising the Council areas of Donegal, Derry and Strabane. The National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) recognise that the development of the North-West city region is essential to achieving the potential of the overall region and maximising its contribution to regional and all island economic growth.

Letterkenny's designation as a Regional Growth Centre in the NPF and the RSES is crucial to strengthening its strategic economic role by continuing to attract companies to locate and expand and to command investment in key enabling infrastructure for the wider city region.

Atlantic Technological University

The importance of the Atlantic Technological University (ATU) campuses at Letterkenny and Killybegs is acknowledged as key economic drivers for the county and wider region, increasing the attractiveness of the county as a potential investment location by both providing a pool of educated and skilled prospective employees and building the research and innovation capabilities that strengthen the county's economic resilience and competitiveness. The contribution of the ATU to the economy and employment offering of the county and wider region is set to grow, amid continuing collaboration on a cross-border further and higher education cluster with Ulster University, North West Regional College and Donegal ETB (Education & Training Board), and in terms of its strategic partnerships and its growing research and development capabilities.

Driving Innovation

The development of strong research, development and innovation capability is evidenced by the investment in the ATU's business start-up innovation centre, 'CoLab' which also houses WISAR a Technology Gateway. In addition there has been an increased focus on R&D with projects such as the Bryden Project and the increasingly strong cross border collaborations with Ulster University and the North West Regional College in Derry under the auspices of the North West Tertiary Education Cluster.

The county's innovation capability has been enhanced further through the new Alpha Innovation Centre which will form a central part of the new Business and Innovation Quarter in Letterkenny and plans are afoot for a new Ocean Innovation Centre on the ATU campus in Killybegs.

New Work Patterns

While Covid 19 presented significant challenges for businesses, it also accelerated the move towards flexible working arrangements including remote working. This has resulted in opportunities emerging for locations like Donegal, where businesses and employees can have both excellent working conditions with good broadband connectivity as well as superb work life balance opportunities. No longer do employees have to choose between advancing their careers or improved work life balance, they now have every opportunity to achieve both by locating in Donegal or other similar locations.

The growth in the network of co-working spaces and locally based digital hubs in Donegal has also facilitated this move and such spaces and hubs have become an important community facility in many towns and villages across Donegal.



Deficit in Enabling Strategic Infrastructure

Alongside the significant growth that has taken place in the county and the wider city region in recent years, a number of challenges remain to be addressed, including deficits in key enabling strategic

infrastructure including roads, rail, electricity, gas, rural broadband, water and wastewater. These 'long-held' deficiencies serve only to restrict the county in meeting its full potential. The extent and nature of such deficiencies are detailed in the relevant sections of this plan. Donegal County Council is committed to working with government departments & agencies to support the delivery of this critical infrastructure during the plan period and beyond.

Property Solutions for Business

In addition, the shift in business's preference for town centre grade A office accommodation is also proving to be a challenge especially in larger centres such as Letterkenny. The proposed development of the new Business and Innovation Quarter in Letterkenny which will comprise of the Alpha Innovation Centre and the Beta Business Centre, will help address this need and should also trigger or act as a catalyst for further private sector investment of this nature.

Good quality and affordable housing options are also proving to be a challenge for businesses looking to grow and expand in the county, with particular challenges being experienced in Letterkenny and the surrounding areas. In some instances, this is resulting in businesses curtailing or postponing their development plans, presenting further barriers to development and growth in Donegal.

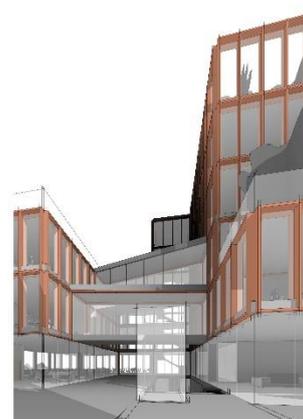
The need for serviced land for economic development and job creation purposes is also emerging as an essential requirement in a number of centres across the county and a key policy of this plan must be to look at how land can be released in various locations to facilitate this type of essential investment that will support and facilitate expansion of locally based businesses as well as enabling inward investment opportunities to materialise.



3D View 01



3D View 02



3D View 03

<p>Comhairle Contae Dhún na nGall Donegal County Council</p>	<p>Community Development Planning Services Economic & Development Team</p> <p>NEW ADDRESS: 20001, SPENCER, LEE, DONEGAL</p> <p>PLANNING SERVICES: 097 8622000 097 8622001</p> <p>Mail: Plans and Control, 16, Pearse Street, Letterkenny</p>	<p>Rialtas na hÉireann Government of Ireland</p>	<p>Donegal County Council 2024-2030</p>	<p>Project Name: Alpha Innovation Centre & Beta Business Centre</p> <p>Location: Letterkenny, Donegal</p> <p>Client: Donegal County Council</p> <p>Architect: [Name]</p> <p>Date: [Date]</p>	<p>Scale: 1:500</p> <p>Author: [Name]</p> <p>Check: [Name]</p> <p>Approved: [Name]</p>	<p>Project No: [Number]</p> <p>Drawn: [Name]</p> <p>Scale: 1:500</p> <p>Date: [Date]</p>	
	<p>Project No: [Number]</p> <p>Scale: 1:500</p> <p>Date: [Date]</p>						

Impact of Brexit

Brexit has had a significant impact on Donegal and the wider North West City Region. This impact has been felt most acutely in our coastal communities as a result of the impact of the reduction of fishing quotas as per the Trade and Cooperation Agreement reached by the EU and UK in December 2020.

This impact on Ireland's fishing industry has been felt strongly in Donegal. Donegal is the county in Ireland that is most reliant on the sea food sector and arguably most affected by Brexit. The SeaFood Taskforce established by the Minister in 2021, has introduced measures to help mitigate the impact on coastal communities including through a range of funding initiatives under the auspices of the Brexit Adjustment Reserve Fund.

Grant Thornton, in their 2021 report²⁴ commissioned by Donegal County Council, noted that Brexit was not an event but a process and one that will continue to be played out over the next number of years with a number of outstanding or unresolved matters still to be agreed, leading to continuing levels of uncertainty in many sectors.

The report noted this continued 'uncertainty' crystallised the need for solutions to address long standing issues, particularly emanating from a legacy of under investment in key enabling infrastructure in and to the county.

Blue Economy

New opportunities are emerging for coastal communities in terms of the blue economy with an increased focus on areas such as value-added seafood production, aquaculture, tourism and renewable energy.

The recently formed Killybegs Marine Cluster presents opportunities for businesses to collaborate to maximise the potential from these sectors with a view to enhancing business development opportunities.

Killybegs is home to a well-established world class marine engineering cluster servicing a range of sectors including commercial fishing, fish processing, aquaculture and on and off-shore renewable energies on an international scale. These businesses have developed strong relationships with other engineering businesses across the county resulting in a strong engineering cluster presence in Donegal.

Killybegs is also an established cruise ship destination, due to its deep water capacity, and already 30 cruise ships are set to dock in the port in 2023.

Renewable Energy

A recent Dublin Offshore Report²⁵ was commissioned by the Regional Enterprise Offices and Local Authorities along the western seaboard, including Donegal County Council and the Western Development Commission, to examine the potential for developing the Offshore Wind sector along the Atlantic coast.

The report found that 90% of future new build offshore energy capacity in the Atlantic Region will be Floating Offshore Wind (FOW). The unique selling point of floating offshore is the ability to develop

²⁴ Grant Thornton – Responding to Brexit: An Investment Plan for Donegal and the North West Region, March 2021

²⁵ Dublin Offshore, The Growth of Onshore to Offshore Wind in the Atlantic Region, Wind Energy and Supply Chain Feasibility, November 2021

offshore wind farms in deeper water and with a more consistent wind resource, resulting in increased capacity generation.

To quantify the scale of the opportunity, the report found that by 2037 there could be upwards of 5,000 jobs supported directly by the offshore wind sector off the western seaboard generating €400 million in gross value added (GVA) annually to the Atlantic region economy.

The proximity to the offshore continental shelf and the natural strategic advantage in terms of a sustained wind resource and the deep water port at Killybegs makes Donegal an attractive investment location in the offshore wind sector.

This report also found that in terms of the suitability of key ports in the Atlantic region, Killybegs Port presented strongly in terms of its capability to service the offshore wind sector and noted that the planned infrastructure developments at the Port would be essential if Killybegs is to achieve its potential.

The report also called for investment in high capacity grid connection of at least 220kv in order to ensure that there is certainty of route to market for the energy produced. The Atlantic Region including Donegal has the capacity to produce multiples of the current electricity demand on the island of Ireland and investment in technology innovations such as Green Hydrogen is needed to realise the export potential that exists.

The last number of years has seen an unprecedented period of change not just locally but globally and this includes Brexit, the Covid pandemic, the acceleration of the climate change agenda, the war in Ukraine and the ongoing energy crisis. While these challenges have created high levels of economic uncertainty, a unique set of opportunities for Donegal and the wider region has emerged.

7.2 Strategic Policy Context

The economic framework set out in this chapter has been drafted in the context of the following national, regional plans, policies, and guidelines.

7.2.1 National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) recognises the economic contribution and potential of Donegal and in particular the Regional Growth Centre of Letterkenny.

The NPF recognises the important economic role of urban settlements at a county and regional level, and rural settlements at a local level, whilst identifying the need to strengthen rural economies and communities by broadening the employment base of rural areas, improving connectivity and addressing infrastructural deficits.

A number of National Planning Objectives (NPOs) reference the interconnection of employment with land use planning. NPO 7 encourages population growth in strong employment and service centres, regeneration of smaller urban centres, addressing the legacy of unplanned growth and facilitating 'catch-up', balancing population and employment growth. NPO 11 states a presumption in favour of development that can encourage more people and generate more jobs and activity within existing towns and villages.

In terms of job creation in urban areas, the overarching guidance provided in the NPF is that job creation should coincide with population increase at a ratio of 1.0.

7.2.2 National Development Plan 2018-2027

The National Development Plan provides a framework for the government's capital expenditure in alignment with the National Development Plan (and the RSES) under the umbrella of Project Ireland 2040. Four Project Ireland 2040 funds have been established including: The Climate Action Fund, Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund, the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, and the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund. A collective budget amounting to an estimated €4 billion over the ten-year period has been allocated to these funds. Key strategic investment priorities will be accelerated in County Donegal under these funds. The plan identifies key infrastructural investment projects which are crucial to future economic growth and prosperity in the County.

7.2.3 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern and Western Region 2020-2032

The focus of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) is on place-based assets as well as sectors and clusters. The RSES approach aims to realise the full potential of the region through investments in placemaking, developing places that are attractive for business investment and for people to live and work. At a macro level there are a number of RPO's that encourage settlements to; harness their export capacity by promoting trade and global opportunities; by being vibrant and distinctive, where our communities act as a spur for quality of life, creativity and innovation and are attractive for innovators, investors, business, visitors and all residents.

7.2.4 North West Regional Enterprise Plan 2022-2024

This Enterprise Plan includes projects and initiatives across the three North-West counties of Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim. The strategic objectives of the plan are centred on encouraging entrepreneurship, scaling of SMEs and promoting the region's economic strengths including capitalising on new work trends such as remote or agile working arrangements.

In particular, the strategy identifies 'wind energy' and the 'blue economy' including a key objective to support the regional blue economy and marine cluster in Killybegs. The plan looks to encourage the regions enterprises to transition to low carbon operations and grow the circular economy in the region. The plan recognises our unique position as a cross border region and looks to strengthen our cross border relationships in order to further enterprise growth in the North-West. The plan examines options to assist in addressing challenges around talent retention and attraction in the North West.

7.2.5 Donegal 10 Year Strategic Enterprise Plan 2021-2030

This Enterprise Development Plan is predicated on 4 pillars of development which work with government agencies, various industries and academia to attain sustained enterprise growth and value, expand business activity within the SME sectors, generate more and better employment opportunities, attract new talents and skills, enhance the competitiveness of the sector in order to increase exports, accentuate the development of human resources in tandem with key sectors (ICT Digital, Patient Centre Healthcare, Tourism +, Engineering/Advance Manufacturing, Blue Economy, Creative and Food) and increase foreign direct investment inflows and improve the governance of the local economy.

7.2.6 Our Rural Future – Rural Development Policy 2021-2025

Our Rural Future outlines a vision to support the regeneration and development of rural towns and villages to contribute to local and national economic recovery, and to enable people to live and work in a vibrant environment. The Our Rural Future Plan recognises the importance of digital connectivity

for rural communities and enterprise, focusing on remote working, education and enterprise opportunities and reiterates the ambition of delivering high speed broadband to rural areas. The Plan seeks to regenerate rural towns and villages and provide more employment in rural areas. It includes a policy to develop 9 no. Regional Enterprise Plans and work with the IDA to target 400 no. investments and 19 no. Advanced Technology Buildings all in regional locations. The Plan seeks to provide improved public transport, health care, housing and childcare in rural areas.

7.2.7 Town Centre First – A Policy Approach for Irish Towns 2022

“The Town Centre First policy aims to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community”. The series of actions put forward in the policy collectively create the framework required to support our towns to achieve the desired outcomes and deliver on their own unique vision. These Actions are centred around improving our knowledge and understanding our towns and what they need, enhancing the capacity of delivery agents to implement this ambitious policy, building new structures at national and local level, and ensuring that new and existing funds are co-ordinated and targeted towards the implementation of Town Centre First in each town.

7.2.8 Enterprise 2025 Renewed

Enterprise Policy in Ireland is formulated by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation. Current enterprise policy is provided by ‘Enterprise 2025 Renewed’. The policy is based on export-led growth, underpinned by talent and innovation, with the objective of driving resilience in the enterprise base so that full employment is sustainable over the longer term.

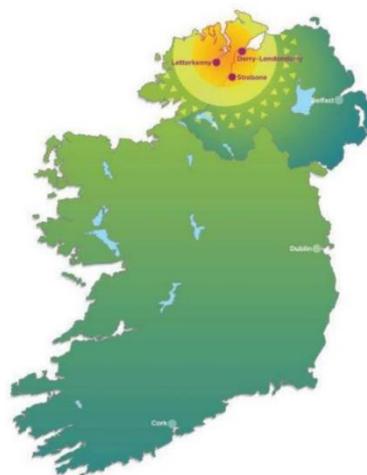
7.3 Economic Profile

Population is a key economic indicator at regional, county and settlement level. How population is concentrated and configured determines critical mass levels in an area, which in turn drives economic growth, service provision and infrastructural delivery.

7.3.1 Population

Demography - North West City Region

The North West City Region is the fourth largest urban agglomeration on the island. The city region of 400,000 inhabitants’ interconnects Donegal, Derry and Strabane as illustrated in figure 7.1²⁶.



²⁶ North West City Region Investment Plan – Technical Document, commissioned by Donegal CC on behalf of the North West Strategic Growth Partnership

Figure 7.1 North West City Region in the island context

Demography – Nationally by County

The publication of census 2022 data shows the population of Donegal at 167,084. Over the period 2016-2022 Donegal enjoyed a net population growth of 4.5%. This increase of 7,129 persons positively surpasses the fall experienced between 2011-2016. In the national context Donegal experienced the lowest population growth of any county in the state, with a state average of 7.6%.

Live Register: Overall, since 2018 numbers on the live register have dropped 15% from 10,634 to 9,032.

Disposable Income is used as a proxy for determining potential spending and economic activity relating to salary earning. 2020 figures from CSO identify Donegal as having a disposable income of 18,322, the lowest disposable income per person of any County in the State.

Occupancy in residential and commercial buildings - In terms of residential buildings, Census 2022 data shows that there has been a 3% increase in housing stock in Donegal between 2016 – 2022 compared with a 4.5% increase in population.

Census 2022 data shows that 13.4% or 10,861 dwellings have been returned as vacant in the County. According to Geodirectory,²⁷ the residential vacancy rate in County Donegal is at 9.7% compared to 4.2% nationally while the commercial vacancy rate is the 3rd highest nationally at 17.2%. As of December 2021, housing stock in the County comprised 79.3% occupied, 11.1% Holiday Homes and 9.7% vacant. A national comparison of this breakdown is detailed in Table 4.5 appended.

Vacancy and dereliction levels are key indicators of vibrancy in town centres and particularly in our strategic growth settlements. Vacancy rates across the main settlements range from 8.3% in Raphoe to 31.5% in Bunbeg Derrybeg. These urban vacancy levels in many instances are greater than the State average of 11.7% and represent a quantum of latent capacity with an opportunity for take up by a range of enterprises types.

Agency Assisted Employment: The total number of IDA Ireland client companies based in Donegal amounted to 17 in 2021, representing 1% of the total stock of IDA Ireland client companies. 2022 was a strong year for IDA job announcements in Donegal with 830 jobs announced up to the end of October.

The Annual Employment Survey provides an analysis of employment levels in 'Industrial and Services' companies under the remit of IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta. For 2021 this survey shows Donegal running in 11th position as regards the number of jobs by County in the State. The number of agency assisted jobs in Donegal grew by 3,191 over the period 2012-2021. Year on year this represented growth rates varying between 2 and 9 %, with the exception of 2020 where

7.4. Economic Development Framework

This Economic Development Framework is grounded in 6 Key Pillars as set out below.

²⁷ Geodirectory Database 2022

7.4.1 Aligning economic development and job creation with the core strategy

Linking the economic and spatial dimensions of the plan by aligning job creation with the settlement hierarchy is essential in ensuring the coordination of business growth and housing provision in the county. This involves the identification of key employment locations as economic drivers in the context of their placement in the Core Strategy while recognising the critical role of smaller settlements and rural places in the economic development of the county.

Jobs growth will, to a large extent, be connected with population growth during the lifetime of this plan. The core strategy sets the location and quantum of population growth across the county's settlement hierarchy over the next six years. Alongside these population targets the National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy identifies jobs targets for key settlements at a ratio of 1.0 representing one job for each resident worker indicating a balance between the residential and employment functions of a settlement.

In these areas it will be important to ensure that there is an adequate supply of zoned land for employment purposes at appropriate locations to accommodate employment growth and cater for the number of jobs that would help achieve this balance. In effect, this brings specific jobs targets to our key settlements as set out in table 7.1 below.

Settlement Name	Population 2016	Resident Workers	Total Jobs	Jobs: Resident Workers
Letterkenny	19274	7669	11395	1.486
Buncrana	6785	2327	1988	0.854
Ballybofey Stranorlar	4,852	1,530	1,878	1.227
Donegal	2618	996	1673	1.680
Carndonagh	2471	791	1062	1.343
Ballyshannon	2,299	787	875	1.112
Bundoran	1963	723	588	0.813

Table 7.1 Job Targets in Key Settlements

These targets bring a new focus in terms of how we implement our urban development plans, local area plans, regeneration plans and town centre first plans in our towns and villages to support business development and create new enterprise opportunities on the ground. The Development Plan supports the preparation and implementation of these town and village plans to enable economic development and job creation.

Objectives:

ED-O-1	To align job creation with the Core Strategy's Settlement Hierarchy with a view to achieving a jobs ratio of 1.0 and above in Letterkenny and those settlements identified as County Growth Drivers.
ED-O-2	To support appropriately-scaled and located economic development projects in the County's smaller towns and villages.

ED-O-3	To support appropriately scaled and located rural economic development projects where they are functionally-related to the countryside.
ED-O-4	To support the development of Páirc Ghnó Gaoth Dobhair as a business, enterprise and manufacturing centre to support the employment base, economic vitality and in turn the linguistic vibrancy of the Gaeltacht.
ED-O-5	To facilitate cross-border collaboration to enable and sustain regional economic, cultural and social development opportunities including through the North West City Region, the Atlantic Economic Corridor and engagement with other neighbouring Council areas.

7.4.2 Zoned and Serviced Employment Lands

The provision of available, attractively located and well serviced employment lands is key to enterprise growth in the county.

A review of lands zoned for economic and mixed-use development was carried out as part of the review of the County Development Plan. This review identified the quantum and location of existing zoned lands across key settlements.

The Area Plans included in this plan as well as those due for adoption over the lifetime of the plan shall review existing employment, mixed use and residential zonings to ensure an adequate supply of such lands in optimal locations.

The need for town centre Grade A office accommodation in key centres including Letterkenny, has been highlighted, to enable growth and business development in Business and Financial Technology sectors such as FinTech, InsurTech, MedTech and RegTech as well as other technology or knowledge based industries.

This plan shall identify urban sites, brownfield lands and underutilised buildings with a view to facilitating their development to meet such identified needs and opportunities.

The need for serviced land for economic development and job creation purposes is also emerging as a essential requirement in a number of centres across the county and a key policy of this plan must to be to look at how land can be released in various locations to support and facilitate expansion of locally based businesses as well as enabling inward investment opportunities to materialise.

A key consideration going forward will be the activation of these lands for both economic and residential purposes. As a means of tackling 'land release' challenges in key strategic locations, the Council shall examine and utilise where appropriate alternative methods to activate such sites for development.

As part of the focus on enhancing the vitality and viability of urban cores, the change of use of homes in established residential areas to use for the provision of professional services (where the services provided are principally to visiting patrons etc) generally will not be permitted.

Objectives

ED-O-6	To ensure that sufficient land is provided at appropriate locations for employment generating uses in key settlements and that such land is protected from inappropriate development that would prejudice its long-term development.
ED-O-7	To facilitate the development of underutilised sites and buildings to meet demands for Grade A office accommodation and quality housing in core areas of key settlements.
ED-O-8	To develop serviced lands for economic development and job creation purposes in key settlements across the county.
ED-O-9	To facilitate the activation of economically important lands through CPO or other means including public private partnerships as appropriate.

7.4.3 Strong and Vibrant Towns and Village Centres

Donegal offers a superb quality of life with fresh air, open spaces and vibrant communities. Continued investment in our towns and villages is an essential aspect of the Council's approach if we are to continue to attract people back to Donegal or encourage those not from the area to relocate here.

Attracting and retaining talent is the number one challenge for companies all over the world and providing a strong and compelling quality of life offering has become an even more important factor for companies in their location decision making process.

The availability of good quality infrastructure such as broadband, mobile phone coverage, childcare services, education, housing, recreational amenities, libraries, cultural services and so on contribute significantly to the quality of life aspect of living in a place like Donegal.

The recent growth in remote working presents new opportunities for towns and villages with many communities investing in co-working and digital hub spaces. There are approximately 15 hubs or co-working spaces currently in operation throughout the county and the vast majority are community run. These hubs provide an essential resource, bringing back vibrancy and activity to town and village centres. It is the Council's policy to continue to support these community-based hubs and to continue to promote Donegal as a superb location for remote working in line for the Council's 'Remote Working for Business Strategy.'

Objectives:

ED-O-10	To encourage enterprise and employment developments to locate in brownfield sites or unoccupied buildings in town centres or, where appropriate, in existing industrial/retail parks or other brownfield industrial sites in preference to undeveloped zoned or unzoned lands as a key measure to drive economic activation of town centres and to optimize the economic spin off from enterprise.
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ED-O-11

To enhance town centre vibrancy by supporting the development of 18 hour economy with quality gastronomy, entertainment and recreational options located in attractive and active town centre spaces.

ED-O-12

To encourage and facilitate the activation of new town centre housing options having regard to Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

7.4.5 Supporting and facilitating growth in key industry and business sectors

The County Development Plan supports and promotes the development of traditional sectors such as agriculture and fishing, as well as emerging growth sectors such as the blue economy, the business and financial technology sectors, life sciences, advanced manufacturing and engineering, tourism development and other more indigenous sectors such as food and the creative industries.

Donegal is home to leading international companies along with many flourishing SME businesses in these sectors. The highly skilled pool of talent and a strong focus on continued workforce development opportunities has been a key enabler in many of these sectors. The proactive collaboration between Further Education and Training (FET) providers including Donegal Education and Training Board (ETB) and the Atlantic Technological University with industry has played a key role in ensuring a pipeline of highly skilled workers.

Donegal's location as part of the North West City region also presents a unique and strategic business proposition providing a cross-border gateway to both the UK and EU markets.

Growing innovation and research & development capability is a key priority for the county if it is to deepen and strengthen its core proposition in these sectors. The new Alpha Innovation initiative is set to enhance the innovation capability of various businesses operating in Donegal and to increase the number of new start-ups and spin-outs. Likewise Donegal County Council, through Donegal 2040, has developed a strong relationship with Northern Ireland based Catalyst, a not for profit company specialising in innovation with a view to strengthening crossborder connections and opportunities in this space particularly in the context of the new Beta Business Centre to be housed in the new Business and Innovation Quarter in Letterkenny.

Plans are also progressing for the development of a crossborder centre of excellence in regulatory technology connecting to plans already progressed in Northern Ireland for a similar facility in Derry and Belfast.

The ATU are also continuing to enhance their capabilities in terms of innovation, research and development through the work of the CoLab in Letterkenny, the success of their FinTech Learning Labs initiative as well as plans for a new Ocean Innovation Centre at their campus in Killybegs. In addition, the ATU as a strong track record in collaborating with Ulster University in a number of key research and development initiatives including those that are currently being progressed as part of the City Deal and Inclusive Futures Fund.

A key focus for many industries in the county is how to pivot to meet the needs and opportunities of the two biggest trends affecting all businesses - sustainability and digitalisation.

The increasing requirements on businesses to ensure climate resilient practices and approaches are adopted throughout their business operations so as to achieve not only Government carbon reduction targets but also to comply with supply chain expectations and requirements is becoming more

prevalent. This is also a consideration for our ports including Killybegs and Greencastle with the growing expectation of achieving carbon neutrality.

Likewise the need to remain competitive in light of the opportunities presented by digitalisation is also a key consideration for businesses operating in many sectors including for examples opportunities to apply the latest IoT technologies in sensors, automation, data to improve production processes and increase life cycles as well as improved customer engagement.

Maritime and the ocean economy is a key growth sector for Donegal and includes a range of areas including commercial fishing and fish processing, bio-marine, renewable energy, green hydrogen, tourism, technology, engineering and sustainability.

The new Marine Spatial Planning Framework will have a particular relevance to Donegal considering the importance of the marine sector to the county. The requirement for a Designated Marine Area Plan (DMAP) is essential to provide for the proper and planned sustainable development off our coast in a way that takes on board all environmental considerations and meets the needs of all key stakeholders including the fishing community and developers.

The comparative strengths that Donegal and the region has in terms of offshore renewable energy cannot be underestimated. The proximity to the offshore continental shelf and the natural strategic advantage in terms of a sustained wind resource and the deep water port at Killybegs makes Donegal an attractive investment location in the offshore renewable energy sector. However, the lack of enabling infrastructure including a high capacity grid connection and gas network continues to hamper Donegal's opportunity for development.

Objectives:

ED-O-13	To support and facilitate, where appropriate, the further growth and development of the County's economic base through the key sectors identified in this plan. Proposals outside of these sectors shall be open for consideration and assessed against all policies and objectives of this plan, as well as national, regional plans, policies and guidelines.
ED-O-14	To facilitate and support the future development of the ATU campuses in Letterkenny and Killybegs, including their innovation, research and development functions.
ED-O-15	To implement the policy objectives as set out within the National Marine Spatial Planning Framework to support the effective management of marine activities and the sustainable use of the county's marine resources in accordance with related objectives contained in Chapter 14: 'Marine Resource, Coastal Management and the Islands'.
ED-O-16	To support the early development of a Designated Marine Area Plan, off the coast of Donegal and the North West region, in line with provisions in the Marine Spatial Planning Framework.
ED-O-17	To support the strategic importance of Killybegs as a primary commercial fishing port, and as a hub for the development of the renewable energy sector.

ED-O-18	To support and facilitate the sustainable development of Offshore Wind opportunities off the Donegal coastline
ED-O-19	To facilitate continued investment in key strategic infrastructure in Killybegs Port in a sustainable manner.

7.4.6 Delivering Key Strategic Infrastructure

As set out in the introduction to this chapter, investment in a range of key enabling infrastructure including roads, rail, rural broadband, gas, electricity, water and wastewater is essential in driving Donegal to meet its true potential. The deficits which exist are for the most part a 'long-held' trend where Donegal and the North West has generally lagged behind other regions of the State.

The nature and extent of such investment (as detailed in the transportation, telecommunications, energy, water and environment sections of the plan) represents a clear call to action by Government, it's agencies and utilities operators to positively discriminate in favour of County Donegal and this region. As reinforced through the policy objectives of this plan Donegal County Council are committed to working with government departments and agencies to support the delivery of this critical infrastructure during the plan period and beyond.

Objectives:

ED-O-20	To progress the delivery of key strategic enabling infrastructure including roads, rail, broadband, gas, electricity, water and wastewater as identified in this plan in close collaboration with government departments, agencies and utilities operators in order to align the Core Strategy and the economic development objectives of this plan with the development and roll out of their respective investment programmes.
ED-O-21	To facilitate, where appropriate, proposals to enhance the Metropolitan Area Networks, all ICT resources and infrastructure to achieve sustainable economic development and support the initiatives contained in the Donegal Digital Action Plan.

7.4.7 Proactive and Supportive Business Culture

Donegal County Council works in close partnership with all economic development agencies including IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Údaras na nGaeltachta and neighbouring local authorities in Northern Ireland to progress economic development and job creation opportunities in Donegal.

In addition, the Council has resourced a new Economic Development Division to work side by side with the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) and economic development partners to enhance and develop the county's proposition as a place to invest, to do business and to live and work.

The LEO is an essential resource and one stop shop for businesses in Donegal and the Economic Development Division has progressed a range of supporting interventions to promote economic development and job creation including for example the new Donegal DNA placebrand and a range of property solutions including the new Business and Innovation Quarter in Letterkenny.

The Economic Development team also provide a business concierge service for businesses looking to access Council services and this includes providing a facilitated and proactive approach to ensuring that businesses can access the services and supports they need.

The Council is committed to ensuring that this proactive and supportive approach to meeting businesses needs and providing good services and supports to businesses is nurtured and developed across all parts of the organisation.

Policies:

Settlements

ED-P-1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. To direct office and light industrial developments to town centre sites, edge of centres locations, or appropriately zoned lands in Letterkenny, Growth Driver Settlements and Service Towns. b. To consider such proposals on lands currently used for such purposes. c. To determine such proposals on other lands within settlements on their own merits having regard to the scale and character of the settlement, environmental considerations including the merits of the proposal in terms of sustainable travel outcomes, the availability of necessary infrastructure, compliance with Policy ED-P-10, and compatibility with the locality.
ED-P-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. To direct development involving industrial buildings and/or industrial processes, and warehouse/storage use to appropriately zoned lands, or lands currently used for such purposes in Letterkenny, Growth Driver Settlements and Service Towns.. b. Determine such proposals on other lands within settlements on their own merits having regard to the scale and character of the settlement, environmental considerations including the merits of the proposal in terms of sustainable travel outcomes, the availability of necessary infrastructure, compliance with Policy ED-P-10, and compatibility with the locality.
ED-P-3	<p>It is a policy of the Council to consider proposals for the extension of an existing industrial or business use within a defined settlement provided the resultant scale and form of the enterprise is compatible with the character and scale of the settlement and locality and the proposal meets the criteria set out in Policy ED-P-10.</p>

Rural Area

ED-P-4	<p>Consider proposals for the businesses in rural areas of the nature identified in 'a.', 'b.' and 'c.' below, where such uses would comply with the terms of 'c.' below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Valuable additions to the local economy and/or tourism offering in an area, such as those relating to food (particularly value-added products such as artisan food), forestry (e.g. wood products), crafts, creative industries, ecotourism and agritourism (e.g. farmhouse accommodation, pet farms, farm holidays, health farms, equestrian activities, bird-watching holidays, painting and photography tuition, angling tourism, field studies cycling and hill-walking); and
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Genuine Farm Diversification Schemes where the diversification scheme is to be run in conjunction with the agricultural operations of the farm. The provision of associated short-term let rental accommodation purposes (up to a maximum of five units) may be considered. c. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. As far as possible, proposed developments should reuse or adapt existing redundant farm buildings. ii. Any new proposed building must be of a scale, form and design appropriate to the rural area. iii. Compliance with all the relevant criteria of Policy ED-P-10. iv. Where there are deficiencies in water infrastructure and/or where it is not possible to connect to the public systems, the developer will be required to demonstrate that bespoke development-led solutions can be identified, agreed in writing, implemented, and maintained.
ED-P-5	Support a home-based business of limited scale (circa 1-5 employees), located within the curtilage of an existing dwelling house; subject to compliance with Policy ED-P-10 and having regard to all other material planning considerations.
ED-P-6	<p>To support the principle of the following small businesses in distinctly rural areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. ICT-based micro enterprises (i.e. those with up to 10 employees), and enterprises addressing climate change and sustainability. In such cases, the applicant will be required to demonstrate in general terms that the projected workforce could be drawn from the locality. b. Businesses providing professional services to the local community. In such cases, the applicant will be required to demonstrate in general terms that the anticipated clientele is likely to be drawn from the locality. <p>In all cases, the applicant shall be required to demonstrate that the proposed development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. would be physically sympathetic to, and would not be visually incongruous with, the locality having regard to the quality, character and distinctiveness of the local landscape; b. would be compatible with surrounding existing or approved land uses and would not be detrimental to the amenities of any nearby residents; c. is otherwise generally in accordance with the requirements of Policy ED-P-10.
ED-P-7	<p>Consider proposals for the expansion or re-development of an existing economic development in the countryside provided the scale and nature of the resultant development will contribute positively to the long-term sustainability of the existing enterprise, subject to compliance with all relevant provisions of Policy ED-P-10. A proposal which would not meet these criteria will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated that:</p> <p>The proposal would provide for consolidation and/or remediation of the existing facilities;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Where relocation of the enterprise would not be possible; b. The proposal would make a significant contribution to the local economy; c. The development would maintain the existing rural character of the area; and d. Where infrastructural improvements are required that a developer-led solution can be identified and delivered.

ED-P-8	<p>It is a policy of the Council to consider exceptional proposals for a major industry/enterprise in the countryside which makes a significant Regional contribution to the economy of the County where it is demonstrated that the proposal, due to its site specific requirements or size, requires to be located outside the confines of a settlement. An application for a development proposed under this policy must be accompanied by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> evidence to support the case for the potential Regional economic benefit to the economy of the County; and detailed information on the search conducted to secure a suitable site within the boundary of a settlement. <p>The provisions of Policy ED-P-10 will also be taken into account and a Travel Plan must be prepared to address the issue of accessibility by various modes of transport. Developer-led infrastructural improvements will be conditioned in appropriate cases. Development proposals will be assessed in the light of all relevant material planning considerations, relevant policies of the County Development Plan and other regional and national guidance/policy, relevant environmental designations including demonstration of compliance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.</p>
ED-P-9	<p>It is a policy of the Council to support Gaeltacht-based economic opportunities on lands within the ownership of, or supported by, Údarás na Gaeltachta. Development proposals will be assessed in the light of all relevant material planning considerations, relevant policies of the County Development Plan including Policy ED-P-10 and other regional and national guidance/policy, relevant environmental designations including demonstration of compliance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.</p>
ED-P-10	<p>It is a policy of the Council that any proposal for economic development use, in addition to other policy provisions of this Plan, will be required to meet all the following criteria;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> It is compatible with surrounding land uses existing or approved; It would not be detrimental to the character of any area designated as being of especially high scenic amenity (ehsa); It does not harm the amenities of nearby residents; There is existing or programmed capacity in the water infrastructure (supply and/or effluent disposal) or suitable developer-led improvements can be identified and delivered; The existing road network can safely handle any extra vehicular traffic generated by the proposed development or suitable developer-led improvements are identified and delivered to overcome any road problems; Adequate access arrangements, parking, maneuvering and servicing areas are provided in line with the development and technical standards set out in this plan or as otherwise agreed in writing with the planning authority; It does not create a noise nuisance; It is capable of dealing satisfactorily with any emission(s); It does not adversely affect important features of the built heritage or natural heritage including natura 2000 sites; It is not located in an area at flood risk and/or will not cause or exacerbate flooding;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> k. The site layout, building design, associated infrastructure and landscaping arrangements are of high quality and assist the promotion of sustainability and biodiversity; l. Appropriate boundary treatment and means of enclosure are provided and any areas of outside storage proposed are adequately screened from public view; m. In the case of proposals in the countryside, there are satisfactory measures to assist integration into the landscape; n. It does not compromise water quality nor conflict with the programme of measures contained within the current north western river basin management plan.
ED-P-11	<p>To consider commercial developments on the periphery of settlements where such uses would be incompatible with and detrimental to the centres of such settlements by virtue of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the extent of land required for the effective functioning of such an enterprise; and/or b. the nature of the enterprise, particularly in the context of potentially incompatible or 'bad neighbour' uses. <p>All such proposals shall also be considered against other relevant policies of the Plan including, inter alia, traffic and pedestrian safety and public health.</p> <p>Convenience and comparison retailing will not be supported in such cases, and proposals shall be considered against the Retail Planning Guidelines and Policy RS-P-3 (sequential test) and RS-P-4 (retail impact assessment) where retailing is proposed. Exceptions to the general presumption against retail development may be used in the case of all developments where the sale of vehicles is the predominant use.</p>

7.6 Retail Strategy

Objectives

RS-O-1	<p>To ensure that the vitality and viability of town centres are not prejudiced by the scale and/or location of significant retail development proposals.</p>
RS-O-2:	<p>To secure high design quality in the form and layout of retail proposals in a manner that contributes to the physical quality of town centres.</p>

Policies

RS-P-1	<p>It is a policy of the Council to consider proposals for large foodstores (up to 3000 square metres net) in the town centres of Letterkenny and the County Growth Drivers as identified in the Core Strategy, subject to the provisions of Policy RS-P-3 and RS-P-4.</p>
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RS-P-2	It is a policy of the Council to consider proposals for small-to-medium sized food/ convenience stores (up to 1500 square metres net) in the town centres of Letterkenny, the County Growth Drivers and Service Towns as identified in the Core Strategy subject to the provisions of Policy RS-P-3 and RS-P-4.
RS-P-3	It is a policy of the Council that all retail proposals with the potential to impact on the vitality and viability of the relevant centre (or centres) shall be subject to an appropriate sequential test of the site location and proposed retail type in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines (2012) or any subsequent iteration of these guidelines. Only proposals that satisfy the sequential approach will be acceptable, save for exceptional circumstances.
RS-P-4	<p>It is a policy of the Council to require a Retail Impact Assessment, in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines (2012) or any subsequent iteration of these guidelines, where it considers that a retail development proposal is particularly large in scale compared to the relevant settlement in which the site is located. Through the Retail Impact Assessment, the applicant must address the following criteria and demonstrate whether or not the proposal would:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Support the long-term strategy for the County's town centres as established in the Core Strategy/Retail Strategy, and would not materially diminish the prospect of attracting private sector investment into one or more such centres; Have the potential to increase employment opportunities and promote economic regeneration; Have the potential to increase competition within the area and thereby attract further consumers to the area; and Respond to consumer demand for its retail offering and not diminish the range of activities and services that an urban centre can support; Cause an adverse impact on one or more town centres, either singly or cumulatively with recent developments or other outstanding planning permissions (which have a realistic prospect of implementation) sufficient to undermine the quality of the centre or its wider function in the promotion and encouragement of the arts, culture, leisure, public realm function of the town centre critical to the economic and social life of the community; 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; and/or Link effectively with an existing town centre so that there is likely to be commercial synergy. <p>Only those proposals that can demonstrate to the Planning Authority that the development is not likely to have a significant adverse impact as demonstrated by an assessment of the above criteria, will be acceptable.</p>
RS-P-5	It is a policy of the Council to consider proposals for the provision of local scale neighbourhood shops where such shops are clearly designed and located so as to serve distinct residential neighbourhoods, subject to compliance with all other relevant policies of this Plan.
RS-P-6	It is a policy of the Council to consider proposals for a shop of up to 100 square metres net retail area when associated with a petrol filling station. Where net

	retail space in excess of 100 square metres is sought the sequential approach to such development will apply.
RS-P-7	<p>Retailing will generally be directed to existing settlements of appropriate size and the development of inappropriate retail facilities in the open countryside will not be permitted. However, it is a policy of the Council to consider proposals for certain retail facilities that may be considered appropriate outside settlement framework areas, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Farm shops which are ancillary to activities arising from farm diversification; b. Shops designed to serve tourist or recreational facilities and that are clearly ancillary to the main use; c. Small-scale shops attached to existing or approved craft workshops in order to permit direct retailing of the product to the public; and Small-scale shops designed to serve a dispersed rural community and; The redevelopment of existing small-scale shops designed to serve a dispersed rural community. All proposals for retail uses pursuant to this Policy must also comply with all other relevant policies and standards contained within this Plan.

Chapter 8 Infrastructure



Chapter 8 – Infrastructure

8.1 Transport

8.1.1 Introduction

The NPF and the RSES collectively provide a strong national and regional policy context for this Transport chapter. At a strategic level, they recognise the role of Donegal in providing international connectivity (through Killybegs Port, Greencastle Port and Donegal Airport) but, critically, also acknowledge that Donegal is lacking in national and regional connectivity. A strong policy framework is also provided in relation to the need for a significant shift to more active and sustainable modes to help Ireland achieve its mandatory climate action targets under the Climate Action and Low Carbon (Amendment) Act 2021.

8.1.2 International Connectivity

Donegal County Council acknowledges the Regional Assembly's support for Killybegs Port, Greencastle Port and Donegal Airport in the context of the NPF's 'National Strategic Outcome 6: High Quality International Connectivity'.

6. High-Quality International Connectivity



RPO 6.2

Support, enhance and enable investment in the development and diversification of our network of key Airports and Seaports/ Harbours, providing them with adequate and efficient capacity and ensuring they have high-quality sustainable transport connectivity, including road, rail, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, as appropriate and subject to environmental considerations.

RPO 6.3

Support the development and the protection of the fisheries harbours in the context of Brexit and its effect on waters available for Irish trawlers to fish.

The importance of Killybegs and Greencastle Ports, their potential diversification, and how this Plan aligns with the national and regional policy framework, are addressed in detail in Chapters 7: 'Economic Development' and 13: 'Marine Resource, Coastal Management and the Islands'.

The policies at the end of this Chapter provide support for, and protect the functionality of, Donegal Airport and City of Derry Airport in the provision of key international, national and regional access to/from the County.

8.1.3 National and Regional Accessibility

The NPF's National Strategic Outcome 2 is for: 'Enhanced Regional Accessibility'. As noted in the RSES (p.219), 'both the NPF and the National Development Plan strongly acknowledge that the accessibility from the Northern and Western region (and between centres of scale separate from Dublin) will need to be significantly improved, focused on cities and larger regionally distributed centres and key east-west and north - south routes'.



8.1.3.1 Strategic Roads Network

'The national road network is a critical enabler in facilitating an island-wide sustainable national transport system. A number of the more strategic routes also form part of the EU TEN-T comprehensive network, providing essential connectivity to regions of the EU. Such high-value assets and amenities need to be protected and their use enhanced for the region and also the country as a whole.' (RSES, p.219)

Existing Network

Donegal's strategic road network is identified on Map 8.1.2 and in the Core Strategy. It comprises Trans European Transport Network roads (TEN-T), other National roads and a number of regional roads recognised by the Council as being of strategic importance as these roads facilitate high volumes of vehicular traffic, allowing for the efficient movement of traffic between settlements within and outside of the County.

The critical TEN-T network is comprised of the following National Primary Roads (refer Map 8.1.1):

- The N15 road from Bundoran and on to Donegal Town and to Ballybofey/Stranorlar;
- The N13 Ballybofey/Stranorlar to Letterkenny to Bridgend road (and Derry via the A6); and The N14 Letterkenny to Lifford road (and Strabane via the A5).

These routes provide critical connectivity both:

- To Dublin and the south-east (via the N14 and A5 roads); and to the broader North-West City Region area (with Derry via the N13/A6 route; and with Strabane via the N14/A5 route); and
- Along much of the length of the County and to the south and the broader NWRA area and the Atlantic Corridor area (via the N15 and N13 roads)

The N15 Ballybofey/Stranorlar to Lifford road, whilst not on the TEN-T network, is a National Primary Road and provides another vital element of the strategic road network in the east of the County. The N3 Ballyshannon to Belleek National Primary Road connects the south east of the County to Dublin and the south-east (via the N4) via Enniskillen.

The N56 National Secondary road serving the south, west and north-west and north of the County is a second critical element of the County's National Roads network. As well as providing a vital transport corridor for the residents and businesses of the area, the road also aligns significantly with the Wild Atlantic Way tourism route.

Finally, the Council also recognises the vital importance of the sections of the regional road network identified in Map 8.1.2 as part of the Strategic Road network including :

- The R250, R252 and R251 routes connecting the west of the County with the centre and east;
- The R238,39 R244, R240, and R241 serving the Inishowen area; and
- The R245 between Letterkenny and Milford serving the Fanad and Rossgill peninsulas, respectively; and
- The short, but important, stretch of the R263 linking Killybegs and the N56 National Secondary road; and,
- The N56 from Inver to Killybegs; and
- The regional road network from Carrigans to Rossgier.

Table 8.1A below provides an overview of all the components of the Strategic Road Network:

Table 8.1A: Strategic Road Network (as shown on Map 8.1.2)

Strategic Road Network

N13 Ballybofey/Stranorlar to Letterkenny to Bridgend road	TEN-T Network / National Primary
N14 Letterkenny to Lifford road	TEN-T Network / National Primary
N15 Bundoran to Ballybofey/Stranorlar	TEN-T Network / National Primary
N3 Ballyshannon to Belleek	National Primary
N15 Ballybofey/Stranorlar to Lifford road	National Primary
N56 Serving the south, west and north-west and north of the County	National Secondary
R250, R251 and R252 – connecting the west of the County with the centre and east	Regional
R238, R240, R241 and R244 - serving the Inishowen area	Regional

Regional R245 – Letterkenny and Ramelton and connecting the Fanad and Rossgill peninsulas	Regional
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R263 – section connecting Killybegs and the N56.	Regional
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(In recognition of the importance of Killybegs as a regionally significant deep water port, an application has been made to the Department of Transport proposing that the existing National Road in the vicinity of Killybegs is extended to the Port to provide connectivity commensurate with its functions.)

Regional Roads - Carrigans to Rossgier	Regional
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Proposed Network Improvement Projects

Table 8.1B below details proposed transportation improvement projects across the county, including the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal. Donegal County Council welcomes support in the National Development Plan and the RSES for the following projects:

- N56 Dungloe to Glenties and Mountcharles to Inver (RPO 6.6 refers);
- N13 Ballybofey Stranorlar Bypass; N13/N14/N56 Letterkenny Bypass and Dual Carriageway to Manorcunningham; and N14 Manorcunningham to Lifford (ie. Donegal TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal) (RPO's 3.7.30 and 6.7 refers);

RPO 3.7.30

To deliver the TEN-T priority route improvement for Donegal and Letterkenny by 2028, including the N-56 Link, and also progress the Southern Relief Road (Leck Road), the N-14 Manorcunningham – Lifford and N-13 Letterkenny - Ballybofey.

And

- N13 Manorcunningham to Bridgend/Derry (RPO 6.8 refers).

TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal (TEN-T PRIPD)

The TEN-T PRIPD consists of and prioritises 3 key sections of the TEN-T network in Donegal for improvement namely:

- Section 1 – N15/N13 Ballybofey/Stranorlar Urban Region.
- Section 2 – N56/N13 Letterkenny to Manorcunningham.
- Section 3 – N14 Manorcunningham to Lifford/Strabane/A5 Link (Note: The N14/N15 to A5 link has been approved separately by An Bord Pleanála in 2012 (ABP Ref: 05.HA033 refers). Same may be incorporated (subject to compliance with the requirements relating to Environmental Impact Assessment, Appropriate Assessment and/or Compulsory Purchase) within the upcoming

TEN-T PRIPD process for Section 3, or otherwise progressed separately as deemed necessary or appropriate. The preferred route corridors for those sections are now shown on Map 8.1.4, Map 8.1.5 and Map 8.1.6 respectively.

The benefits of the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal are significant and wide ranging including:

- **Economic:** Facilitating economic growth and allowing Donegal to successfully compete for inward investment by improving the efficiency and capacity of the road network including improving journey time and journey time reliability at a local, regional and national level.
- **Safety:** Reducing the frequency and severity of collisions/improving safety on our national roads and enhancing road safety in towns, villages and rural areas by segregating strategic traffic from local traffic.
- **Environmental:** Reducing air pollution caused by congestive queuing and reducing noise levels near noise sensitive receptors.
- **Quality of life:** Reducing journey times, reducing traffic and thus freeing up road space in our towns and villages for sustainable transport modes (i.e. walking, cycling and public transport), providing new walking and cycling infrastructure as part of the scheme and improving access to health and education services.
- **Enhancing Regional Accessibility:** Improving accessibility to/from Donegal for employers, exporters, tourists and the general public.
- **Strategic/Cross border:** Improving cross border connectivity, unlocking the potential of the North West City Region and the Atlantic Economic Corridor.

Furthermore the strategic importance of this project to the County is highlighted by the fact that:

- Enhanced Regional accessibility, including upgrading access to the North-West utilising routes such as the N14 and progressive development of the Atlantic Economic Corridor Northwards by upgrading the N15/N13 link, is a National Strategic Outcome of the National Planning Framework Project Ireland 2040.
- The "N15 Ballybofey Bypass", "N13/N14/N56 Letterkenny Bypass and Dual Carriageway to Manorcunningham" and the "N14 Manorcunningham to Lifford" are all listed as priorities for investment within the National Development Plan 2018-2027.
- It is an objective of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly Area to deliver the project by 2028. (Objective RPO 3.7.30 of said document refers).
- The project is fundamental to both the success of the North-West City Region and enhanced transport connectivity between Ireland and Northern Ireland, each of which in turn are National Policy Objectives of the National Planning Framework (NPO 45 and 46 of said document refers).

The TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal includes: The mainline and all associated temporary and permanent works including, but not restricted to, all junctions, associated link and other new roads, realignment of existing roads necessitated by the Project along with all earthworks, structures and bridges, drainage, signage, construction compounds, borrow pits and deposition areas related to said project.

N13 Bridgend to County Boundary Route TEN-T Improvement Project

Donegal County Council, in conjunction with the Department of Transport and Transport Infrastructure Ireland, is also progressing the N13 Bridgend to County Boundary Route Improvement Project. The village of Bridgend sits at the southern end of the Inishowen Peninsula in Co. Donegal on the most strategically important border crossing in the Northwest. The village is bisected by the N13 / A2 transboundary route. The strategic importance of the route is supported by the fact that the N13 transboundary route forms part of the EU TEN-T comprehensive network and is the primary link between Letterkenny and Derry City.

This project delivers on the strategies and objectives of the National Development Plan 2021-2030 (NDP) and National Planning Framework 2040 (NPF). It aims to improve connectivity between the regional centres of Letterkenny and Derry City, thereby improving access to employment, education, retail, commercial and health services and onward national and international travel. The N13 currently experiences congestion, with high traffic volumes over 19,000 vehicles per day passing through the village and across the border. The high volumes of traffic, in conjunction with the high number of direct accesses to businesses and properties also impact on the safety of this section of the N13, which under the TII collision ranking is consistently ranked as having a collision rate of above or twice above the national average for this type of road.

Bridgend is predominantly a car centric congested environment and this in turn contributes to a poor quality village centre, with unreliable journey times when accessing this important border crossing, with an average speed for traffic of 24km/h. Environmentally, traffic congestion results in traffic noise and vibration levels along with poor air quality experienced by sensitive receptors and residents along the existing N13. This improvement will aim to minimise where possible the climate and environmental impact.

Supporting National Roads

Donegal County Council recognizes the importance of the N56 within Donegal. The N56 has vastly different levels of use as well as different, sometimes multiple, roles and functions across its 157km from Donegal Town in the South to Letterkenny in the North. In summary the N56 can be viewed under three principle heading in respect to its function and operation.

Strategic Transport Corridor: The N56 is a critical primary transport corridor into Donegal for all goods, services and people. It is critical for compact, urban growth and development as envisaged under national, regional and local policies. It is key to NPF National Strategic outcomes including under Connectivity and All Island Economy. The route forms a significant part of the Wild Atlantic Way and as such is an important enabler for Tourism.

Letterkenny Distributor Road and Interurban Connector: The N56 is a vital transportation corridor within Letterkenny enabling the movement of goods, services and people within the town. It is critical for compact growth, modal shift and economic growth in Donegal's primary town and urban 'centre of significance'. It is also a primary connecting corridor between many of the County's principal towns along the Atlantic coast.

Lifeline Route: The N56 is acknowledged by TII in its emerging strategy for the National Roads network (NR2040) as a lifeline route. It is the sole significant access to and from Letterkenny for all vital emergency services, Fire, Hospital, etc. The TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project will provide key alternative access in Letterkenny and reduce the current dependency on this single road artery. Other sections of the rural N56 have similar limited network resilience which means that any

operational issues arising can rapidly result in shutdown, significant disruption and loss of all critical / emergency access.

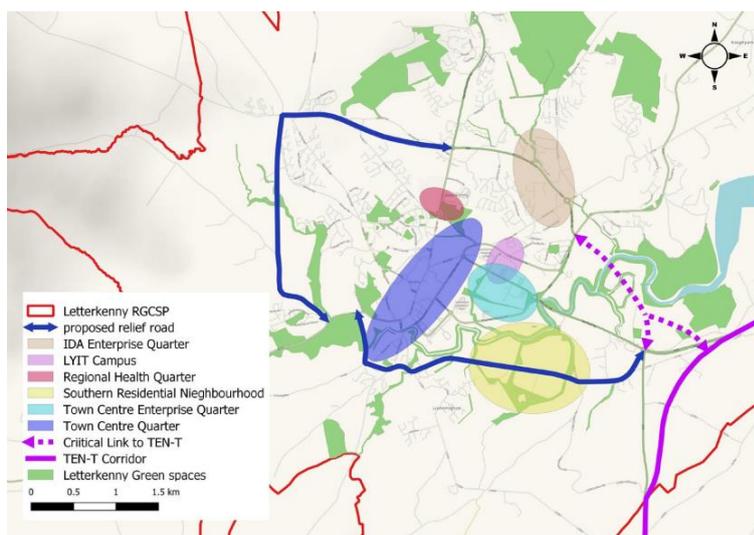
The rural section of the N56 (Five-Points Killybegs to Log Cabin Creeslough –OwenCarrow River) has significantly low-traffic volumes and is situated in the most remote part of the County servicing the largest Gaeltacht region in the Country. Rural and Gaeltacht communities in this region have suffered from generational chronic depopulation. Through the current Socio Economic Statement being developed for Donegal this region is classified as the most deprived and disadvantaged region in the State. The Socio Economic Statement for Donegal is the fact based document that forms the basis for policy development in Donegal.

Donegal County Council seeks to enable the continued survival of our rural and Gaeltacht communities by allowing, where necessary the appropriate, very limited but essential family access to the N56. The proposed policy has been developed with a clear focus to not in anyway disrupt or undermine the current multifaceted and vital operation of the N56. This targeted and controlled policy is a minimal response to a clear social, economic, cultural and linguistic challenge facing this rural and Gaeltacht region of Donegal. This low-volume section of the N56 has been identified by Donegal County Council to comply with the 'Low Volume' envelope for 'exceptional circumstances' as defined under the National Planning Guidance. The associated planning criteria have been constituted to be very clear, limited in extent, strictly controlled and administered.



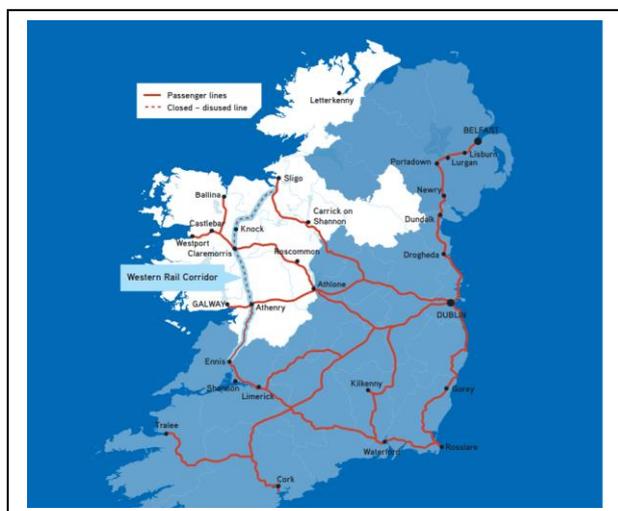
Supporting Regional and Local Roads

Donegal County Council supports the recognition in the RSES that the accessibility of the region also depends upon appropriate management and investment in the supporting regional and local roads, including strategic road improvement projects in urban areas necessary to unlock development opportunities (RSES p.219 refers). Consistent with this approach, this Plan and the emerging Letterkenny Plan and Local Transport Plan identify northern, southern and western strategic multi-modal corridors for these purposes, which projects are specifically identified in the 'Letterkenny Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan' in the RSES.



(reproduced from Fig. 33-Letterkenny Core Projects, NWRA RSES)

8.1.3.2 Rail



Donegal County Council welcomes the ongoing 'All Island Strategic Rail Review' and has made a submission to the consultation process. The Council also welcomes the statement in the NDP that the Review '...will examine all aspects of the inter-urban and inter-regional rail network including decarbonising the railway, the feasibility of higher speeds, increased capacity, improved connectivity to the North-West and the enhancement of the Dublin to Mullingar railway line and the creation of a strategic plan for freight. The Western Rail corridor has the potential to revitalise the West of Ireland and the Strategic rail review will examine how it would be delivered.' The

Council also acknowledges similar aspirations contained in the RSES, and the policies at the end of this Chapter align with this approach.

RPO 6.16

Investigate the feasibility of extending the rail network to the North West City region from Sligo and Dublin.

8.1.3.3 Buses

As recognised in RSES RPO 3.7.34, the provision of a Regional Transport Hub in Letterkenny will be a critical enabler of increased public transport usage in the County and beyond. The delivery of this project is being progressed by Donegal County Council with the majority of funding thus far having been secured under the Government's Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) and the Council providing match funding. This Plan supports the delivery of this project at the strategic level.

RPO 3.7.34

To deliver a multi-purpose Public and Private Regional Transport Hub within the Town Core of Letterkenny to serve County Donegal and the wider region.

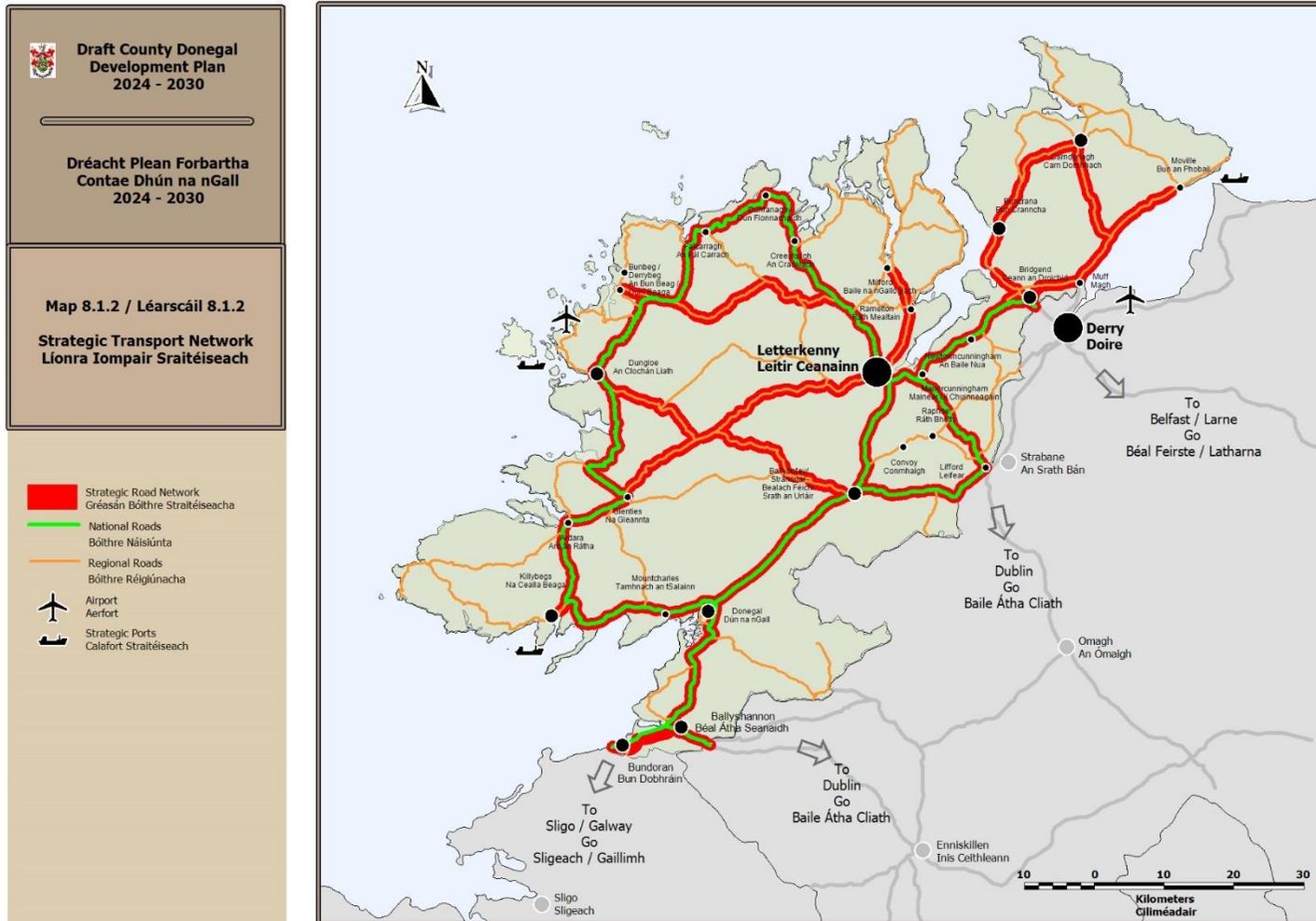
Also in Letterkenny, the Council has been working with the National Transport Authority to expand the bus networks serving the Regional Centre, consistent with the (region-wide) requirements of RPO's 6.20 and 6.21. There is further work to do on this project and the Council is committed to delivering on these badly needed improvements to the public transport offer in the town.

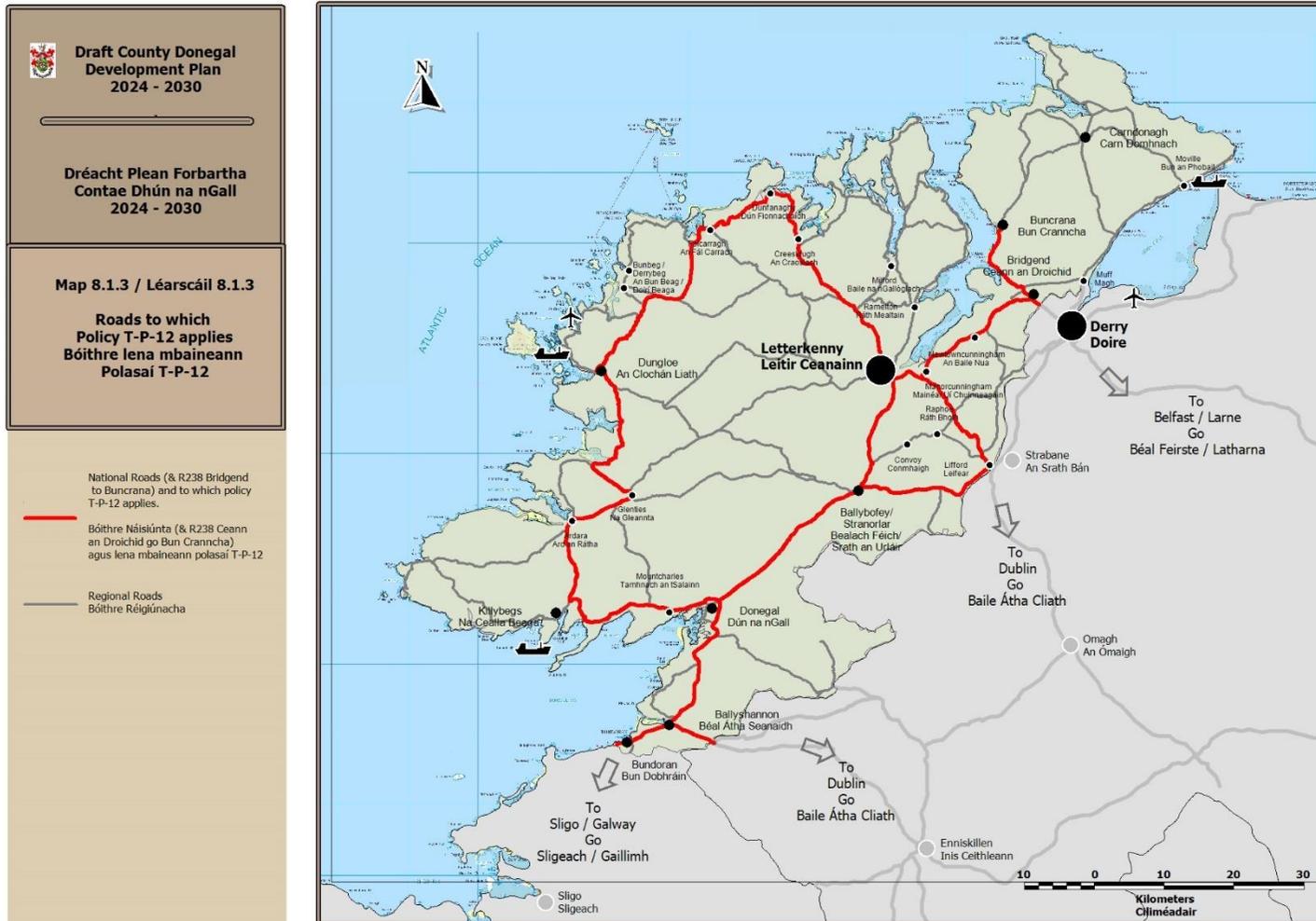
The Council acknowledges the National Transport Authority's '*Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan*'. The Plan is described by the NTA as '*an ambitious programme of enhancements to create a more integrated, accessible, and sustainable public transport network for rural Ireland*'. The Council in particular welcomes the inclusion in the national Phase 2 programme of the proposed 'Planning and Design' of the Moville - Malin Head Tower, and Carndonagh – Bunrana routes respectively programmed to be operational in Q3, 2023.

Table 8.1B: Key Transportation Improvement Projects.

PROJECT	MAP REFERENCE
TEN-T PRIORITY ROUTE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT, DONEGAL	
N14 Manorcunningham to Lifford / Strabane / A5 Link.	Map 8.1.4
N15/N13 Ballybofey / Stranorlar Urban Region	Map 8.1.5
N56/N13 Letterkenny to Manorcunningham	Map 8.1.6
Other TEN-T Projects	
N13 Bridgend to County Boundary route improvement Project	NOT MAPPED
NATIONAL	
N15 Lifford to Ballybofey/Stranorlar	Map 8.1.7
N56 Mountcharles to Inver	Map 8.1.8
N56 An Clochan Liath (Dungloe) to Glenties	Map 8.1.9
N56 Inver to Killybegs	Map 8.1.10
N14/N15 to A5 link (or as may be amended or incorporated, with or without amendment or modification, within the TEN-T developments)	NOT MAPPED

OTHER	
Buncrana Inner and Outer Relief Road	Map 8.1.11
Muff Bypass	Map 8.1.12
Ballybofey Link Road	Refer to Seven Strategic Towns Local Area Plan 2018-2024
Burnfoot Bypass	Refer to Settlement Framework Map for Burnfoot.
Killybegs Outer Relief Road	Refer to Seven Strategic Towns Local Area Plan 2018-2024
LETTERKENNY	
Regional Transport Hub, including dedicated bus corridor	Please refer to: Draft Letterkenny Plan and Draft Local Transport Plan 2023-2029.
Expansion of Town Bus Services	
Northern Network Project	
Western Network Project	
Southern Network Project (including link to National Road Network	
Bridge linking Leck area with town centre	
Pedestrian bridge linking Oldtown area with town centre	







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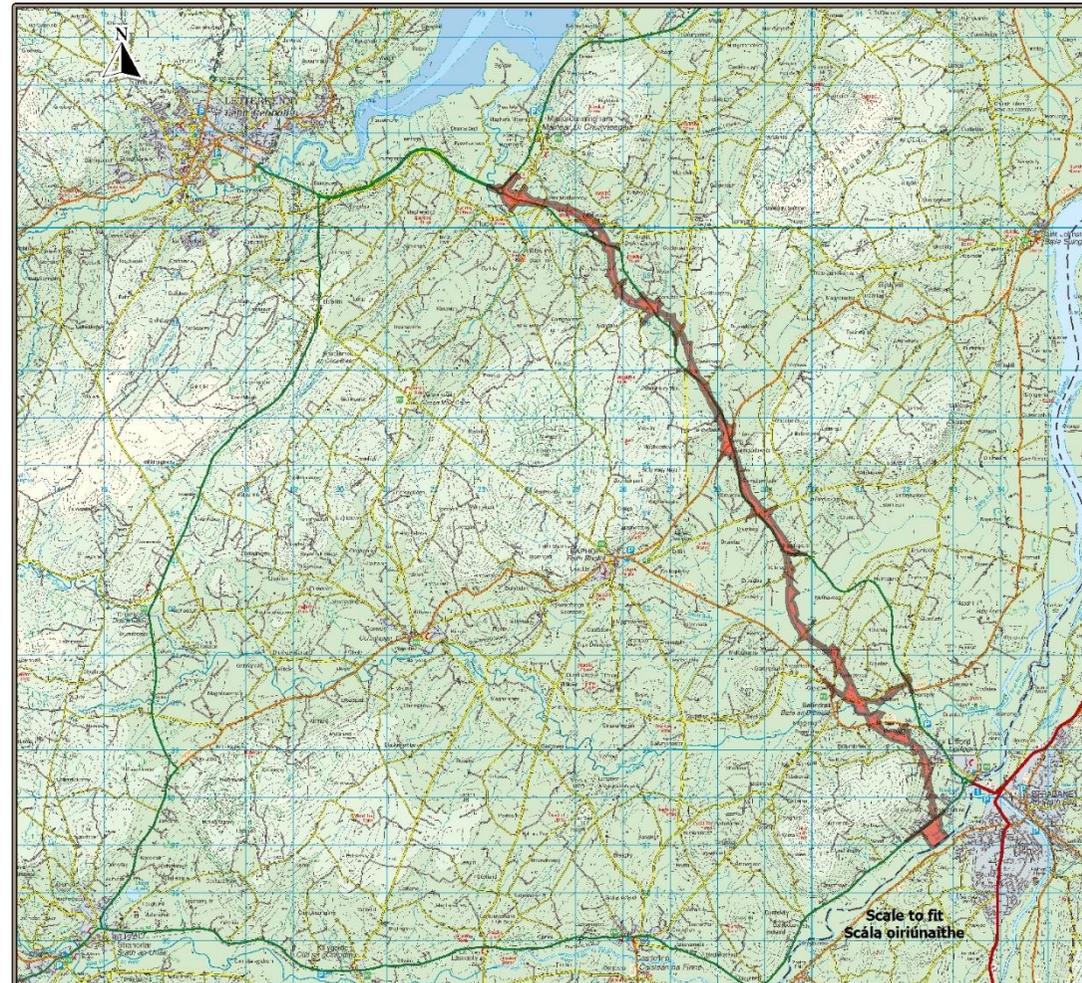
 **Draft County Donegal Development Plan 2024 - 2030**

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Map 8.1.4 Léarscáil 8.1.4

TEN-T Letterkenny to Lifford
TEN-T Leitir Ceanainn go Leifear

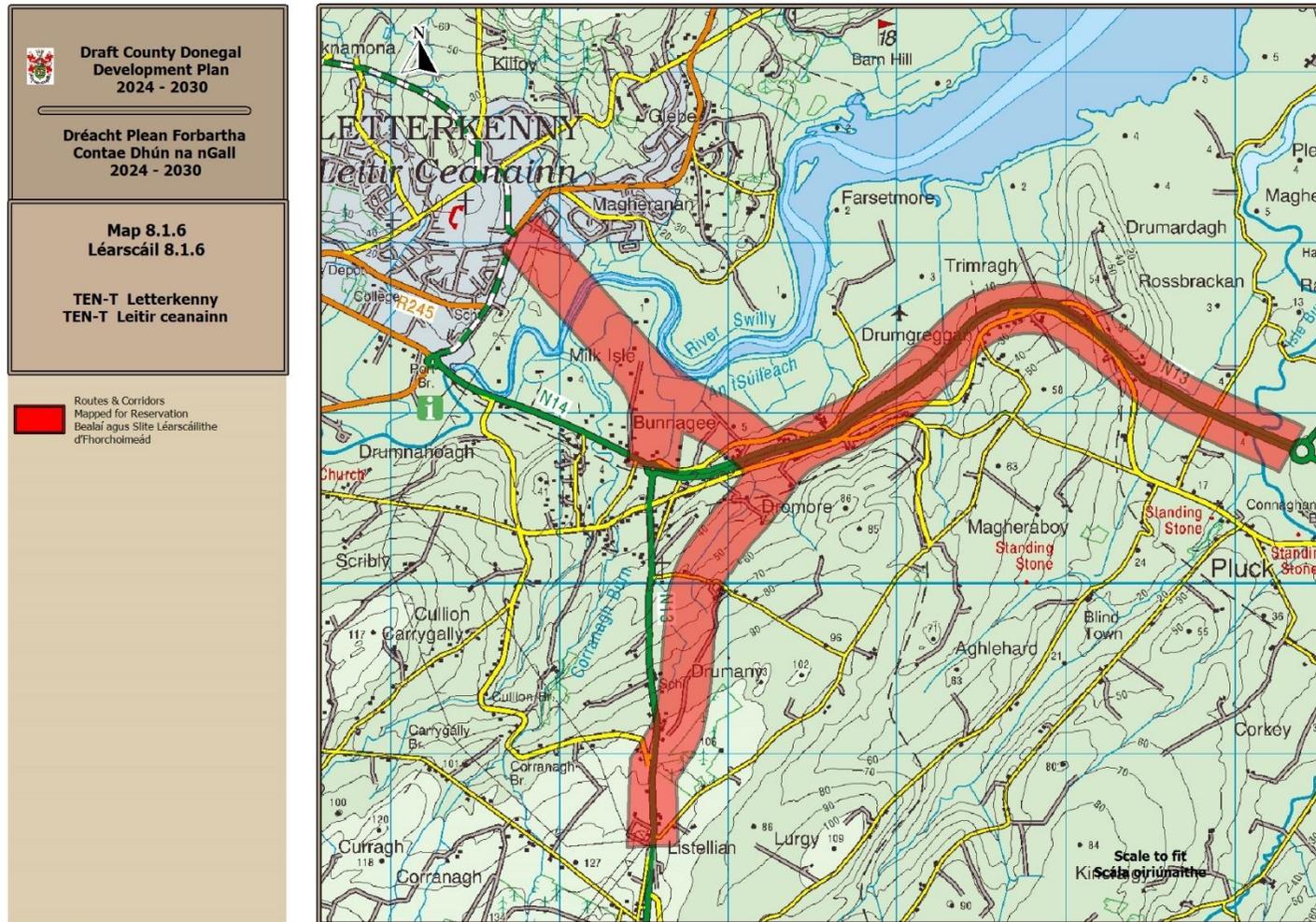
 Routes & Corridors Mapped for Reservallon Bealaí agus Site Léarscáilthe d'Fhorchoimeád



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Draft County Donegal Development Plan 2024 - 2030

Dréacht Plean Forbartha Contae Dhún na nGall 2024 - 2030

Map 8.1.8 Léarscáil 8.1.8

N56 Mountcharles to Inver N56 Tamhnach an tSalainn go hInbhear

Routes & Corridors Mapped for Reservation
Bealaí agus Silte Léarscáilthe d'Fhorchoimeád



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Draft County Donegal Development Plan 2024 - 2030

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Map 8.1.9
Léarscáil 8.1.9

N56 An Clochán Liath/Dungloe Genties (Kilrairie)
N56 An Clochán Liath Na Gleanna (Cill Riáin)

 Routes & Corridors Mapped for Reservation Bealaí agus Silte Léarscáilthe d'fhorchoimeád



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Comhairle Contae Dhún na nGall, 2023.

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Dréacht Plean Forbartha Contae Dhúin na nGall 2024 - 2030

Map 8.1.10 Léarscáil 8.1.10

N56 Inver to Killybegs N56 Inbhear go Na Cealla Beaga

 Routes & Corridors Mapped for Reservation Bealaí agus Slíte Léarscáilithe d'Fhorchoimeád

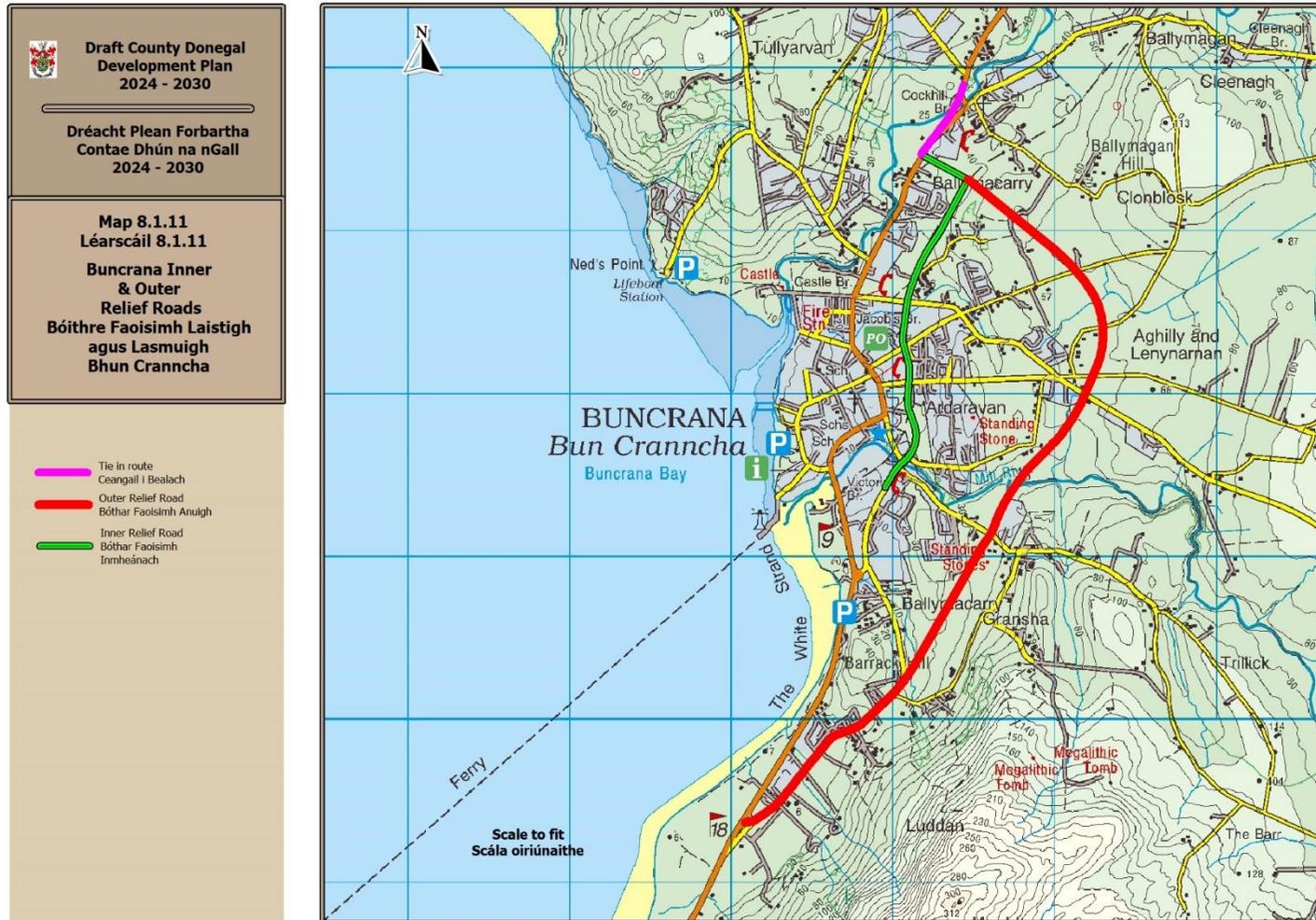
[Route open to further Consultation with Elected Members] (D'fhéadfaí an bealach seo a phlé tuilleadh le Comhairleoirí tofa)

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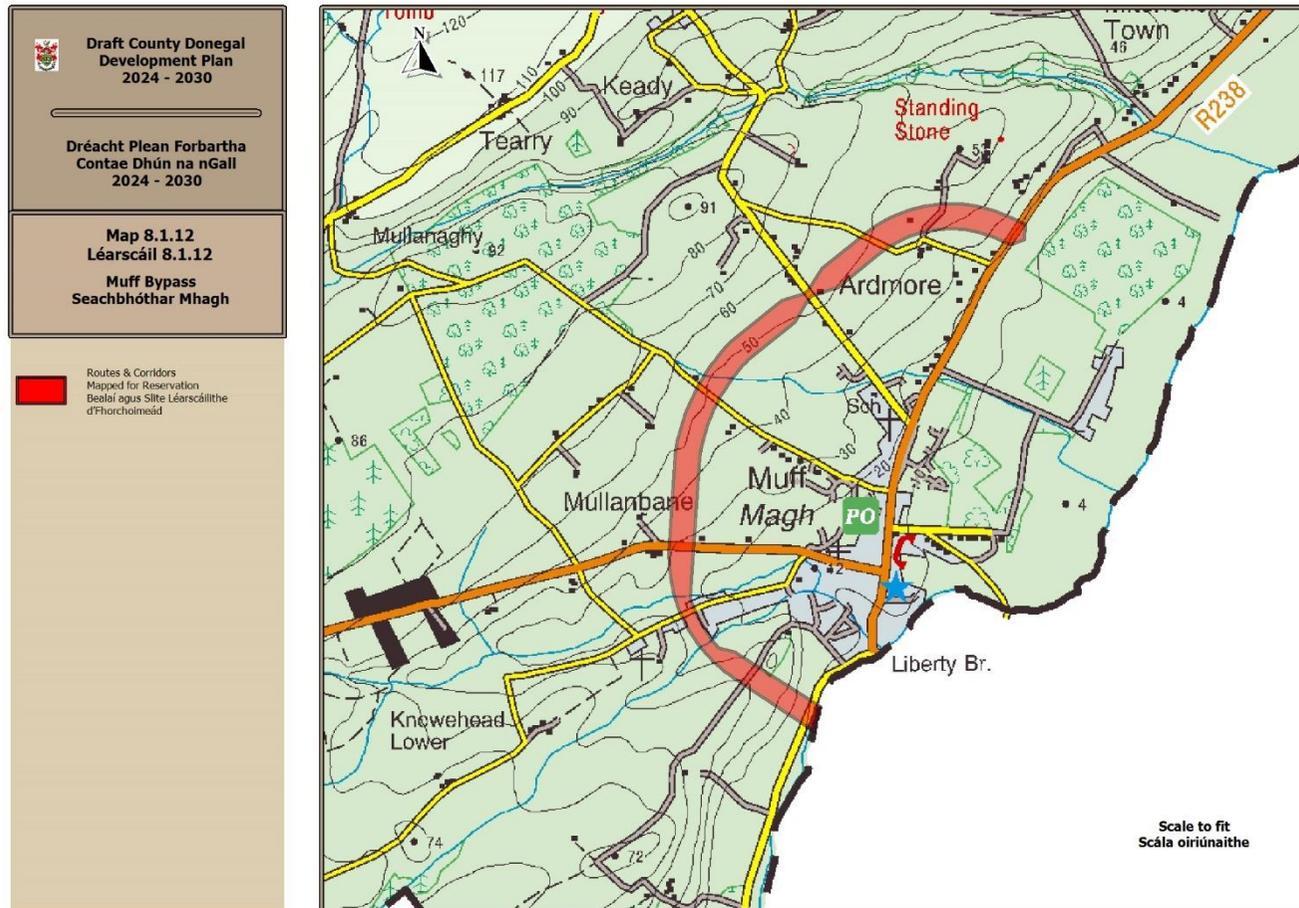
To be read in conjunction with relevant accompanying text contained in the front section of this appendix as well as other relevant objectives & policies of the CDP.
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To be used in conjunction with relevant accompanying text contained in the front section of this appendix as well as other relevant objectives & policies of the DDP.
 Le léamh i gcomhar le an téacs ábhartha tairiscint atá chun tuairisc a dhéanamh ar na cuspóirí agus bearta ábhartha eile sa FPC.

8.1.4 Sustainable Mobility

Donegal County Council is committed to improving the networks of active travel facilities in the County in line with national policy as contained in the Government's 'National Sustainable Mobility Policy' (2022). The Council's commitment is evidenced in the active travel content of the emerging Letterkenny Plan and Local Transport Plan, and the active travel measures contained in the town Plans for Ballybofey/Stranorlar, Buncrana and Bundoran contained within this Plan. The recently-established Active Travel team within the Transportation and Roads Directorate is progressing the implementation of a range of projects across the County including a Greenways Strategy.



8.1.4.1 Greenways Strategy

The programme for Government as set out in 'Our Shared Future' acknowledges the wide-ranging benefits of Greenway Infrastructure including tourism development, recreational, quality of life, sustainable mobility and climate change mitigation. Government policy aims to lead the development of an integrated national greenways strategy.

Within Donegal some significant infrastructure advancements have been made in this regard through the development of the Interreg IV cross border NW Greenway project in partnership with cross border authority Derry City and Strabane District Council (lead partner) with phase 1 complete from Strabane to Lifford and phases 2& 3 currently under construction. Other schemes are at early stages of project development by DCC and TII. In addition, walking and cycling infrastructure is planned as an integral part of key strategic roads projects (e.g. TEN-T PRIPD, and 56 improvement schemes). In this regard, this Plan supports broad strategic greenway and sustainable mobility opportunities

between key nodes based on the framework set out below whilst retaining the possibility of providing additional connecting links to specific locations/settlements along these routes.

Table 8.2: Strategic Greenways Opportunities

Strategic Greenway Opportunities
Inishowen Greenway (Including from Bridgend to Bunrana and Newtowncunningham, Bunrana to Carndonagh via Quigleys Point to Muff).
Letterkenny to Burtonport
Carrigans to Bundoran (including Barnesmore Gap Greenway and Carrigans, Lifford to Castlefin)
Sustainable Mobility Infrastructure Opportunities (forming part of Strategic Transport Schemes)
Letterkenny to Lifford (forming part of Section 3 of the TEN-T PRIPD)
Ballybofey Stranorlar (forming part of Section 1 of the TEN-T PRIPD)
Manorcunningham to Letterkenny (forming part of Section 1 of the TEN-T PRIPD)
N56 (including from Donegal Town, to Clochan Liath, Gaoth Dobhair, Falcarragh and Kilmacreanan)
Future Potential Strategic Active Travel Opportunities
Killybegs to Glencolmcille.
Ballybofey to Glenties.
Fanad Peninsula.

In addition to the above, this Plan also supports the implementation and delivery of projects arising from: the National and Draft Donegal Outdoor Recreation Strategy; the National Cycle Network and the Draft Donegal Cycle Network (currently under development).

8.1.5 Integrated Land Use and Transportation

National and Regional policy requires the integration of land use and transport planning in developing sustainable future urban environments as such measures can achieve efficiencies in the location, scale, density and mix of land-uses in creating more compact urban growth. In turn, this can help reduce the need to travel, create greater opportunities for a choice in active travel and in turn creating sustainable urban neighbourhoods.

RPO 6.29

The management of space in town and village centres should deliver a high level of priority and permeability for walking, cycling and public transport modes to create accessible, attractive, vibrant and safe, places to work, live, shop and engage in community life.

RPO 6.30

Planning at the local level should promote walking, cycling and public transport by maximising the number of people living within walking and cycling distance of their neighbourhood or district centres, public transport services and other services at the local level such as schools.

RPO 6.31

New development areas should be permeable for walking and cycling and the retrospective implementation of walking and cycling facilities should be undertaken where practicable in existing neighbourhoods, to give a competitive advantage to these modes. Prioritisation should be given to schools and areas of high employment density.

Donegal County Council supports this policy agenda, and Objectives T-O-1 to T-O-5 inclusive and Policy T-P-3 set out this Authority's planning approach to these matters.

Objectives and Policies

Sustainable Modes

Integration of Development and Transportation

Objective:

T-O-1

To promote sustainable development and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas including the promotion of measures to:

- a. reduce energy demand in response to the likelihood of increases in energy and other costs due to long-term decline in non-renewable resources;
- b. reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions; and
- c. address the necessity of adaptation to climate change.

Policies:

T-P-1

To integrate land use and transportation considerations to optimise the availability and use of sustainable transport modes in settlements.

T-P-2

To apply the principles of the National Transport Authority's (NTA) 'Area Based Transport Assessment' guidance, in consultation with the NTA, in the

preparation of detailed Urban Plans. The ABTA approach will also be applied to Settlement Framework-type plans where relevant.

Active Travel

Objectives:

T-O-2	To secure the development of strategic, coherent and high-quality walking and cycling networks that are integrated with public transport and connected with cultural, recreational, commercial, educational and employment destinations and attractions consistent with the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy, 2023-2027, the Donegal Outdoor Recreation Strategy, and the Donegal networks as identified in the Cycle Connects: Ireland's Cycle Network Plan.
T-O-3	To protect and acquire the lands necessary for sustainable transportation improvement projects, including those identified in Table 8.2: Strategic Greenways Opportunities
T-O-4	To provide for safer routes to schools within the County and promote walking and cycling as safe and suitable modes of transport, including as part of local traffic management improvements and An Taisce's Green Schools Programme.
T-O-5	To retrospectively provide safe walking and cycling infrastructure, segregated from other traffic, in settlements and into settlements from suitable adjacent rural areas accessing cultural, recreational, commercial, educational and employment destinations and attractions.

Policy:

T-P-3	<p>To consider all developments against the general objectives of providing safe and effective active travel linkages and public transport facilities and to require the provision of such facilities. In this regard, it shall be the policy of the Planning Authority to require that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. development proposals protect potential linkages (such as linear parks, roads, footpaths, trails, greenways and cycleways) where the Authority considers that a strategic opportunity exists to provide linkages to, or between, adjoining areas; and b. the design and layout of multiple residential, community, large scale industrial and commercial developments incorporate distinct and effective provisions for pedestrian and vehicular traffic movements within the site and its locality.
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Public Transport

Objectives:

T-O-6	To support and facilitate:
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the provision of new, and the expansion of existing public transport services and supporting infrastructure; and b. the use of emerging renewable energy technologies for the transport fleet.
T-O-7	<p>To secure the provision of a rail link between:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Letterkenny and Derry; and b. Letterkenny and Sligo.

Policy:

T-P-4	To collaborate with the National Transport Authority in the preparation and implementation of the 'Connecting Ireland' programme.
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Objective:

T-O-8	To develop a centrally-located transport hub in Letterkenny and to seek to develop a dedicated bus corridor between the hub and the eastern edge of the town.
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Electric Vehicles**Policy:**

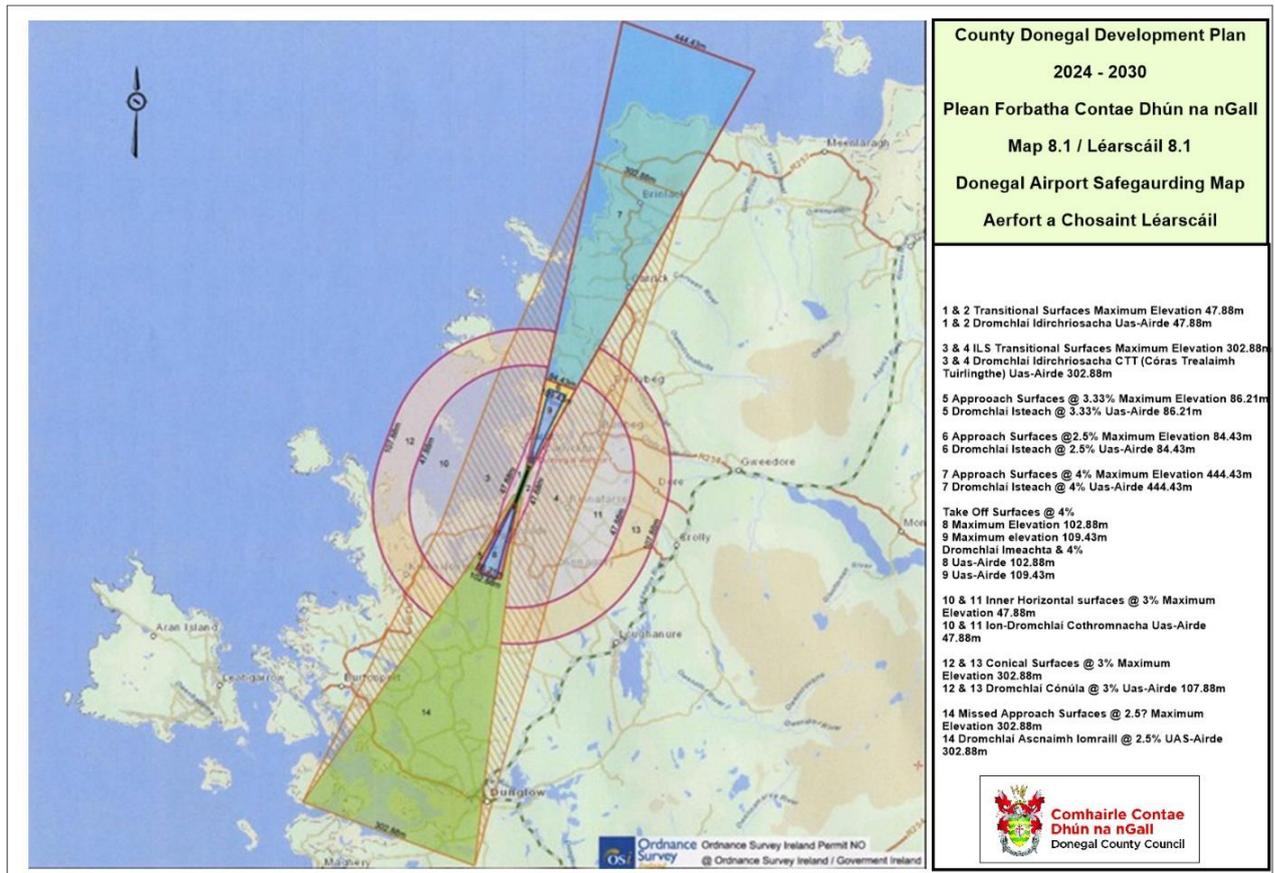
T-P-5	To facilitate the provision of off-street charging facilities, and to only facilitate on-street facilities where there are no alternatives. Any on-street charging facilities shall only be permitted where it is demonstrated that they do not create obstacles to other street users.
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Air**Objective:**

T-O-9	To sustain and enhance the services provided by Donegal Airport and City of Derry Airport.
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Policies:

T-P-6	To facilitate and enhance appropriate access to and expansion of Donegal airport subject to proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
T-P-7	To manage development proposals within the wider vicinity of Donegal Airport, Finner Camp and City of Derry Airport having regard to the safeguarding maps set out at the end of this Section (Map 8.1. refers) and to the Solar Safeguarding Zones for Carrickfinn, Ballyshannon (refers to Finner) and Letterkenny.



Map 8.1 - Donegal Airport Safeguarding

Historic Railway Corridors

Policy:

T-P-8

Save to the extent necessary to allow for the provision of the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal, the Bridgend to County border project scheme, and the Buncrana Inner relief Road it is a policy of the Council to protect established/historic railway corridors throughout the County, primarily for strategic infrastructure provision (such as rail/road/greenway projects), and secondly for recreational development. Along these corridors other uses shall not be considered. Where these corridors have already been compromised by development, adjacent lands which could provide opportunities to bypass existing obstacles and reconnect these routes shall be protected for this purpose. However, in all instances, the over-riding objective shall be the provision of strategic infrastructure.

Community Transport Schemes

Policy:

T-P-9

To support and facilitate the development of public, semi-public and community transport projects and proposals which provide innovative solutions in rural, disadvantaged and border areas such as rural park and ride schemes, rural carpooling and car sharing schemes, park and cycle schemes and bus and taxi schemes in consultation with public, private and community organisations.

Roads

Objectives:

T-O-10

To safeguard the carrying capacity and safety of

- i. National Roads and associated junctions in accordance with the Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DECLG, 2012) and
- ii. The R238 Bridgend to Bunrana Regional Road.

T-O-11

To deliver improvements to the Trans European Transport Network (TEN-T), (as required by EU Regulation (EU) No.1 58315/2013 "Guidelines for the development of the Trans European Transport Network as part of the core and comprehensive transport network of Ireland. In this regard it is a specific objective of the Council to:

- 1.a) Progress and ultimately carry out/implement the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal as one of critical strategic importance to Donegal subject to the granting of the required statutory approvals for same and the terms and conditions of any such approvals (if granted).
- 1.b) Reserve the preferred route corridors of the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal as shown on maps 8.1.4, 8.1.5, and 8.1.6 for the purposes of the project and the ancillary facilities to service the same and not to permit other development within those corridors where such development may prejudice the implementation of the said project.
2. Progress and ultimately carry out/implement the N13 Bridgend to County Boundary Route Improvement TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal as one of critical strategic importance to Donegal subject to the granting of the required statutory approvals for same and the terms and conditions of any such approvals (if granted).

T-O-12

Should there be any ostensible or apparent conflict between, on the one hand, the Objectives, Policies and/or provisions of the development plan herein providing for the development of the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal (TEN-T PRIPD) and the N13 Bridgend to County Boundary TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, and on the other hand, any other Objectives, Policies and/or provisions of the development plan, those Objectives, Policies and Provisions which provide for the development of the TEN-T projects shall take priority over all or any other provisions of the development plan and any such other provisions or Objectives shall be read and construed as subservient to and not in any material way contravening so much of the Objectives, Policies and provisions contained within this development plan as provide for the development of the TEN-T projects.

T-O-13	To achieve quality strategic and important inter-urban and cross border transport corridors, (including the A5 Western Transport Corridor) and support the development of new links to and within the North West City, Region , giving access to regional and international markets with links to sea, air and rail.
T-O-14	To provide for high quality connectivity within the County in line with the Core Strategy through the promotion of a quality Strategic Road Network as identified on Map 8.1.2-
T-O-15	To protect the corridors and routes and acquire the lands necessary for the transportation improvement projects as identified in Table 8.1A and 8.1B

Policies:

T-P-10	<p>It is a policy of the Council to support and facilitate the appropriate development, extension and improvement of the TEN-T network (Map 8.1.1 refers) within Donegal in accordance with the Core Strategy and subject to environmental, safety and other planning considerations. In this regard it is a specific policy of the Council to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Progress and implement the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal as one of critical strategic importance to Donegal subject to the granting of the required statutory approvals and the terms and conditions of any such approvals (if granted). b. Reserve the preferred route corridors and the ancillary facilities of the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal as shown on maps 8.1.4, 8.1.5, and 8.1.6 and not to permit other development within those corridors where such development may prejudice the implementation of the project. c. Facilitate any development related to the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal within lands zoned: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. TEN-T PRIPD/Established Development ii. TEN-T PRIPD/Amenity. d. Progress and ultimately implement the N13 Bridgend to County Boundary TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project as one of critical strategic importance to Donegal subject to the granting of the required statutory approvals for same and the terms and conditions of any such approvals (if granted).
T-P-11	<p>It is a policy of the Council to support and facilitate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. the appropriate development, extension and improvement of Donegal's transport network, including the Strategic Road Network (Map 8.1.2refers), and roads identified in Table 8.1B in accordance with the Core Strategy and subject to environmental, safety and other planning considerations. b. It is a policy of the council not to permit development that would prejudice the implementation of a transport scheme identified in the Development Plan.
T-P-12	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. It is a policy of the Council not to permit developments requiring new accesses, or which would result in the adverse intensification of existing access points onto: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. National Roads where the speed limit is greater than 60 kph; or

	<p>ii. The section of the R238 Bridgend-Buncrana Regional Road where the speed limit is greater than 60 kph.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the foregoing, in exceptional circumstances, developments of national and regional strategic importance where the locations concerned have specific characteristics that make them particularly suitable for the developments proposed may be considered, subject to such developments being provided for through the Local Area Plan or Development Plan making process, including in consultation with the TII.</p> <p>b. Within the section of the N56 National Secondary Road between the Five Points Junction (Killybegs) and the Mountain Top Letterkenny (identified on Map 8.1.3A), development of one-off rural houses impacting on the National Secondary Road may be considered subject to the following:</p> <p>i. As a first preference, the applicant shall use an alternative access onto the public (County or Regional) road network where such an alternative is available and, in such circumstances a new access or intensification of an existing private access onto the National Secondary Road shall not be permitted;</p> <p>ii. As a second preference, the applicant shall use an existing private access (either family owned, or in third party ownership) onto the National Secondary Road where such a practical and realistic alternative is available and in such circumstances, a new access onto the National Secondary Road shall not be permitted;</p> <p>iii. A new access onto the National Secondary Road shall only be considered where the applicant has clearly demonstrated that the options identified in the immediately preceding paras. (a) and (b) are not available.</p> <p>c. Proposals shall only be considered where:</p> <p>i. • the applicant can provide evidence that they, or their parents, have owned the subject lands for a period of at least 7 years;</p> <p>• the applicant shall enter into a legal agreement under Section 47 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (As Amended), which agreement shall provide that the subject dwelling shall be occupied by the applicant as his/her principal place of residence for a minimum period of seven years commencing on the date of the first such use.</p> <p>ii. Proposals shall be required to demonstrate compliance with the requisite national roads design standards including the provision of relevant national vision lines and stopping sight distances.</p>
T-P-13	<p>It is a policy of the Council to require that all new development proposed adjacent to existing and planned National Roads is set back 50m from the outside edge of the running carriageway unless existing buildings have formed an established building line in which case the new buildings may follow the established building line.</p>
T-P-14	<p>It is a policy of the Council to require that any new access to strategic roads is designed in compliance with the road design standards required by Transport Infrastructure Ireland, avoiding the use of right turn lanes unless a clear warrant has been established.</p>

T-P-15

To implement the recommendations in the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS), (Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government) in relation to urban streets and roads in the 50/60 kph zone.

Parking**Policies:****T-P-16**

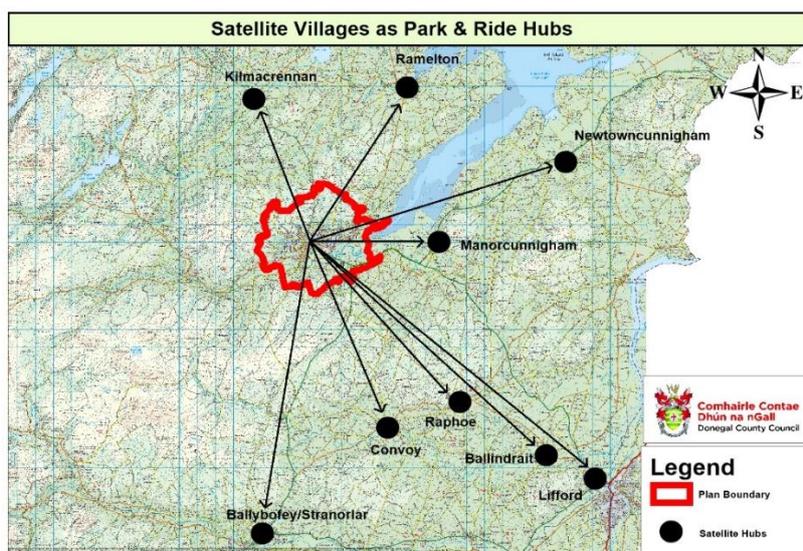
Parking proposals within designated town centres will only be supported:

- a. for commercial developments - in exceptional circumstances, where there is a clearly evidenced significant shortfall of existing available parking and where the provision of such parking would not prejudice the delivery of any relevant regeneration, active travel or public transport initiatives;
- b. for residential and other developments appropriate to the town centre - generally, only where such parking can be discretely accommodated within the development, and where the development design satisfies the town centre urban design ambitions of the Council.

In all other cases, a development contribution will be levied using the framework of the Development Contribution Scheme in force at the time of deciding on any application for planning permission.

T-P-17

To support the principle of the development of additional park and ride/share hubs in the commuter villages around Letterkenny including Kilmacrennan, Ramelton, Newtowncunningham, Manorcunningham, Ballinalacky (Raphoe Environs), Ballindrait, Lifford, Ballybofey/Stranorlar and Convoy.



8.2 Water and Wastewater Infrastructure

8.2.1 Introduction

High quality surface and ground waters, the provision of adequate wastewater treatment and a safe, clean, reliable supply of drinking water are crucial to socio-economic development, human health, biodiversity, tourism, and agriculture. In this regard sufficient water and wastewater infrastructure including adequate treatment capacity are essential prerequisites to achieving the overall growth ambition and range of development envisaged in this Plan and ensuring adequate environmental protection. Since 2014 Irish Water has been the national authority for the provision and maintenance of public water and wastewater infrastructure and is supported by Donegal County Council in this function through service level agreements. However, to achieve the above aim the Council and this Plan have a key role in: ensuring new development is aligned with the provision of water/wastewater infrastructure, facilitating such infrastructure, rigorously assessing proposals for individual wastewater treatment systems, facilitating sustainable solutions for developer provided infrastructure, protecting water services assets, requiring water sensitive urban design, and supporting water restoration/protection programmes and group water schemes.

8.2.2 Water Infrastructure

Public Water Infrastructure

Donegal has a geographically extensive water collection and supply network in both urban and rural areas covering 21 water resource zones (WRZ) including the Pollan Dam and Lough Mourne Water supply assets. There have been significant water supply network improvements in recent years for example to the Letterkenny water supply, and at the Illies, Crolly, Lough Mourne, Milford, Fanad and Culdaff water treatment plants. In addition, a countywide watermain rehabilitation project to replace older watermains has been recently completed and there is an ongoing countywide leakage reduction programme. Consequently, whilst certain Level of Services improvements are required in certain areas, the Irish Water Supply Capacity Register indicates a positive water supply capacity picture overall and it is envisaged that there will be sufficient water supply to accommodate projected growth over the development plan period.

Private Water Infrastructure

There are over 600 private group water supply schemes in the County utilising both public and privately sourced water. The Council has responsibility for administering funding and subsidies for such schemes and the Rural Water Programme funds source protection, public health compliance, network upgrades, and the transfer of such schemes to the public network. In addition to these public and private water networks many individual properties in the county are served by private wells/boreholes.

Lough Mourne

Lough Mourne provides the water supply for most of the Finn Valley area including the settlements of Ballybofey/Stranorlar, Killgordon, Castlefin, Lifford, Raphoe and Convoy. It is understood from local knowledge that the lough is supplied in part by underground water supplies although there is no known accurate record of where these sources are located. Given the strategic importance of the Lough Mourne supply, it is imperative that it is protected.

8.2.3 Wastewater Infrastructure

Public Wastewater Infrastructure

Donegal's wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure network is predominately confined to urban settlements and the extent and capacity of this network varies considerably by settlement. On a positive note, many of Donegal's larger urban settlements have spare wastewater treatment capacity to facilitate new development. In addition, the table below outlines wastewater treatment capacity improvement projects which have been completed, are in progress or are due to commence (June 2022)

Table 8.2.1: Status of Irish Water Wastewater Treatment Capacity Improvement Projects (June 2022)

Category	Settlement
Completed	Ballybofey/Stranorlar, Bundoran, Convoy, Dungloe, Glencolmcille, Glenties, Killybegs, and St Johnston
Construction	Carrigans, Lifford, Killea
Ongoing Projects at previously untreated settlements	Ramelton, Rathmullan, Falcarragh, Kilcar, Merville, Burtonport, Kerrykeel, Coolatee and Burtonport,
Detailed Design	Buncrana, Milford, Ballintra, Carrigart, Kilmacrenan, and Pettigo
Design Scheduled to Commence	Ballyliffin, Dunfanaghy/Portnablagh, Fahan, Muff and Raphoe

The Irish Water Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme (STVGP) aims to provide funding for water and wastewater treatment growth capacity in smaller settlements already served by IW infrastructure but not covered in the IW Capital Investment plan. This programme is currently funding a project to transfer effluent from Mountcharles to the Donegal Town network and will be continued during the plan period. The Council considers that this programme will therefore be essential in addressing widespread wastewater treatment capacity issues in small settlements. In addition, Irish Water is also pursuing an innovative project to provide sewage collection/treatment at An Bun Beag/Doiri Beaga and is undertaking ongoing programmes of sewer rehabilitation and capital maintenance.

Irish Water does not have a remit for the provision of infrastructure in unsewered settlements. However, government funding is now available for Local Authorities to provide wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure for such settlements under Measure A8 of the Multiannual Rural Water Programme. Where appropriate the council will utilise this mechanism to obtain funding for wastewater infrastructure in such settlements and will work in collaboration with the DHLGH and Irish Water to implement such solutions thereafter.

However, it is acknowledged that currently many smaller towns and villages continue to have either inadequate sewage treatment capacity or in some instances no wastewater collection network which significantly hinders their future development. In particular the EPA Report Urban Wastewater Treatment 2021 highlighted the issue of raw sewage discharge to seas/ rivers at Merville and Rathmullan, Ramelton, Kerrykeel, Falcarragh, Burtonport, Kilcar and Coolatee, periodic wastewater contamination of surface water overflows in Buncrana, and risks to surface waters arising from insufficient treatment at Bridgend, Burnfoot, Buncrana, Milford and Kilmacrenan.

Private Wastewater Infrastructure

Almost 200 multiple residential developments in Donegal have been identified by Irish Water as relying on developer provided wastewater treatment systems, many of which have a history of malfunctioning due to poor installation or lack of maintenance. The government's multiannual *Developer Provided Water Services Infrastructure Resolution Programme* aims to progressively facilitate the resolution of such developer provided infrastructure (DPI) to support their taking in

charge, including connecting these developments to the Irish Water wastewater network and decommissioning such infrastructure or the provision of on-site sustainable treatment technologies. The Council recognises the resolution of DPI issues as a key priority for the plan and will therefore advance appropriate solutions to such issues through the above programme.

Donegal also has a high and increasing reliance on individual domestic wastewater treatment systems in the county, with 30,345 systems registered in the County in 2020²⁸ and many commercial developments in unsewered areas also relying on individual treatment systems. In particular the EPA Report on Domestic Waste Water Treatment System Inspections 2021 found that 36% of the 121 systems inspected in Donegal failed and that lack of maintenance and desludging were key factors. This highlights the need to avoid the proliferation of, and rigorously assess proposals for such systems.

8.2.4 Water Quality in Donegal

Figure 8.2.1 Water Framework Directive Ecological Status of Water Bodies in Donegal 2016-2021

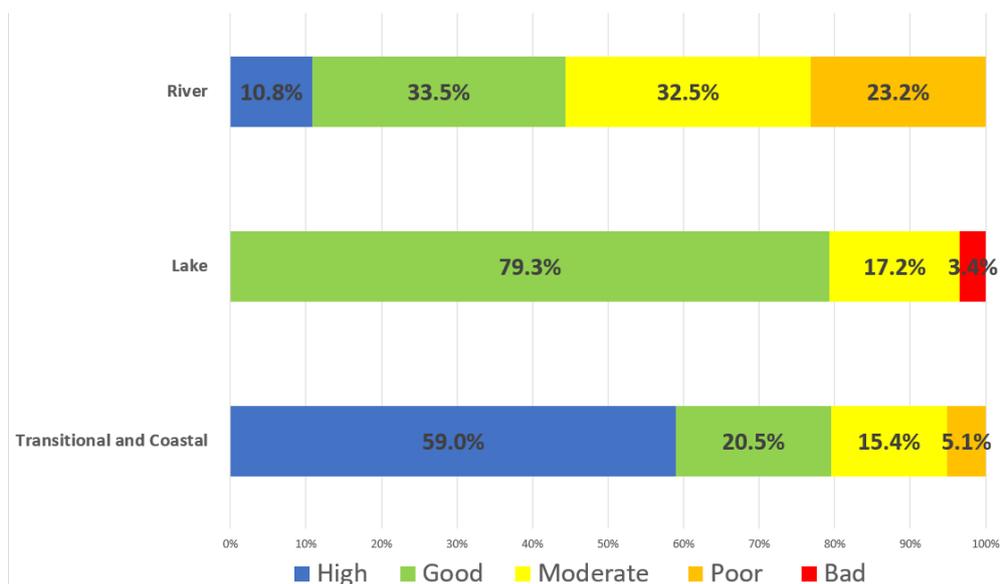
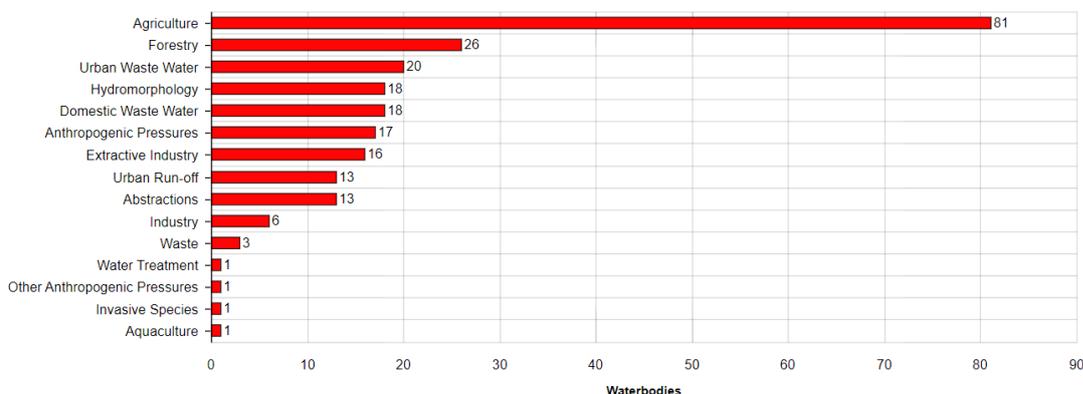


Figure 8.2.2 Significant Pressures impacting At Risk Waterbodies.



²⁸ Source: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/dwwts/domesticwastewatertreatmentsystems2020>

EPA water quality data broadly indicates that 55.7% of monitored river bodies, 20.7% of lake water bodies, and 20.5% have a less than good status but all groundwater bodies were recorded as having good status in Donegal. Furthermore, catchment level assessments indicate that agriculture, forestry, urban wastewater and domestic wastewater are the most significant pressures affecting WFD 'At Risk' waterbodies. As Ireland is required to achieve at least Good status in all water bodies by 2027 under the EU Water Framework Directive this underlines the significant challenge that remains in terms of achieving satisfactory water quality in Donegal.

8.2.5 Relevant Legal and Planning Frameworks and Guidelines

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) is the primary legal instrument regarding water quality in the EU. The WFD applies to rivers, lakes, groundwater, estuaries and coastal waters. In summary it aims to:

- Prevent deterioration in the existing status of all water bodies.
- Protect, enhance, and restore all water bodies with the aim of achieving good water status by 2027 at the latest.
- Achieve compliance with the standards and requirements for designated protected areas.

The WFD is implemented through River Basin Management Plans including a Programme of Measures (POM) to protect and restore water. In planning terms, the POMs in the Draft River Basin Management Plan 2022-2027 emphasises the importance of ensuring effective water management and compatibility between planned growth and environmental sustainability both at a strategic level and when considering applications. It also highlights the need to manage developments which may affect hydromorphology, invest in urban wastewater treatment particularly where urban discharges are a significant pressure and in unsewered villages, manage urban runoff through nature based urban sustainable drainage, and address domestic wastewater discharges from individual houses. The RBMP also identifies priority areas for action including Blue Dot Areas, (waterbodies which have the capacity to have the highest water quality) to be progressed by the Blue Dot Programme, Prioritised Areas for Action by LAWPRO and LA Areas for protection and restoration.

The Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive seeks to protect the environment from the adverse effects of urban wastewater discharges. It sets standards to be met in the collection and treatment of wastewater as well as monitoring requirements for wastewater discharges from urban areas.

Effluent discharges from commercial individual wastewater treatments system (e.g. industries, hotels) to waters and to the public sewer require a licences under Section 4 and Section 16 of the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act 1977, which are issued by the local authority and are subject to specific conditions. The Council operates an ongoing programme of monitoring and compliance regarding such licences.

In addition, the Planning and Development Act 2000 (Section 10(2) refers) requires mandatory objectives for the provision or facilitation of water supplies and wastewater services and the promotion of compliance with environmental standards and objectives established by the Surface water and Groundwater Regulations.

The National Planning Framework identifies the sustainable management of water, waste and other environmental resources as a National Strategic Outcome and also seeks to ensure the efficient and sustainable use and development of water resources and water services infrastructure (NPO 63). The NPF also highlights the need to eliminate untreated discharges from settlements in the short term. The NWRA Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy emphasises that adequate water services

infrastructure is essential for the region's economic prosperity, increased growth, and quality of life and acknowledges the existing deficiency in such infrastructure in the region. The RSES Regional Policy objectives further seek to ensure adequate infrastructure to meet demands for growth and economic development (RPO 8.12), support investment in water and wastewater services (RPO 8.15), ensure the protection and improvement of all waters (RPO 8.18), and promote compliance with the Water Framework Directive (RPO 8.20).

The integration of sustainable water management solutions such as Water Sensitive Urban Design and Nature Based Solutions into developments (e.g. green roofs, porous pavements/green surfaces, rainwater harvesting, planted areas, rain gardens, swales, filter strips, detention basins/ponds, constructed wetlands) is increasingly recognised as a best practice solution to retain, store and treat surface water runoff with significant water quality, flood attenuation, biodiversity, public realm and quality of life benefits. Such solutions are supported by NPO 57 of the NPF and are highlighted in the DHLGH guidance document Nature Based Solutions to the Management of Rainwater and surface Water Runoff in Urban Areas. Consequently, this plan will require such solutions to be integrated into new public and private developments and within the public realm.

The Draft Water Services Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoHPLG 2018) recommend that new development plans have regard to water/wastewater infrastructure capacity, make efficient use of existing or planned infrastructure, and sequentially phase development. They also specifically recommend that new development should be focused in areas with water and wastewater networks, planning authorities should not generally consider alternative solution such as private wells and wastewater treatment plants and notes that Irish Water will not take over responsibility for developer provided treatment facilities. The guidelines also highlight potential impacts from developments arising from greater demands on, and interference with, water and wastewater infrastructure.

Irish Water has published a range of strategic and regional plans with regard to water and wastewater services including:

- **Water Services Policy Statement 2018-2025** which sets out high level objectives and policies for water and wastewater around quality, conservation, and future proofing.
- **The 2015 Uisce Eireann Strategic Plan** which highlights a number of planning related objectives including a safe and reliable water supply, effective wastewater management, protecting and enhancing the environment and supporting socio-economic growth and the associated IW Strategic Funding Plan 2019-2024 which sets out the measure to implement said strategic plan.
- **The Uisce Eireann Capital Investment Plan 2020-2024** which detailed a range of water and wastewater projects for Donegal of which a significant number are now complete and are now at advanced projects (see above). Uisce Eireann is currently in the process of preparing a new capital investment plan
- **National Water Resources Plan** aims to ensure a safe, secure, sustainable, and reliable water supply over the next 25 years and will lead to the preparation of the associated North West Regional Resource Plan which will deal with leakage reduction, water conservation and sustainable supplies.
- **Drinking Water Safety Plans:** seek to protect drinking water sources by identifying and managing risks to water quality and quantity.

In addition, consultations with Irish Water have also highlighted the need to:

- Focus development into areas served by existing water and wastewater networks with adequate capacity and not generally consider alternative solutions such as private wells or wastewater treatment plants, noting Uisce Eireann will not generally takeover developer provided treatment facilities

- Protect existing water and wastewater infrastructure and ensure that the location of new developments takes into account the established use or future expansion of existing WWTPs.
- Remove or avoid additional surface water discharges to combined sewers.
- Utilise Sustainable Urban Drainage systems and Green/Blue infrastructure to manage stormwater and water pollution at source.

Standards for Individual Wastewater Treatment Systems

The EPA Code of Practice for *Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (Population Equivalent <10)* 2021 set out a methodology for site assessment and selection and maintenance of such system including guidance on appropriate percolation values for different types of systems, setback distance and sizing of percolation areas. In addition, the EPA's 1999 *Treatment systems for Small Communities, Business, Leisure Centres and Hotels* manual provides guidance in relation to the selection, design, installation and maintenance of such systems. As these documents represent the most relevant guidance for individual domestic, commercial and community wastewater treatment systems development proposals will be assessed with regard to same.

8.2.6 Key Planning Challenges

Given the above context, the planning and legislative framework, and the need to provide adequate water and wastewater infrastructure to serve new development and to protect, enhance and restore water quality, the following planning challenges for the new plan are evident:

- Ensuring new development contributes towards the achievement of the EU Water Framework Directive objectives particularly in priority areas and also protects drinking water supplies.
- Aligning urban growth with the provision of adequate wastewater treatment capacity.
- Providing new or enhanced wastewater treatment infrastructure in settlements with inadequate treatment capacity in collaboration with Irish Water.
- Providing new wastewater treatment infrastructure in smaller unsewered towns and villages.
- Rigorously assessing proposals for individual wastewater treatment systems in compliance with EPA Code of practices in areas with no or inadequate wastewater infrastructure.
- Providing sustainable long-term solutions for Developer Provided Infrastructure in residential estates.
- Maintaining and improving the efficiency of independent wastewater treatment systems
- Sustaining and improving private group water supply schemes.

Objectives

WW-O-1

To maintain, improve and enhance the quality of surface and ground waters as appropriate in accordance with the requirements of:

- a. The EU Water Framework Directive including implementing the Programme of Measures contained with the River Basin Management Plan 2022-2027 and any subsequent plan.
- b. The European Communities (Surface Water) Regulations 2009.
- c. The European Communities (Ground Water) Regulations 2010.

WW-O-2	To provide an adequate system of wastewater treatment in settlements to facilitate projected growth envisaged in the Core Strategy of the Plan and to protect public health.
WW-O-3	To facilitate the provision of an adequate, reliable and clean supply of drinking water in accordance with relevant standards, including the protection of drinking water sources, and the provision of new/upgraded water collection, treatment, and distribution infrastructure.

Policies

WW-P-1	Support and facilitate the provision of new, and the upgrading of existing, water and wastewater infrastructure in collaboration with Uisce Eireann and other stakeholders including projects associated with Uisce Eireann Capital Investment Plan and the Rural Water Programme.
WW-P-2	<p>Ensure that new developments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. do not have an adverse impact on surface and ground water quality, drinking water supplies, Bathing Waters and aquatic ecology (including Water dependent qualifying interests within Natura 2000 sites); and b. do not hinder the achievement of, and are not contrary to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. The objectives of the EU Water Framework Directive. ii. EU Habitats and Bird Directives. iii. The associated Programme of Measures in the River Basin Management Plan 2022-2027 including any associated Water Protection or Restoration Programmes. iv. Drinking Water Safety Plan. v. The Guidelines on the Protection of Fisheries During Construction Works In and Adjacent To Waters (IFI, 2016)
WW-P-3	Developments connecting to the public water network shall provide confirmation from Uisce Eireann that it is feasible to provide an appropriate water supply service and network capacity to serve the development. Such developments shall ensure that an adequate water supply can be provided to serve the projected requirements of any proposed development, and that existing water services will not be negatively impacted.
WW-P-4	<p>It is a policy of the Council that all new developments shall connect to the public wastewater infrastructure, where available. Such connections shall be subject to a connection agreement with Uisce Eireann.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Developments connecting to the public wastewater network shall provide confirmation from Uisce Eireann that the wastewater system in the area has both treatment capacity and network availability to serve the development. b. In circumstances where works to provide treatment capacity and/or network availability have commenced, developments will be considered on the merits of each case.

	In all instances the first principle of the planning Authority shall be to seek to facilitate development subject to the principles of orderly development and other objectives and policies of this plan.
WW-P-5	In areas with no public wastewater infrastructure, or where there is inadequate public wastewater treatment capacity or networks, larger developments (including commercial, retail, tourism and community developments) where they are to be maintained in single ownership with a projected PE > 10 shall provide effluent treatment by means of an independent wastewater treatment system which comply with the EPA's <i>Treatment systems for Small Communities, Business, Leisure Centres and Hotels</i> manual or any subsequent or updated relevant code of practice. Where limited public wastewater infrastructure may be available, prior to the submissions of any planning application such developments shall be required to submit a pre-connection enquiry to Uisce Eireann to assess the feasibility of connecting to the public wastewater system.
WW-P-6	Facilitate development in urban or rural settings for single dwellings or other developments to be maintained in single ownership with a projected PE < 10 in unsewered areas proposing the provision of effluent treatment by means of an independent wastewater treatment system where such systems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Demonstrate compliance with the EPA's <i>Code of Practice for Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (PE. ≤ 10)</i> (EPA 2021) or any subsequent or updated code of practice. b. Would not result in an over concentration or over proliferation of such systems in an area which cumulatively would be detrimental to public health or water quality. c. Otherwise comply with Policy WW-P-2.
WW-P-7	Support and facilitate Uisce Eireann initiatives for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the provision of new wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure in unsewered settlements in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders through Measure A8 of the Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme or any relevant future funding programme; and b. the provision of sustainable long-term solutions for legacy developer-provided water services Infrastructure in residential development in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders through the Multi-Annual Developer-Provided Water Services Infrastructure Resolution Programme or any relevant future funding programme.
WW-P-8	Consider proposals for community-based group wastewater/sewage schemes for either the extension of existing public wastewater treatment infrastructure into unsewered areas or standalone wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure where such proposals demonstrate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Sustainable long-term management structures and maintenance regimes including appropriate contractual arrangements with all group participants. b. Compliance with the EPA's <i>Treatment systems for Small Communities, Business, Leisure Centres and Hotels</i> manual for any associated treatment systems. c. Approval from Uisce Eireann where it is proposed to connect to public wastewater infrastructure.

	d. Compliance with Policy WW-P-2.
WW-P-9	In areas with no public wastewater infrastructure, or where there is inadequate public wastewater treatment capacity or networks, developments proposing to provide effluent treatment by means of a connection to an existing private communal wastewater treatment system or proposals for such new treatments systems shall not be permitted.
WW-P-10	<p>In general, development proposals shall only be permitted where it is demonstrated that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. They would not negatively impact on existing or proposed water and wastewater infrastructure including the overbuilding of network infrastructure. b. The location takes into account, and is compatible with, the operation/use or expansion of existing or proposed new wastewater treatment plants. In this regard a setback/buffer of 100m will normally be required between existing or proposed wastewater treatment facilities with a PE >50 and any sensitive developments which have a continuous or frequent public usage (e.g. residential, retail, community, educational). c. Save in exceptional circumstances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. all new development shall provide separate foul and surface water drainage systems and the discharge of additional surface waters to combined (foul and surface water) sewers shall not be permitted; ii. the use of Water Sensitive Urban Design/Nature Based Solutions in surface water management systems within public and private developments and within the public realm shall be required to minimise the extent of hard surfacing and paving, thereby reducing flood risk and improving water quality; d. Water conservation measures (e.g. rainwater harvesting) shall be required as an integral part of developments, save in exceptional circumstances and where appropriate to do so.
WW-P-11	<p>Applications for proposed borehole/private wells shall only be permitted where it is demonstrated that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. It is not feasible to connect to a public water supply or group scheme. b. A potable water supply can be provided to in accordance with EU Drinking Water standards. c. The development will not have an adverse effect on water quality.
WW-P-12	It is a policy of the Council to support the extension of the public sewer network serving Glencolmcille from its current western edge as far west as the area broadly defined by the Glencolmcille Folk Village.
WW-P-13	Ensure that new developments do not have an adverse impact on the Lough Mourne drinking water supply. Any developments of scale in the general vicinity shall be required to identify overground and underground water sources supplying the Lough and to demonstrate that there shall be no adverse impact on these supplies.

8.3 Telecoms

High-speed telecommunications networks are key elements to the economic and social development of the County. High-speed broadband and telephony services support all economic sectors, provide universal access to public services, are crucial to the national and international exchange of goods and services, and act as a catalyst in changing economic interrelationships through rapid technological change.

The rapid and continuous development of Information Communication Technologies (ICT), and the extensive growth in the use of the Internet as a critical access gateway to international trade in goods and services, social networking interaction and the emerging convergence of main stream media broadcasting and mobile communication applications, are generating an ever growing demand from business, educational, media broadcasting and residential users for higher download and upload speeds, more capacity and greater reliability and resilience.

A sustainable high-speed telecommunications network is the key to the provision of high quality, accessible broadband services for all. This comprises a range of telecommunications platforms, developed in an environmentally sensitive manner.

Recent years have seen considerable progress achieved through National and EU co-funded projects in addressing the broadband core network and international connectivity deficits, through the implementation of the Metropolitan Area Networks Schemes in the following towns in the County: Gweedore, Letterkenny, Bundoran, Buncrana, Ballyshannon, Ballybofey/Stranorlar, Carrdonagh and Donegal Town.

The rollout of the 'Project Kelvin' initiative established world class international connectivity focused on the Letterkenny-Derry Gateway. This technology provides direct access to a trans-Atlantic submarine fibre optic cable that extends to land based fibre optic cable networks with connectivity throughout Canada, USA, UK and mainland Europe. The completion of the project launched Donegal and the region as an attractive location to global companies, such as leading financial houses, exchange markets service providers and media companies requiring superfast, high capacity, competitively priced, resilient and low latency bandwidth. Map 8.3.1 details the route of the Kelvin line, in addition to the location of Eircom DSL exchanges, the broadband interconnector between the Republic and Northern Ireland and the Eircom broadband backbone network.

Other projects such as the National Broadband Scheme and the locally delivered Community Network Services project have improved availability of first generation broadband services throughout the county.

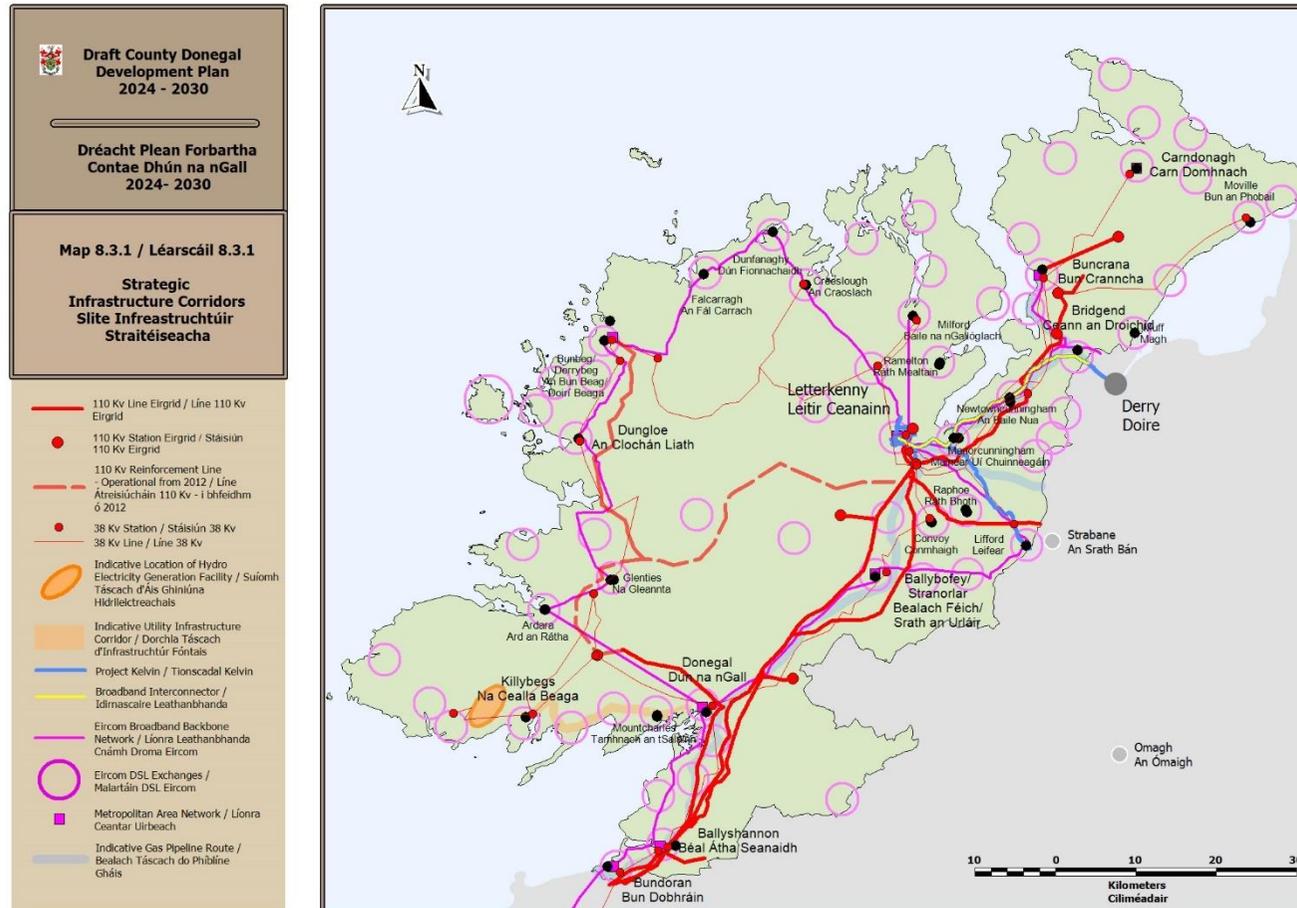
Telecommunications Companies themselves have invested substantially in both fixed and mobile telecommunications services on a commercial basis in recent years. County Donegal relative to other rural Counties has a high percentage of high-speed broadband enabled exchanges. In common with other parts of the Country however, a rural/urban divide in terms of high speed broadband is emerging which is the focus of the National Broadband Plan.

8.3.1 The National Broadband Plan

The Irish Government has recognised the importance of high-speed broadband particularly for rural areas and has developed a comprehensive intervention strategy – the National Broadband Plan. The National Broadband Plan is a Government policy initiative aimed at delivering high-speed broadband to every citizen and business in Ireland. This objective is being achieved through a combination of accelerated commercial investment by telecoms operators, and a State intervention programme to provide high-speed broadband to those parts of the country where it is not economically feasible for

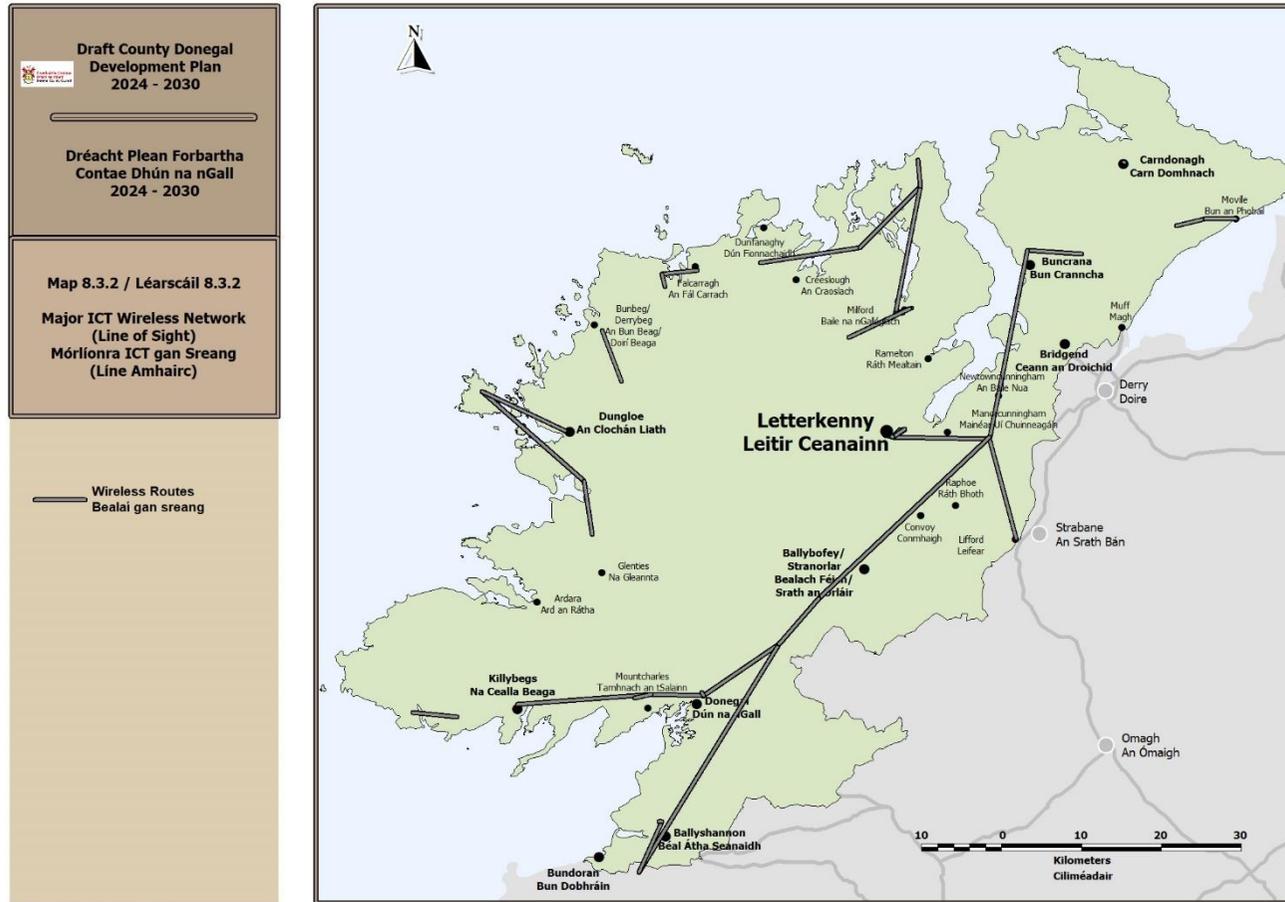
the commercial sector to invest. A comprehensive mapping exercise has been carried out by the Department of Communications, Climate Action, and Environment to identify premises which will be served by commercial operators and those which will not. The state intervention scheme will financially assist the provision of high-speed broadband services in the intervention area by means of a competitive process. In County Donegal approximately 48,249 premises will be served by commercial operators and 52,269 premises will be served under the National Broadband Intervention Strategy.

The Council recognises mobile phone and high-speed broadband networks as essential infrastructure for modern communications, business support and also in servicing urban areas, as well as many rural areas across the County. In Donegal this infrastructure is having an increasingly important influence on the rural economy, both in agriculture, tourism and other businesses, reducing the economic and social impact of remoteness and peripherality. Visual amenity and environmental degradation can be a key issue in relation to mast and antennae proposals and both the cumulative effects and the specific impact of each individual proposal merit careful consideration. The location of telecommunication proposals is a key consideration in addressing the protection of our natural and built heritage. Co-location of antennae on existing masts and collocation of masts on existing sites is preferred as it would serve to eliminate demand to create new mast locations throughout the County; in line with the recommendations of Government Guidelines on Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures. The location of antennae on existing structures such as electricity pylons and aerials shall be encouraged as appropriate. Visual impact assessment is a key tool in appropriate circumstances to examine the extent to which a proposed structure impacts on the host environment



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 Source de chuid: Shuíomh Táscaíoch d'Infrastruchtúir Fóntais agus d'Idinascáire Leathanbhanda ó 2012 a bhfeidhm ó 2012. Comhairle Contae Dhúna na nGall, 2023.
 To be read in conjunction with relevant accompanying text contained in the front section of this appendix as well as other relevant objectives & policies of the DDS.
 Le léamh i gcomhair leat an t-ábairt ábhartha a leanann sa chuid seo den aghaidh chomh maith le cuspóirí agus bearta ábhartha eile sa PFC.



Objective

TC-O-1	To facilitate the development and delivery of a sustainable telecommunications network across the County through a range of telecommunication systems including the National Broadband Plan, the National subvention plan to deliver High Speed Broadband to every rural household outside the commercially served areas as defined on the National Broadband Plan Map, subject to having due regard to natural and built heritage and to environmental considerations.
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Policies

TC-P-1	It is a policy of the Council to protect the major ICT Wireless Network (line of sight). Development proposals falling within the network shall be considered in consultation with Donegal County Council Information Systems Department. Where the development proposal is considered to have negative effects on the network, the developer will be required to identify and implement measures to overcome this obstruction. The network is set out in Map no. 8.3.2. Updated versions will be made available over the Plan period via www.donegalcoco.ie to reflect upgrades and developments to the network as they come on stream.
TC-P-2	It is a policy of the Council to seek the co-location of new or replacement antennae and dishes on existing masts as a first preference, and the co-location and clustering of new masts on existing sites as a second preference, unless a fully documented case for a new antenna, dish and/or structure is made explaining the precise circumstances which militate against co-location and/or clustering. Proposals for replacement antennae and dishes, support structures and associated access roads shall be generally supported where they can be sited and located in a manner that does not negatively impact on the visual amenities, built and archaeological heritage or qualifying interest of any given area;
TC-P-3	Where it has been established that co-location or clustering is not possible in accordance with the requirements of Policy TC-P-2 it is a policy of the Council that such new telecommunications antennae and support structures and associated access roads shall be located in accordance with the provisions of the <i>'Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures, Guidelines for Planning Authorities 1996'</i> , (or as may be amended) and that such structures shall not normally be supported within Areas of Especially High Scenic Amenity, beside schools, protected structures or archaeological sites and other monuments. Within towns and villages operators shall be encouraged to locate in industrial estates/areas where possible.
TC-P-4	It is a policy of the Council to require, where appropriate, (by planning condition if necessary) the installation of broadband ducting in association with road, sewer, watermain, commercial and residential schemes, including one-off rural dwellings.

8.4 Flooding

8.4.1 Introduction

Flooding is a natural occurrence which can never be entirely prevented. It is caused by a variety of factors (e.g. rainfall, river, tidal/coastal, groundwater), often in combination, and can occur in a range of locations. Humans can further increase flood risk by such actions as building developments in flood risk locations, reducing floodplain storage capacity or increasing surface water runoff through overuse of hard surfaces. The timing and extent of flooding is often difficult to predict due to the complex interplay of atmospheric and geographical conditions which give rise to flooding (e.g. rainfall intensity and duration, catchment size, soil, gradient, geology, surface water runoff, tidal conditions etc). Furthermore, it is now widely accepted that flood events will become more frequent and severe as a result of climate change.

In recent years Donegal has suffered a number of flooding events which have caused significant socio-economic damage e.g. Inishowen (2017), Letterkenny General Hospital (2013 and 2014), Bunbeg (2009) and Raphoe (2008). However, the Council considers that the planning process can play a significant positive role in managing flood risk by such actions by ensuring that: vulnerable developments are not built in identified flood prone locations, developments do not reduce the natural storage capacity provided by flood plains, and developments do not increase surface water runoff over and above natural rates.



8.4.2 Legislation and Guidance

Relevant legislation and guidance advocate the precautionary approach to the management of flood risk in the development process. Relevant provisions include:

- The EU Floods Directive (2007/60/EC): The Directive aims to reduce the adverse consequences of flooding on human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity and requires Member states to map the flood extents and assets and humans at risk in these areas and to take adequate and coordinated measures to reduce this risk.

'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (DoEHLG, 2009): These Guidelines set out a sequential approach for the management of development in areas at risk from flooding which can be broadly summarised as follows: Avoid development in locations at risk from flooding; Substitute a land use/development that is less vulnerable to flooding where avoidance is not possible; Justify the proposed land use/development in accordance with a specific Justification Test where avoidance and substitution are not possible; Mitigate any residual flood risks arising from the development to an acceptable level where the development has passed the justification test.

The Guidelines also require the preparation of Strategic Flood Risk Assessments (SFRA) to identify Flood Risk Areas, assess existing flood infrastructure, identify possible flood defence measures; and identifies a hierarchy of Flood Risk Areas and categories of Vulnerable Development through which to apply the Sequential Test. (The categories of Flood Zones and Vulnerable Developments applicable to the Flood Risk Management Guidelines are set out in the Glossary/Definitions subsection below).

NPF NPO57:

National Policy Objective 57

Enhance water quality and resource management by:

- Ensuring flood risk management informs place-making by avoiding inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding in accordance with The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities.
- Ensuring that River Basin Management Plan objectives are fully considered throughout the physical planning process.
- Integrating sustainable water management solutions, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS), non-porous surfacing and green roofs, to create safe places.

8.4.3 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

The Council commissioned Roughan O'Donovan Consulting Engineers to prepare a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) report to inform the preparation of the County Development Plan 2024-2030. The SFRA provides an assessment/identification of flood risk for the Development Plan area²⁹ in accordance with "The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities" (The Guidelines), 2009, published by the Department for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Office of Public Works (OPW).

8.4.4 Flood Risk Maps

A Stage 1 Flood Risk Identification was undertaken by Roughan O'Donovan to identify any flooding or surface water management issues within the County that may warrant further investigation. As part of this stage the most up to date available data at the time of preparation was acquired from the Office of Public Works (OPW) and Donegal County Council. Flood risk information has enabled Donegal County Council to apply 'The Guidelines' sequential approach to flood risk management, and

²⁹ Note: Strategic Flood Risk Assessments were previously carried out for the towns of An Clochán Liath (Dungloe), Ballyshannon, Carndonagh, Donegal Town, Killybegs and Bridgend as part of the Seven Strategic Town Local Area Plan 2018-2024; therefore a Stage 2 Flood Risk Assessment for these settlements does not form part of the SFRA report for the CDP 2024-2030. Similarly, a separate SFRA report has been prepared for the town of Letterkenny as part of the preparation of the Draft Letterkenny Plan and Local Transport 2023-2029.

where necessary the Justification Test, to appraise sites for suitable land zonings and identify how flood risk can be managed as part of the Development Plan.

The findings of the stage 1 assessment indicate that multiple settlements within the Development Plan area are at risk of flooding. Accordingly, a Stage 2 assessment was undertaken to confirm the sources of flooding that may affect settlements and a series of flood zone maps has been produced within the SFRA report (see Appendix A of SFRA report). The flood zone maps are largely derived from the CFRAM (Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management) study and NCFHM (National Coastal Flood Hazard Mapping); areas that are not covered in the CFRAM or NCFHM Studies are supplemented by fluvial mapping from the NIFM (National Indicative Fluvial Maps) Assessment.

The Council recognises that there may be other locations at risk from flooding which are not specifically identified in the SFRA nor identified in OPW Draft Flood Risk Management Plans and the associated Flood Risk mapping. In such areas the Council will adopt a precautionary approach, employ the abovementioned sequential approach and utilise other available datasets (e.g. The Historic flood maps available on www.floodmaps.ie, the OPW's Coastal Protection Strategy Study Mapping).

Glossary/Definitions:

Flood Zones types as summarised from Section 2.23 of The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2009)

Zone A – High probability of flooding, i.e.) more than 1% probability or 1 in 100 from rivers and more than 0.5% probability or 1 in 200 from coastal flooding.

Zone B – Moderate probability of flooding, i.e.) between 0.1% probability or 1 in 1,000 years and 1% or 1 in 100 years for river flooding and between 0.1% or 1 in 1,000 year and 0.5% or 1 in 200 for coastal flooding.

Zone C – Low probability of flooding, i.e.) less than 0.1% or 1 in 1,000 years for both river and coastal flooding). Flood zone C covers all areas outside of Zones A or B.

Table 8.4.1 : Classification of Vulnerability for different types of development taken from Table 3.1 of The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2009)

Vulnerability class	Land uses and types of development which include*:
Highly vulnerable development (Including essential Infrastructure)	Garda, ambulance and fire stations and command centres required to be operational during flooding; Hospitals; Emergency access and egress points; Schools; Dwelling houses, student halls of residence and hostels; Residential institutions such as residential care homes, children's homes and social services homes; Caravans and mobile home parks; Dwelling houses designed, constructed or adapted for the elderly or, other people with impaired mobility; and Essential infrastructure, such as primary transport and utilities distribution, including electricity generating power stations and sub-stations, water and sewage treatment, and potential significant sources of pollution (SEVESO sites, IPPC sites, etc.) in the event of flooding.
Less vulnerable development	Buildings used for: retail, leisure, warehousing, commercial, industrial and non-residential institutions; Land and buildings used for holiday or short-let caravans and camping, subject to specific warning and evacuation plans; Land and buildings used for agriculture and forestry; Waste treatment (except landfill and hazardous waste); Mineral working and processing; and Local transport infrastructure.
Water-compatible development	Flood control infrastructure; Docks, marinas and wharves; Navigation facilities; Ship building, repairing and dismantling, dockside fish processing and refrigeration and compatible activities requiring a waterside location; Water-based recreation and tourism (excluding sleeping accommodation); Lifeguard and coastguard stations; Amenity open space, outdoor sports and recreation and essential facilities such as changing rooms; and Essential ancillary sleeping or residential accommodation for staff required by uses in this category (subject to a specific warning and evacuation plan).

*Uses not listed here should be considered on their own merits

Table 3.1 Classification of vulnerability of different types of development

Table 8.4.2: Matrix of Vulnerability Versus Flood Zone as taken from Table 3.1 of The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2009)

	Flood Zone A	Flood Zone B	Flood Zone C
Highly vulnerable development (including essential infrastructure)	Justification Test	Justification Test	Appropriate
Less vulnerable development	Justification Test	Appropriate	Appropriate
Water-compatible development	Appropriate	Appropriate	Appropriate

Figure 8.4.1: Example - Flood Zone Areas A, B and C



Objectives

F-O-1	To ensure that development does not give rise to unacceptable new flood risks or does not exacerbate existing flood risk.
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Policies

F-P-1	<p>To only permit development where flood or surface water management issues can be successfully addressed and/or where there is no unacceptable residual flood risk for the development, its occupants and/or private property or public infrastructure elsewhere within the catchment. A precautionary approach shall be applied to the consideration of flood risk issues and shall include the application of the 'Avoid', 'Substitute', 'Justify' principles set out in the EU Floods Directive (2007/60/EC) and 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities', November 2009, DoEHLG.</p> <p>Where appropriate, applicants/developers shall be required to submit:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. an independent 'Flood Risk Assessment' in accordance with the aforementioned Guidelines or any subsequent related publication and/or 'Surface Water Drainage Calculations', from suitably qualified persons; and b. evidence of compliance with the Justification test set out in Section 5.15 of the aforementioned Guidelines or any subsequent related publication.
F-P-2	To require the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs) including flood attenuation areas, wetlands, the controlled release of surface waters and use of open spaces and semi-permeable hard surfaces for urban development proposals.
F-P-3	To support the development of long and short-term flood remediation works, including embankments, sea defences, drainage channels, and attenuation ponds and wetlands, subject to environmental considerations including potential impact on designated shellfish water and fresh water pearl mussel catchment areas, compliance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, best practice in Coastal Zone Management and the Marine Resource and Coastal Management policies of this Plan.
F-P-4	Not to permit developments which would hinder the maintenance of river or drainage channels.

8.5 Electricity Transmission and Gas Networks

'The provision of prudently managed infrastructure is key to delivering a connected, vibrant, inclusive, resilient and smart region that places environmental sustainability and quality of life values at the heart of our decisions. The lack of access to the essential benefits that infrastructure provides – such as electric power, clean water, modern telecommunications, and safe and reliable transportation - impede higher living standards and a significant obstacle to economic development.' (NWRA RSES, p.262)

8.5.1 Electricity Transmission Network

As noted in the RSES, the existing electricity transmission network in the region is predominantly lower capacity 110 kV with very little higher capacity of 220 kV and 400 kV transmission infrastructure. Donegal is only served by the lower capacity 110kV lines. The RSES makes the case for enhanced transmission capacity having regard to, inter alia: the surplus of regional supply versus demand; the likelihood of increased demand arising from economic growth and the need to service these growth sectors in order to secure their location in the region; and the potential for exporting excess supply. Donegal supports the broad approach of the Regional Assembly for the enhancement of the network etc. as referenced in RPO's 8.1, 8.2, 8.3 and 8.4. However, it is noted that there are no firm proposals at present to enhance the transmission capacity to Donegal, and that the only indication of any commitment to the County is to be found in the 'North-West Project (study area)' referenced in Table 11 in the RSES.

Table 11: Projects in Northern & Western Region

Project Name	Location
North Connacht Project	Roscommon, Sligo, Mayo
Regional Solution Project (series compensation on 400 kV network)	Galway
North South 400 kV Interconnector	Meath, Cavan, Monaghan, Armagh, Tyrone
Bellacorick – Castlebar 110 kV Line update	Mayo
North West Project (study area)	Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo
Bellacorick – Moy 110 kV Line update	Mayo
Cashla – Salthill 110 kV Line update	Galway
Galway 110 kV Station Redevelopment	Galway

As referenced elsewhere in this Plan, Killybegs is recognised nationally and regionally as Ireland's premier fishing port. The port also has the potential to function as a key strategic hub for offshore renewable energy projects in the context of the national climate change policy, and the resultant drive towards developing the country's renewable energy resource. However, the deficiencies in the electricity transmission network (and the strategic roads network – addressed in Chapter 8.1) are likely to prejudice achievement of the national and regional objectives for the Port. Objective ETN-O-1 sets out the Planning Authority's support in principle for the upgrading of the electricity transmission network to deal with the potential demands arising from projected growth in the County generally, and in particular from realisation of the full strategic potential of Killybegs.

8.5.2 Gas

For similar reasons to those set out at Section 8.5.1, the Council welcomes recognition in the RSES of the absence of a gas supply in Donegal and the observation that: 'Within the lifetime of the RSES, it should be the ambition of our region to explore the extension of the network into Counties Sligo, Roscommon, Donegal and Leitrim.' The Council also welcomes the RSES's policy support for addressing this deficiency as contained in RPO's 8.5, 8.6 and 8.7.

RPO 8.5

To support the build-out of the gas supply network into Counties Sligo, Roscommon, Donegal and Leitrim and in additional locations in the remainder of the region.

Objectives

ETN-O-1

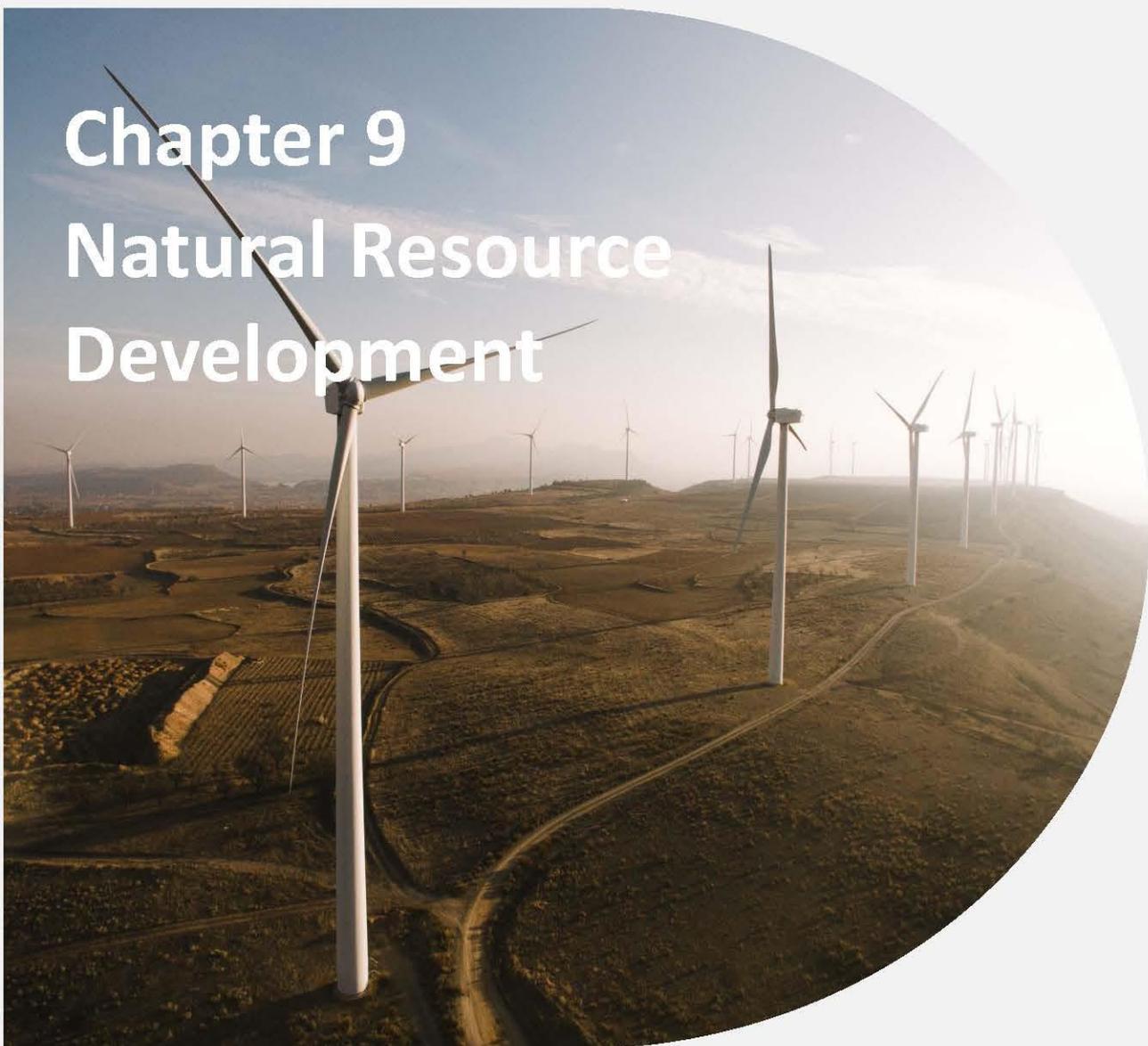
To secure the upgrade of the electricity distribution network serving the County to a minimum 220kv distribution network.

G-O-1

To secure the build-out of the gas supply network into Donegal.

Chapter 9

Natural Resource Development



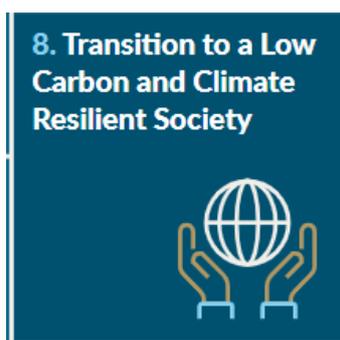
Chapter 9 – Natural Resource Development

9.1 Renewable Energy (General)

'New energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary for a more distributed, renewables-focused energy generation system, harnessing both the considerable on-shore and off-shore potential from energy sources such as wind, wave and solar and connecting the richest sources of that energy to the major sources of demand.'
(NPF Commentary on NSO8, p.15)

The Government has identified increased renewable energy generation as a key measure in the strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and meet international obligations (refer Chapter 3: 'Climate'). Notably, one of the measures outlined in the 'Climate Action Plan, 2021' (DCCA) is that 80% of the Country's electricity shall be generated from renewable sources.

National planning policy in this area is encapsulated in National Strategic Outcome 8 (NSO8) and National Policy Objective 55 in the NPF:



National Policy Objective 55

Promote renewable energy use and generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment to meet national objectives towards achieving a low carbon economy by 2050.

The Council also acknowledges Eirgrid's Strategy 2020-2025, entitled 'Transform the Power System for Future Generations' sets out plans for an estimated 25% growth in electricity demand by 2025, along with a target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Alongside this strategic context, the value of Donegal's natural, built and cultural heritage must also be considered in the preparation of this policy framework.

9.1.1 Ocean Energy

The EU Blue Growth Strategy 2012 identifies 'Blue Energy' as a sector that could not only help compliance with the EU renewable energy targets but could also deliver sustainable economic growth and jobs in the blue economy.

The Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources published a framework for the sustainable economic development of Ireland's offshore renewable energy resources entitled 'Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDPA)' in February 2014. The OREDPA sets out the following vision: "Our offshore renewable energy resource contributing to our economic development and sustainable growth, generating jobs for our citizens, supported by coherent policy, planning and regulation, and managed in an integrated manner". The OREDPA recognises that development of offshore renewable energy represents a significant opportunity for ports, particularly along the western Atlantic coast. This constitutes a significant opportunity for Killybegs in particular from an economic and employment generating as well as technological research and training.

9.1.2 Bioenergy

Biomass is the biological material derived from living, or recently living organisms. For centuries people in Donegal relied upon our natural resources including peat as a source of fuel and seaweed for the fertilisation of crops. While the harvesting of peat is increasingly unsustainable there is a wide range of sustainable and affordable alternatives. The County has large areas of sustainably managed commercial forestry which has potential for use as wood fuel for both domestic and commercial markets. In addition, the growth of interest in energy crops such as willow, rape seed and miscanthus, all represent alternative biofuel opportunities which are viable and already growing in the County.

9.1.3 Fossil Fuels

Nationally the supply of gas will be strategically supplied through inter-connections between Ireland and the UK, which will secure sufficient gas supplies for the foreseeable future. A new gas pipeline has been constructed from Belfast to Derry and the Council would support the extension of existing services into the County.

9.1.4 Solar Energy

Traditionally Solar Energy has not been a prevalent renewable energy source in County Donegal, however advances in technology mean that the capacity for production of electricity from light (photovoltaics) to electricity and solar thermal for heat, is increased. It is estimated that a typical 2.5kWp system could provide up to 50% of a household's annual electricity.



9.1.5 Geothermal Energy

Ireland has an excellent source of geothermal energy, a clean and sustainable heat energy stored underground, that can be extracted through a number of engineering methods involving shallow and deep drilling. The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) has prepared mapping of the country identifying areas of geothermal potential. This mapping is available at the SEAI's website along with other information on geothermal energy (refer www.seai.ie).

General Objectives

E-O-1	To sustainably develop a diverse and secure renewable energy supply to meet demands and capitalize on the County's competitive locational advantage.
E-O-2	To secure the maximum potential from the wind energy resources of the County commensurate with the receiving environment and local developments patterns consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development, thereby contributing to the national drive towards ensuring the security of energy supply.
E-O-3	To facilitate the strengthening of the electricity grid to a minimum rating of 220KV to enable the harnessing and distribution of energy.
E-O-4	To facilitate the sustainable development of Donegal as a Centre of Excellence for renewable technology, and Killybegs as an offshore service centre and renewable energy hub.

E-O-5

To ensure that wind energy developments do not adversely impact upon the existing amenities of residential properties, and other centres of human habitation (as defined in 'Definitions' below).

General Policies

E-P-1

It is policy of the Council to facilitate the development of grid reinforcements including grid connections and transboundary energy network (electricity and gas) into and through the County, within the Region, and to support the development of cross border grid connections, subject to other objectives and policies of this Plan.

E-P-2

It is a policy of the Council:

- a. to facilitate the appropriate development of renewable energy and energy storage projects arising from a variety of sources, including hydro power, ocean energy, hydrogen, bioenergy, biomass, solar, wind, district heating systems and geo-thermal and the storage of water as a renewable kinetic energy resource, in accordance with all relevant material considerations and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area;
- b. not to support the process of Hydraulic Fracturing (or fracking).

E-P-3

It is a policy of the Council to facilitate solar energy installations in residential, commercial, industrial and public building projects, provided such proposals do not detract from the built heritage, in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

E-P-4

It is a policy of the Council to become a centre of excellence for research and development of renewable energy technologies including wind, hydro, tidal and wave and specifically to facilitate the development of Killybegs Harbour and Donegal Airport as maintenance, service and supply centres for onshore and offshore energy facilities in the context of other objectives and policies of this Plan.

E-P-5

It is a policy of the Council to seek to ensure that, where practicable, power lines be routed underground, having particular regard to the scenic amenity of the receiving landscape.

E-P-6

It is a policy of the Council that proposals for grid connections shall be considered along the national road network only after other potential alternative routes have been reasonably eliminated for reasons of environmental sensitivities.

9.2 Wind Energy

Donegal County Council acknowledges the importance of wind energy as a renewable energy source which can play a vital role in achieving national targets in relation to reductions in fossil fuel dependency and therefore greenhouse gas emissions. In terms of wind speed and consistency, Donegal is ideally and strategically located on the North-West Atlantic coast and this wind energy resource has already been harnessed to a significant degree. Thus Donegal already generates

significant wind energy outputs relative to other counties in Ireland and has become an energy exporter, despite the limited available electricity grid infrastructure in the County and significant environmental and heritage designations covering over one-third of the County. It is therefore challenging to achieve a balanced approach to the identification of further suitable locations that will not detract from the scenic and environmental resource of the County.

The potential for offshore wind, and the capacity of Donegal to help realise this potential in terms of onshore facilities (particularly at Killybegs Port), is addressed in Chapters 7: 'Economic Development' and 14: 'Marine, Coast and Islands'.

With regard to onshore wind energy, the Council's approach has been prepared having regard to the 'Wind Energy Development Guidelines, 2006' (DHPLG) ('the Guidelines') [the Planning Authority has been advised that it may not have regard to the Draft Guidelines, 2019 pending finalization]. Whilst the importance of addressing climate change is at the fore of national policy, and whilst the Government's commitment to achieving targets as discussed above is acknowledged, the Guidelines provide that this must be achieved in a balanced way: *'the development plan must achieve a reasonable balance between responding to Government Policy on renewable energy and enabling the wind energy resources of the planning authority's area to be harnessed in a manner that is consistent with proper planning and sustainable development, taking into account the legitimate views of local communities.'* (p.11).

Map 9.2.1: 'Wind Energy' designates 'areas considered suitable or unsuitable for new wind energy development that have been identified on foot of a comprehensive analysis of the environmental sensitivities and the wind energy potential of the County'. The mapping has been prepared using a spatial sieve analysis of factors (in accordance with the Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006). In the event of a discrepancy occurring between Map 9.2.1 and the written objectives and policies contained in the Plan, the written text shall be the key material consideration and take precedence over Map 9.2.1.

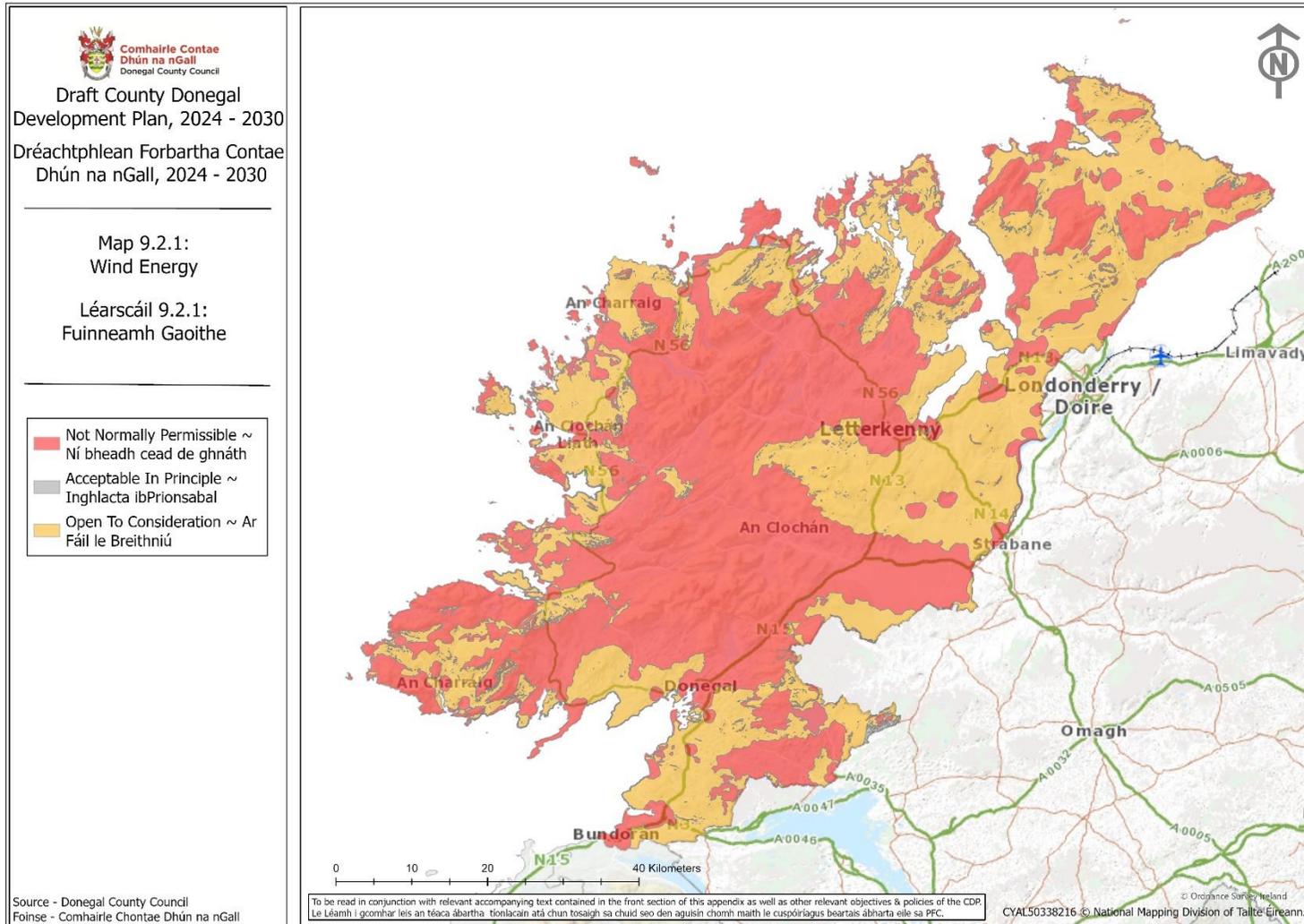
Arising from this process, and in accordance with Policy WE-P-1 and Map 9.2.1, the Plan identifies the following policy area designations as the means of determining the principle of the acceptability or otherwise of proposed wind farm developments.

- (a) **Acceptable In Principle**
Wind farm developments shall be generally acceptable in principle in these areas.
- (b) **Open to Consideration**
Wind farm developments shall be generally open to consideration in these areas.
- (c) **Not Normally Permissible**
Like the other two designations, these areas were identified on foot of a comprehensive analysis of the environmental sensitivities and the wind energy potential of the County. On foot of this determination, and in-line with national guidelines, it follows that most windfarm developments will not normally be permissible. This should apply in particular to such proposals on previously undeveloped sites, inclusive of sites with a lapsed un-implemented permission (and where substantive works have not been undertaken). Notwithstanding, and having regard to previous planning assessments and decisions and the subsequent investment incurred, it is the position of Donegal County Council that a more balanced approach is required when dealing with windfarm proposals in these areas where, crucially, there is an already existing strong planning history. This refers to the following categories: Existing Windfarms; Developments Under Construction; Developments Where Permissions Have Lapsed But Where Substantial Works Have Been Completed; and Sites With a Live Permission but not yet started. For such sites, it is considered reasonable to allow for the

consideration of proposals for the augmentation, upgrade and improvement of such developments in accordance with the details set out in Policy WE-P-1(c)(ii.) below.

The objectives and policies contained in this Section of the Plan set out a broad framework against which all windfarm proposals shall be considered. However, individual windfarm proposals are likely to give rise to additional issues covered by other provisions in the Plan and thus proposals shall also be subject to compliance with all other pertaining objectives and policies contained in this Plan.

Within each of the wind energy area designations on Map 9.2.1, and along the interface between the designations, there may be small areas that do not fully meet the intent of the designation. Such anomalies shall be considered individually and in the context of all other objectives and policies contained within this Plan, should an application for development be submitted in these. The onus shall be on the applicant to make the case that the site does not meet the characteristics of the designation within which it is, but ultimately it shall be a matter for the Planning Authority to adjudicate on such matters.



As well as implementing the undernoted policy framework, it will be the practice of the Council:

- a) in accordance with Article 22A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), to require all windfarm developers to submit a Community Report with their planning application, which report shall be consistent with the relevant provisions of 'The Code of Practice for Wind Energy Development in Ireland, Guidelines for Community Engagement'; Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (December 2016); and
- b) to ensure that for all applications for renewable energy projects, details of the proposed grid connection and all associated infrastructure are considered in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Natura Impact Statement as may be required; to ensure that all roads associated with the development of wind farms are maintained or repaired at the developer's expense to the satisfaction of the Council.

Wind Energy Policies

WE-P-1	<p>That the principle of the acceptability or otherwise of proposed wind farm developments shall be generally determined in accordance with the three areas identified in Map 9.2.1 'Wind Energy' and as detailed below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Acceptable in Principle Wind energy development shall be generally acceptable in these areas. b. Open to Consideration Wind energy development shall be generally open to consideration in these areas. c. Not Normally Permissible <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Windfarm development proposals on previously undeveloped sites, inclusive of sites with a lapsed un-implemented permission (and where substantive works have not been undertaken) will not normally be permissible. ii. The augmentation, upgrade and improvements of: existing windfarms; windfarm developments under construction; developments where permission has lapsed but substantial works have been completed, or on sites with an extant planning permission will be open to consideration where such proposals shall be generally confined to the planning unit of the existing development, or where a modestly-proportioned projection (relative to the established unit) beyond the established footprint can be demonstrated to be essential and unavoidable for the augmentation project in terms of operational efficiencies, and can demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that all environmental issues can be adequately mitigated.
WE-P-2	<p>That wind farm developments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Must not be located within the zone of visual influence of Glenveagh National Park; b. Must not be located within the following areas, subject to the possible exceptions set out in Policy WE-P-1(1)(c)(ii): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. the Gweebarra River Basin; ii. areas contained within 'Especially High Scenic Amenity' on Map 11.1 'Scenic Amenity' and iii. St. John's Point.
WE-P-3	

	<p>To ensure that the assessment of wind energy development proposals will have regard to the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. sensitivities of the county’s landscapes; b. visual impact on protected views, prospects, designated landscapes, as well as local visual impacts; c. impacts on nature conservation designations, archaeological areas, county geological sites, historic structures, public rights of way and walking routes; d. local environmental impacts, including those on residential properties, such as noise, shadow flicker and over-dominance; e. visual and environmental impacts of associated development, such as access roads, plant and grid connections from the proposed wind farm to the electricity transmission network; f. scale, size and layout of the project and any cumulative effects due to other projects; g. the impact of the proposed development on protected bird and mammal species; h. the requirements and standards set out in the DEHLG Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006, or any subsequent related Guidelines (or as may be amended). i. ‘The Planning System and Flood Risk Management, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)’; and j. the protection of drinking water sources. <p>In addition, all applications for wind farm development located on peatland and bog, including repowering and augmentation projects, shall be accompanied by a ‘Peat Stability Risk Assessment Report’.</p>
WE-P-4	<p>To support and facilitate, appropriate on site wind energy development by auto producers/micro producers (see definitions below) where energy generated is primarily required to meet the immediate needs of the development, whether community/ agricultural and/or small enterprise, subject to compliance with all other relevant objectives and policies contained within this plan.</p> <p>The Wind Energy Map 9.2.1 does not restrict the location of turbines for the purposes of auto-production. (see definitions below)</p>
WE-P-5	<p>To ensure that all roads associated with the development of wind farms are maintained or repaired at the developer’s expense to the satisfaction of the Council.</p>
WE-P-6	<p>To ensure that all windfarm development proposals demonstrate how the proposed development will be of enduring economic benefit to the communities concerned, through a form of community investment/ownership, benefit or dividend, or similar.</p>
WE-P-7	<p>To ensure that the decommissioning, post-operational restoration and restoration of habitats of redundant windfarm developments is achievable and practical once a wind energy development ceases to generate electricity.</p>
WE-P-8	<p>To require that proposals for grid connections shall be considered along the national road network only after other potential alternative routes have been reasonably eliminated for reasons of environmental sensitivities.</p>
WE-P-9	<p>To ensure that the assessment of Wind Energy Development Proposals have regard to the following Specific Biodiversity Related Requirement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Loss of functionally linked habitat: Developers of wind energy proposals on greenfield sites shall undertake a preconstruction appraisal of habitats. Should

habitats suitable for supporting Special Conservation Interest bird species be present, developers will be required to undertake pre-construction bird surveys to confirm whether the site supports a significant proportion of bird populations (typically taken to be 1% of the population of a SPA, at time of designation). Depending on whether qualifying birds represent breeding or overwintering species, surveys will need to be undertaken in the breeding season or overwintering period (October to March). If a site represents functionally linked habitat, avoidance / mitigation measures will be required and the proposal will need to be supported by a bespoke Appropriate Assessment.

- b. Mortality due to collision with operational wind turbines: Wind energy development proposals shall demonstrate that they can be delivered without resulting in adverse effects on the integrity of European sites. Vantage point surveys will be required to establish:
 - (i) the overall use of the development site by Special Conservation Interest birds and
 - (ii) more detailed usage by Special Conservation Interest birds of the turbine swept area taking account of specifications such as turbine height, blade length, nacelle (blade hub) rotation speed and the number of turbines. Mitigation measures may need to be delivered to ensure that any residual risks are appropriately avoided or reduced.
- c. Disturbance displacement: To avoid potential permanent disturbance displacement impacts on Special Conservation Interest bird species, Donegal County Council will generally not support wind energy proposals within 1km of Special Protection Areas unless clear evidence from the applicant or scheme promoter can demonstrate no adverse effect on site integrity will arise.
- d. Water Quality: Any wind energy developments within 1 km of sensitive SPAs / SACs shall ensure that potential adverse impacts on the European sites due to water quality impacts are assessed and, where required, mitigated. Mitigation measures include, but are not limited to, water quality and ecological baseline studies, run-off / leachate modelling, delivery of Construction Environmental Management Plans (CEMPs) and Water Management Plans (WMPs) and compliance with industry good practice.

Definitions:

1. Auto-production

Auto-production of electricity is the production of electricity for a consumer's own use on a premise/site where the energy is to be consumed. While there is no upper limit to the definition of an auto-producer, the Maximum Export Capacity (MEC) must be less than twice the Maximum Import Capacity (MIC). Auto producers are generally industrial large volume energy users who generate wind energy to offset their immediate energy needs and reduce their reliance on fossil fuels. For generation up to 0.5MW, auto-producers do not have to apply via the Group Processing Approach Process (Gate queue) for connection to the grid. For generation of between 0.5MW and 1MW they are processed as non GPA applicants if they can demonstrate there are no interactions and public good criteria are met. Auto-producers can avail of an export tariff, agreed upon between the autoproducer and their energy supplier. The tariff rates offered vary with electrical supplier and technology exporting to the electrical grid. However, it is more cost effective for an auto producer to use the electricity generated to replace imported electricity.

2. Micro-production

Micro-generation is a subset of auto-production classified by ESB Networks as generation of less than 11kW when connected to the three phase portion of the distribution grid (400V). However, in the case of most users, who are connected to the single phase portion of the distribution grid (230V), a maximum rating of 6kW is permitted. Small scale wind energy developments (consisting of 1 turbine) with a total height of 13m for domestic use or 20m for agricultural and light industrial use are exempted developments subject to criteria specified in the Statutory Instruments (SI 83 of 2007 and SI 235 and SI 256 of 2008).

Glenveagh National Park: Zone of Visual Influence:- The environmental and visual character of Glenveagh National Park consists of the geographic extent of the park and its immediate environs. The implementation of the relevant policy should not be interpreted as relating to lands with limited physical or visual connection to the park. The onus is on the applicant to demonstrate the extent of the potential impact a proposed wind energy development has on the National Park.

9.2 Extractive Industry and Geology

9.2.1 Background

Aggregates are a significant and necessary natural resource for the continued economic development of Donegal including job creation and are essential materials for construction industry. The Plan needs to make provision for the sustainable and appropriate extraction of minerals including clays, gravels, sands, stone, and aggregates subject to compliance with pertaining legislation and guidelines. Specifically, factors that must be considered in order to minimise the impact of any extractions include, but are not limited to noise, vibration, dust, water quality, the North-west River Basin Management Plan, natural and cultural heritage, landscape, and waste materials.

Aggregate is the collective name for natural rock and gravel deposits and mapping of Aggregate Potential in Ireland is prepared by the Geological Society Ireland and is widely available online.³⁰ This mapping can assist in the identification of locations of certain minerals throughout the county but is not to be construed as locations where extraction would be appropriate in the round. The Minerals Development Act 2017 governs the exploration for, and development of all minerals other than stone, gravel, sand or clay and that may include small, non-commercial quantities of minerals.

The Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications is responsible for the issuing of Prospecting Licences to undertake mineral exploration in Ireland, these licences are normally renewed every 6 years permitting prospecting only and not extraction. At present there are four licences within the county³¹. The DECC is also responsible for the issuing of mining lease or licences, these and prospecting licenses also require planning permission and an Integrated Pollution Control licence (from the EPA) before extraction can proceed. The extractive industries shall also be guided by the DEHLG Quarries and Ancillary Activities Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2004 and the EPA Environmental Management in the Extractive Industry (non-scheduled minerals) 2006.

Proposals for extractive industries are encouraged to have regard to the Donegal Climate Adaptation Strategy, 2019-2024.

The Waste Management (Management of Waste from the Extractive Industries) Regulations 2009 (S.I. No 566 of 2009) requires each Local Authority to establish and maintain a register of all extractive industries within its functional area including the extraction, treatment and storage of mineral resources, the working of quarries, and the extraction, treatment and storage of peat. At present there are in the region of 170 identified quarries in the county, these can be viewed live on the council website at www.donegalcoco.ie.

'The Geological Heritage of Donegal' was published in November 2020³² and is an audit of County Geological Sites in County Donegal. The audit is a compilation of the following 2 reports:

- An audit of County Geological and Geomorphological Sites in north Donegal and
- An audit of County Geological and Geomorphological Sites in south Donegal

³⁰ www.gsi.ie

³¹ www.donegalcoco.ie

³² www.gsi.ie

Objective

EX-O-1

To facilitate extractive industries subject to the protection of residential and natural amenities, the prevention of pollution, and the safeguarding of aquifers and groundwater.

Policies

EX-P-1

It is a policy of the Council that the principle of proposed new extractive industries, shall generally be accepted where such deposits exist save:

- a. for the following areas/designations where such development shall not be supported:
 - i. Areas designated as Especially High Scenic Amenity;
 - ii. Designated Natura 2000 sites, Natural Heritage Areas, Nature Reserves or other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna; or
 - iii. Areas of significant archaeological potential.
- b. In the following scenarios, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the development would not have significant adverse impacts on the amenities or the environment;
 - i. identified Views and Prospects, Greenways, Blueways and tourist routes.

EX-P-2

It is a policy of the Council to only support development proposals for extractive industry developments where such proposals identify relevant robust and effective mitigation measures in respect of the anticipated environmental impacts of such development in accordance with the DEHLG Quarries and Ancillary Activities Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2004 and the EPA Environmental Management in the Extractive Industry (non-scheduled minerals) Guidelines, 2006. Such impacts to be considered shall include: noise and vibration; dust deposition/air quality; water supplies and groundwater; natural heritage; landscape; traffic and roads impact; cultural heritage; waste management; environmental management systems; and site restoration plan.

G-P-1

It is a policy of the Council to protect County Geological Sites (CGS). Accordingly, the Council will adopt a precautionary approach to development proposals with the potential to impact upon a CGS. Proposals should be accompanied by a detailed report from a competent person setting out the potential impact to ensure that an informed decision can be made. Where significant harm to the CGS is deemed likely, planning permission will not be granted unless there are overriding considerations of public importance to the County.

Chapter 10

Tourism



Chapter 10 - Tourism

10.1 Background

Donegal is renowned for its rich and diverse tourism offering including its rugged coastal landscapes, a wealth of sandy and blue flag beaches, windswept mountains, the highest accessible sea cliffs in Europe, one of the largest collections of inhabited and uninhabited offshore islands, varied natural habitats, vibrant cultural life and Gaeltacht areas, and rich built heritage.



The Wild Atlantic Way (WAW) extends along the entire 1134 km of Donegal's coast. The county hosts 37 discovery points (21% of the entire WAW) and 3 key signature discovery points including Sliabh Liag, Fanad Lighthouse and Malin Head. Donegal possesses a wealth of world-class tourism assets, including, but not limited to those listed in table 10.1 below ³³.

Table 10.1: Donegal tourism attractions and visitor numbers.

Key Tourism Attractions in County Donegal (2021)	Visitor Numbers
Sliabh Liag Cliffs	167,528
Malin Head	92,924
Glenveagh	87,113
Fanad	64,529
Oakfield Park	49,000
Glencolumkille Folk Village Museum & Heritage Centre	32,500

³³ Fáilte Ireland Visitor Attraction Figures 2021

Doe Castle	28,097
Doagh Visitor Centre	25,000
Donegal Craft Village	20,000
IOSAS - Celtic Gardens	20,000
Lurgybrack Open Farm	20,000

The tourism sector is a critical component of economic activity in Donegal accounting for an estimated 13% of jobs in the county in 2018, that were directly dependent on the tourism and hospitality sectors. The Northern Ireland market has always been of extreme importance to the county in terms of inward tourism and the potential therefore exists to encourage 'regionality' by attracting visitors to the North West Region. There is also significant potential in terms of encouraging seasonality through the tourism product and extending the season.

10.2 Policy and Trends

Nationally it is a primary tourism objective of the government to maximise revenue centred on Ireland achieving its full potential as a destination for overseas tourism and similarly the domestic tourism sector, setting out the following 3 primary goals:

1. By 2025 revenue from overseas visitors will increase to €5 billion in real terms.
2. Tourism related employment will increase from 200,000 at present to 250,000 by 2025.
3. Reach 10 million annual visits to Ireland by 2025.³⁴

Regionally the development of the WAW touring route is a key driver of the strong growth in visitor numbers to the county over the last decade, highlighted by Fáilte Ireland's recent publication of a draft Wild Atlantic Way- Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2022-2026. The strategy sets out an ambition to drive recovery and growth into the Wild Atlantic Way region striving to recover and grow the visitor economy creating sustainable high-quality jobs that aim to support and strengthen local communities while protecting the natural and built environment.

The Donegal County Council Tourism Strategy 2022-2026, reflects the above referenced national and regional aims and objectives setting out a strategy for the County that prioritises the core principle of sustainability and ensuring that tourism developments and operations in Donegal provide full protection and preservation of the rich natural resources and unique socio-cultural heritage of the County while maximising the economic benefits for all in Donegal. It sets out the importance of achieving a balance to ensure that benefits outweigh the costs and ensuring that tourism adds to the quality of life of residents in a particular destination. The primary goal is to boost visitor counts, lessen seasonality, and improve visitor spending and dwell time. It also identified Donegal as a 'primary destination' on the Wild Atlantic Way in Ireland, offering a unique visitor experience.

Interest and participation in outdoor recreational activities has surged in popularity particularly in a post Covid-19 environment where the value of the great outdoors has become a key defining reason for people to choose Donegal as a holiday destination, and the county's natural assets (coastline; rivers and lakes; cliffs and waterfalls; and hills, valleys and mountain ranges) are characterised by a growing number of self-guided and organised recreational activities. The Outdoor Recreation Strategy for Donegal provides a roadmap to inform the sustainable development and management of outdoor

³⁴ Government's Tourism Strategy 'People, Place and Policy Growing Tourism to 2025.

recreation over the next 5 years, whilst still preserving the ecological and culturally rich land and waterscape that is unique to Donegal, and upon which outdoor recreation depends.

In addition to supporting tourism product expansion and development, the council will support the identification and prioritisation of investment in key tourism supporting infrastructure to service growing visitor numbers. Such supporting infrastructure could include the facilitation/provision of sustainable transport modes, development and maintenance of walking and cycling routes and infrastructure, mobility access, signage and public conveniences as examples. The council shall support a review to assess and prioritise investment locations at sites where such investment would:

- reduce congestion and/or mitigate against environmental degradation
- address identified infrastructural deficiencies
- act as a catalyst to grow tourism revenues in the wider catchment

Caravanning and Camping is estimated to generate €1.8m in site rental fees annually with indirect revenues/benefits valued in the region of €4.5m to the Donegal economy³⁵. Specific requirements and infrastructural provision relate to caravan and camping and the Council shall require the provision of infrastructure at identified and permitted caravanning locations including safe site access, signage, waste & recycling facilities, toilets/showers, water sources, information panels and motorhome facilities as examples.



10.3 Key Planning Challenges

The many opportunities for tourism development within the county and the provision of their sustainable development translate into several key planning challenges which need to be overcome to achieve Donegal's tourism potential, namely:

³⁵ Donegal County Council Caravan, Camping and Campervan Study 2021, KPMG

- Protecting the key landscape resource which underpins the tourism product from inappropriate development.
- Facilitating the development of a wide range of tourism products and attractions which support the visitor experience by providing a wide range of things to see and do (activity based tourism and engaging with the landscape) and thus increase visitor dwell time in a manner consistent with the brand identity of the Wild Atlantic Way.
- Improving visitor infrastructure throughout the county.
- Protecting the approaches to key tourism attractions and enhance visitor access to same.
- Protecting the natural environment.
- Protecting historic and archaeological sites and artefacts including maritime heritage.
- Protect cultural and linguistic heritage, particularly in the Gaeltacht.
- Improving the social and economic vibrancy and vitality of settlements. The market desire to provide accommodation adjacent to rural attractions must be balanced with the objective of sustaining and regenerating the County's towns and villages.
- Protecting and enhancing the built heritage and the vernacular character of the county within rural and urban areas.
- Protecting the routes and visual settings of existing and potential greenways, recreational walkways and cycling routes.
- Facilitating the protection and improvement of access to and within the county including, public transport, road, air and sea access to Donegal.
- Facilitate the improvement of infrastructure necessary to support and further strengthen tourism potential and in particular the cruise ship market in Killybegs.

10.4 Other Relevant Policies in Plan

The tourism sector is an important consideration for the management of areas of development addressed elsewhere in the Plan, inclusive of the following:

- Strategic roads, airports, greenways and other forms of active travel and railway development;
- Harbours and piers;
- Built heritage;
- Natural heritage 'Biodiversity' and 'Landscape';
- The Gaeltacht .

Objectives

TOU-O-1

To facilitate the sustainable development of Donegal's tourism product as a key economic driver of, and social catalyst for the County, whilst protecting and enhancing the County's landscape, natural heritage, built heritage, and communities from inappropriate development that would detract from the tourism product.

Policies

TOU-P-1	To facilitate the development of signature/strategic tourism experiences/attractions which are consistent with the brand identity of the Wild Atlantic Way and other similar initiatives, and are generally in accordance with the policies of this Plan.
TOU-P-2	Not to permit development which would materially detract from visual and scenic amenities along the route of the Wild Atlantic Way.
TOU-P-3	Not to permit developments which would materially detract from the visual/scenic amenities on the approach roads to, the visual setting of, or the views to be had from, significant tourism attractions.
TOU-P-4	To support the principle of tourism and recreational activities that will harness the potential of the river systems in Donegal and the region (including the Rivers Finn and Foyle), subject to environmental considerations including the Habitats Directive.
TOU-P-5	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Support the principle of resource- related/activity-based tourism developments (eg. walking, cycling, horse riding, fishing/angling, watersports, outdoor pursuits, craft/cultural/interpretive centres) throughout the County, but excluding Especially High Scenic Amenity areas, where it is demonstrated that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. the core of the proposal constitutes a demonstrable tourism product; ii. the said product is functionally-dependent on the resource which is being harnessed, or is activity-based; and iii. the development has wider economic benefits for the community. b. Support the principle of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. On-site accommodation units in conjunction with the core tourism business providing the tourism product; ii. A small retailing element or café/restaurant which is ancillary to, and functionally dependent on, the core tourism product (such as gift shop, equipment shop); and iii. Supporting ancillary infrastructure.
TOU-P-6	That: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the principle of the acceptability or otherwise of proposals for standalone tourism-related accommodation developments shall be determined in accordance with the following table; and b. such developments shall generally only be acceptable where they can demonstrate compliance with the specific requirements identified in the last column of the table below and the detailed criteria set out in Policy TOU-P-8 and other relevant policies of the Plan.

		Within Urban Areas	Rural areas (excluding EHSA areas)	Specific Policy Requirements
	Hotels	✓	x	

New-build 'mainstream' accommodation	Hotels functionally dependent on, and ancillary to, an existing rural resource (e.g. golf courses)	✓	✓	In urban areas, developments shall be within safe walking distance of local services and facilities (i.e. via an existing footpath or a footpath required as part of the development)
	Small Hotels/Guesthouses	✓	✓ (up to a maximum of 10 bedrooms)	
	Hostels	✓	✓ (up to a maximum occupancy of 20 people)	
Extensions to existing 'mainstream' accommodation,	Hotels	✓	✓	May include standalone modular accommodation subject to site conditions.
	Guesthouses	✓	✓	
	Hostels	✓	✓	
Development of accommodation involving refurbishment/renovation of an existing building		✓	✓	
New Prefabricated, Modular and/or Mobile Holiday accommodation unit developments (refer to 'Definitions' below)	Static mobile homes, caravans, demountable modular units, cabins etc.	✓	x	Within urban areas, the development shall be within safe walking distance of local services and facilities (i.e. via an existing or proposed footpath); Provision of quality supporting infrastructure including suitably designed surface parking bays, green space commensurate with the nature and capacity of the site, communal toilets/shower facilities, water sources, wastewater disposal facilities, signage and recycling facilities.
	Touring caravans, campervans, motorhomes and camping/glamping	✓	✓ (up to an aggregate maximum of 10 units/pitches)	
Extensions to existing prefabricated, modular and/or mobile holiday accommodation unit developments	Static mobile homes, caravans, demountable modular units, cabins etc.	✓	✓	
	Touring caravans, campervans, motorhomes and camping/glamping	✓	✓ (up to an aggregate maximum of 10 units/pitches)	

Definitions:

Modular Holiday Unit: Self-contained units incorporating shower, bath, wc, kitchen and other amenities/facilities
Glamping Unit:

Glamorous glamping in the form of small-scale units (maximum 15 sq.m.) that provide for sleeping and resting, and where wc/showering facilities are provided in on-site communal facilities only.

TOU-P-7

To consider development proposals for holiday resorts of a scale that would have a regional impact on the tourism market involving high quality recreational amenities/visitor facilities and associated managed accommodation units, in both urban and rural locations areas excluding areas of Especially High Scenic Amenity where they comply with the following criteria:

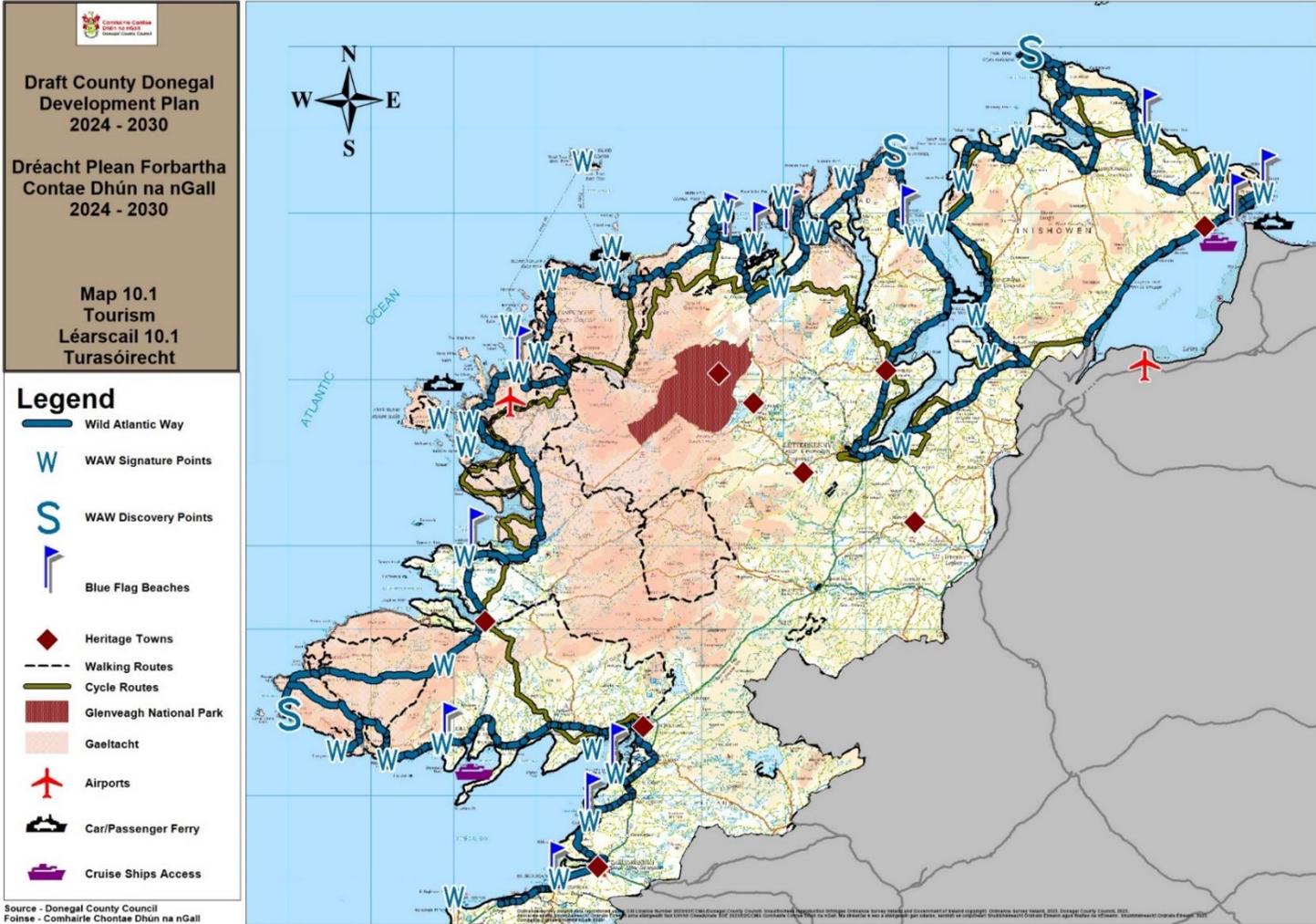
- a. The resort offers a wide range of high quality on-site sports and recreational activities for various age groups (e.g. playgrounds, ball courts, all weather pitches, indoor swimming pools, marine leisure equestrian, golfing, etc) and other visitor facilities (e.g. reception, restaurant, bar/evening entertainment, games rooms) within walking distance of the accommodation units.
- b. It is demonstrated that at minimum 75% of the associated accommodation units will be retained within the ownership of the resort and are designed for, and rented on a short term basis (maximum one month) in conjunction with, the holiday resort with the remainder of the units leased on a longer term basis.
- c. The proposed development of a high-quality design and layout with natural boundary screening, internal planting and landscaping, physically defined and adequately surfaced internal road and pedestrian linkages.
- d. The development is within safe walking distance of local services and facilities (via an existing or proposed footpath) where developments are located within or adjacent to town and villages.
- e. That there is the suitable provision of toilet/shower facilities where camping facilities are proposed.
- f. It would otherwise comply with the Tourism Development General Criteria Policy (TOU-P-8 refers).

TOU-P-8

That all development proposals for the creation of new, or the extension of existing Tourist Developments (including Resource Related/Activity based Tourism Product Developments, Campervan/Motorhomes and Touring Caravan Stopover Sites, Hotels, Guest Houses, Tourism Hostels, Holiday Resorts, Mobile Homes/Static Caravan Parks Camping Sites, and other Tourist Related Developments) shall comply with the following criteria:

- a. The location, siting and design of the development (including associated infrastructure and landscaping arrangements) is of a high quality, integrates successfully with, and does not, either individually or in combination with existing and permitted developments, have an adverse impact on; the scenic quality, visual amenity, rural character, streetscape, vernacular character or built environment of the area.
- b. The development is not located within designated habitats such as Natura 2000 sites and designated Nature Reserves.
- c. The development does not negatively affect sensitive natural environments.
- d. The development is significantly set back from, and adequately screened from, coastlines, shorelines and riverbanks.

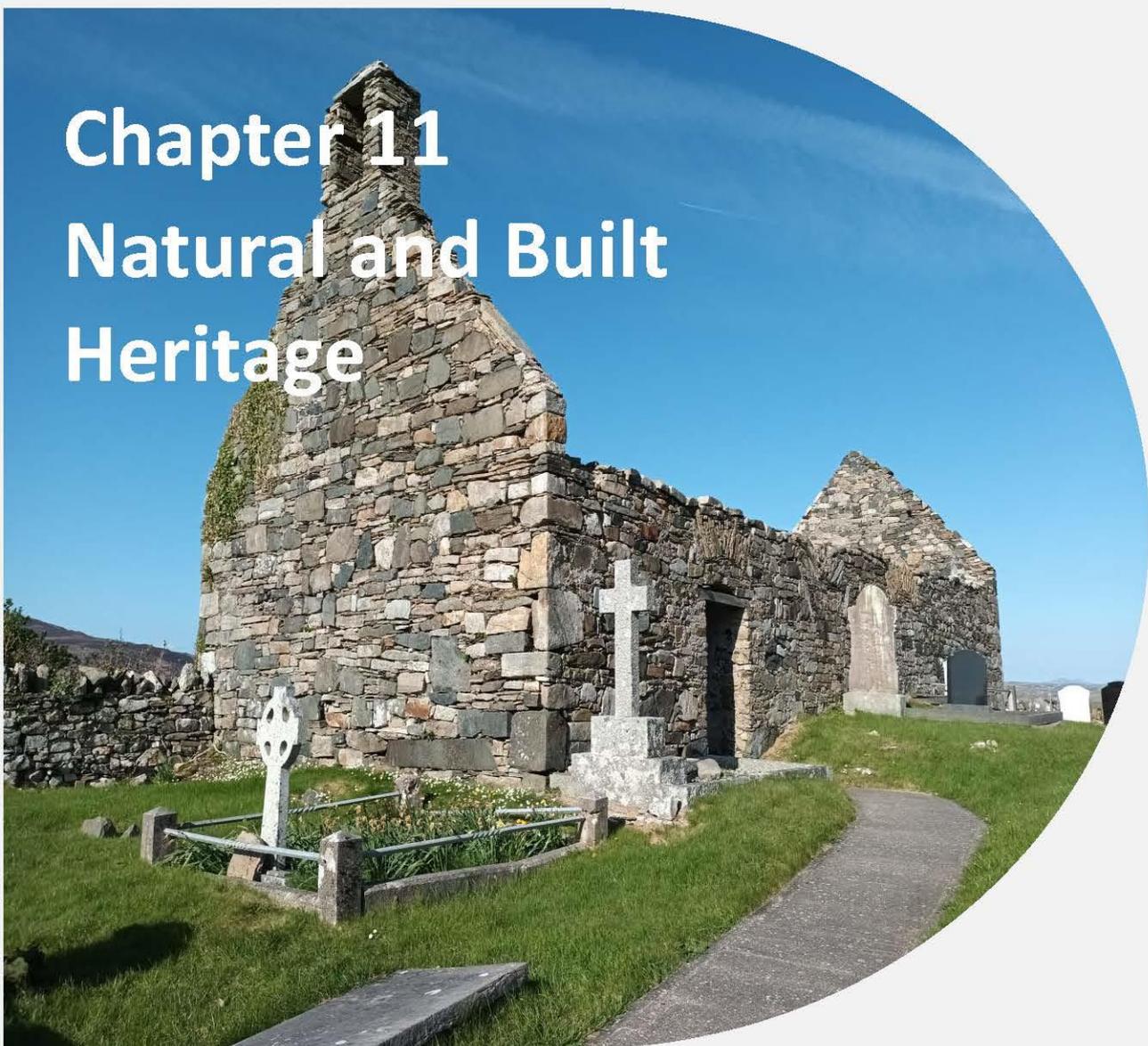
- e. The development will not detract from the visual setting of the coastline or be visually obtrusive from key points along the coastline.
- f. Appropriate boundary treatment, landscaping and means of enclosure are provided and any areas of outside storage proposed are adequately screened from public view;
- g. The development will not significantly impact on existing residential amenities.
- h. There is an adequate means of water supply.
- i. There is existing capacity in the public wastewater infrastructure for developments within urban areas or suitable on-site effluent treatment facilities to EPA standards can be provided in rural areas.
- j. The development will not cause a traffic hazard, and the existing road network can safely handle any extra vehicular traffic generated by the proposed development.
- k. Adequate parking provision, access and manoeuvring arrangements (including for touring coaches and motorhomes), and servicing areas are provided in accordance with road safety standards, and the technical standards and policies of this Plan.
- l. The layout of the development provides for a high level of, and prioritises, pedestrian permeability and access.
- m. The development does not create a noise nuisance and will not cause any significant environmental emissions.
- n. The development will not have an adverse impact on the built, scenic, or natural heritage of the area including structures on the RPS/NIAH and designated habitats such as Natura 2000 sites and designated Nature Reserves.
- o. The development is not located in an area at flood risk and/or will not cause or exacerbate flooding.
- p. The development will not compromise the water quality of water bodies within River Basin Districts designated under the Water Framework Directive or hinder the programme of measures contained within any associated River Basin Management Plan.



Map 10.1 – Tourism

Chapter 11

Natural and Built Heritage



Chapter 11 – Natural and Built Heritage

11.1 Biodiversity

11.1.1 Introduction

Biodiversity means the variety of all living things and the living systems of which they are a part including the variation within and between species and habitats/ecosystems and is a core element of our natural heritage.

Ensuring a high level of biodiversity is vital not only for the protection of natural ecosystems but for the protection and enhancement of quality of life, visual amenity, landscape, water quality, carbon sequestration, tourism, and food production and therefore is an essential component of any strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Donegal.

Donegal has a wide range of biodiversity assets including habitats and species in protected Natura 2000 sites, Ramsar Wetlands Sites, Nature Reserves, Natural Heritage Areas, proposed Natural Heritage Areas, extensive blanket bog covering significant parts of the county, and within woodlands, hedgerows, and aquatic environments in the wider environment.

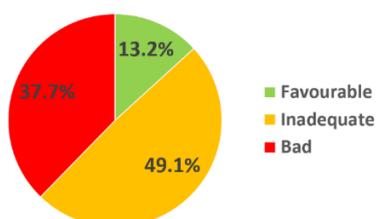
The protection of Biodiversity requires a multi-faceted, all of society approach including the Government, the National Parks and Wildlife Services, landowners and the local authority. However, the Development Plan can play a significant role in protecting our Biodiversity through for example:

- Ensuring that new developments do not have significant adverse effects on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites.
- Protecting other designated sites e.g. pNHAs, RAMSAR and Natura Reserves.
- Safeguarding existing biodiversity in the wider environment through the planning process.

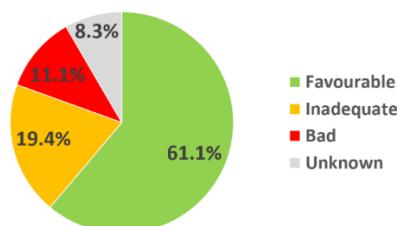
11.1.2 Current State of Biodiversity

Unsustainable development has heavily impacted biodiversity both internationally, nationally and locally. The 2019 IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystems found that globally, nature was declining at unprecedented rates, extinction rates were accelerating, and transformative change was required. This Biodiversity Crisis is mirrored in Ireland with the 2019 NPWS Article 17 Reports indicating that 46% of EU Protected Habitats and 15% of EU Protected Species were suffering ongoing decline and Birdwatch Ireland reporting in 2021 that 63% of bird species are declining at alarming rates. Furthermore, analysis of said Article 17 reports indicates the following conservation status and trends for the EU Protected habitats and species present in Donegal:

Status of the EU Protected Habitats Present in Donegal (NPWS 2019)



Status of EU Protected Species Present in Donegal (NPWS: 2019)



In particular it is noted that habitats such as shallow inlets and bays, fixed dunes, wet heath, dry heath, blanket bogs and old oak woodlands and species such as the Freshwater Pearl Mussel, White Clawed Crayfish, Maerl, and Geyers Whorl Snail were recorded as having a bad status. However, bat and marine species tended to have a favourable conservation status.

In terms of bird species, the I-WeBS Species Trends Reports 1994/1995 to 2019/2020 for the Lough Swilly, Maghera Lake and Donegal Bay SPA's indicates a mixed picture with large declines for species such as Scaup, Grey Plover, Pochard, and Goldeneye, moderate declines for other species, but also stable or increasing populations for a significant number of species.

11.1.3 Legislative and Policy Context

The 1992 **UN Convention on Biological Diversity** aims to conserve biological diversity and sustainably use its components. It requires states to develop biodiversity strategies and integrate biodiversity into relevant sectoral plans, establish a system of protected areas and adopt in situ and ex situ conservation measures. The associated **Draft Global Biodiversity Framework** Strategic Plan sets out 2030 action targets including: ensuring all areas are under biodiversity integrated inclusive spatial planning, conserving 30% of land and sea areas, ensuring active management solutions to enable the recovery and conservation of species, reducing invasive species and increasing green/blue spaces in urban areas.

Under the **Ramsar Convention** (1971) 4 wetland sites of international importance have been selected in Donegal namely: Lough Barra Bog, Meenachullion Bog, Pettio Plateau and Trawbreaga Bay. The convention requires parties to implement their planning so as to promote the conservation of said wetlands and to establish Nature Reserves on wetlands

The **EU Birds Directive** 1979 aims to protect all of the 500 wild bird species naturally occurring in the EU and requires member states to; take measures to maintain their population, designate Special Protection Areas for the most endangered Annex I species and other regularly occurring migratory species and take steps to avoid the pollution and deterioration of habitats for said species outside their habitats.

The **EU Habitats Directive** 1992 is the cornerstone of EU biodiversity conservation policy and aims to conserve and to maintain at, or restore to, favourable conservation status, certain rare, threatened, or endemic natural habitats and species listed in the directive. It required member states to establish the Natura 2000 network consisting of both Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for the protection of the specific habitat types and habitats of species listed in Annex I and II of the directive respectively and Special Protection Areas for the protection of certain bird species (originally designated under the Birds Directive).

The Directive requires that any plan or project which is likely to have a significant effect on any Natura 2000 site must undergo an Appropriate Assessment (AA) and planning authorities shall only agree to the plan or project after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the Natura site concerned. Case law has also established that AAs must: be conducted using best scientific knowledge, have no reasonable scientific doubt in their conclusions and take into account effects on habitats and species outside Natura 2000 sites which could result in adverse effects on said sites.

The directive also requires, where necessary, landuse planning and development policies to encourage the management of landscape features of major importance for wild flora and fauna such as rivers, traditional field boundaries, ponds and small woods due to their importance for migration,

dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species. It also obligates member states to take strict protection measures for the species listed under/in Annex IV in their natural range including prohibiting the deterioration and destruction of breeding sites or resting places for animal species.

The Natura 2000 network covers large parts of Donegal and has been established to conserve a wide variety of habitats and species including the Freshwater Pearl Mussel (e.g. Leannan River, Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood, and Fawnboy Bog/Lough Nacung SACs), Blanket Bog (e.g. Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park and Lough Nillian SACs), Atlantic Salmon, (e.g. River Finn SAC), Otter (e.g. Lough Swilly SAC), Embryonic shifting dunes (Gweedore Bays and Islands SAC), Corncrake (Falcarragh to Meenlaragh SPA), Curlew (e.g. Lough Swilly SPA). The Council recognizes the crucial importance of the habitats directive in protecting the most sensitive habitats and species in Donegal and will therefore rigorously implement it in the assessment of development proposals.

The **EU Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive** requires the assessment of projects that are likely to have significant effects on the environment including identifying, describing, and assessing direct and indirect effects on a wide range of environmental topics such as flora and fauna. Consequently, the council will carry out EIA as necessary in ensuring an appropriate level of biodiversity protection.

The **EU Water Framework Directive** aims to: prevent deterioration in existing status of water bodies, protect, enhance and restore all water bodies to achieve good water quality status by 2027, and comply with requirements for designated sites, and also incorporates the requirements of the Shellfish Directive. Its implementation is of crucial importance to biodiversity and is dealt with under the Water and Waster Section of this plan (see Section 8.2.5).

The need for urgent action, the importance of space for nature and the business case for biodiversity is set out in the **EU Biodiversity strategy for 2030**. This strategy lists land use change, overexploitation, climate change, pollution and invasive species as key drivers of biodiversity loss. It sets out a framework for putting biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030 including:

- A coherent network of protected areas including protecting at least 30% of EU land and sea areas and strictly protecting primary and old growth forests, peatlands, wetlands and ecological corridors.
- An EU Nature Restoration Plan including legally binding restoration targets, preventing deterioration in conservation trends and status of protected habitats and species by 2030, addressing threats to soil, increasing forestry, sustainably sourced renewable energy, protecting and restoring marine and freshwater ecosystems, greening urban spaces, reducing pollution and addressing invasive species.

The Planning and Development Act 2000(as amended) requires Development Plans to include objectives for the 'conservation and protection of the environment including... Natural heritage.... And European sites' S.10(c) refers and '*the encouragement, pursuant to Article 10 of the Habitats Directive, of the management of features of the landscape, such as traditional field boundaries, important for the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species; S10(ca) refers.*

The **Wildlife Act 1976** is the principle national wildlife protection legislation and aims to conserve wildlife and conserve biological biodiversity. Under the act bird species, 22 animal species and 86 species of flora are protected under the act by ministerial order. The act also provided for:

- Establishment of protected **Nature Reserves** including habitats and ecosystems of scientific interest, features of geological/geomorphological or other natural interests, and landscape

features of major importance for wild flora and fauna. Donegal has 10 such reserves namely Ardnamona, Ballyarr Wood, Derkmore Wood, Duntally Wood, Inch Levels, Lough Barra, Meenachillion, Pettigo Plateau, Rathmullen Wood, and Sheskinmore which contain a range of important habitats and species.

- The establishment of **Natural Heritage Areas (NHA's)** which are areas considered nationally important for the habitats present or that hold species of plants and animals whose habitat needs protection which are additional to the Natura 2000 network. There are 12 NHA's in Donegal.
- The publication on a non statutory basis of **proposed NHAs (pNHAs)** of significance for wildlife and habitats. These have not been statutorily proposed or designated. Most were later incorporated into the Natura 2000 network but some remain outside said network.

The Council recognises the ecological importance of these nature designations and will not permit development which would have any direct or indirect adverse effect on same.

The **4th National Biodiversity Action Plan** cites the poor state of biodiversity, the need for urgent, impactful action to prevent further loss, and highlights invasive species, change in land use including residential and commercial development and over-exploitation of resources such as peatland as the main drivers of biodiversity loss. The action plan sets out a number of planning related objectives including:

- Adopting a whole of government/society approach including preparing local authority biodiversity actions plans by 2026.
- Meeting urgent conservation/restoration needs noting the crucial importance of the protection and restoration of designated areas and species, the equal importance of biodiversity conservation/restoration in the wider countryside, supporting native tree planting, achieving good water quality status and invasive species management.
- Securing natures contributions to people noting planning's important role in safeguarding biodiversity, delivering biodiversity as part of new applications, and promoting green infrastructure and nature based solutions.
- Embedding biodiversity at the heart of climate action including ensuring that the transition to carbon neutrality does not come at the expense of biodiversity.

The importance of biodiversity is embodied in the *Sustainable Management of Water, Waste and Other Environmental Resources* National Strategic Outcome of the **National Planning Framework**, which highlights the need to protect habitats and species in both the Natura 2000 network and more widely and establishes an objective to enhance the conservation status and improve the management of protected areas and species (NPO 59 refers). The NWRA **Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy** cites the need to conserve habitats and species, highlights the importance of designated sites, undesignated habitats and peatlands and specifically contains a policy objective (RPO 5.5 refers) to ensure no net contribution to biodiversity loss arising from the strategy and to protect European sites and Natural Heritage Areas.

11.1.4 Biodiversity in the Wider Environment

A significant portion of Donegal's biodiversity is located in the wider environment outside of designated sites where interactions with new development is most likely. This biodiversity is contained within natural heritage features as hedgerows/field boundaries, trees, woodlands, wetlands, water bodies which collectively provide habitats for native wild flora (e.g. hawthorn, whitethorn, gorse, holly, ash, beech, birch, oak, rowan, willow, bramble, wild flowers and aquatic plants) and fauna (e.g. badgers, hedgehogs, hare, deer, wild birds, fish and insects). These features act as vital ecological corridors for wildlife and species, collectively deliver crucial ecosystem services

such as carbon sequestration/storage, nutrient cycling, water purification and flood attenuation, and represent key components of our rural landscapes and townscapes and thus represent essential components of our overall biodiversity.

The importance of this wider biodiversity is reflected in the protection of all bird and a variety of animal and flora species protected under the Wildlife Act, and the requirement to manage natural heritage features such as rivers, field boundaries, ponds, and small woods as ecological corridors linking Natura 2000 sites under Article 10 of the habitats directive. This biodiversity has come under significant development pressure in recent decades including from agricultural clearance, urban sprawl, rural housing development etc which often results in the direct loss of these natural features and the associated habitats and species. Consequently, this plan will protect existing features of local biodiversity value, and otherwise maximise their retention and enhancement of biodiversity in new public and private developments.

11.1.5 Peatlands

Donegal has extensive peatlands consisting of both upland and Atlantic blanket bog types. These peatlands act as a unique wetland habitat, contain a variety of plant and animal species (e.g. Hen Harrier, Red Grouse, Curlew, Greenland White-fronted Goose, sphagnum mosses, rushes and sedges, bog cotton, ling heather) and are a key component of Donegal's Biodiversity. They also provide other important ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, flood attention, water filtration, and recreation. The conservation and sustainable management of peatlands is therefore crucial to Donegal's sustainable development. The **National Peatlands Strategy 2015-2025** sets out peatland management principles including utilising peatland for agriculture, development, peat extraction, forestry, conservation and amenity, protecting threatened peatland habitats and also planning related actions such as reviewing the legal framework for peat extraction and ensuring compliance with the Habitats and WFD directives.

Whilst some of Donegal's peatlands are located within designated nature protection sites a significant portion are not. Donegal's peatlands are threatened by peat extraction on blanket bogs within designated sites (which currently has no regulatory regime), peat extraction elsewhere (which generally does not require planning permission) and other development pressures such as wind energy and rural housing development. Consequently, this plan will seek to protect peatlands both within designated biodiversity sites and where appropriate in the wider environment.

11.1.6 Pollinators

The **All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025** notes that pollinators are in decline, with 33 out of 99 bee species at risk of extinction. Habitat loss is a key driver of this problem, and this has serious implications for agricultural production and the health of the environment. The plan cites the need for collective action and sets out key objectives including making public and private lands pollinator friendly (including creating networks of biodiversity friendly habitat) and conserving rare pollinators and lists the Council as a key partner. The plan also identifies a number of land use planning actions including encouraging the development of pollinator friendly parks, and ensuring new roadside planting has a significant portion of pollinator friendly plants. The Council will therefore seek to ensure that new development proposals do not have a significant adverse impact on pollinator habitat and species.

11.1.7 Invasive Species

Invasive species are non-native animal and plants which have been accidentally or deliberately introduced into an area (e.g. Japanese knotweed, Himalyan Balsam, Zebra Mussel, Hogweed, and Grey squirrel). They are recognised as a major cause of biodiversity loss through negative impacts on native habitats and species and can cause significant social and economic damage (e.g. roads and buildings). Development can inadvertently result in the introduction or spread of invasive species particularly as a result of excavation, site clearance and movement of spoil material. The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 make it an offence to plant, breed, disperse, allow dispersal or cause to grow a range of plant and animal species, or to import or transport these or vector material such as soil or spoil from which they can grow. The Council will therefore seek to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species including as part of the planning process including by requiring the submission and implementation of invasive appropriate control and management programmes where necessary.

11.1.8 Soil Habitats

Soil is the most complex of all ecosystems, is a habitat in its own right and is a hugely important non-renewable resource performing vital ecosystem services including food production, water purification/pollution control, nutrient recycling, flood attention, and carbon sequestration.

Development pressures such as construction activities and land sealing can result in loss and damage to soil and these important ecosystem services. It is there important to manage new development in a manner which minimises the direct loss/removal of soils, soil sealing and soil pollution.

Objective:

BIO-O-1 To preserve and enhance the biodiversity of the County in accordance with the relevant EU policies and national legislation.

Policies:

BIO-P-1 To require all developments to comply with the requirements of the EU **Habitats Directive and EU Bird Directive**, including ensuring that development proposals:

- Do not adversely affect the integrity of any European/Natura 2000 site (i.e. Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas) including effects on ex-situ but functionally linked habitats, and species (e.g. Pearl Mussel) save where a plan must be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI).
- Provide for the protection of animal and plant species listed in Annex IV of the EU Habitats Directive.
- Manage features of the landscape (such as rivers, riverbanks, field boundaries, ponds and small woods) which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora and the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network.

BIO-P-2 Ensure that all developments seek to conserve/protect the qualifying interests of Ramsar Sites, Nature Reserves, Natural Heritage Areas (NHA), proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA), and any species protected under the Wildlife Act save to the extent necessary to provide for strategic infrastructure projects including the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal.

BIO-P-3

Save to the extent necessary to provide for strategic infrastructure projects including the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal, it is the policy of the Council to:

- a. Protect, where justified, features of local biodiversity value (e.g. hedgerows/field boundaries, trees, woodlands, wetlands, water bodies, riverbanks and peatlands) which make a significant contribution to the biodiversity, ecological connectivity, and associated visual amenity and/or rural character of the area.
- b. Require, where justified, that developments otherwise maximise the retention of and suitably integrate such features. In this regard proposals for the removal of existing roadside hedgerows/field boundaries for new developments in rural areas will only be permitted in so far as is necessary to safeguard public safety and any remaining portion of those features identified above not so required shall be retained.
- c. Require that development proposals provide biodiversity enhancement measures (e.g. native tree and hedgerow planting, and nature-based water management solutions).
- d. Require that large-scale developments result in no net biodiversity loss.

BIO-P-4

Ensure that any development proposals do not lead to the introduction or spread of invasive species. Where invasive species are present, development proposals may be required to be submit an appropriate control and management programme.

BIO-P-5

- a. Ensure that new developments do not have a significant adverse impact on pollinator habitat and species, including protecting rare pollinators listed under the Wildlife Act and maximizing the retention of pollinator friendly habitats within development proposal where feasible.
- b. Require pollinator friendly planting and management regimes as part of planting/landscaping schemes for new public development including green infrastructure, large scale residential and transport development.

11.2 Landscape

11.2.1 Background

County Donegal has a unique and distinctive landscape with a wide diversity of landscape types including significant arable and grazing lands, agricultural plains, inland waterways, boglands, mountains and an extensive and varied coastline of rocky outcrops, cliffs and sandy beaches. The many islands both inhabited and uninhabited also have their own unique landscape identity. The natural diversity of the landscape coupled with built and cultural heritage features such as archaeological monuments, stonewalls, hedgerows, woodlands, field patterns, settlements and buildings further inform the inherent character of the county.

Landscape is recognised as an integral component of our surroundings and well-being, a visual expression of the diversity of a shared cultural and natural heritage and is intrinsic to the identity of the county.³⁶ The past, present and on-going influences on the landscape from a broad range of sectors and the need to support sustainable landscape change and better promote landscape protection, management and planning form a core component of this Plan.

The Donegal landscape is a valuable national and local asset of enormous amenity value to residents and tourists, constituting a valuable economic asset that requires sustainable management to facilitate development and growth whilst also retaining, conserving and protecting the character, quality and resultant value of the landscape.



³⁶ National Landscape Strategy 2020-2025, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

11.2.2 Policy Background

The **Council of Europe's European Landscape Convention, 2000** (ETS No.176) was signed and ratified by Ireland in 2004, requiring actions to be taken to fulfil obligations within member states to identify their landscapes, analyse and characterise them, and commit to introducing policies to effect landscape protection, management and planning. The Convention describes landscapes as:

"Landscape' means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors" covering:

"... the entire territory of the Parties and covers natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas. It includes land, inland water and marine areas. It concerns landscapes that might be considered outstanding as well as everyday or degraded landscapes."

The European Landscape Convention recognises the importance of all landscapes, not just exceptional landscapes, as having a crucial bearing on our quality of life and as deserving attention in landscape policy.

A **National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2020-2025** was published by the Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht that aims to "implement the European Landscape Convention in Ireland by providing for specific measures to promote the protection, management and planning of the landscape" through 6 core national landscape strategy objectives and 19 associated key objectives.

The National Landscape Strategy ensures compliance with the European Landscape Convention and establishes principles for protecting and enhancing Ireland's landscape while positively managing its change. It is a high-level policy framework to achieve balance between the protection, management and planning of the landscape by way of supporting actions.

The **Regional and Spatial Economic Strategy 2020-2032** published by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly identifies the following landscape related Regional Policy Objective for the north-west region as a part of Growth Ambition 2: Environment-Natural Region:

RPO 5.2

- (a) Protect, manage and conserve the quality, character and distinctiveness of our landscapes and seascapes*
- (b) The assembly supports co-operation and co-ordination between Local Authorities in determining landscape character along their borders. A targeted review should be undertaken to ensure consistency in classification and policy in adjoining areas of similar character. The NWRA will assist in collaboration and co-ordination.*
- (c) Following the completion of the National Landscape Character Assessment, and any associated statutory Guidelines, the Regional Assembly shall prepare a Regional Landscape Character Assessment to promote improved landscape management and designation.*

A Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) for Donegal was prepared and endorsed by the members of Donegal County Council in May 2016; this first stage identified both Landscape 'Types' and 'Landscape Character Areas' and is available on Donegal County Council's website www.donegalcoco.ie. The process was an analysis, characterisation and narrative of the component parts of the landscape of County Donegal and is not to be construed as an accompanying policy document of this Plan.

A landscape's capacity to absorb new development, without exhibiting a significant alteration of character or change of appearance is referred to as its 'sensitivity'. This depends on factors such as

elevation, slope, views over water bodies or the sea, as well as the types of land-cover and soil. The area is classified as being increasingly sensitive as more of these factors are present in the same place.

The Plan identifies three separate **Landscape Classifications** for the county, these are illustrated on map 11.1 and as follows:

1. Areas of Especially High Scenic Amenity (EHSA): These are sublime natural landscapes of the highest quality that are synonymous with the identity of County Donegal. These areas have extremely limited capacity to assimilate additional development.
2. Areas of High Scenic Amenity (HSA): These are landscapes of significant aesthetic, cultural, heritage and environmental quality that are unique to their locality and form a fundamental element of the landscape and identity of County Donegal. These areas have the capacity to absorb sensitively located development of scale, design and use that will enable assimilation into the receiving landscape and which does not detract from the quality of the landscape, subject to compliance with all other objectives and policies of the plan.
3. Areas of Moderate Scenic Amenity (MSA): These are primarily landscapes outside Local Area Plan Boundaries and Settlement framework boundaries, that have a unique, rural and generally agricultural quality. These areas have the capacity to absorb additional development that is suitably located, sited and designed subject to compliance with all other objectives and policies of the Plan.

Within each of the landscape classifications detailed above (EHSA, HSA and MSA) and along the interface between the designations there may be areas that do not fully meet the definition of the designation. Such anomalies in landscape designation shall be considered individually and in the context of all other objectives and policies contained within this Plan, should an application for development be submitted in these areas (excluding wind energy proposals or ancillary works). The onus shall be on the applicant to demonstrate that the site does not meet the characteristics of the landscape designation within which it is situated and that any development applied for shall not adversely affect the classification of the wider landscape.

The County has a network of scenic routes punctuated by multiple views and prospects of natural beauty over both seascape and the rural landscape. Many of the routes are recognised nationally and internationally, including the Wild Atlantic Way that extends around the entire coast, with its designated discovery points along its route, including three signature discovery points. There is a need to protect and conserve the character and quality of the identified stretches of scenic routes that have special views and prospects that are identified on Map 11.1.

The Environmental Report (SEA) accompanying this Plan has examined the current state of the environment including ecological networks, statutory nature reserves, land cover, cultural heritage (including archaeology and architectural heritage), landscape and visual impacts, material assets and marine/coastal resources. As a result, the potential impact on landscape through the implementation of policies and objectives of the Plan has been considered.

Objective:

L-O-1

To protect, manage and conserve the character, quality and value of the Donegal landscape.

Policies:

L-P-1	To protect areas identified as 'Especially High Scenic Amenity' on Map 11.1 'Scenic Amenity'. Within these areas, only developments of strategic importance, or developments that are provided for by policy elsewhere in this Plan may be considered.
L-P-2	To protect areas identified as 'High Scenic Amenity' and 'Moderate Scenic Amenity' on Map 11.1 'Scenic Amenity'. Within these areas, only development of a nature, location and scale that integrates with, and reflects the character and amenity of the landscape may be considered, subject to compliance with other relevant policies of the Plan.
L-P-3	To safeguard the scenic context, cultural landscape significance, recreational/tourism amenities, and environmental amenities of the County's coastline from inappropriate development, save for strategic infrastructure provision of overriding regional or national public interest.
L-P-4	To protect the character of the following approach roads to the Glenveagh National Park: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Glendowan to Doochary road b. Dunlewey to Termon Road c. Churchill to Termon d. Muckish Gap to Calabber Bridge
L-P-5	To protect views to and from St Johns Point.
L-P-6	To safeguard prominent skylines and ridgelines from inappropriate development.
L-P-7	To preserve the views and prospects of special amenity value and interest as identified on Map 11.1
L-P-8	To preserve scenic views between public roads and the sea, lakes and rivers. Such developments shall be considered on the basis of the following criteria. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. whether the integrity of the view has been affected to-date by development; b. whether the development would intrude significantly on the view; and c. whether the development would materially alter the view. <p>In operating this policy, a reasonable and balanced approach shall be implemented so as to ensure that the policy does not act as a blanket ban on developments between the road and the sea, lakes and river but also seeks to maintain existing landscape qualities in the area.</p>



Comhairle Contae Dhún na nGall
 Donegal County Council

Draft County Donegal Development Plan, 2024 - 2030
 Dréachtphlean Forbartha Contae Dhún na nGall, 2024 - 2030

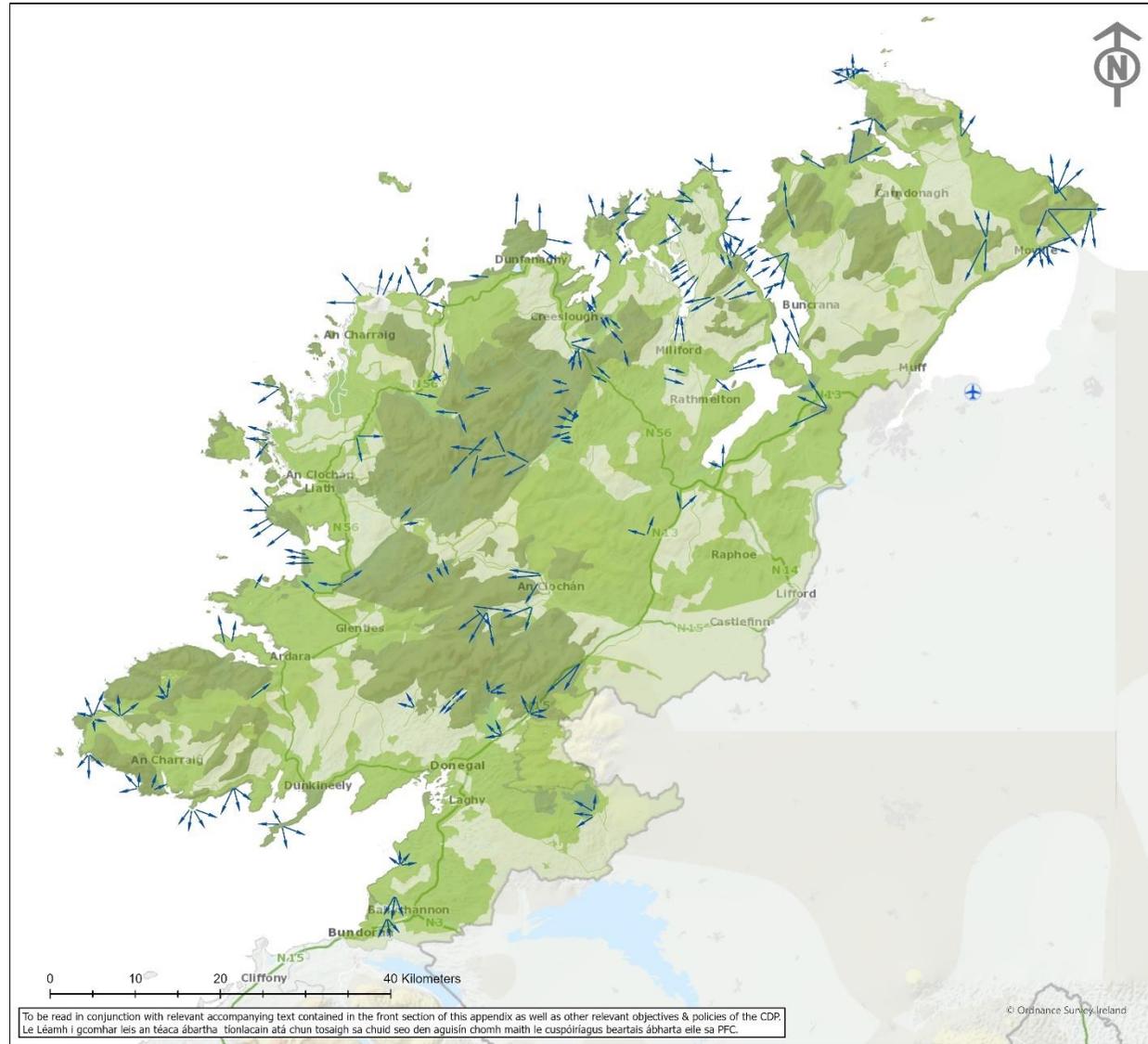
Map 11.1:
Scenic Amenity

Léarscáil 11.1:
Conláiste Scéimhe

-  Views ~ Radhairc
- Areas of Especially High Scenic Amenity (EHSA) ~
 Limistéar Cónlaiste Go hAairithe Ardscéimhe
- Areas of High Scenic Amenity ~ Limistéar Cónlaiste Ardscéimhe

- Areas of Moderate Scenic Amenity ~ Limistéar Cónlaiste Measartha scéimhe


Source - Donegal County Council
 Foinse - Comhairle Chontae Dhún na nGall
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11.3 Built and Architectural Conservation

11.3.1 Introduction

Donegal's architectural built heritage helps create the backdrop to our lives, giving our living environments a strong and unique sense of place. This is enjoyed by residents and visitors and is a critical asset in the county's identity and economy.

Re-use of existing built heritage also plays a key role in achieving carbon neutrality, climate resilience and a circular economy. Existing building stock is a tangible asset to be recycled, reducing the need for demolition, new construction and generation of carbon dioxide.

Donegal County Council recognises the importance of identifying, valuing and safeguarding the architectural heritage of Donegal. It will do this through sustainable protection of our historic structures to ensure our architectural heritage remains for the use and enjoyment of future generations.

Protection of Architectural Heritage is enshrined in the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada Convention) and in legislation through the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) which specifically requires the protection of structures, or parts of structures, which are of special Architectural interest (S.10(2)(f) refers), and the Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1999.

Its importance is also enshrined in the National Planning Framework – Ireland 2040, National Development Plan 2018-2027, Climate Action Plan 2023, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region 2020-2032, Heritage Ireland 2030 (February 2022), Government Policy on Architecture 2009- 2015, 'Places for People - National Policy on Architecture' (May 2022), the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines 2011 and A Living Tradition – A Strategy to Enhance the Understanding, Minding and Handing of Our Built Vernacular Heritage (2021).



Guiding Principles of Architectural Conservation

The majority of Donegal's built heritage was constructed using traditional, natural materials from the landscape that require breathability and good ventilation to allow for a cycle of absorption and evaporation of moisture.

Modern impermeable building products are conversely designed to waterproof and can have unintended harmful consequences for historic traditional buildings, leading to issues of damp and decay. Proposals to improve the thermal performance of historic buildings and to insert renewable energy technologies needs to be informed by a proper understanding of the built fabric and traditional methods of construction.

Some energy retrofitting options are not suitable for, or efficient in traditional buildings. The condition of the building is a key contributor to good thermal performance and so routine maintenance, conservation and building repair should be completed before other retrofit options are considered.

Any new insertions or changes to architectural heritage should generally be directed by the following principles:

Guiding Principles of Architectural Conservation

- Undertake Minimum Intervention
- Ensure Regular Maintenance
- Repair Rather Than Replace
- Use Appropriate Materials And Methods
- Ensure Reversibility of Interventions

Objectives (General):

AH-O-1

Conserve, manage, protect and enhance the architectural heritage of Donegal namely Protected Structures, Architectural Conservation Areas, NIAH structures, designed landscapes and historic gardens, vernacular, industrial and maritime built heritage, character and setting of such structures.

AH-O-2

Promote the sustainable and sensitive re-use of the existing built heritage as a positive response to climate change, and promote the circular economy and climate mitigation and adaptation through proper maintenance, repair and appropriate retrofitting, adaptive re-use and regeneration employing best conservation practice.

Policies (General):

AH-P-1

Seek to ensure best conservation practice through the application of the Guiding Principles of Architectural Conservation as referenced above, where appropriate including in relation to RPS, NIAH, and Vernacular structures and within ACA's. In this regard, the use of specialist conservation professionals, conservation plans and crafts persons shall be encouraged.

AH-P-2

Protect traditional shopfronts and signage and where required and appropriate, ensure new shopfronts are of a high-quality architectural design.

11.3.2 Protected Structures

Under Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) the Council must maintain a Record of Protected Structures (RPS). This record must include all structures or parts of structures in their functional area of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social, or technical interest.

The purpose of the designation of protected structures status is to protect this architectural heritage and ensure that any changes are sensitively made using best conservation practice. Section 57(10) (b) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) states that the Council "shall not grant permission for the demolition of a protected structure or proposed protected structure, save in exceptional circumstances". There are currently 466 structures that have been formally added to the RPS with a further 2550 structures to be considered for addition.

Works that affect the character of a protected structure, must receive planning permission. An owner or occupier may make a written request to the Planning Authority to issue a Section 57 Declaration as to the type of works, which it considers would or would not materially affect the character of the structure.

In addition, the Minister of Housing, Local Government and Heritage has instructed planning authorities to include National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) structures (see related section below) of Regional, National or International importance to their Record of Protected Structures (RPS). The Council is therefore proposing to add these structures to the RPS over the course of the plan.

Objective:**AH-O-3**

Protect all structures and parts of structures on the Record of Protected Structures and to extend the RPS where appropriate.

Policies:**AH-P-3**

- a. Protect all structures or parts of structures on the RPS to include protection of the curtilage, attendant grounds; and,
- b. Require that development proposals directly affecting structures on the RPS are appropriate in terms of architectural treatment, character, scale, and form to the existing protected structure and not detrimental to the special character and integrity of the protected structure and its setting.

save to the extent necessary to provide for strategic infrastructure projects including the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal.

AH-P-4

- a. Extend the Record of Protected Structures in order to provide a comprehensive schedule for the protection of structures of special importance in the County during the lifetime of the Plan; and

b. Identify structures for inclusion in the Record of Protected Structures based on the criteria set out in the Architectural Heritage Protection, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011), the NIAH and Ministerial recommendations.

AH-P-5

Any proposed development that includes proposed works to an RPS structure shall, where appropriate, provide for the works affecting the Structure to be carried out in the first phase of the development to prevent endangerment, abandonment and/or dereliction of the structure.

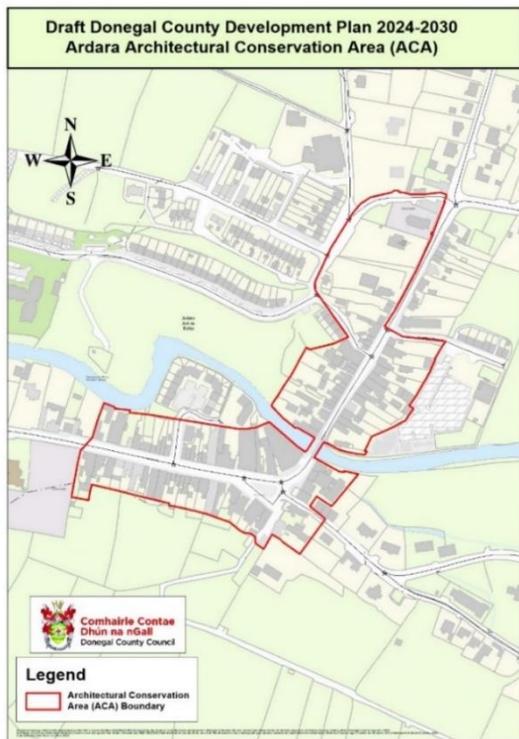
11.3.3 Architectural Conservation Areas

An Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) is defined as a place, area, group of structures or townscape that is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or contributes to the appreciation of protected structures. The special character of urban areas generally derives from its collection of buildings and their setting as a whole rather than the presence of individual buildings in isolation.

The Council must include an objective in its Development Plan to preserve the character of a place, area, group of structures, or townscape if it is of the opinion that its inclusion is necessary for the preservation of the character of that area. Work has been undertaken to identify additional ACAs through this plan in Donegal's five designated Heritage Towns.

**Objective:****AH-O-4**

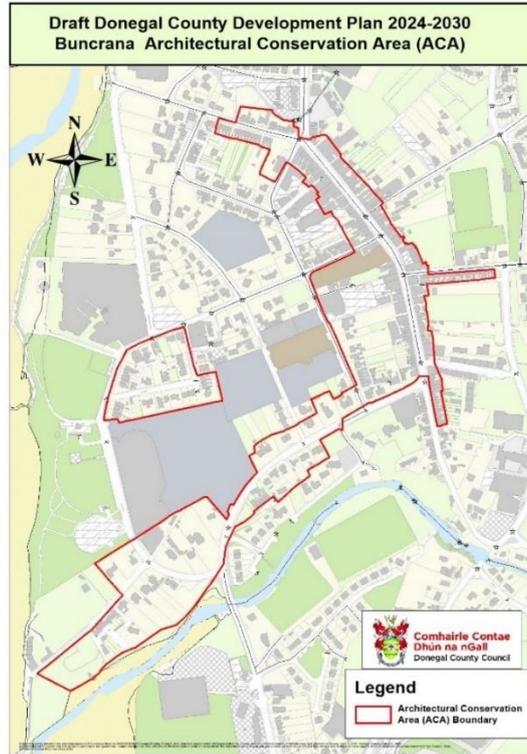
Preserve the special character of the Ardara, Ballyshannon, Buncrana, Bundoran, Letterkenny, Ramelton, Raphoe, and Moville Architectural Conservation Areas as identified on Maps 11.2 – 11.9 inclusive.



Map 11.2 - Ardara ACA



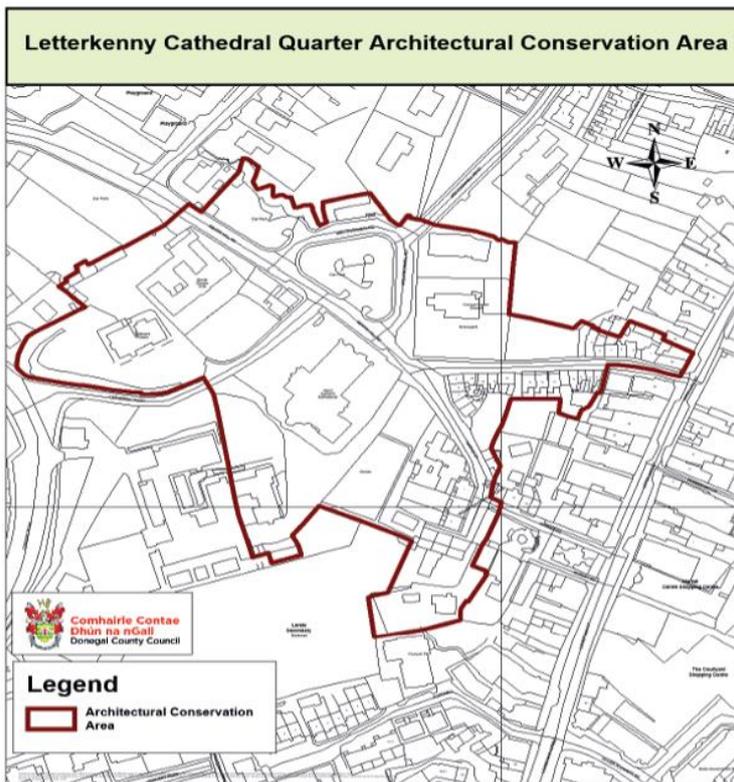
Map 11.3 - Ballyshannon ACA



Map 11.4 Buncrana ACA



Map 11.5 Bundoran ACA



Map 11.6 Letterkenny ACA



Map 11.7 Ramelton ACA



Map 11.8 Raphoe ACA



Map 11.9 Raphoe ACA

Policy:

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| AH-P-6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Protect and enhance the special character of ACAs to include traditional building stock, material finishes, spaces, streetscape, shopfronts, landscape and settings therein. b. Protect all buildings, structures, groups of structures, sites, landscapes and all other features considered to be intrinsic elements to the special character of an ACA from unsympathetic demolition or alteration. c. Ensure appropriate and sensitive reuse and rehabilitation of buildings and sites, secure appropriate infill and new development, and require high quality architectural design within and adjacent to ACAs. d. Protect traditional shopfronts in ACAs and ensure new shopfronts are of a high-quality architectural design. e. Ensure all new signage, lighting, advertising and utilities within ACAs are designed, constructed and located in such a manner as not to detract from the character of the ACA. f. Protect and reuse historic street finishes, furniture and features which contribute to the character of ACAs and associated areas of public realm. |
|---------------|---|

11.3.4 National Inventory of Architectural Heritage Structures (NIAH)

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage established the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) on a statutory basis to identify, record and evaluate post-1700 built structures across the country to aid the protection and conservation of built heritage. The Minister has recommended that all NIAH structures be included on the Record of Protected Structures. NIAH structures must therefore be protected in advance of being systematically assessed for inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures.

Policies:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| AH-P-7 | Require that development of structures on the NIAH including the curtilage, attendant grounds and setting of the structure are appropriate in terms of architectural treatment, character, scale, and form, and is not detrimental to the special character and integrity of the structure and its setting, save to the extent necessary to provide for strategic infrastructure projects including the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal. |
| AH-P-8 | Ensure high quality architectural design of all new development relating to or which may impact on NIAH structures (and their setting) save to the extent necessary to provide for strategic infrastructure projects including the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal. |

11.3.5 Vernacular Architecture

Vernacular structures are traditional building forms and types, including modest rural and urban houses, built by local builders, using local materials, skills and building techniques. These buildings formed the main component of the 18th and 19th Century landscapes in County Donegal. The Built

Vernacular Strategy now provides a national framework for the planning and development of such assets within the state.

In Donegal many such structures consist of single storey, direct entry, one room deep, linear cottages. These cottages had low wall-heads and door heights and small irregularly placed windows, with rooms often added to either end extending the linear form and resulting in extended farmsteads such as the famous "Donegal Longhouse". Other vernacular structures include farmsteads, limekilns, mills, forges, piers/quays and other built evidence of lifestyles in years past.

Associated features can include designed gardens/garden features, masonry walls, railings, gates, bridges, shopfronts, pub fronts, hand painted signage and street furniture as well as street layouts, buildings lines and traditional plot widths. Donegal also boasts multiple Islands with unique vernacular landscapes. The special character of these islands includes their traditional building stock, material finishes, spaces, streetscape, landscape and setting.

Vernacular structures and their associated features reflect the unique local history and character of a place, reflecting local traditions, available materials and craftsmanship.

The plan supports the protection, appropriate re-use and sympathetic extension of these structures within the County to meet sustainability goals, respect their important heritage value and the contribution they make to our architectural, historical, social and cultural heritage, local character and sense of place.



Policies:

AH-P-9

Seek to protect, conserve and preserve vernacular structures and enhance the established character, forms, material features, and settings of vernacular buildings

	<p>that are considered to be intrinsic elements of the character of a place, save to the extent necessary to provide for strategic infrastructure projects including the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Vernacular and traditional style farmhouse buildings including Clachans and local authority labourer’s cottages. b. Vernacular buildings, groupings of buildings on Donegal’s Islands. c. Historic thatch structures as a key component of the built heritage of the county.
AH-P-10	<p>Seek to ensure that conversions or extensions to vernacular buildings and the provision of new adjoining buildings shall be of a scale and form that complements the existing building and ensures that the distinctiveness and character of the vernacular form is retained and respected.</p>

11.4 Archaeological Heritage

11.4.1 Introduction

Archaeology is the study of past societies through their material remains and the evidence of their environment including both ancient (e.g. Neolithic, Iron Age) and more recent societies (e.g. industrial and military sites). Archaeological heritage is a crucial non-renewable historical and cultural resource which comprises all material remains of past societies including the remains of settlements, monuments, burials, ships and boats and portable objects of all kinds. It occurs in all environments, (e.g. urban and rural, upland and lowland, agricultural, forestry, wetland, and underwater) and may consist of upstanding or visible remains, or subsurface features. As such it is considered that the conservation and protection of archaeological heritage constitutes proper planning and sustainable development and should be robustly implemented by the development plan.



Donegal has a rich and diverse archaeological heritage. In terms of protected Archaeological Heritage in Donegal there are currently:

- 17 'National Monuments' considered to be of national importance and archaeological merit that are in state ownership/care (such as Grianan of Aileach and Donegal Castle), designated under the National Monuments Act 1930.
- 33 'Historic Monuments' on the Register of Historic Monuments (RHM) (such as Burt Castle, ringforts and megalithic tombs) designated under the National Monuments (Amendment Act) 1987.
- Over 3,400 'Recorded Monuments' on the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) (such as historic churches, standing stones and souterrains) designated under the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994.

Note: There is some overlap between these designations.

In addition, the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage has designated the following Historic Towns for general protection: Ballyshannon, Donegal Town, Killybegs, Lifford, Ramelton, Rathmullan and St. Johnston. These towns contain Zones of Archaeological Potential where intense archaeology is present and where prior consent for works is required.

Furthermore, there are also 50 Historic Graveyards in the Guardianship of Donegal County Council which are on the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP). With the enactment of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 2004, any archaeological sites on the RMP in the ownership/care of local authorities are, in effect, National Monuments. Prior consent for works to, or in the vicinity of, an archaeological monument is required from the National Monuments Service.

Donegal has also yielded significant underwater archaeology in our coastal areas, lakes and rivers (e.g. Spanish Armada Kinnagoe Bay, Log Boats Lifford/Strabane, Crannogs) and all wrecks over 100 years old (whether previously known or just discovered) and all archaeological objects situated underwater, are protected under the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1987. .

Donegal also contains a number of battlefield sites (e.g. Farsetmore and Scarrifholis) which may contain significant archaeological remains and represent an important part of our historical and cultural heritage. In addition, developments have the potential to uncover previously unrecorded archaeological sites or objects during the course of their construction.

11.4.2 Sites and Monument Records

Many community groups undertake archaeological heritage initiatives to protect, conserve and promote our archaeological heritage. Grant Schemes such as the National Monuments Service's Community Monuments Fund and the Heritage Council's Community Heritage Grant Scheme provide opportunities to conserve our archaeological and built heritage with appropriate specialist expertise and traditional skills. As part of the Colmcille 1500 commemorations in 2021, Donegal County Council commissioned conservation works to Kilmacrennan Abbey and to St. Colmcille's Chapel at Gartan. The Heritage Council also provides support to local community groups who care for archaeological heritage in their own locality under the Adopt a Monument Scheme. At present, four archaeological monuments in County Donegal are included in the scheme – Doon Fort, Kilbarron Castle, Malin Well Old Church & Old Killaghtee Graveyard.

The importance of archaeological protection is underlined by the fact that Ireland is a party to the 1992 Council of Europe European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (the "Valletta Convention"), and the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention. Furthermore the Planning and Development Act requires that the Development Plan include objectives for the 'conservation and protection of the environment including in particular archaeologicalheritage' (Section 10(2)(c) refers) and 'the protection of structures of special ... archaeological interest (Section 10(2)(f) refers). It is also an objective of the NWRA Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy to Support the conservation of the region's National Monuments (RPO 5.13) and support a targeted programme of National Monument sites to be developed in a manner that shall enhance the visitor experience (RPO 5.16).

The publication of The Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Government of Ireland 1999) sets out national policy on the protection of the archaeological heritage in the course of development. In particular it states that:

- Architectural heritage is a non-renewable resource requiring careful management.
- There should be a presumption in favour of avoidance of development impacts on archaeological heritage with Preservation in Situ the preferred option
- Preservation by Record including appropriate excavation and recording should only be utilised in very exceptional circumstances
- The carrying out of archaeological assessment is an important tool in assessing the implications of proposed developments on known or suspected sites or monuments, whilst archaeological monitoring during the course of development can help to identify and protect archaeology.

It is also important to highlight that in addition to the need to obtain and comply with planning permission there are additional archaeological protection requirements which must be adhered to under the National Monuments Act which developers should also be cognisant of.

As such the development plan has an important role to play in providing appropriate protection to, achieving a greater appreciation and knowledge of, and where appropriate improving access and visitor/interpretative facilities to Donegal's archaeological heritage.



Objective:

AYH-O-1

To conserve and protect archaeological heritage, achieve a greater public knowledge and appreciation of archaeology, protect existing access to, and where appropriate provide new access and visitor infrastructure for, such heritage.

Policies:

AYH-P-1

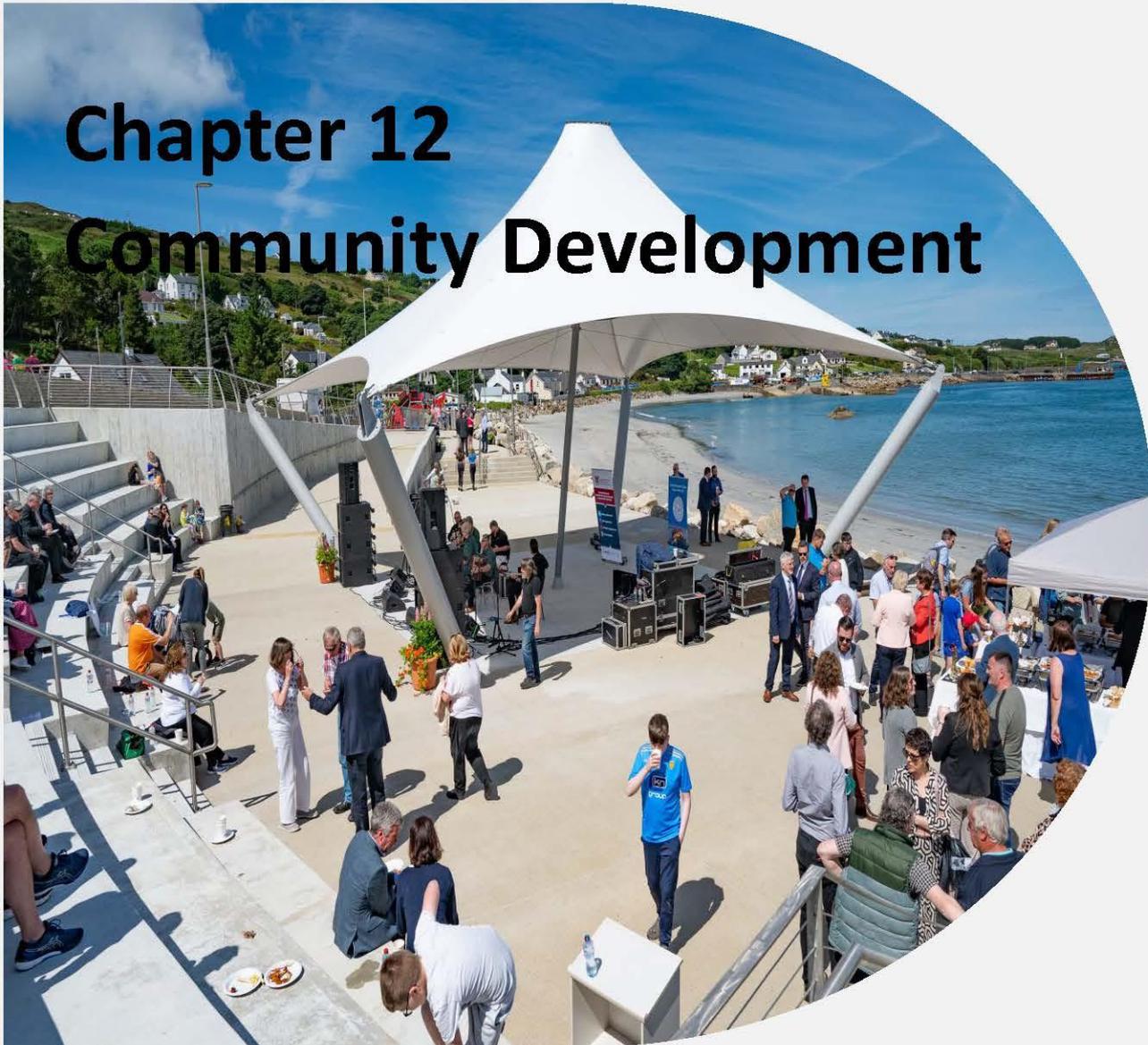
Save to the extent necessary to allow for the provision of strategic infrastructure projects including in particular the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal:

- a. conserve and protect all forms of archaeological heritage including:
 - i. National Monuments,
 - ii. Structures on the Record of Historic Monuments (RHM),

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii. the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) iv. Sites and Monument Record (SMR), v. Historic Graveyards and environs, vi. Historic Towns, vii. Historic battlefield sites, viii. Unrecorded archaeology ix. Industrial and post-medieval archaeology; x. Underwater archaeology and xi. The settings of such heritage <p>in accordance with the publication Framework and Principles for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage (DoAHGI 1999); and</p> <p>b. Conserve and Protect Zones of Archaeological Protection located in Urban areas of Ballyshannon, Donegal Town, Killybegs, Lifford, Ramelton, Rathmullan and St. Johnston as identified in the Record of Monuments and Places including requiring the carrying out of archaeological assessment prior to the granting of permission and the imposition of archaeological monitoring planning conditions.</p>
AYH-P-2	<p>Save to the extent necessary to allow for the provision of strategic infrastructure projects including in particular the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal, protect existing access to, and facilitate appropriate new public access, informational and visitor infrastructure for, archaeological heritage (including signage, parking, pedestrian access, commemorative memorials, and interpretative facilities) where such development would not be detrimental to the character or setting of said heritage where statutory consent has been obtained from the National Monuments Service and where the development would not otherwise negatively impact on traffic safety, local residential amenities, natural environment or the visual or scenic amenities of the area.</p>
AYH-P-3	<p>Save to the extent necessary to allow for the provision of strategic infrastructure projects including in particular the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal, ensure that development proposals affecting archaeological heritage sites shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Sensitively incorporate archaeological heritage Preserved In Situ in a manner which is compatible with the protection and proper management of such heritage and its setting including adequate safeguards from damage/vandalism and for public safety and suitable informational signage. b. Be accompanied by a long-term management plan that incorporates appropriate protections for the heritage site. c. Provide appropriate informational signage regarding any archaeological heritage which has been identified and Preserved by Record during the course of construction to an agreed standard with Donegal County Council and the National Monuments Service.
AYH-P-4	<p>Ensure that historic graveyards in the ownership or care of the Council are managed and maintained in accordance with legislation, appropriate/best conservation standards, in consultation with the National Monuments Service and the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage.</p>

Chapter 12

Community Development



Chapter 12 – Community Development

12.1 Introduction

Sustainable, healthy, socially inclusive and culturally vibrant communities with an optimal quality of life are dependent on a wide range of childcare and education, recreational, healthcare, social and cultural infrastructure/facilities for all sectors of society in accessible locations and within a built environment which encourages active lifestyles. Responsibility for the delivery of such infrastructure and services is shared across a spectrum of government departments, agencies, and community organisations. The development plan has a crucial role to play by working with key stakeholders to ensure that sufficient high-quality community infrastructure and services are provided at sustainable locations to meet a wide diversity of both current and future societal needs.

In this regard there is a statutory requirement for the plan to include objectives for: the zoning of land for *recreational and open space* (S.10(2)(a) of the Planning Act refers), the integration of the planning and sustainable development with the *social and community requirements of the area* (S.10(2)(d) refers), *the preservation, improvement and extension of amenities and recreational amenities*, (S.10(2)(j) refers), and the provision of *schools, crèches and other education and childcare facilities*; (S.10(2)(l) refers).

In addition, it is recognised that in order to justify, sustain and maximise the potential of social and community infrastructure and services it is imperative to; achieve a critical mass of population in our settlements, locate new community developments in close proximity to residential areas and public transport nodes, and ensure that such developments are of high quality layout and a universal and age friendly design.



General Objectives

CCG-O-1:

To create sustainable, healthy, socially inclusive, and culturally vibrant communities with an optimum quality of life and high-quality childcare, education, recreational, and cultural infrastructure and facilities and to integrate the planning and sustainable development of the County with the social, community and cultural requirements of its population.

General Policies

CC-P-1:

Support the provision of new social and community infrastructure/service related developments (e.g. childcare, education, healthcare, sports/recreational facilities, playgrounds, community resource centres sheltered housing, residential care/nursing homes, large scale cultural facilities etc) where such proposals are consistent with the zoning objectives of the Plan, and otherwise in accordance with the following locational criteria:

- a. At locations within the defined boundaries of settlement framework/urban areas which are within safe walking distance (i.e. via an existing or proposed footpath) of local services and residential areas or are accessible by public transport and which would otherwise promote social inclusion.
- b. At alternative locations within settlement framework/urban areas where it is demonstrated that there are no suitable sites available which meet the locational criteria in point a) above.
- c. In rural locations in close proximity to existing rural infrastructure (e.g. rural schools, Community centres, sports facilities, churches etc) where it is demonstrated that; the development is intended to serve an exclusively rural need, the development is functionally dependent on a specific rural location, or where there are no sites available which meet the abovementioned locational criteria in points a) and b) above.
- d. At other rural locations where it is demonstrated that; the development is intended to serve an exclusively rural need, the development is functionally dependent on a specific rural location, or where there are no sites available to meet the abovementioned locational criteria in points (a), (b) and (c) above.

CC-P-2:

Require that social, community cultural development proposals generally comply with the policies and technical standards of this plan and the following specific development management criteria:

- a. Are compatible with adjacent existing or approved land uses.
- b. Do not have a significant impact on adjacent residential amenities.
- c. Provide adequate effluent treatment in compliance with the wastewater treatment policies of this plan.
- d. Do not cause a traffic hazard and ensure the existing road network can safely handle any extra vehicular traffic generated by the proposed development.
- e. Provide adequate parking provision, access arrangements, manoeuvring and servicing areas in line with technical standards and policies of this plan.
- f. Prioritises, and provides for a high level of, pedestrian and cycling permeability and access.
- g. Do not create a noise nuisance and or cause significant environmental emissions.
- h. The location siting and design of the development is of a high quality, successfully integrates with the host environment including the landscape and/or built environment of the area and does not negatively impact on the visual and scenic amenities of the area.
- i. Provides appropriate boundary treatment and screening of storage areas from public view.
- j. Does not have a negative impact on the built or natural heritage of the area and complies with the built and natural policies of the plan.

- k. Complies with the flood risk management guidelines and the associated flood risk policies of this plan.
- l. Have suitable soil depth and water table (in the case of burial grounds/graveyards).

12.2 Childcare

The provision of high-quality Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and School Age Childcare (SAC) facilities at accessible and socially inclusive locations is a central component of childhood development, sustainable communities, and a prosperous economy with high labour market participation. The National Planning Framework aims to achieve 'Access to Quality Childcare' (NSO 10) and cites the need to provide childcare facilities on well located sites within or close to built-up areas, that meet the diverse need of local communities (NPO 31 refers). The NWRA Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy also cites the need for a multi-stakeholder approach in childcare provision.

The 2001 Childcare Facility Planning Guidelines identifies residential areas/new housing developments, employment centres, sites in the vicinity of schools, neighbourhood centres and public transport nodes, as appropriate locations for new childcare developments. The guidelines also identify, compliance with Childcare Regulations, site suitability, outdoor play areas, safe access and convenient parking, traffic conditions as key development management criteria³⁷. In addition, the *Universal Design Guidelines for Early Learning Centres and Care Settings* (2019) sets out guidance in relation to the location, layout, access, internal and external spaces of such facilities. The Council will specifically have regard to these guidelines in relation to the location, siting, and overall design of new childcare facilities.

Furthermore consultations with the Donegal Childcare Committee indicate that: there is currently a significant deficit in baby/toddler and ECCE capacity in most areas of Donegal particularly in urban areas, high property rents are a deterrent for childcare providers, many childcare facilities have been affected by Mica and there is a need to provide childcare facilities in tandem with larger scale residential developments.

Policies

CC-P-3

Have regard to childcare capacity and requirements in the local area when considering applications for new multiple residential development, and to require the provision of purpose-built facilities as an integral part of large scale residential development proposals in accordance with the thresholds and requirements set out in *Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG 2001)* (save Appendix 1 of said guidelines), the *Universal Design Guidelines for Early Learning Centre and Care Settings (2019)* or any subsequent relevant guidelines.

12.3 Primary, Post Primary and Third Level Education

Quality education facilities at sustainable locations is essential to the creation of strong communities, social inclusivity, a skilled workforce, and future economic prosperity. The NPF highlights the need

³⁷ Circular Letter PL 3/2016 Request that planning authorities exclude the general facility standards outlined in Appendix 1 of these guidelines from their consideration of applications as such standards are now dealt with by the Childcare (Pre-School) Regulations 2006

for additional facilities where population growth has occurred and seeks to align targeted and planned population growth with investment in new and refurbished schools (NPO 31 refers). The NWRA RSES in particular encourages a multi-agency approach in delivering education services (RPO 7.15).

The departmental guidelines '*The Provision of Schools and the Planning System*' (DoEHLG 2008) states that schools should be an integral part of compact sustainable urban development, the provision of new schools should be based on an integrated approach between planning authorities and the Department of Education and local authorities should assist the department in the timely provision of school sites. It also highlights the need for Local Authorities to anticipate school demand arising from new development, identify suitable lands for same, locate new schools close to new residential areas and community facilities and in a manner which aids sustainable mobility. The Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Area Guidelines (2009) highlights the need to provide school facilities in tandem with residential development and to share community facilities with education facilities. In addition, the Department of Education and Skills Technical Guidance Documents sets out a range of guidance for the identification of suitable sites for, and the detailed design of new primary and post primary schools.

As part of the consultation process for this plan the Department of Education highlighted the need for collaboration and long term planning and recommended that the plan should: explicitly support the provision of school accommodation, retain zonings for educational provision, provide school sites to accommodate new brownfield/infill development, provide buffer zones/land use designations around existing schools, support urban design schools, zone land to meet current need, planned population growth or current school projects, facilitate schools in as many zonings as possible, utilise departmental technical guidance when identifying school sites, site schools close to community facilities, and consider school capacity when assessing new residential development. Furthermore, Department of Education enrolment projections for Donegal predict at:

- Primary Level: An overall trend of falling enrolments across all school planning areas out to 2030.
- Post Primary: A short term growth in enrolments in certain school planning areas (e.g. Milford and Raphoe) but otherwise an overall trend of falling school enrolments out to 2030.

Consequently, the Council will take the above technical guidance and recommendations into account when identifying suitable lands for and assessing development proposals for new primary and post primary schools and additionally will have regard to the existing capacity of schools when assessing and planning new residential development.

The Atlantic Technological University Donegal campuses at Letterkenny and Killybegs provide a wide range of 3rd level business, engineering, technology, and tourism related courses, and thus represent a key educational asset playing a key role in providing a skilled workforce and enabling growth in Donegal. ATU Letterkenny has extensive plans for expansion of the Port Road campus (for additional teaching/education, research, and student accommodation facilities) and a new campus at Knocknamona (for agricultural education, student housing and sports facilities) which will be supported by both this plan and the detailed policies and zonings of the Letterkenny Plan 2023-2029.

Policies

CC-P-4

Development proposals adjoining existing public educational facilities shall not hinder the planned future expansion of such facilities and any associated ancillary infrastructure.

CC-P-5

Require that the layout and design, and any grant of permission, for new public education facilities enables the use of any associated social and sporting facilities (e.g. playing pitches sports halls) for wider community uses.

12.4 Recreational and Sporting Infrastructure

The provision of high quality green, active, and recreational infrastructure such as parks, playgrounds, sporting facilities, walking and cycling facilities, and greenways, in sustainable locations are key components in creating healthy, active and socially inclusive communities with a high quality of life and a strong sense of place and identity.

The NPF seeks the achievement of *Enhanced Amenities and Heritage*, highlights the link between the design of our built environment and healthier lives, and the need to design communities in a manner which supports physical activity and prioritises walking and cycling accessibility (NPO 27 refers). The NWRA Regional and Spatial Economic Strategy highlights the need to provide safe walking and cycling infrastructure in urban and rural areas (RPO 6.26 refers). The Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan identifies good planning and design practice to support and encourage active travel (walking and cycling) in urban areas as a priority focus area. The *Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways* (2018) highlights the significant health/wellbeing benefits of greenways as recreational amenities and the need for Greenways to be strategic, scenic, sustainable, segregated and offer lots of things to see and do.

New public open space needs to be appropriately located, well designed, and maintained to maximise its usability and value to the community. Different types of public open space are also required to fulfil distinct functions ranging from larger urban parks (a distinct destination with high quality open space/landscaping, a diverse range of facilities and functions, accessible by public transport, walking/cycling and cars), neighbourhood parks (to serve individual neighbourhoods with active and passive open space, play equipment and accessible by pedestrians) and pocket parks (small parks with landscaping/seating to serve immediate communities). Moreover such open space should be: designed to meet a range of needs, both, active and passive recreation, promote safety, accessible by pedestrians and/or public transport depending on park type, have a variety of open spaces, and enable shared use of facilities (e.g. sports facilities). In addition, there is a symbiotic opportunity for public spaces to incorporate nature-based water management solutions and protect/enhance biodiversity. Furthermore, community gardens/allotments can play an important role in promoting physical and mental wellbeing, social interaction, climate/environment friendly food production, education, and biodiversity.

Currently Donegal has a significant network of recreational and sporting infrastructure including dedicated community leisure facilities (e.g. Aura Leisure Centre Letterkenny, the Finn Valley Centre Ballybofey), urban parks/parklands (e.g. Swan Park Bunrana, Letterkenny Town Park, Drumboe Woods), and an extensive network of 51 playgrounds and 4 multi use games areas, 1 skate park and 7 outdoor gyms managed by the Council. The county also boasts a range of dedicated recreational walkways (e.g. Glenveagh National Park, Ards Forest Park, Muckish Railway Walk, Burtonport Old Railway, Dungloe River Walk, Walk, Rougey Cliff Walk) and a variety of other on and off road walking and cycling routes (Slí Cholmcille, Slí Na Finne, and the Donegal Cycle Route) which provide significant recreational amenity. In addition, Donegal has a vibrant and spatially extensive network of organisation-based sports infrastructure (e.g. GAA, Football, Rugby, and Athletic Clubs) which play an integral part in the community and sporting life of the county.

Moving forward, the completion of the North West Greenway Network including the Bridgend to Bunrana and Newtowncunningham, Muff to Quigleys Point and Lifford to Castlefinn Greenways will provide strategic recreational assets. The Donegal Outdoor Recreational Strategy aims to put in place a framework for the sustainable development and management of outdoor recreation over the next 5 years with a vision to 2040. In addition, the National Cycle network plan which aims to link towns, cities and destinations across Ireland with a safe, connected and inviting cycle network is also currently under preparation.

Consequently, this development plan will reserve and protect land for recreation and amenity purposes at sustainable locations, and support and facilitate: the provision of new public amenity and outdoor recreation facilities having regard to the outdoor recreation strategy, the delivery of new greenways in a strategic, systematic and geographically flexible manner (see Transport section), the provision of new/enhanced walking and cycling infrastructure in both urban and rural location, and the expansion of existing and provision of new sporting facilities at sustainable locations.



Objective

CC-O-2	To provide a network of high-quality green, active and recreational infrastructure at sustainable and socially inclusive locations throughout the county
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Policies

CC-P-6	Ensure that the siting, layout, and design of community development proposals facilitate and promote active travel modes (e.g. walking and cycling) and reduce car dependency.
CC-P-7	Support and facilitate community-based gardens/allotments at sustainable, accessible, and socially inclusive locations.

12.5 Religious Facilities, Burial Grounds and Crematoria

Donegal has an extensive network of existing religious facilities (e.g. churches, chapels, parochial halls) which continue to play a significant role in local communities. Burial grounds/graveyards are also a fundamental part of community infrastructure which have traditionally been provided and managed on a denominational basis. As existing graveyards reach capacity there will be a need to extend them or to provide new burial grounds. It is also recognised that as Donegal's population diversifies and changes that there is growing demand for; new places of worship for emerging faith communities, multi-denominational/non-religious burial, and crematorium type facilities. Overall accessibility, vehicular access and parking, and integration with adjoining lands uses, and in the case of burial grounds water table and soil depth, will be key considerations for such development proposals.

Policies CC-P-1 and CC-P-2 explicitly make provision allowing for the investigation of potential sites across the County at suitable locations and enables respective denominations to seek to identify locations for their own places of worship.

12.6 Healthcare

Access to quality health services is a stated National Strategic Outcome of the NPF. Currently Donegal has range of health facilities including Letterkenny University Hospital which is an acute general and maternity Hospital, community hospitals and primary care centres. The Government's Slaintecare Health Programme places a particular emphasis on developing primary and community health services. In turn it is an objective of the RSES to support the objectives of Slainte Care including the advancement of primary care centres in our urban places (RPO 7.8) and the provision of healthcare facilities to all sections of the community at appropriate locations with good public transport links, parking and accessible facilities (RPO 7.10). Consequently, this plan will support and facilitate the provision of new and the expansion of existing healthcare facilities at sustainable and socially inclusive locations.

12.7 Age and Disabled Friendly Communities

ESRI population projections indicate that by 2040 the number of older people aged 65 and over will double to 1.3m (to representing 23% of the population) and the number of people over 85 will quadruple. Furthermore, census figures indicate that many rural and peripheral areas in Donegal have a high age dependency ratio. In terms of disability Census 2016 found that 14% of Donegal's Population (22,955 persons) had at least one disability (including pain, physical activity, learning difficulty, hearing, mental health, intellectual, visual) and disabled persons in Donegal had significantly lower education attainment, workforce participation, and access to private transport³⁸.

In this regard the NPF highlights the need for housing, transport/accessibility, and leisure policies to meet the needs of an ageing population (NPO 39 refers). The NWRA RSES aims to make the region age-friendly, to provide facilities and services for older people at appropriate locations (RPO 7.13 refers) and seeks the designation of specific lands for nursing homes/sheltered housing integrated within communities (RPO 7.14 refers). Furthermore, it is goal of the Donegal Local Economic and Community Plan to develop Donegal as an Age Friendly county.

³⁸ <https://www.disability-federation.ie/publications/disability-profile-donegal/>

This creation of age and disabled friendly communities and places requires the integration of universal design principles and due consideration for older people into both the spatial planning of communities and the design of homes, the urban environment, commercial and community buildings, the public realm/town centre environments, and public amenity areas etc., to allow everyone to live active, healthy and independent lives ideally within their own homes as part of accessible, inclusive, attractive and safe communities.

The publication *Age Friendly Principles and Guidelines for the Planning Authority* (Age Friendly Ireland 2021) highlight the need to: provide for nursing home/step down facilities/independent living units, facilitate housing for older people, seek universal design for housing to provide age friendly occupancy, age friendly policies in the refurbishment of existing housing stock, increase inter-generational interaction opportunities, ensure healthcare facilities are located close to population centres and public transport, improve public transport for older people, integrate universal design into urban/rural regeneration, and take into account older peoples needs in the design of public/recreational spaces.

The Age Friendly Strategy Donegal (DCC) also stresses the need for safe and accessible outdoor spaces/physical environments with adequate seating for older people, the provision of more age friendly public transport services, the need to support independent living in the community, increased participation by older people in community/sports activities, and age friendly health facilities.

The National Disability Authority's *Building For Everyone A Universal Design Approach Booklet 9 Planning and Policy* recommends: mixed use neighbourhoods, universal designed lifelong adaptable housing, a universally accessible urban environment designed to be pedestrian/vulnerable road user friendly with easily accessible public transport, accessible parking in accordance with NDA standards, accessible locations and design for new economic developments and public buildings, universal design in the public realm, amenity areas and town centre environments. (e.g. seating, wide pavements, level access, tactile paving, control of street furniture, clear signage).

Consequently, to create more age and disabled friendly communities this development plan will: require the incorporation of universal design principles in the location siting and design of all development proposals including proposals within the public realm and the urban environment, ensure that new community facilities (e.g. parks, healthcare facilities, sheltered housing, residential care/nursing homes etc) are provided in accessible locations and spatially integrated into local communities (See Policy CC-P-1), facilitate lifetime adaptable housing and improved age friendly housing options (see housing section) and support the improvement of public transport options for older and disabled persons.

Policies

CC-P-8

Ensure that the siting and design of development proposals (including housing, retail, commercial, community, public realm/urban environment and public amenity spaces) comply with best practice in universal design including in particular the guidance set out in *Building For Everyone A Universal Design Approach Booklet 9 Planning and Policy* (National Disability Authority) including the associated parking standards set out in section 9.4.14 therein and otherwise provides for lifetime adaptability.

CC-P-9

Ensure that the needs of older and disabled persons are integrated into the provision of public transport services and associated physical infrastructure.

12.8 Culture

Donegal's rich, diverse, and unique culture represents one of our strongest assets, it provides a strong sense of identity, affords important quality of life, recreational, tourism, and economic benefits, and is an intrinsic part of the wider Donegal brand. Key elements of Donegal culture include theatre, music, public art, the Irish language, and island culture.



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The National Cultural Policy Framework *Culture 2025* is based on the premise that culture is intrinsic to both individual and communities, seeks to support creative practice and cultural participation and cherish our cultural heritage. It highlights that creative activities can enhance sense of place, improve the attractiveness of both urban and rural areas and that cultural vitality is a key instrument in attracting inward investment and tourism and fostering sustainability. The strategy also emphasises the importance of high-quality cultural infrastructure, the need to protect existing infrastructure and target new investment at projects that align with the National Planning Framework. The document further states the importance of the Irish Language, natural habitats, and landscapes, built and archaeological heritage to our cultural identity and legacy.

It is recognised that high quality and sustainably located cultural infrastructure facilities are an essential part of wider of social and community infrastructure and wellbeing. In this regard the Donegal Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018-2022 details a number of Cultural Infrastructure Priorities including: supporting cultural venues funded by the Arts and Culture Capital Scheme (ACCESS), establishing creatives hubs, re-using historic/vacant building for cultural activities and

establishing an incentive scheme for the conservation of vernacular buildings (Strategic Priority 5). Furthermore, the provision of a Donegal Town Library, a County Archives Centre and the redevelopment of the County Museum are also considered key ongoing strategic infrastructure priorities. In addition, whilst the County generally boasts a strong network of performing arts spaces (e.g. An Grianan Theatre Letterkenny, the Balor Arts Centre Ballybofey, Amharclann Ghaoth Dobhair, and the Abbey Ballyshannon) it is specifically recognised that Inishowen lacks a performing arts facility. Furthermore, the Council also recognises that urban regeneration, new amenity spaces, and creative placemaking provide significant and symbiotic cultural opportunities in terms of providing public spaces for arts and cultural events, revitalising/reutilising vacant and derelict buildings to create artists workspaces, creative hubs and exhibition space and the provision of both permanent and temporary art in the public realm. It is also acknowledged that the intrinsic cultural and linguistic resource of Donegal's Gaeltacht and Islands must be protected and enhanced and policies to achieve same are contained within the Gaeltacht and Islands sections of this plan.



Consequently, to protect, support and sustainably develop Donegal's rich culture this development plan will: support and facilitate the delivery of the abovementioned key Cultural Infrastructure Priorities, ensure that cultural facilities are provided at sustainable and socially inclusive locations, support the provision of new performing arts facilities in Inishowen subject to a needs based assessment, ensure that new urban placemaking/regeneration projects provide space for arts and cultural events where practicable, facilitate the refurbishment of vacant and derelict properties for artist workspaces, creative hubs and exhibition spaces, and facilitate both permanent and temporary art in the public realm.

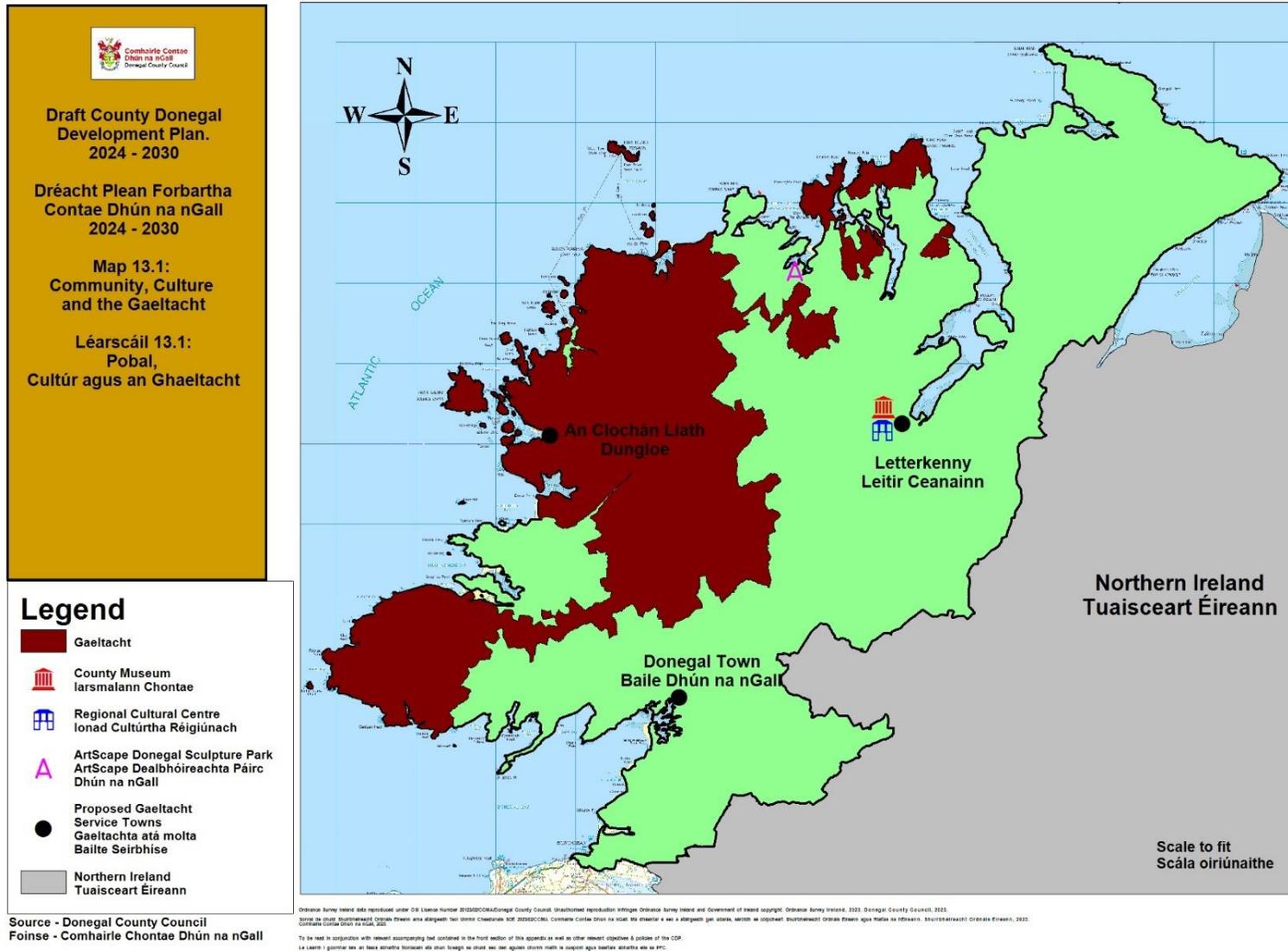


Objective

CC-O-3:	To protect and enhance the vibrancy of Donegal's cultural resource in a sustainable and socially inclusive manner including providing new arts and cultural infrastructure, new spaces for arts and culture in the public realm, quality public art, and enhanced creative/artistic spaces.
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Policies

CC-P-10	<p>Support and facilitate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. strategic cultural infrastructural projects including: the Donegal Town Library, the provision of an Archives Centre and the redevelopment of the County Museum, and other projects identified within Cultúr Le Chéile, the Libraries Capital Programme, or the Cultural Capital Scheme; b. the provision of large-scale cultural facilities (e.g. Libraries, Theatres, Museums, Galleries, Large Scale Visitor Centres etc) at sustainable, socially inclusive, and other functionally appropriate locations in accordance with Policy CC-P-1; c. small scale Cultural developments (e.g. artist's studios, small scale visitor centres etc) throughout the county excluding areas of Especially High Scenic Amenity; d. the provision of a performing arts facility in the Inishowen peninsula subject to a carrying out of an evidence-based needs assessment in consultation with relevant stakeholders.
CC-P-11	Ensure that new urban placemaking/regeneration and public realm projects provide space for arts and cultural events and incorporate creative public art where practicable to do so.
CC-P-12	Facilitate the reuse/refurbishment of underutilised, vacant, or derelict buildings as artist workspaces, creative hubs and and/or exhibition spaces and other cultural facilities (e.g. libraries).
CC-P-13	Seek the protection of stone wall boundaries where they are shown to play a significant heritage role. Where the demolition of such stone walls is unavoidable, the reinstatement of stone walls at revised location/set back within the site using agreed local materials and techniques, will be required.



Chapter 13

An Ghaeltacht



Chapter 13 – An Ghaeltacht

13.1 Donegal Gaeltacht

Irish is one of Europe's oldest spoken and literary languages and despite significant long-term challenges, remains spoken as a first language in 7 Gaeltachts across the state. The Donegal Gaeltacht is the second largest in Ireland, covers 26% of the County (1502km²), and contains a population of 23,346 which equates to 14.7% of Donegal's population and 23.4% of the state's entire Gaeltacht population (Census 2016). It covers large areas of the west of the County including 6 inhabited islands of Aranmore, Tory, Inishboffin, Inishfree Upper, Island Roy and Gola. It contains areas with the highest percentage of daily Irish speakers in the state (i.e. Mín Lárach 73.3% and Rann na Feirste 66.6%); however, it otherwise displays a variety of Irish language usage. Census 2016 found that 26% people spoke Irish on a daily basis and the total Gaeltacht population decreased by 5.6% relative to the 2011 Census (24,744).



13.2 Current Use of the Irish Language

Summary results from census 2022 indicate that the number of people that can speak Irish in Donegal stands at 59,130; compared with 56,738 in 2016. Within this figure 7,750 said they spoke Irish daily while 4,533 spoke Irish weekly.

Recent studies such as the 'Comprehensive Linguistic Study of the use of Irish in the Gaeltacht: Principal Findings and Recommendations 2007' and the 2015 update report of said study, indicate that the number of people who speak Irish within the Gaeltacht is diminishing at an increasing rate and that English is now the dominant language of young people. The above studies indicate that this decline is being driven by such factors as: social dynamics (the linking of Gaeltacht Communities to

wider English-Speaking networks), demographic movements (the movement of non-Irish speakers into the Gaeltacht), and the socialisation of young people through English. It further concluded that without intervention, even in the strongest Gaeltacht districts, Irish, will become a language of social networks rather than the main community and family language within a generation.

The study highlighted a number of priorities including: maintaining and increasing the proportion of active speakers in Category A districts above a sustainability threshold of 67% supporting, maintaining and strengthening Irish speaking networks in Category B and C districts, supporting parents in raising their children through Irish, ensuring educational institutions support same, supporting Irish use in young people's social networks, focusing on the linguistic rights and needs of native speakers, ensuring delivery of all public services to the Gaeltacht community through Irish, devising language centred economic strategies and incentivising good language practice in Gaeltacht businesses. Allied to these measures, and as part of the planning response to foster the increased use of the Irish language in the County, the planning authority will monitor and review the impact of language plans as a policy approach.

13.3 Legislation, and Government and Planning Policy related to the Irish Language

The Irish Constitution designates Irish as the First Official Language of the state (Article 8 refers). Under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) a development plan must include objectives for the *protection of the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht including the promotion of Irish as the community language*. S.10(2)m refers). The Official Languages Act 2003 (as amended) places obligations on public sector bodies to provide services through Irish, led to the establishment of An Coimisiún Teanga, requires bilingual Irish signage, and makes statutory provision for Irish placenames and their uses. Furthermore, the most recent amendments to the Act in 2021 will ultimately require, inter alia, that public bodies carry out at least 20% of their advertising through Irish, that the logo for an organisation be in Irish or bilingual and that replies to queries written in Irish on social media be replied to in Irish. The 2021 amendment also includes an objective that by 2030, 20% of new recruits to the public sector and the Civil Service be proficient in Irish.

The Government's Statement on the Irish Language 2006 sets out a vision to: increase the use and knowledge of Irish as a community language, ensure as many people as possible are bilingual, strengthen the Gaeltacht as an Irish speaking community, ensure that the use of Irish in public services will be a choice, and make Irish more visible in our society as a spoken language and in signage. The statement also outlines a number of objectives including giving special support to the Gaeltacht, supporting Gaelscoileanna and Irish language pre-school education. The 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010–2030, aims to increase the number of daily speakers of Irish to 250,000, and the number daily Irish speakers in the Gaeltacht by 25%.

The Gaeltacht Act 2012 provided for Gaeltacht Language Planning areas to strengthen Irish as a family and community language, and the designation of Gaeltacht Service towns to play a significant role in the delivery of public services to those areas and this is further supported by the National Planning Framework (NPO 29). It is also an objective of the NWRA Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy to: *Promote, enhance and protect the linguistic, cultural and heritage value of our Gaeltacht Communities* (RPO 5.8), support the implementation of Language Plans and ensure that Development Plans and Local Area Plans be consistent with same.

13.4 Gaeltacht Language Plans

Language Plans have been approved for the 8 different Donegal Gaeltacht areas including: Tuaisceart Dhún na nGall, Gaoth Dobhair, Rann na Feirste, Anagaire agus Loch an Iúir, Cloich Cheann Fhaola, Na Rosa, Árainn Mhór, An Ghaeltacht Láir, Dún na nGall Theas and Toraigh. These language plans identify a wide range of actions including the following planning and development and Council related actions:

- Develop a new language sanctuary (with Café, Shop, Open Space for young people) and the designation of secondary language sanctuaries in the Gaoth Dobhair, Rann na Feirste, Anagaire and Loch an Iúir area.
- Provide a library and language laboratory at Pobalscoil Ghaoth Dobhair.
- Re-open Colaiste Uladh as a language and cultural sanctuary in the Cloich Cheann Fhaola area.
- Develop additional social, community and tourism facilities to aid language enhancement and upgrade housing to provide accommodation for language students on Toraigh.
- Establish an Irish Language drop-in centre for Irish speakers and youth on Árainn Mhór.
- Support the development of Gleann Domhain Naionra, and provide a permanent premise for Ceim Aniar in Tuaisceart Dhún na nGall.
- Attract businesses, start-up groups and other to use unoccupied Údarás Na Gaeltachta premises in North Donegal.
- Create a drop-in language centre in the Gaeltacht Láir.
- Implement language planning conditions which recognize linguistic heritage and culture of Gaeltacht areas.
- Provide services of equal standards to Irish speakers.
- Ensure Council signage policy gives priority to Irish on road signs and in public notices.

In addition, the towns of Letterkenny, An Clochan Liath and Donegal Town have been identified as Gaeltacht Service Towns. Associated language plans have now been published for An Clochan Liath and Letterkenny identifying a wide range of actions including: translation services, supports for Irish in the business sector, Irish language classes, bilingual tourism material, signage and visibility, support for Irish in the education, childcare, and preschool systems, Irish orientated youth, social and recreational services and in particular the development of a Cultúrlann for Letterkenny.

The Donegal Local Economic and Community Plan contains a wide variety of Irish language related actions broadly including: strengthening Gaeltacht service centres, preparing a countywide language plan, increasing service delivery through Irish, protecting Gaeltacht cultural heritage, developing cultural infrastructure, promoting the Gaeltacht as a cultural tourism destination, developing a centre for Irish cultural studies on the islands, improving employment and educational opportunities, supporting Gaeltacht summer colleges and Irish language learning opportunities, and promoting Irish medium education. In addition, the Council is also currently preparing an Irish Language County Plan.

The successful delivery of the above plans, the preservation of Irish as a community language, and increasing Irish usage overall requires a multifaceted, collaborative, and multi-stakeholder approach involving local communities, Údarás Na Gaeltachta, and Foras Na Gaeilge. To achieve these plans and objectives the Council will therefore: collaborate with key stakeholders, facilitate development proposals associated with said Language Plans, manage multiple residential development to protect linguistic vibrancy, facilitate sustainable rural housing in the Gaeltacht, facilitate language related educational and community developments, provide and improve public services in Irish, and enhance the visibility of Irish in public, business and community signage. The Council will also monitor compliance with language occupancy conditions attached to permissions for residential development and will implement the means to ensure compliance, e.g. undertake language competency interviews of 1st occupants of dwellings in appropriate circumstances.

13.5 Challenges and Opportunities for the Donegal Gaeltacht

In addition to the linguistic resource the Donegal Gaeltacht also benefits from such assets as: a high quality of life, a well-educated workforce, a rich social and cultural heritage, outstanding natural beauty including along the Wild Atlantic Way, significant marine and coastal resources and skillsets, Údarás Na Gaeltachta business parks and the Gteic digital hub network, an improving strategic road network (e.g. N56) and significant healthcare related employment.

It is also acknowledged that the Gaeltacht faces significant social, economic, and infrastructural challenges. It has lower income and higher deprivation profiles than other parts of the state and has suffered from population decline. Significant sections of the N56, the regional and local road network require upgrading to improve safety, improve journey times and attract economic investment. The implementation of the National Broadband Scheme is required to ensure adequate digital connectivity. A significant number of Gaeltacht town and villages either have no (e.g. An Bun Beag-Doiri Beaga, Baile Na Finne, Loch An Luír) or inadequate (e.g. An Fal Carrach, Na Dunaibh, An Charraig) wastewater treatment capacity. Many also suffer from high commercial and/or residential vacancy rates (e.g. An Bun Beag-Diori Beaga, Ailt An Chorráin, An Fál Carrach and An Charraig). Many islands in the Gaeltacht suffer from a lack of or substandard infrastructure (e.g. water supply, roads etc). In addition, the Gaeltacht has a weak urban structure and many town and villages require significant urban regeneration interventions.

Nevertheless there are significant development opportunities for the Gaeltacht including in terms of: remote working opportunities, digital innovation and enterprise, cultural and language related tourism, the marine sector (including coastal recreation, island tourism, sustainable aquaculture, fishing, seafood processing, seaweed harvesting) and urban regeneration. The development plan will therefore support and facilitate such opportunities to enhance the social, economic and cultural vibrancy of the Gaeltacht.

Donegal County Council has been involved with central Government as regards Gaeltacht planning matters and the future publication of guidelines in relation to such matters may require the updating of the planning policy approach to the Irish language.

Objective:

GAE-O-1

To sustain and strengthen the Irish Language, to protect the cultural heritage of, and facilitate the sustainable social, physical, cultural, and economic development of the Gaeltacht.

Policies:

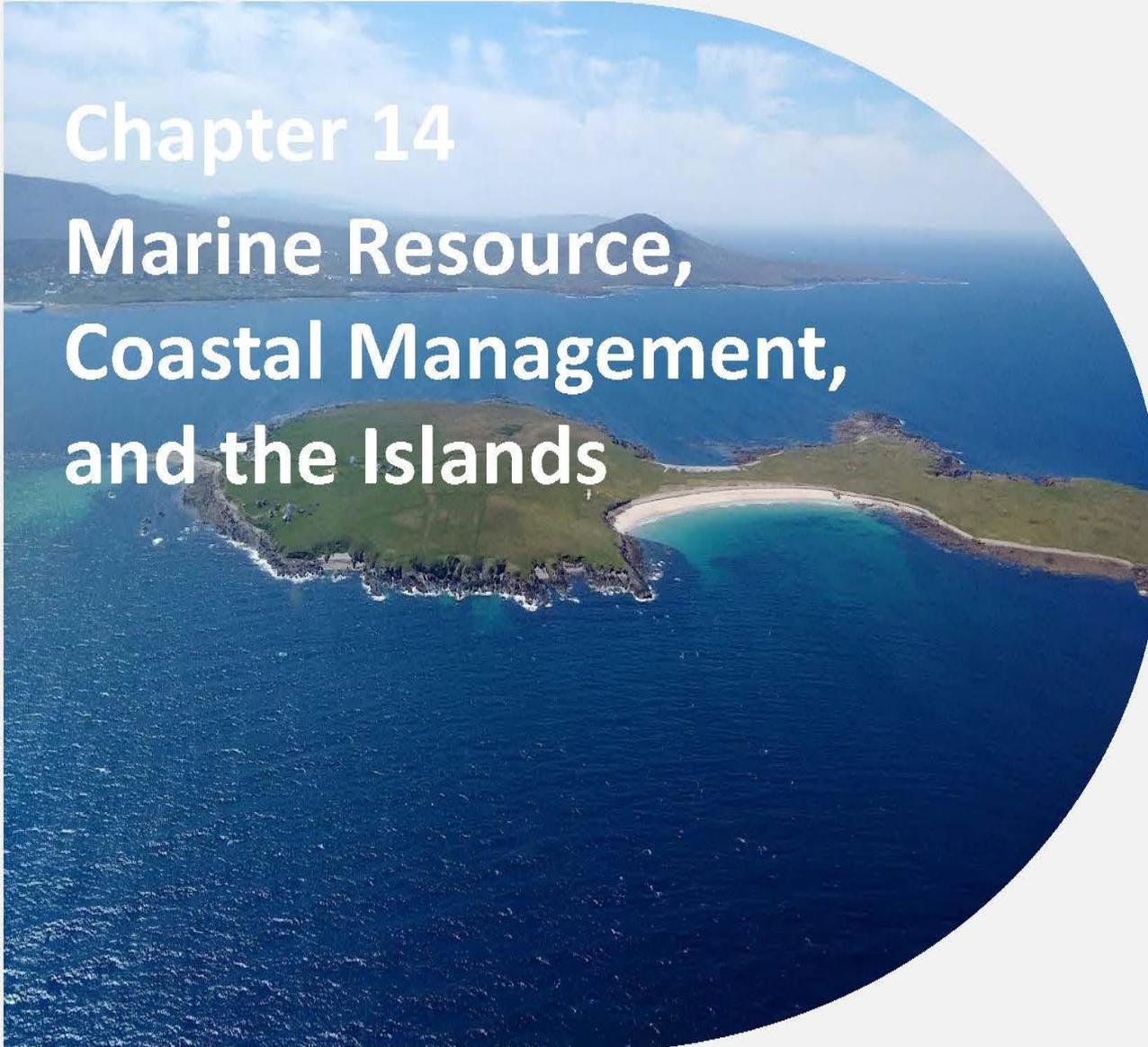
GAE-P-1

Support the implementation of language plans in Gaeltacht Language Planning areas, Gaeltacht Service Towns and Irish Language Networks by supporting the principle of related development proposals, undertaking Council related actions and collaborating with key stakeholders.

GAE-P-2

a. Impose a language condition on any planning permission for multiple residential development of 2 more dwellings in the Gaeltacht requiring that the

	<p>proportion of units to be occupied by Irish speakers equates to the proportion of Irish speakers within the subject DED (based on the latest available census data) subject to a minimum of 20% rounded to the nearest whole number of units where necessary.</p> <p>b. Require Language Impact Assessments for Multiple Residential Developments within Gaeltacht areas of 10 or more dwellings in all cases, and less than 10 dwellings where there is potential for a significant impact on the Irish language in the area, in accordance the associated technical standards of this plan.</p>
GAE-P-3	Facilitate sustainable single rural housing developments within the Gaeltacht in accordance with the rural housing policies of this plan.
GAE-P-4	<p>Support the principle of the following Irish language-related developments:</p> <p>a. educational, cultural and community developments including the provision of new, and the expansion of existing, Gaelsoileanna and Naíonraí, and youth and social infrastructure;</p> <p>b. strategic tourism projects supported by Udaras Na Gaeltachta;</p> <p>c. economic/enterprise development proposals including those in existing and new Údarás Na Gaeltachta business parks and sites, the completion of the Gteic network, remote working infrastructure and projects associated with the Gaeltacht Glás programme;</p> <p>d. the provision of enhanced transport, water and wastewater infrastructure; and</p> <p>e. urban regeneration and placemaking projects in Gaeltacht towns, villages and Islands.</p>
GAE-P-5	Support and facilitate the development of the marine sector in the Gaeltacht including island tourism, marine access and recreational infrastructure, onshore facilities for fishing, seafood processing, aquaculture, seaweed harvesting etc in accordance with the marine coastal and island policies of this plan.
GAE-P-6	Require the use of the Irish language in public, business, and community signage in accordance with the requirements of the Official Languages Act 2003(as amended) and any associated regulations and orders (where applicable) in accordance with the technical standards of this plan.

An aerial photograph of a tropical island, likely in the South Pacific, featuring a white sand beach, turquoise shallow water, and a dark blue ocean. The island is surrounded by a grey circular graphic element.

Chapter 14
Marine Resource,
Coastal Management,
and the Islands

Chapter 14 – Marine Resource, Coastal Management and the Islands

14.1 Introduction

As a coastal county on Ireland’s northwest Atlantic seaboard, Donegal has one of Ireland’s richest marine resources including 1,134 km of coastline (17% of the state’s total), 12 Blue Flag beaches, 2 Blue Flag Marinas, deep natural harbours, rich fishing grounds and coastal ecosystems, an abundant renewable marine energy potential, coastal communities and inhabited islands. This marine resource has allowed the fishing and aquaculture sectors to thrive, is of major importance to tourism and leisure activities, and is a fundamental part of our natural and cultural heritage. Moreover, an abundant offshore wind resource provides Donegal with an immense renewable energy asset which combined with ancillary onshore infrastructure, can be harnessed to deliver renewable energy and climate targets, greater energy security and local socio-economic benefits. The Council recognises the immense environmental, social and economic value of this marine and coastal resource and seeks to harness its potential in a sustainable manner.



14.2 Legal Context

The Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 created a new planning and regulatory framework for Ireland’s maritime area which:

- Defines an extensive Maritime Area consisting of Ireland’s internal waters, the territorial seas (extending out to 12 nautical miles), exclusive economic zone and continental shelf.
- Provides for a Forward Planning regime consisting of the National Marine Planning Framework, Designated Maritime Area Plans (for specific parts of the Maritime Area) and Ministerial Guidelines.
- Creates a 2-stage development consent process consisting of:
 - A legal consent process called Maritime Area Consent (MAC) to occupy a particular part of the Maritime Area regulated by the new Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA).
 - A planning consent process including a requirement for planning permission regulated by Coastal Planning Authorities in the ‘nearshore area’ (out to 3 nautical miles) and

otherwise by An Bord Pleanála for developments located in the 'outer maritime area' and for specific development types as identified through legislation.

- Provides for a Maritime Planning Enforcement System regulated by MARA and Coastal Planning Authorities.
- The Planning and Development Bill 2022 is currently in draft form and is undergoing legislative scrutiny. This draft Bill also seeks to incorporate provisions of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 and will influence both the policy and consenting processes that relate to the maritime territory.

14.3 National and Regional Policy Context

The Government's Marine Strategy '*Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth An Integrated Marine Plan for Ireland*' published in 2012 recognises our ocean wealth as a key element of economic recovery and sustainable growth. It sets out 3 high levels goals for managing Ireland's Marine resources, namely a thriving marine economy, a healthy ecosystem, and increasing our engagement with the sea, and aims to double the value of our ocean wealth to 2.4% GDP by 2030. In particular, it highlights offshore wind, cruise tourism, blue biotechnology, ocean renewables and aquaculture as key future growth opportunities.

The National Marine Planning Framework was formally adopted in May 2021 pursuant to the EU Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (2014/89/EU refers). This comprehensive framework sets out a range of national policies in relation to:

- Marine Environment/Ocean Health including: avoiding, minimising or mitigating impacts on species, natural capital assets, water quality, sea floor integrity, coastal habitat, marine litter, underwater noise, air pollution, preventing adverse impacts on SAC/SPAs, controlling invasive species, climate change etc.
- Maritime Economy including ensuring co-existence between different maritime uses and supporting land base infrastructure which facilitates marine activity.
- Social including avoiding, minimising, and mitigating impacts on public access, heritage assets, seascape and landscape, supporting access, communications, and energy proposals for island and coastal communities and supporting projects providing social benefits.
- Key Maritime Sectors including supporting the sustainable development of aquaculture and Offshore Renewable Energy, avoiding, minimising or mitigating impacts on, supporting diversification of, and maintaining harbour infrastructure for fishing and supporting water-based sports and marine recreation.

In this regard it is acknowledged that the NMPF provides a comprehensive overarching planning policy framework for maritime and coastal areas. Developments falling within the functional remit of this plan which may affect the maritime area should demonstrate compliance with the NMPF.

The National Planning Framework recognises the marine environment is a National asset with wide ranging benefits and cites the need to adopt a transboundary and co-approach to Marine planning and the importance of land-based infrastructure in harnessing offshore renewables. The NPF sets out a number of marine related National Policy Objectives including: supporting the sustainable growth and development of the *maritime economy and continue to invest in the seafood sectors and our Fishery Harbour Centres* (NPO 39), ensuring that the coastal resource is managed to sustain its physical character and environmental quality (NPO 41a) addressing the effects sea level changes and coastal flooding and erosion (NPO 41b), and supporting the development of Ireland's offshore renewable energy potential (NPO 42).

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region 2020-2032 sets out a number of marine related Regional Policy Objectives including: protecting, upgrading and expanding the key fisheries ports of Killybegs and Greencastle (RPO 4.31), enabling the expansion of regional blue economy assets such as marine research and innovation and seafood innovation (RPO 4.32) , facilitating marine renewable energy projects (RPO 4.33), developing marine resource innovation parks at Greencastle and Killybegs (PRO 4.34), upgrading and improving the region’s harbour and ports (RPO 4.35) and supporting increased access to coastal areas (RPO 4.1).

14.4 Coastal/Wild Atlantic Way Settlements

Donegal possesses a distinct set of coastal settlements ranging from larger towns such as Moville, Falcarragh, Glenties, Ardara to smaller places such as Culdaff, Portsalon, Downings, Carrick etc. These settlements provide specific functionality within our overall urban structure, being both key settlement nodes along the Wild Atlantic Way tourism route and also important local service centres, economic drivers, and employment centres for their respective local communities.

However due to a legacy of underinvestment, many of these settlements collectively face significant development challenges including: inadequate or lack of wastewater treatment (See Table below), poor/underdeveloped public realm and civic spaces, inadequate amenities, community and recreational infrastructure, vacancy and dereliction, and insufficient sustainable and active travel infrastructure. In turn, these deficiencies hinder the realisation of their tourism potential, are a barrier to additional residential development, disincentivise economic investment, detract from quality of life, and deter social/community development.

A programme of focused, collaborative, and co-ordinated investments and actions, combined with sustainable development management, can deliver the significant tourism and socio-economic potential of these coastal settlements. In this regard the Council considers that these settlements require a specific range of actions and interventions including:

- Delivery of wastewater treatment capacity and water supply infrastructure.
- Regeneration of the public realm and the provision of new/enhanced civic spaces.
- Provision of new amenity, recreation and community infrastructure (e.g. parks and playgrounds).
- Tackling vacancy and dereliction to provide new town centre living options, facilitate new economic development opportunities (e.g. digital or enterprise hubs) and to protect built heritage.
- Providing new and enhanced active travel and sustainable mobility infrastructure (e.g. footpaths, cycleways, bus stops/shelters, reallocation of existing road space) to encourage modal shift and a safer pedestrian environment.
- Creating new visitor facilities including: public conveniences, visitor parking and transient campervan facilities at sustainable locations.

Consequently, the Council will work with all key stakeholders (e.g. Local communities, Uisce Eireann and government departments) and utilise all suitable funding mechanisms (e.g. Rural Regeneration and Development, Town and Village Renewal Scheme, Croi Conaithe (Towns) fund etc) to deliver the necessary actions to tackle these development challenges in order to unlock the tourism and economic potential of, and deliver improved quality of life for, these coastal settlements.

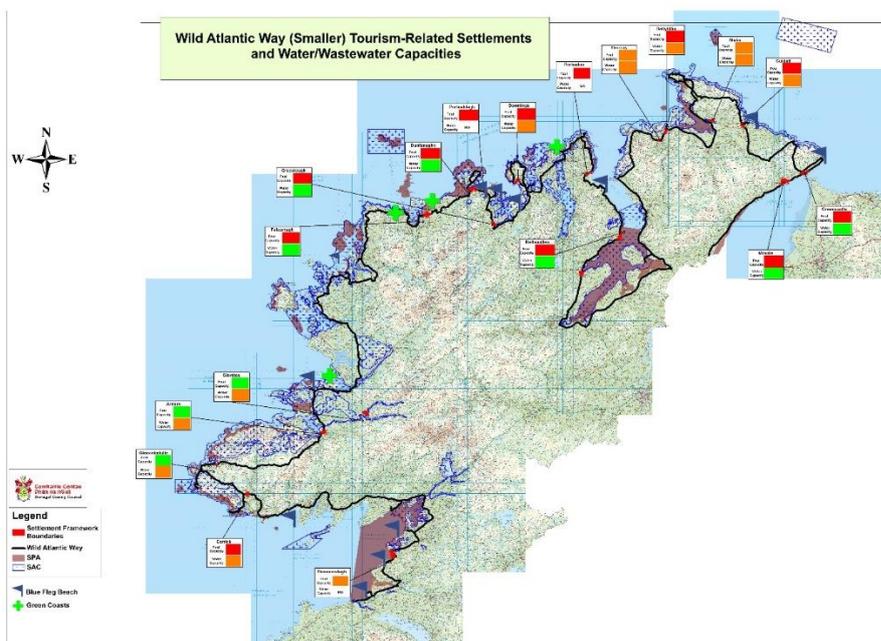
Figure 14.1: Spare Wastewater Treatment Capacity and Water Capacity in Coastal/Wild Atlantic Way Settlements

	Spare Wastewater Treatment Capacity	Water Capacity
Donegal MD		

Cill Chartaigh (Kilcar)		
An Charraig (Carrick)		
Glenties MD		
An Fál Carrach (Falcarragh)		
Cresslough		
Ardara		
Dunfanaghy		
Glenties		
Portnablagh		N/A
Letterkenny MD		
Na Dúnaibh		
Portsalon		N/A
Rathmullan		
Inishowen MD		
Ballyliffin		
Greencastle		
Malin		
Moville		
Clonmany		
Culdaff		

Legend

Wastewater Capacity		Spare capacity
		Capacity available to Urban Wastewater Standard only
		No spare capacity
Water Capacity		Capacity available
		Potential Capacity available





14.5 Fishing, Seafood and the Blue Economy

The contribution of fishing, seafood and related marine industries in Donegal remains strong despite challenges presented by quota restrictions and the loss of valuable fishing quota in UK waters due to Brexit. The 2013 National Ports Policy recognises Killybegs as a port of Regional Significance and in 2021 Killybegs remained Ireland's premier fishing port with €121m³⁹ worth of landings. The Killybegs region is a nationally important blue economy hub with well-established value-added seafood processing, marine engineering/servicing, renewable energy logistics, offshore support, and marine services industries. Recent funding to provide a 120m quay extension at Killybegs Fisheries Harbour Centre will help to alleviate congestion, increase overall port capacity, and facilitate the further expansion of the fishing, seafood, renewable energy and marine tourism sectors. Furthermore, increasing fishing vessel length may necessitate additional harbour expansion. Greencastle remains an important harbour with €9m⁴⁰ worth of landings in 2021 and is home to BIM National Fishery college. The completion of the Greencastle Breakwater Project will provide additional shelter and associated safety benefits for the fishing fleet.

Collectively the seafood sector in Donegal provided 1,938 and 4,327 jobs in direct and downstream seafood employment respectively in 2021, and seafood industries provide 16% of coastal employment in Donegal's marine related industries. In particular, it is recognised that Killybegs and Greencastle have significant clusters of marine industries and act as economic catalysts for their respective local economies. It is essential therefore to provide a planning framework which aids the further growth and diversification of the marine sector. Given the above context, the Plan will support the development of additional fisheries harbour infrastructure where necessary, and onshore fisheries related development at appropriate locations in accordance with the economic development policies of the plan.

³⁹ The Business of Seafood A Snapshot of Ireland's Seafood Sector 2021 (BIM, 2021) (P. 15)

⁴⁰ The Business of Seafood A Snapshot of Ireland's Seafood Sector 2021 (BIM, 2021) (P. 15)

14.6 Aquaculture

Donegal continues to have a robust aquaculture sector (e.g. salmon, oyster, mussel farming and seaweed harvesting) which provides considerable local employment both onshore and offshore for coastal communities and represents a profitable value-added export-orientated industry. The Council will therefore facilitate the sustainable development of onshore/ancillary aquaculture developments to sustain and maximise the potential of the sector whilst protecting marine ecosystems.

14.7 Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE)

Ireland's north western seaboard possesses one of the world's greatest offshore wind and wave resources. The Climate Action Plan 2021 aims to capitalise on this resource to provide 5GW of offshore wind energy by 2030 to meet Ireland's climate change and renewable energy targets. Designated Maritime Area Plans (DMAPs) under the new Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 will provide the necessary planning framework for new offshore renewable energy projects in maritime areas off Donegal. Whilst the shallower waters off south and east coasts of Ireland are providing an initial focus for fixed bottom offshore wind energy, floating offshore wind (FOW) energy projects are likely to commence off the west and north-western seaboard in the medium to long term.

The deployment of such projects will require onshore operation and maintenance facilities. Killybegs, with its strategic location, 12m deep quay, sheltered deep-water harbour, and marine service industries is ideally placed to provide and benefit from this sector. In addition, such deployment may present additional opportunities for Killybegs to provide shore-based support for ORE projects. In this context, it is likely that the provision of additional harbour and onshore facilities will have to be considered to enable Killybegs to fulfil its potential. The Government's *'Policy Statement on the Facilitation of Offshore Renewable Energy by Commercial Ports in Ireland'* (December 2021) recognises the need for large scale infrastructure for project deployment and smaller-scale port facilities for operation and maintenance, espouses a multiport approach, highlights OREport-related infrastructure funding opportunities for TEN-T network ports, and recognises the ORE opportunities for Killybegs. The importance of seeking TEN-T Comprehensive Network Status for Killybegs is specifically highlighted in the NWRA RSES (p.216 refers) and Chapter 8.1: 'Transport' in this Plan. The deployment of large-scale offshore renewable energy in the North West is dependent on the strategic necessity to upgrade the electricity transmission network to the north-west. Consequently, to harness this ORE potential the Council will support: the ancillary use of the existing fisheries harbour centre facilities for the ORE sector, the provision of additional harbour infrastructure to accommodate ORE sector requirements (subject to a demonstrated need); the upgrade of the electricity transmission network in Donegal and the designation of Killybegs Port as part of the TEN-T comprehensive network.

ORE may also provide a synergistic opportunity for the production of green hydrogen and its conversion to green ammonia within the Killybegs area. Such fuels could in turn be used for example in HGV transport, a sustainable marine propulsion fuel, or a heavy industry fuel for bulk export. This would require suitable lands for hydrogen production (electrolysis), ammonia conversion and storage facilities. The Council recognises this strategic potential and will investigate the feasibility and identification of suitable locations for this sector. The Council will seek to facilitate and support ORE Research and Development.

14.8 Onshore Renewable Energy

Killybegs port has emerged as an important logistics hub for onshore renewable energy development in recent years, ancillary to its primary function as a fisheries harbour. In particular, this role requires not only berthing space but set down space for turbine components. The Council will support the

continued use of Killybegs harbour as a logistics hub for onshore renewable energy. The Council will also support the principle of additional harbour infrastructure to facilitate this sector.

14.9 Islands

Donegal possesses a diverse range of islands including large/well populated islands (e.g. Arainn Mhór and Toraigh) smaller islands with low/seasonal populations (e.g. Rutland, Gabhla) and uninhabited islands (e.g. Inis Oirthir). Together these islands represent a unique geographic, scenic, environmental, heritage, cultural and linguistic asset for the County.

Each Island has its own distinctive character, population and infrastructural profile and issues. Collectively however the Islands face a range of development challenges including: depopulation, socio-economic disadvantage, the need to sustain, support and enhance marine access and any associated ferry services, a lack of mains water and electricity supply, inadequate tourism infrastructure (e.g. public conveniences), localised coastal erosion and the influence of protected habitats.

In the context of these issues, the Islands' sublime landscapes and seascapes, rich built heritage, robust communities, the Irish language, marine and coastal assets, together with modern communications provide key development opportunities including: island and marine tourism (e.g. day trips, marine charters, fishing, kayaking, walking, bird watching, and rock climbing), language, cultural and linguistic tourism and, increasingly, remote working.

The Council is committed to sustaining island communities, enhancing their social, economic, tourism and cultural vitality whilst enhancing their environment, heritage, and landscape (e.g. the Árainn Mhór shorefront and Burtonport harbour project). Consequently, in view of the above challenges and opportunities the Council will work collaboratively with island Communities and relevant stakeholders to support sustainable developments of the Islands subject to natural and built heritage policies of the plan.



14.10 Cruise Ship Tourism

With a strategic 12m deep water all-weather quay at Killybegs, and sheltered deep-water anchorages at Lough Foyle and Lough Swilly and a wealth of nearby scenic, historic and cultural attractions (e.g.

Sliabh Liag, the Wild Atlantic Way, Glenveagh National Park, Dunree Fort) the North-West is an ideal destination for the cruise ship market. The deep-water quay at Killybegs Fisheries Harbour has attracted a significant number of large-scale cruise ships in recent years bringing considerable local economic benefits. Foyle Port has proposed additional cruise ship berthing facilities at Greencastle and it is acknowledged that this project has the potential to significantly enhance its usability and attractiveness as a cruise destination. The Council will continue to support the use of Killybegs fisheries harbour as a Cruise Ship destination including the facilitation of additional berthing facilities where necessary and where compatible with the functioning of the fisheries harbour. In addition, subject to appropriate feasibility studies, the Council will support the provision of cruise ship berthing facilities at Greencastle.

14.11 Marine and Coastal Access Infrastructure

Donegal has an extensive network of marine access infrastructure including approximately 100 harbours, piers, and slipways, as well as pontoons and visitor moorings, which provide vital marine access infrastructure for coastal fishing, angling, aquaculture, marine tourism and leisure sectors.

Whilst coastal fishing has declined in recent decades marine tourism and leisure are increasing in popularity and there is a growing demand and need for associated marine access infrastructure and ancillary facilities. Donegal has a rugged tidal coastline and marine tourism studies have emphasised the need to create a chain of safe berthing facilities at regular intervals to facilitate visiting boats. In this regard the marina at Fahan and other recent developments at Donegal Town, Mountcharles, Killybegs, Kilcar, Teelin, Ardara, Burtonport, Rathmullan, Ballywhoriskey(Fanad), Bonagee(Culdaff) and Greencastle represent significant marine leisure and tourism assets. It is also recognised that other piers and harbours and visitor mooring at locations such as Creevy, Bundoran, Teelin, Arranmore, Kincasslagh, Bunbeg, Magheragallon, Portnablagh, Downings, Mevagh, Portsalon, Bunrana and Portmore, provide important local infrastructure for a wide range of marine activities including coastal fishing, sea angling, marine charter, diving and other marine leisure activities. In addition, the council also acknowledge the important roles of Fahan, Rathmullan and Greencastle as sailing centres and Bundoran and Rosstown as surfing centres.

The Council therefore recognises the need to maintain and, where appropriate, enhance Donegal's marine access infrastructure in order to sustain the fishing, angling, marine tourism and leisure sectors. In this regard the Council will:

- Progress projects to provide new floating pontoon facilities at **Mevagh, Burtonport, Bunbeg and Ballyshannon**.
- Upgrade marine access infrastructure at key piers and harbours subject to an identified need and resource availability.
- Provide ancillary infrastructure (e.g. parking, vehicular and pedestrian access, safety barriers and public toilets) at other piers and harbours subject to demand and financial resources.

In addition, the Council recognises the socio-economic and tourism importance, and will continue to support the operations of, the Greencastle-Magilligan and Rathmullan-Bunrana car ferry routes during the lifetime of the plan.



14.12 Foyle Port

The strategic role of Foyle Port as a cross-border operation is a key infrastructural asset, marine gateway, and economic enabler for the North-West City Region. In this context the Council supports the continued growth of the Foyle Port's facilities, the provision of improved infrastructural links to the port, and, subject to appropriate feasibility study, the provision of enhanced cruise ship berthing facilities at Greencastle.

14.13 Coastal Management

Donegal has a unique and varied coastline with rocky cliffs, headlands, sea loughs, coastal estuaries, beaches (including 12 blue flag and 4 green coast award beaches) and dune systems and associated valuable and sensitive marine and coastal habitats (including designated Natura 2000 sites) This coastline and the associated marine environment has long been recognized as one of Donegal's key scenic, environmental, recreational and tourism assets.

The maintenance and improvement of water quality in coastal and bathing waters requires a multifaceted/multi-stakeholder approach including improving municipal wastewater treatment facilities, providing individual Wastewater Treatment Systems to EPA standards in unsewered areas, and sustainable agricultural management practices. The Council will therefore implement the wastewater infrastructure policies of this plan to maintain and improve such water quality. The Council will also protect and manage the visual scenic and environmental amenities of our coastal areas in accordance with the natural heritage policies of this plan.

In recent years pressures on coastal areas and associated marine environments have increased due to development pressures and higher seasonal visitor numbers and associated increased demands for improved beach/coastal access and recreational infrastructure and management services. The retention of our strategically important Blue Flag Beaches requires adherence to strict environmental education and management, water quality, and safety criteria. Green Coast beaches require the

achievement of excellent water quality and environmental management to protect the natural environment. To sustainably manage this vital resource the Council therefore recognizes the need to maintain, and improve, such infrastructure and services including: vehicular parking and management, public conveniences/changing facilities, playgrounds/play areas, pedestrian/cycling infrastructure, waste management, informational signage water safety, as well as implementing beach and maritime craft byelaws and protect the underlying environmental resource including sensitive habitats.

Coastal change, such as coastal erosion and deposition, is a phenomenon which can result from both natural processes (e.g. wave action, longshore drift) and human actions (e.g. sand removal, trampling of dunes, building of piers, harbours, causeways etc). Donegal's soft shorelines such as beaches and dune systems, generally based on a finite resource of glacial derived sand, formed by a complex interplay of geomorphological forces, and involving finely balanced sediment budgets, represent a unique and fragile resource which requires careful management. In this regard coastal erosion and deposition is often part of a natural cyclical process.

Donegal has been largely insulated from significant sea level rise to date by post glacial uplift. However, our coastline and coastal developments are at risk from increased storm surges and future sea level rise from climate change. Flood risk mapping for future climate change related sea level rise scenarios is available through floodinfo.ie and the Council will utilize these and other appropriate datasets in managing development in coastal areas in accordance with the flood risk management policies of the plan (See Section 8.4 of the Plan).

There are a range of strategies for managing coastal erosion/sea level rise which are suitable to specific locations and circumstances including doing nothing (e.g. in remote unpopulated areas), managed retreat (e.g. allowing low-lying rural areas to flood/erode), or holding the line (e.g. protecting urban or valuable areas via hard engineering solutions such as sea walls or rock armour or soft engineering solutions such as dune protection or beach nourishment).

The Council recognizes that hard engineering solutions are the most resource intensive, costly and also may result in high levels of interference with natural processes. Consequently, it is best coastal management practice that such solutions only be used in limited strategic circumstances where supported by appropriate risk managements studies. In addition to natural coastal erosion and sea level rise, our coastline is also at risk from developments that may alter natural coastal process such as a longshore drift and tidal currents and thus cause siltation/deposition and also potentially increase erosion elsewhere due to the resulting displacement of sediment.



Objectives

MRCM-O-1	To sustain and enhance the economic, social and cultural, and tourism vitality of Donegal’s marine sector, coastal communities and islands communities.
MRCM-O-2	To safeguard and enhance the health of Donegal’s marine and coastal ecosystems and sustainably manage our coastal environment.

Policies

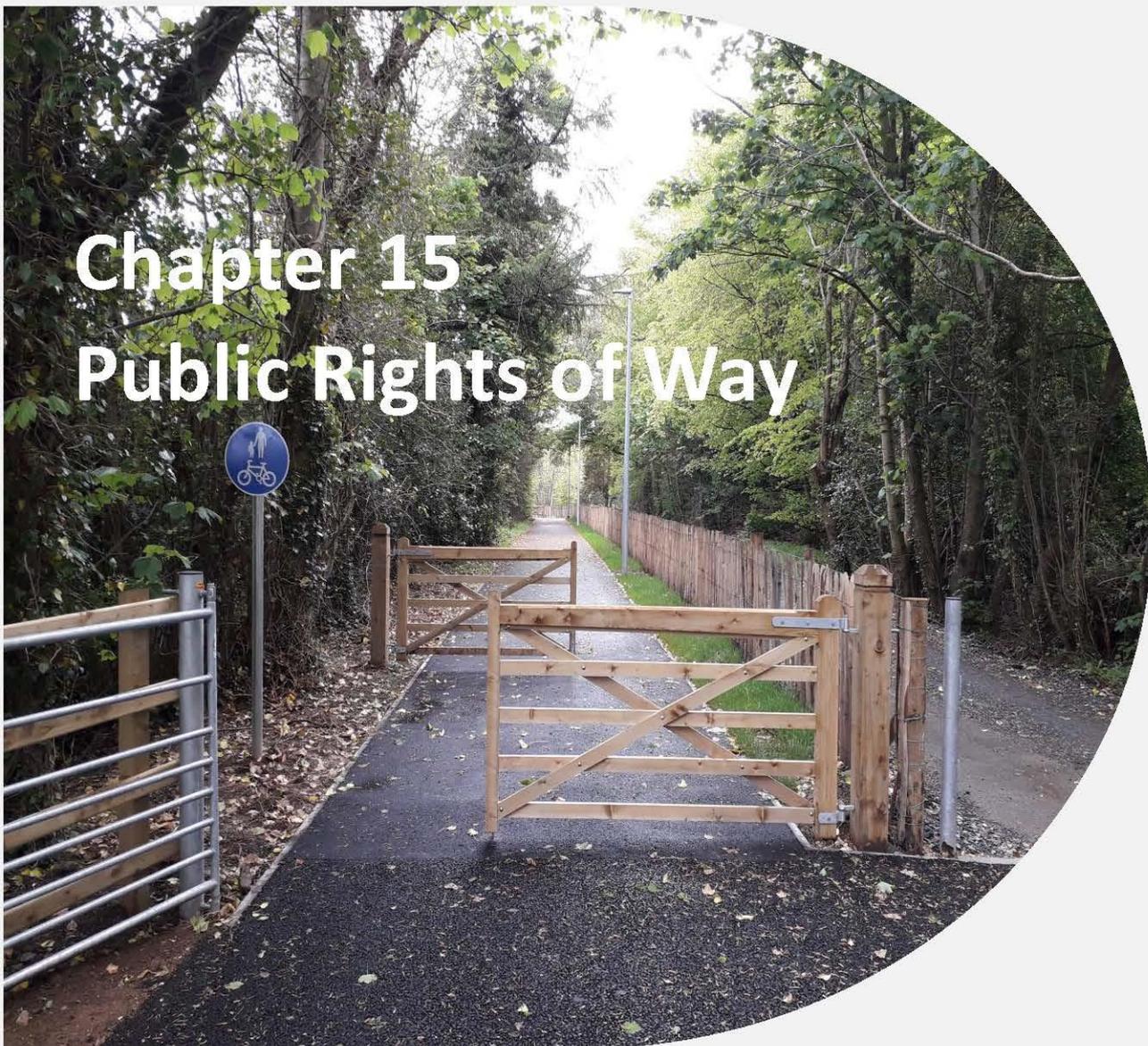
MRCM-P-1	To ensure that development proposals are consistent with the National Marine Planning Framework including the environmental, economic, social and sectoral objectives and policies detailed therein.
MRCM-P-2	<p>To support and facilitate the provision of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • additional wastewater treatment capacity and water supply upgrades • public realm improvements, • new/enhanced civic, cultural, green, amenity, and recreational infrastructure, • initiatives to tackle vacancy and dereliction • active and sustainable transport infrastructure and visitor facilities in our coastal/Wild Atlantic Way settlements.
MRCM-P-3	To safeguard and enhance the roles of Killybegs, Greencastle, and Burtonport, as centres of fishing, fleet activity, seafood processing and/or ancillary marine services and education including, where necessary the provision of additional harbour infrastructure, and facilitate the diversification of such locations into new

	areas of appropriate investment and employment opportunities, including marine related economic activity.
MRCM-P-4	<p>To support the development of Killybegs as a centre for Offshore Renewable Energy and as a marine logistics hub for onshore wind energy, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitating operations and maintenance; • storage infrastructure; • engineering and assembly activities ; • ancillary marine support services and training, research and development facilities; • its designation as a Comprehensive TEN-T Network Port; and • supporting the development of additional harbour infrastructure where necessary and compatible with its primary function as a fisheries harbour.
MRCM-P-5	To facilitate onshore aquaculture related developments including servicing, marine access, storage and processing-related developments. including where feasible the development of a seaweed biorefinery.
MRCM-P-6	To support and maintain existing, and facilitate the improvement of, marine access infrastructure and ferry services, tourism, cultural, community, transport, remote working and education facilities for Donegal’s Islands.
MRCM-P-7	<p>a. To facilitate the development of new, and the upgrading of existing, small scale marine and inland waters access infrastructure including piers, harbours, berthing/pontoon facilities, slipways for fishing, angling, marine tourism and leisure purposes, subject to an identified need.</p> <p>b. To facilitate large scale marine access infrastructure (e.g. marinas in excess of 100 berths, large scale harbour facilities) in accordance with the following locational criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Within established ports/harbours or coastal settlements ii. At alternative locations, excluding areas of Especially High Scenic Amenity where there are no suitable sites available which met the locational criteria in Point a) or where the development is functionally tied to a specific location. <p>c. To support the continued operation of the Greencastle to Magilligan and Buncrana to Rathmullan Ferry Services.</p> <p>d. To support the development of Killybegs and Greencastle as regional cruise ship destinations including where necessary the facilitation of additional cruise ship berthing facilities in Killybegs (where compatible with its primary function as a fisheries harbour) and provision of cruise ship berthing facilities at Greencastle.</p>
MRCM-P-8	<p>a. To support the maintenance of, and where a there is a demonstrated need, facilitate improved coastal/beach infrastructure and management services at Blue Flag beaches and candidate locations including: pedestrian/cycling access; vehicular parking and management, public conveniences/changing facilities, playgrounds/play areas, pedestrian/cycling infrastructure, waste management, informational signage, water safety, and implementing beach and maritime craft byelaws.</p> <p>b. Ensure other developments do not have a significant adverse impact on existing public access to coastal areas.</p>

<p>MRCM-P-9</p>	<p>To facilitate development proposals for, or the carrying out of works to prevent, coastal erosion or flooding where the location is subject to significant long-term coastal erosion/flooding or the effects of sea-level rise and there is strategic justification for such interventions (e.g. to protect built up urban areas or strategic developments).</p>
<p>MRCM-P-10</p>	<p>To ensure that new marine and coastal developments do not give rise to significant coastal change, nor have a significant adverse impact on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The visual and scenic amenities of the coastline/seascape and the marine environment in accordance with the natural heritage policies of this plan. • Sensitive physical coastal environments (e.g. beaches, sand dunes and other soft shorelines) and take appropriate measures to protect same where necessary. • Coastal Geomorphological processes and systems (e.g. longshore drift, tidal currents, sediment budgets).. <p>Where potential impacts are identified, appropriate evidence-based assessments shall be provided to demonstrate compliance with this policy.</p>

Chapter 15

Public Rights of Way



Chapter 15 – Public Rights of Way

15.1 Introduction

Public rights of way are an important recreational amenity for local people and visitors and their enjoyment of landscapes, as well as providing linkages to amenities such as shore fronts, lakes and forests. The Council recognise the importance of protecting existing public rights of way which often provide important access to recreational resources, the integrity of which should be protected.

It is a requirement of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) to include an objective for the preservation of public rights of way. The identification on maps and listing of such public rights of way is a further requirement of the Act. The Planning Authority is currently reviewing the data available to it on this matter with a view to presenting detailed information as a Material Alteration to the Plan later in the process.

Objective

PROW-O-1	To preserve public rights of way which give access to seashore, mountain, lakeshore, riverbank or other place of natural beauty or recreational utility.
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Policy

PROW-P-1	It is a policy of the Council to only support development where such proposals would not give rise to any impeding or obstruction of any public rights of way identified in this Plan.
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Chapter 16 – Technical Standards

Policy TS-P-1	To require compliance with the following technical standards, where applicable, in addition to all other relevant policy provisions of this Plan and relevant Governmental guidance and standards.
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Telecommunications Infrastructure

Development proposals for multiple residential developments shall provide open access fibre connections and vendor neutral ducting throughout the development.

All ducting (public and private) shall be designed and installed in accordance with 'Recommendations for Underground Telecommunications Cable Works - For Road, Commercial and Residential Schemes'.

Bonds

In the case of developments comprising 2 or more houses, developers shall be required to give adequate security by way of a cash deposit or bond to ensure satisfactory completion and maintenance of development, including maintenance until taken in charge, in circumstances where the development satisfies the Council's policy on Takeover of Private Housing Estates. Where the development satisfies the Council's policy in respect of Takeover but the residents/developer have made alternative suitable arrangements for maintenance, such as a Management company, then the security may be released.

A condition shall be imposed in accordance with the provisions of Section 34(4)(g) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The amount of the security will be calculated on the basis of €5000 per house within a development that contains no mechanical/electrical equipment. In instances where the development contains mechanical/electrical equipment the security shall be €15,000 per house.

The developer will be required to provide "as constructed" drawings, CCTV survey, a written report and written certification that infrastructural services have been completed to the required standards before the security is released.

Transport

All Public Roads

Requirement for Traffic and Transport Statement

Certain development proposals will generate significant trips either by car, commercial vehicle, cycling, walking or public transport, with potentially serious implications for the local road network, this could in some circumstances necessitate changes to the road/junction layout and capacity in order to address road safety concerns and maintain a satisfactory level of service for road users. In these circumstances a traffic and transport assessment (TTA) may be required to fully address the implications arising and assist the evaluation of the planning application. Planning applications requiring an access on to a public road and generating significant additional traffic must be

accompanied by a completed Transport and Traffic Statement, i.e. TTS 1 and a TTS 2. These will not normally be required in the case of an application for a single dwelling

The Traffic and Transportation Assessment should be an impartial description of the impacts of proposed development and should outline both positive and negative aspects. The scope of which must be agreed with the Councils Road's Engineers and relevant Guidance documents.

Requirement for Safety Audit

In certain instances a road safety audit may be required to better inform that assessment of the safety implications of the proposed development and to aid the identification of appropriate measures required to maintain safety standards. Safety audits may only be carried out by safety audit teams, the members of which have been approved by the NRA/Local authority.

What to safety Audit:

- Road safety audits are mandatory for all planning applications on National Roads (TII Publication GE-STY-01024; NRA HD19).
- On Local roads Safety Audits are mandatory for applications in excess of 50 dwellings or other developments of similar traffic types and/or volumes or as deemed necessary by Donegal County Council in the interests of traffic safety.
- On developments where NRA DMRB Standards may be difficult to achieve, the applicant may submit alternatives supported by a feasibility stage safety audit for consideration.

When to Safety Audit:

- Feasibility stage (F) – a comparative assessment of options.
- Stage 1 – Completion of preliminary design.
- Stage 2 – completion of detailed design.
- Stage 1/2 - Combined for minor schemes.
- Stage 3 – Completion of construction/prior to open to traffic.

Roadside Boundaries in Rural Areas

- The line of existing roadside boundaries in rural areas should be retained, where possible, particularly along scenic roads, subject to traffic safety considerations, whereby setback may be required. The setback area shall be soiled to a height no higher than 100mm above the level of the adjacent carriageway and shall be seeded with grass.
- All roadside boundaries to be maintained by landowner to ensure vision line requirements are preserved. (low Level Planting to ensure visibility).
- Roadside boundary in rural areas shall be setback to the minimum distance specified in Table 12.1 below to facilitate the entrance.

Table 16.1 Roadside Boundaries in Rural Areas

ROAD TYPE	MINIMUM SETBACK FROM CENTRE LINE OF ROAD
National Secondary Road	10.0m
National Primary Road	12.0m
Regional	6.5m
County Road	5.0m

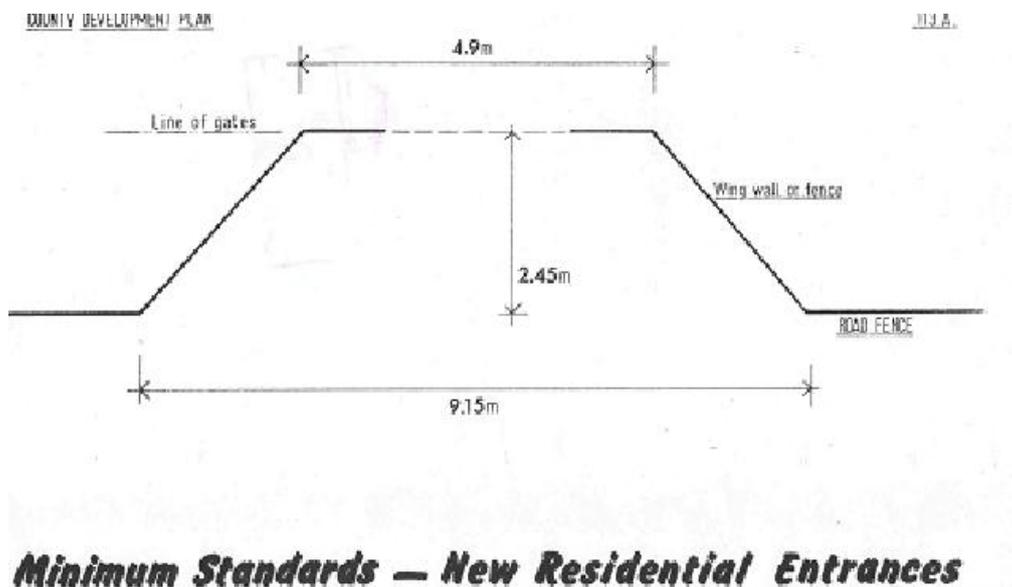
Should the existing roadside ownership boundary be further back than the setback identified in the table above, then that boundary shall be retained.

Should the existing adjacent roadside development boundary setback be less than that stated in the table above, the Council shall decide the minimum setback.

Reference should also be made to Building a House in Rural Donegal A Location Siting and Design Guide (refer to the councils website) where it refers to boundary treatment/entrance and access.

Entrance Details

- Entrance details for residential properties shall be laid out in accordance with Table 16.1 and Figure 21.1, Entrance Details and Residential Properties.

Figure 16.1 Entrance Details For Residential Properties

- For non-residential entrances the setback of entrance gates/barrier from road kerb shall be minimum of 20m.

Entrance radii for all developments other than single dwellings, shall provide public road/development junction radii in accordance with TII standards. Internal radii within residential developments shall be a minimum of 6m.

Internal access roads shall be designed and constructed in accordance with Recommendations for Site Development Works for Housing Areas and Design Manual, Donegal County Council.

Driveway access shall not be located at the mouth of a junction nor within twice the kerb radius on minor arms of a junction.

Surface Water and Roadside Drainage

Existing roadside drainage shall be maintained and surface water road gullies or alternative suitable system shall be provided to cater for run-off from the public road. The entrance shall be designed to prevent discharge of water from site onto public road or footpath. Surface water systems shall preferably be routed to discharge to a suitable watercourse, capable of accommodating the anticipated volume of water (soakpits shall not normally be encouraged). All proposed road works shall include fully designed drainage systems to the final outfall and shall include attenuation systems where necessary particularly on steep sites or at outfalls which may be deemed to be at or near capacity.

Visibility Splays at junctions/Site Entrances

Visibility splays at junctions and site entrances shall be provided in accordance with 12.3 or table 12.4, as appropriate.

Road Re-instatement

Any damage to public roads occurring as a result of a development shall be repaired to the satisfaction of the County Council, where deemed necessary, a cash security may be required to guarantee the satisfactory repair of damage.

In certain circumstances the road network may be deficient in carrying capacity and it may be appropriate to facilitate the development subject to a requirement that road strengthening works be undertaken by the Council at the expense of the developer. In such circumstances a development contribution shall be levied or in appropriate circumstances a condition may be imposed requiring works to be undertaken by the developer to Council specifications, including indemnification of the Council.

Non-National Roads

Maximum Acceptable Gradient on Approach to Public Road

The table below is indicative of maximum gradients permissible on roads– refer to NRA DMRB for more detail:

Table 16.2 Internal Residential/Industrial Roads

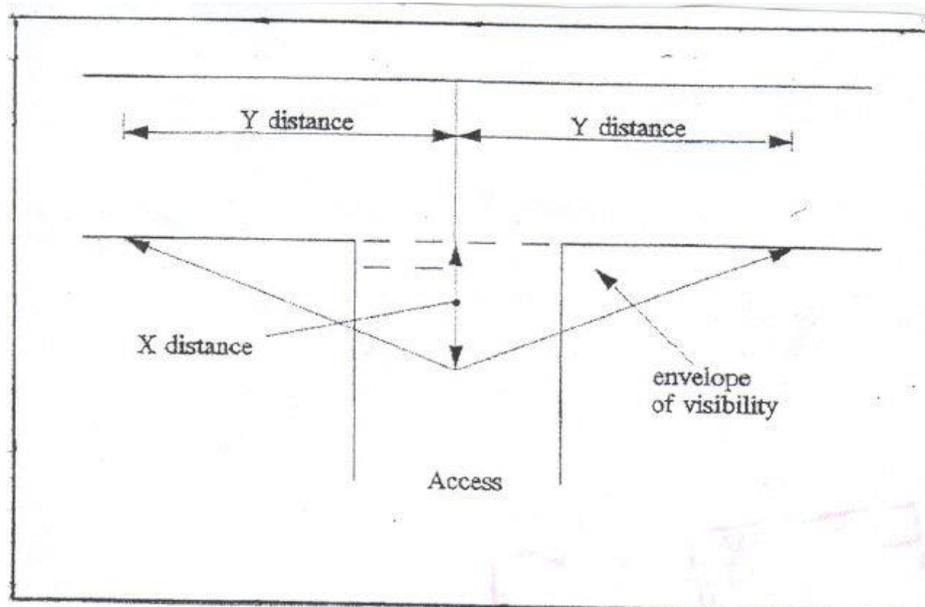
	Access Point	Section adjacent to Public Road	Maximum internal road gradient
TD41-42/09/ DN-GEO03043	Direct Access	15m @ 2.5%*	10% gradient
	Single Access **	15m @ 2.5%	

* can be relaxed to 10m dwell area and 4% in difficult circumstances

** can be relaxed to 5m dwell area and 4% in difficult circumstances

Vision Lines

Vision Lines at junctions with Non-National Public Roads: Permanent visibility splays shall be provided to enable emerging drivers using the direct access to have adequate visibility in each direction to see oncoming traffic in sufficient time to make their manoeuvre safely without influencing the major road traffic speed. Vision Lines at junctions with the Non-National Public Road in rural areas outside a 60kph speed limit zone shall be in accordance with Table 03 Appendix 3 and Figure 02 Appendix 3. Visibility in urban areas within a 60kph speed limit shall be based on the stopping sight distances set out under Table 12.4 and in accordance with Figure 12.2 or 21.3, as appropriate. Deviation from the requirements in Table 12.3 /Table 12.4 may be considered upon certification by the Applicant's Designer to be designed and constructed in accordance with the DMRB/DMURS as appropriate. The following diagram details the method by which the site envelope shall be calculated and presented for all planning applications, with the exception of urban roads where there is a constraint on overtaking.

Figure 16.2 Measurement for visibility Splays [X & Y distances]

Definition of 'X' and 'Y' distances

The 'X' distance is referred to as the setback distance and shall be measured from the continuation of the nearer edge of the major road running lane (edge of carriageway markings and not the hard strip) along the centreline of the direct access. Where a hard shoulder on the major road continues across the line of the direct access, the 'X' distance shall be measured from the back of the hard shoulder.

The 'Y' distance is the minimum permissible vision line and shall be measured from a point on the nearer edge on the main road running lane to its intersection with the centreline of the access road.

For regional and local urban roads, where overtaking is prohibited by a solid white line, a relaxation may be allowed to measure the visibility splay to the left to the near side edge for oncoming traffic, rather than the near side edge of the road; See Figure 16.3

Figure 16.3 Alternative visibility Splay for urban regional and local roads where overtaking is prohibited (source: DMURS).

Forward visibility splays refer to an X and Y value. The X value allows drivers to observe traffic on the intersected arm. The Y value allows the driver of a vehicle to stop safely should an object enter its path, and is based on the SSD value

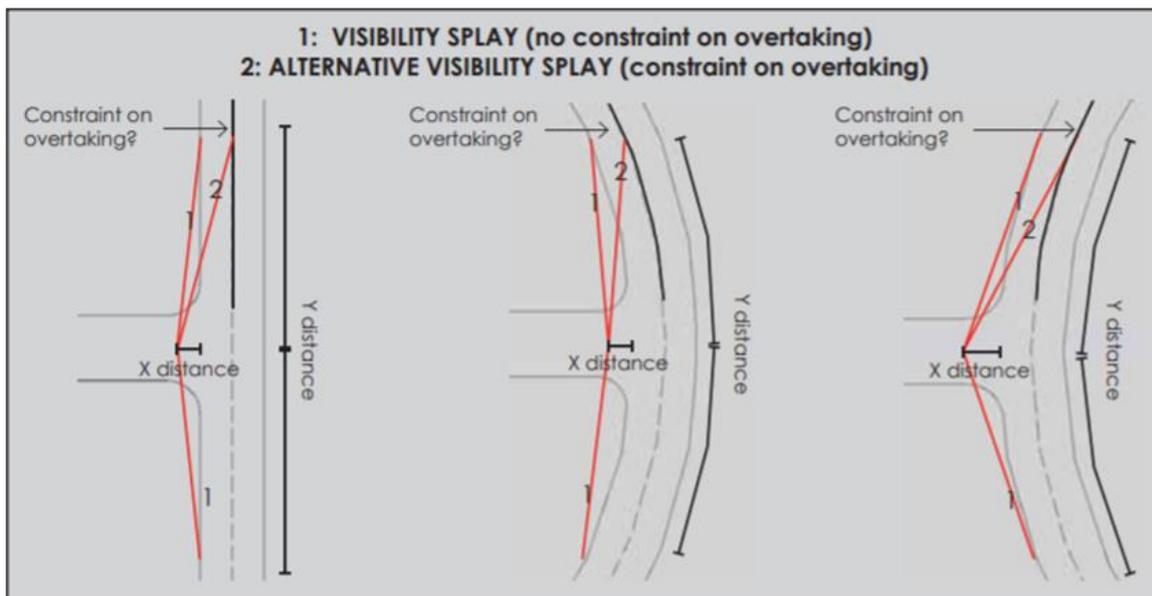


Table 16.3: Vision Lines at accesses to Non-National Rural Roads, outside 60kph speed limit zone

Vision Lines at accesses to Non-National Roads				
DMRB - Ref	Access Type	Speed (Kph)	Y Distance (Metres)	X Distance (Metres)
TD 41- 42/09 Table 7.1/DN- GEO-03043	Multiple Access	42	50	3m*-9m**
	Multiple Access	50	70	3m*-9m**
	Multiple Access	60	90	3m*-9m**
	Multiple Access	70	120	3m*-9m**
	Multiple Access	85	160	3m*-9m**
	Multiple Access	100	215	3m*-9m**
	Single Access		Dependant on speed limit above	2.4m

* When stop sign is erected at junction

** When yield sign is erected at junction

Table 16.4 Stopping Sight Distances for Urban Areas within 60kph speed limit zone (SSD).

Reduced SSD standards for application within cities, towns and villages. Reduced forward visibility increases driver caution and reduces vehicle speeds

SSD STANDARDS			
Design Speed (km/h)	SSD Standard (metres)	Design Speed (km/h)	SSD Standard (metres)
10	7	10	8
20	14	20	15
30	23	30	24
40	33	40	36
50	45	50	49
60	59	60	65
Forward Visibility		Forward Visibility on Bus Routes	

(Source: DMURS)

Building Setback on Non-National Roads

A minimum of 25m setback will be required from centreline of carriageway on Regional Roads and 15m setback will be required from centreline of carriageway on Local Roads. Where existing buildings have formed an established building line, new buildings may follow the established building line, and the proposed set back may not be required.

Stopping Sight Distance

Minimum stopping sight distances on Non-National Roads in rural areas outside a 60 kph speed limit zone shall be in accordance with Table 12.5 below. Deviation from the requirements in Table 16.5 may be considered upon certification by the applicant's designer to be designed and constructed in accordance with DMRB.

Table 16.5 Stopping Sight Distances

Design Speed (km/h)	100	80	70	60	50
Stopping Sight Distance (m)	215	160	120	90	70

Source: DMRB ref TD 9/07 / TII DN-GEO-03031

Parking

Table 16.6 Car Parking Standards⁴¹

Development	Car-Parking	Cycle-Parking (no. of stands)
Dwellings/Residential		
Dwelling house	2 per dwelling House 1.5 per Terraced Dwelling House	None provided external access is provided to back garden/yard otherwise 1 per unit.
Duplex (upper floor dwelling unit)	2 per Dwelling	1 covered stand per unit
Apartments/Flat	1.25 per One Bedroom 1.5 per Two Bedroom 1.75 per Three Bedroom	1 covered stand per unit
Caravans/Mobile Home	1 space per Caravan/Mobile Home	
Shops/Retail		
Shops/Retail Food	1 per 20m ² publicly accessible floor area Plus Parking for Delivery Vehicles	Minimum of 2 per unit. 1 per 500m ² publicly accessible floor area 1 per 250m ² publicly accessible floor area thereafter

⁴¹ Note: These standards shall not be applied in certain town centre areas where there are specific policy provisions relating to town centre parking.

Development	Car-Parking	Cycle-Parking (no. of stands)
Shops/Retail Non Food	1 per 25m ² publicly accessible floor area Plus Parking for Delivery Vehicles	1 per 100m ² publicly accessible floor area 1 per 500m ² publicly accessible floor area thereafter
Bulky Goods Retail	1 per 35m ² publicly accessible floor area Plus Parking for Delivery Vehicles	Minimum of 2 per unit. 1 per 500m ² publicly accessible floor area
Offices and Professional Services		
Offices and Financial/ Professional and other Services principally to serve visiting members of the public	1 per 30m ²	1 per 100m ²
Industrial/Light Industrial/Storage or Distribution		
Heavy Industrial	Assessed on individual merits having regard to the number of workers, operating patterns, location and proximity to public transport but with a minimum of 1 per 2 employees	Assessed on individual merits having regard to the number of workers, operating patterns, location and proximity to public transport but with a minimum of 1 per 10 employees
Light Industrial	As above	As above
Warehousing	As above	As above
Hotels/Hostels/Guesthouses		
Hotels/Guest Houses (Excluding internal Bars, Restaurants and Function Rooms) - to be calculated separately.	1 per bedroom Plus 1 space per 10 Bedrooms Staff Car Parking Plus Parking for Delivery Vehicles	1 per 10 Bedrooms with a minimum of 2 stands.
Hostels	1 space per 5 beds	1 per 20 Beds with a minimum of 2 stands.

Development	Car-Parking	Cycle-Parking (no. of stands)
Restaurants and Take Aways		
Restaurant	1 per 9m ² publicly accessible floor area	1 per 100m ² publicly accessible floor area
Take Away (including take away counter within restaurants)	Minimum of 5 spaces up to 30m ² publicly accessible floor area and 1 per 10m ² thereafter	1 per Take Away
Educational/Childcare Establishments		
Schools - Primary and Secondary	1.5 per classroom	2.5 per classroom
Third level Colleges/other Public/Private Adult/Further Education Facilities	5 per classroom	4 per classroom
Childcare Facilities	1 per employee plus 0.25 spaces per child (as defined by the maximum number of children allowable for the floorspace provided as set out in Government Childcare Regulations)	1 per 5 employees
Healthcare Facilities		
Health Centres, Doctors Surgeries, Healthcare Practitioners, Dentists, Veterinary Surgeries etc	3 per consulting room Plus dedicated ambulance space at health centres Plus adequate turning/manoeuvring space at veterinary surgeries for large animals.	1 per consulting room
Nursing Homes	1 per on duty employee 1 per bed/room visitor car parking plus parking for Delivery Vehicles.	1 per 5 employees
Hospitals	1 space per doctor or consultant 2 spaces per 3 nursing staff 1 space per 3 beds 3 spaces per outpatient consulting room Plus operational space for ambulance service lorries.	1 per 10 staff

Development	Car-Parking	Cycle-Parking (no. of stands)
Social/Entertainment		
Public Houses without dancing areas	1 per 20m ² publicly accessible floor area	1 per 200m ² publicly accessible floor area.
Public Houses/Nightclubs/Music venues with dancing areas	1 per 20m ² publicly accessible floor area Plus set down area to accommodate a minimum of 3 taxis, 2 bus parking spaces at non town centre sites.	1 per 200m ² publicly accessible floor area.
Social/Religious/Assembly		
Function Rooms/Conference Centres	1 per 10m ² Plus set down area for taxis/other vehicles and dedicated bus parking as/where appropriate at non-town centre sites.	1 per 200m ²
Cinema	1 per 5 no. seats	1 per 200m ²
Theatre	1 per 5 no. seats	1 per 200m ²
Church	1 per 5 no. seats	1 per 200m ²
Community/Sports Facilities		
Libraries	1 per 50m ²	Minimum of 5 spaces
Museums	1 per 100m ² plus bus parking for Non town centre locations	Minimum of 5 spaces
Sports Hall	1 per 50m ² plus bus parking	Minimum of 5 spaces
Sports Club/Playing Pitches	30 per Sports Club/Primary Pitch Applications for larger sports clubs and sports grounds with dedicated spectator facilities shall be assessed on their own merits.	Minimum of 5 spaces

The above standards should be read in conjunction with the Parking related policies contained within this plan. NB – in assessing car parking requirements, the Council will require that a proportion of the spaces to be provided are allocated as charging points for electric vehicles in accordance with best practice.

The floor spaces listed above shall equate to the net floor space of the development proposed, unless otherwise stated.

All other proposals for development types not listed above shall be assessed having regard to specific characteristics of the development including: the number of employees/visitors, hours of operation, location and proximity to public transport etc.

Car parking areas shall be landscaped and planted with trees to minimise their visual impact where appropriate.

The planning authority shall seek financial contributions in lieu of parking spaces in line with the current Development Contribution Scheme when:

- a. The developer cannot conveniently provide the required spaces.
- b. Policy specifically dictates that new town centre parking is not required to be provided by a developer but that a contribution towards parking provision shall instead be sought by the Council.
- c. The Council wishes to develop a centrally located car park rather than a number of individual car parks. The contribution per space will reflect the cost of developing the said alternative space.

The Council will be prepared to enter into caretaker agreements with landowners/property owners to provide car parking in towns whereby:

- a. The landowner retains full ownership and development potential of the lands concerned.
- b. The Council will convert the lands into temporary car parking (usually for a period of at least 5 years).
- c. In this policy, adjoining lands owned by different landowners (back lands) may, by agreement with the parties, be aggregated into one single car park.

Table 16.7 Dimensions of Loading and Parking Bays

DIMENSIONS OF LOADING AND PARKING BAYS	
Car parking bay	5m x 2.5m
Circulation Aisles	6m
Loading Bay	Designed and sized for appropriate Service Vehicles

Language Impact Assessment

Preparation of a Language Impact Assessment

- a. In relation to cases where it will be a requirement of any permission that the proportion of units to be occupied by Irish speakers equates to the proportion of Irish speakers within the DED (based on the latest available census data) of the application site (subject to a minimum of 20%), and where the number of units is a fraction of a whole, then the number shall be rounded to the nearest whole number.
- b. Structure for a Language Impact Assessment to be as follows:
 - A description of the development and the district.
 - Analysis of census (CSO) data, and the usage of the Irish language on a daily basis in the area.

- Analysis of the social infrastructure in the area where the use of the Irish language and its cultural effect can be demonstrated, for example the media, schools, sporting facilities, Irish language facilities/venues, businesses, signage.
- The conclusions and presentation of possible mitigation measures where negative impacts are demonstrated.

Industrial and Commercial Development

All industrial and commercial development proposals shall be subject to environmental and all other planning considerations and shall be located and designed in accordance with NRA, DMRB, EPA Guidelines and Standards and any such future publications.

Landscaping and in appropriate cases, buffer zones between different uses will be required to be provided. Developers shall provide effective screening from the public road or residential areas, where appropriate.

All service areas shall be located entirely within the curtilage of the site with adequate manoeuvring space and a suitable means of access to the public road being provided.

All waste materials shall be stored to the rear of buildings in environmentally safe conditions and shall be screened from public view.

All waste shall be stored in such a manner so as to ensure runoff shall not seep into surface water drainage system.

All runoff from bunded areas shall be collected and disposed off separately from surface water drainage.

All fuel connection points or similar discharge points shall be rollover bunded.

All ducting (public and private) shall be designed and installed in accordance with 'Recommendations for Underground Telecommunications Cable Works - For Road, Commercial and Residential Schemes'. DCNR

Caravan and Camping

Proper consideration shall be paid to the design and landscaping of the park with particular reference to the entrance and reception areas.

A maximum density of 50 caravans per hectare (20 per acre).

Minimum of 8m between each pitch and a minimum 9m between each pitch and any permanent structure. Additional space will be required where a car will be parked alongside a caravan.

Minimum 30m between any pitch and the public road or 15m if suitable screening is provided plus minimum 3m between any pitch and site carriageways.

Where such a supply is not available an alternative source of potable water must be provided to the satisfaction of the County Council, i.e. which will permit 136 litres (30 gal) per day per pitch.

A fire hydrant conforming to BS750 should be provided on site a maximum of 100m from the furthest pitch. The hydrant should be connected to a 100mm minimum diameter watermain. A fire flow water supply of 2000 litres per minute sustainable for 30 minutes simultaneously with peak daily demand shall be provided for. If no suitable water flow or source is available, storage may be provided. A fire point with hose reels shall be provided within 30m of any pitch.

General lighting shall be provided and maintained at all times in good working order for all buildings, caravans, entrances, exits and roads used for internal circulation.

Petrol Filling Stations

The following will apply in respect of new petrol filling stations:

- Where appropriate a low wall, approximately 0.6m in height, shall be constructed along the road frontage in conjunction with appropriate measures to provide for the adequate enclosure and security of premises outside operating hours.
- A maximum of 2 road access points shall be provided for, which will be designed and constructed in accordance with the NRA DMRB/DMURS, as appropriate. The applicant shall submit a document demonstrating compliance with the NRA DMRB/DMURS as part of the planning application.
- No advertising or commercial signage shall obstruct visibility over the site access points or front boundary/wing walls.

A shop of up to 100 square metres net floor area may be allowed when associated with a petrol filling station. Where net retail space in excess of 100 square metres is sought the sequential approach to such development will apply.

In order to protect the carrying capacity of strategic routes, new petrol filling stations requiring direct access onto such routes, will not be considered outside the 60kph speed limit. This policy will apply to the strategic road network mapped in the Transportation Chapter.

Signage

Advertising signage can have a significant impact on the visual appearance and character of an area and it is therefore the goal of the Council to ensure that any such signage is designed and located in a manner that integrates effectively within the host environment. In general terms, signs should compliment the architectural features of buildings and should refrain from cluttering streetscapes. Furthermore, signs should be designed to promote retail, business and community activity in a way that enhances the pedestrian/visitor experience and avoids any adverse impacts in terms of traffic safety.

It is a policy of the Council to only permit Directional Signage on the subject business/development, or in the immediate vicinity of key junctions leading to the subject business/development where it is:

- Exclusively directional in nature;
- Of a scale appropriate to its directional function and its host location. In rural areas signs shall be of a modest scale.

It is a policy of the Council to only permit general Advertising Signage on/within the curtilage of a business/development or within the defined, or readily identifiable centres of all settlement framework areas.

It is a policy of the Council to only permit General Interpretative/Informational Signage of a non-commercial nature on lay-bys, parks, public car parks, viewing points or other points or areas of historical, geographical, scientific, literary or architectural significance.

It is a policy of the Council to only permit Name/Welcome signage for the County, Town/Village or Specific Geographical Area (including signs for geographically specific tourism brands) at entry points to; the county, the subject town/village, or geographical areas (e.g. Ballybofey/Stranorlar, An Gaeltacht, Fanad Peninsula etc.) where the name/crest of the county, particular town/village or tourism brand is the dominant element if appropriate.

It is a policy of the Council to only permit Signage for key Tourism Attractions (e.g. Heritage Centres, Museums, Interpretative Centres etc), Tourism Routes, Community Facilities (e.g. community centres, sports facilities etc) or other Key Public or Infrastructural Facilities (e.g. Parking facilities, Post Office, Hospitals, Health Clinics, Libraries, public toilets, civic amenity sites, airports etc) on the subject development, at the entry points to the host town/village, or at, or in the immediate vicinity of, key junctions leading to the subject development. At such locations signage for multiple facilities/attractions shall be grouped on a single sign. Signage for Tourism Attractions/Routes shall be brown and white in colour. Signage for public/community facilities shall generally be Black and white in colour. Signage for car parking/transportation shall be predominately blue and white in colour. Logo's/symbols shall be a dominant element of such signs. Internationally Recognised symbols of a non commercial nature shall be a dominant element of such signs.

It is a policy of the Council to ensure that all signage proposals, shall:-

- Not compromise road safety;
- Be of a High Visual Quality in terms of design, colour and materials;
- Be, as appropriate, of a scale/character suitable to the subject building and the host environment;
- Not detract from built or natural heritage;
- Comply with shop front policies set out in the Urban Design Policies of the Core Strategy.

Use of Irish in Public and Business/Community Signage

- All signage erected by public bodies shall abide by the provisions of The Official Languages Act 2003, An tOrdu Logainmneacha (Ceantair Ghaeltachta) 2004, Signage Regulations S.I. No. 391 of 2008 and the Road Traffic Manual in relation to the use of Irish and English on various types of signage.
- All Business/Community signage in the Gaeltacht shall be either Irish Only or Bilingual in nature with Irish First and more prominent than the other languages used.

All Business/Community signage outside the Gaeltacht shall be Bilingual in nature.

Part B

Chapter 17

**General Introduction to the
Buncrana**

Ballybofey/Stranorlar &

Bundoran

Area Plans

PART B

Chapter 17 –General Introduction

17.1 Introduction to the Buncrana, Ballybofey/Stranorlar and Bundoran Local Area Plans

This Part of the Plan contains detailed plans for Ballybofey/Stranorlar, Buncrana and Bundoran. The three Plans are contained within the County Development Plan (CDP) 2024-2030 but provide detailed planning policies that address the specific challenges and opportunities arising in the towns. The Plans must be read in tandem with the CDP as relevant policies, objectives, standards and guidance contained with the CDP will also be applicable.

17.2 The Purpose of These Plans

The purpose of these plans is to guide planning and future public investment decisions for each town. In practical terms such Plans can help to achieve this aim by: ensuring a sufficient range of housing in accessible and socially inclusive locations close to jobs, schools and community services, enabling new pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, reserving lands for strategic and local access roads projects, facilitating urban regeneration including public realm improvements and tackling vacancy and dereliction, protecting key environmental assets, managing flood risk and allocating lands for economic development at commercially viable and strategic locations.

The Plans must also be consistent with National Planning Framework, and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region and is otherwise guided by Ministerial Planning guidelines on specific planning issues (e.g. flood risk management, retail development). The Plans are being prepared as part of the wider County Development Plan process which has included research, public consultation, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

17.3 Overall Development Management Approach

Ensuring specific development is situated in appropriate locations is crucial in providing adequate lands for new housing, ensuring compact growth, enabling sustainable mobility and new transport infrastructure, protecting residential and visual amenities and environmental assets, providing new community/recreational infrastructure, and managing flood risk etc. Consequently, specific lands have been zoned for specific purposes within the Plans and development proposals in the three towns will be considered in the context of:

- their compliance with the zoning objectives as set out in Table 17.1 below and the corresponding zones identified on the Zoning Maps;
- the zoning matrix and the wider policy framework contained in each Plan; and
- the policy framework within the wider CDP, where relevant.

Policy GEN-DM-1:

It is a policy of the Council to support the principle of development proposals that are:

- (a.) Generally consistent with the zoning objectives as set out in Table 17.1 below and the corresponding zones identified on Map 19.1 entitled 'Ballybofey/Stranorlar Land Use Zoning Map',**

	<p>Map 18.1 entitled 'Buncrana Land Use Zoning Map', and Map 20.1 entitled 'Bundoran Land Use Zoning Map'; and</p> <p>(b.) Supported in the zoning matrix contained in the Tables contained in each Plan. Such proposals will also be considered against the wider policy framework contained in both this Plan and the CDP where relevant, and relevant guidelines.</p> <p>Proposals for land-uses that are not specifically identified on the zoning matrix may also be considered where the proposed use does not materially contravene the relevant zoning objective, subject to compliance with the wider policy framework contained in both this Plan and the CDP where relevant, and relevant guidelines.</p> <p>Proposals for land-uses that are not specifically identified on the zoning matrix may also be considered where the proposed use does not materially contravene the relevant zoning objective, subject to compliance with the wider policy framework contained in both this Plan and the CDP where relevant, and relevant guidelines.</p>
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Table 17.1 - Land Use Zoning Objectives

Name	Objective	Colour/RGB Colour
General		
Established Development	To conserve and enhance the quality and character of the area, to protect residential amenity and allow for development appropriate to the sustainable growth of the settlement, including new residential development, subject to all relevant material planning considerations, all the policies of this Plan, relevant national/regional policy/guidance including environmental designations and subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.	
New Residential (Phase 1)	Provide for new residential development in tandem with the provision of the necessary social and physical infrastructure.	
New Residential (Phase 2)	Provide for new residential development in tandem with the provision of the necessary social and physical infrastructure where it is evidentially demonstrated that all alternative New Residential (Phase 1) sites are unavailable or unsuitable for development.	
Strategic Residential Reserve	To reserve a quantum of land primarily for residential development as a long term strategic landbank	
Urban Core	Provide for the development and enhancement of urban core uses including retail, residential, commercial, civic and other uses	
Community Infrastructure	Provide for and protect civic, religious, community, health care, educational and social infrastructure	
Open Space and Recreation	Preserve and provide for open space, biodiversity and recreational amenities.	

Regeneration	Provide for public realm, civic, community, enterprise and/or residential led regeneration	
Opportunity Site	To reserve lands for specific development opportunities that are appropriate in terms of mix of use and compatibility with the wider area (See Specific Opportunity Site Policies)	
Business/Enterprise	Provide opportunities for general enterprise and business development	
Rural/Agricultural	Protect and improve rural amenity and provide for the development of agriculture	
Tourism	Provide for tourism Related facilities and amenities	
Transport and Utilities Infrastructure	Provide for transport and utilities infrastructure	
Caravan Park	To allow for the development of new caravan parks, the enhancement and appropriate expansion of existing caravan parks and development of associated tourist facilities.	
High Amenity	Protect and enhance high amenity areas	
Ballybofey/Stranorlar Specific		
TEN-T PRIPD/ Established Development	To conserve and enhance the quality and character of the area, to protect residential amenity and allow for development appropriate to the sustainable growth of the settlement, including new residential development, subject to all relevant material planning considerations, all the policies of this Plan, relevant national/regional policy/guidance including environmental designations and subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and to provide for the development of the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal.	
TEN-T PRIPD/ Opportunity Site	To reserve lands for specific development opportunities that are appropriate in terms of mix of use and compatibility with the wider area (See Specific Opportunity Site Policies) and to provide for the development of the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal.	
TEN-T PRIPD/ Rural/Agricultural	Protect and improve rural amenity, provide for the development of agriculture and to provide for the development of the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal.	
TEN-T PRIPD/ Open Space and Recreation	Preserve and provide for open space and recreational amenities and to provide for the development of the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal.	
Settlement Consolidation Sites	To deliver sustainable compact growth that is strategic in nature and scale.	
Bundoran Specific		
Coastal Management Zone	To ensure that this area remains free from development but facilitates access as an important local amenity.	

17.4 Housing

The current housing crisis is well documented and is manifested locally in rising house⁴² and rent⁴³ prices, high residential vacancy and dereliction rates and the severe shortage of new housing completions in Ballybofey/Stranorlar, Buncrana and Bundoran urban areas over the last decade particularly on zoned residential lands⁴⁴ and local social housing waiting lists.

The Planning Authority has had regard to, inter alia, the following related national policy frameworks and guidelines when planning new residential development:

- **National Planning Framework** which emphasises the need to achieve compact growth, focus 30% of new housing within existing built-up footprints on brownfield and infill sites and vacant buildings, ensure efficient land use, co-ordinate zoning and services using a tiered approach and enable sustainability mobility (e.g. walking cycling and public transport).
- **Urban Design Manual** which highlights the need to ensure that new residential developments respond to their context, are well connected, inclusive, promote a variety of uses, make efficient use of resources including land, create a sense of place, and have safe secure and enjoyable public realm.
- **Housing For All** which priorities increased social housing provision, new land activation measures (e.g. Residential Zoned Land Tax), and tackling vacancy (e.g. via the Croi Conaithe (Towns) Fund and Town Centre First Initiative).
- **Development Plan Guidelines** which recommends:
 - **Applying the core strategy** requirements to each settlement.
 - **Adopting a sequential approach** for residential zoning prioritising centrally-located serviced lands.
 - Conducting a detailed **assessment** of existing and proposed residential zonings.
 - **Not de-zoning existing serviced and developable zoned land where there is a surplus of same but taking a phased approach** where there is a sound planning rationale. (although phasing may not be necessary if zoned and serviced sites are of broadly equivalent merit).
 - **Dezoning** or examining alternatives for residential lands which have remained **undeveloped and are unserviced**.
 - Ensure **sufficient flexibility** in zoning to allow sufficient residential sites to come forward if residential development does not proceed on one or more sites.

Consequently, the Plans are intended to facilitate an adequate supply, range and mix of high-quality housing at serviced, sustainable, accessible, and socially-inclusive locations by:

- Providing adequate zoned residential land at appropriate compact, accessible and serviced locations with a focus on town centre regeneration, brownfield and infill and sequential development sites in accordance with the core strategy allocation for each town in the first instance.
- Ensuring sufficient flexibility in terms of the overall amount of zoned land including through the retention of pre-existing zoned serviced and developable residential zonings on a phased basis.
- Ensuring quality inclusive, well connected housing which respond to their local context by requiring adherence to national residential development guidelines and implementing site specific housing policies to capitalise on local opportunities and address local deficiencies.

⁴² 16.8% Annual Increase Daft House Price Report Q3 2022.

⁴³ 19.0% Annual Increase Daft Rental Price Report Q3 2022.

⁴⁴ There were no housing completions on zoned Ballybofey/Stranorlar residential lands during the period 2018-2024.

- Supporting the refurbishment of vacant and derelict housing stock within the urban cores .
- Supporting proposals for single dwellings on lands zoned ‘Rural/Agricultural’ in limited circumstances and they would integrate with the landscape,

To this end the following approach was taken in identifying land for residential development:

- The formulation and provision of a core strategy allocation for each town.
- An examination of extant planning permissions which could facilitate the delivery of the core strategy allocation.
- An assessment and ranking of all potential residential sites (including both pre-existing residential zonings and other potential residential sites) vis-v-vis: in accordance with the sequential test in Section 6.2.3 of the Development Plan Guidelines and other planning guidelines including the following criteria compact growth, active travel, availability of water and wastewater networks, roads, footpath, public lighting, surface water, flooding, natura 2000 sites, national roads policy (in the case of Ballybofey/Stranorlar and Bundoran), infrastructure corridors, environmental amenities,
- The identification of sufficient residential lands to meet the core strategy allocation based on the above ranking.
- The retention of existing residential zonings which were serviced and developable on a phased basis not otherwise identified above in accordance with Section 4.4.1 of the Development Plan Guidelines.

Generic Objective and Policies Applicable to All Settlements

Housing

Objectives:

GEN-H-O-1	Facilitate an adequate supply, range and mix of high-quality housing at serviced, sustainable, accessible, and socially inclusive locations to meet anticipated housing need.
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Policies

GEN-H-1:	It is a policy of the Council to secure an adequate supply of strategic landbanks for the purposes of housing provision beyond the life of this LAP through the identification of lands as a ‘Strategic Residential Reserve’. The Council will examine and manage the appropriate release of such lands on the basis of a continued assessment of need and levels of supply. The release of ‘Strategic Residential Reserve’ lands for multiple residential development (i.e. 2 or more dwellings) shall only be carried out in the context of a statutory review or Variation of the County Development Plan.
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GEN-H-2	It is the policy of the Council to facilitate an appropriate provision of one-off housing in ‘Rural/Agricultural’ areas where the applicant can demonstrate that they need a new house at this location and can provide evidence that they, or their parents, have resided in those areas for a period of at least 7 years. All proposals shall be subject to all relevant material considerations, relevant policies of the Plan, other regional and national guidance and relevant Environmental Designations.
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GEN-H-3	Consider the development of multiple residential developments on ‘New Residential, Phase 2’ sites where it can be demonstrated that there is market failure in relation to the development of Phase 1 residential development lands. In
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this regard, the onus will be on applicants to demonstrate a bona fide case of evidenced market failure which shall include, inter alia, the following:

- (i) Evidence of market failure on Phase 1 land within the settlement;
- (ii) A supporting case-specific report from a suitably qualified property/valuation/estate agency expert; and
- (iii) other evidence, to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.

Economic Development

Objectives

GEN-ED-1 Only support the provision of professional services, where the services proposed are provided principally to visiting members of the public, within land zoned as 'Urban Core'. (Professional services includes dentists, solicitors, beauty therapists/hairdressers, physiotherapists).

Transport

Objectives:

GEN-T-O-1 Facilitate a significant increase in sustainable mobility through the provision of a compact permeable urban form, new and enhanced active travel infrastructure (walking and cycling), and public transport services and associated infrastructure.

GEN-T-O-2 Improve strategic transport connectivity, traffic safety and local traffic flow and accessibility (including through the delivery of the TEN-T PRIPD strategic roads project in the case of Ballybofey/Stranorlar), the provision of new local access links and the implementation of appropriate safety, parking/traffic management solutions.

Policies

GEN-T-P-1 1. Implement, deliver and/or facilitate all projects/actions outlined in the Land Use/Transportation strategies and associated map during the lifetime of the Local Area Plans subject to resource availability and the necessary planning consents.

2.

- (a.) Ensure that any new developments do not prejudice the development/implementation of transport projects/links identified in the Land Use/Transportation Strategy and associated maps.
- (b.) Protect the corridors or routes associated with said transport projects/links.

GEN-T-P-2 Ensure that new developments proposals preserve the key access points to undeveloped or existing adjoining lands identified in the Ballybofey/Stranorlar Land Use Zoning Map.

GEN-T-P-3 Require, where feasible, that new developments are sited and designed in a manner which prioritises, and provides safe, direct, and attractive access for pedestrians and cyclists.

GEN-T-P-4 Facilitate the re-allocation of existing road space to provide enhanced, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure.

GEN-T-P-5 Support and facilitate the provision of local public transport services and associated infrastructure (e.g. bus stops/shelters, laybys, and bus prioritisation measures) in collaboration with the NTA.

GEN-T-P-6 Facilitate the provision of electric vehicle charging points at public off-street locations.

GEN-T-P-7	<p>Only consider vehicle parking proposals within areas zoned Urban Core in the following exceptional circumstances:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The provision of secure and attractive parking for residential developments, including disabled and age friendly parking, in accordance with the guidance set out in the Urban Design Manual (DoHLGH 2009) or any subsequent related publication where such parking cannot otherwise be catered for by existing capacity in adjacent on-street or publicly accessible parking spaces. For commercial/community developments where such parking is essential to ensure the viability of the development, and cannot otherwise be catered for by existing spare capacity in adjacent on-street or publicly accessible parking spaces, and would accord with the town centre objectives of this plan. Publicly accessible disabled and age friendly parking spaces and public transport facilities.
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Town Centre

Objectives

TC-G-O-1	Create vibrant, multifunctional, attractive, and accessible town centres, including through the reduction of the overall level of Vacancy and Dereliction.
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Policies

TC-G-P-1	Facilitate a variety of developments and uses within the town centres including residential, retail, day and night-time hospitality, professional services, tourism and cultural development which accord with the urban design policies of the development plan and otherwise do not detract from the visual, residential or environmental amenities of the area or cause adverse impact traffic impacts.
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TC-G-P-2	Positively facilitate sensitive proposals for the refurbishment and reuse of vacant and derelict building including proposals for the amalgamation and extension of existing properties for town centre compatible uses (e.g. commercial, retail and residential) in accordance with the urban design policies of this plan.
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TC-G-P-3	<p>Positively support proposals for infill and backland residential and commercial developments where they would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not have a significant adverse effect on existing residential and visual amenities. Respect the existing character, scale and setting of the local built environment.
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TC-G-P-4	<p>Consider proposals for food take-away units, bookmakers, amusement arcades, and casinos within the 'Urban Core' zoning provided that they:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Are not located within or abutting premises consisting of residential accommodation, schools or religious institutions. Do not contribute to the over concentration of such uses in a given area which would result in excessive noise, litter and anti-social hours of operation; and Do not detract from the streetscape and vitality and viability of the area.
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Recreation, Community and Natural Heritage

Objectives

RCNH-G-O-1	Create a high-quality integrated network of recreational and amenity spaces, linkages and infrastructure which provide an optimal quality of life and visually attractive environment.
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Chapter 18 – Buncrana Area Plan 2024-2030



18.1 Introduction

The second largest town by population in the County (recorded as 6,875 in the 2016 census [CSO, 2016]), Buncrana is a coastal seaside town strategically located on the eastern shores of the Inishowen peninsula in the North-West of the county.



The town currently functions as a tourism destination (identified in the RSES as a 'Key Destination Town' on the Wild Atlantic Way), and as a service town for large parts of the Inishowen Peninsula. Buncrana serves as a gateway to Inishowen including the most northerly Signature Point on the Wild Atlantic Way at Malin Head. Buncrana is one of the 4 strategic nodes in the North-West City Region (NWCR), along with Derry, Letterkenny and Strabane. The town's seaside location, natural and heritage resource, proximity to, and cross border connections with Derry are among its key strategic assets.

18.1.1 'Strategic Strengths and Future Direction Study', (ICLRD, August 2020)

In 2020, Donegal County Council (DCC) commissioned the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) to prepare a strategic report on potential key sectors for the future development of the town⁴⁵. The study identified evidence of a need for a co-ordinated place-based approach to driving the future development of Buncrana based on extensive public engagement and consultation. The key findings of the Report are set out below and have informed the development of this Plan:

- The overall economic performance of Buncrana is not reflective of its status within the county (in terms of population size): relatively low total of jobs; one of the lowest jobs ratios (local jobs:resident workers) in the county; high overall unemployment level despite significant out-commuting to employment in Derry and Letterkenny.
- Buncrana's current and future development is shaped, influenced, and governed by policy documents and statutory frameworks that are currently in place at a county level. These include the County Donegal Development Plan, Local Economic and Community Plan and Local Development Strategy, which are closely aligned and give effect to several complementary objectives for Buncrana:
 - Maintaining and furthering cross-border linkages and collaboration;
 - Harnessing the opportunities associated with the NWCR and the linked metropolitan area;
 - Promoting an attractive, accessible and liveable town, based on sequential development and focusing on compact growth and utilising the existing town core;
 - Fostering local economic development and entrepreneurship;
 - Supporting the 'Repowering Buncrana' project.

⁴⁵ Strategic Strengths and Future Direction Study, ICLR, August 2020

- Development of a Night -Time economy within the town (NTE)⁴⁶ ;
- Investing in green transport and active travel (walking and cycling), associated with environmental and public health;
- Supporting the provision of greenway infrastructure, associated with economic diversification (tourism), public transport, enhanced connectivity and the promotion of active travel;
- Protecting biodiversity and harnessing natural resources, including the marine;
- Emphasising quality-of-life, stemming from investments in enhanced community amenities and infrastructure, particularly those associated with outdoor activities and accessing the natural environment;
- Increasing citizen participation in local decision making, with particular focus on youth and the third age; and
- Ensuring that the public realm and built environment are conducive to social well-being, community health, social inclusion and vibrant places.

Buncrana's geographic location and role within the County's Core Strategy settlement hierarchy as a County Growth Driver positions it to become a strong employment centre, with a particular focus on tourism and opportunities to attract investment from the IT, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, food processing and electrical/electronics sectors. The focus on tourism development can be achieved through:

- the reservation of land for recreation and amenity,
- continued investment in recreation and amenity infrastructure,
- protection and enhancement of the built heritage of the town,
- development of the night time economy⁴⁷,
- appropriate marketing and promotion and,
- cross-border cooperation on mutually beneficial cross sector projects.

18.1.2 Core Strategy

The Core Strategy sets out an overall settlement hierarchy including population and housing targets and associated residential land zonings allocations for settlements (or groups of settlements) within the county. The Core Strategy identifies Buncrana as a second-tier 'County Growth Driver' and allocates 566 units or 7.3% of the overall housing target in the county to the town. On the basis of a residential density of 35 units per ha this means that overall 16.2ha of zoned land is required to fulfil the core strategy housing targets for Buncrana.

18.1.3 Zoning Matrix

As specified in Policy GEN-DM-1 in the General Introduction (see Section 17.3), development proposals in Buncrana will be considered in the context of their compliance with the zoning objectives as set out in Table 17.1, the corresponding zones identified on Map 18.1 entitled 'Buncrana Land Use Zoning Map', and the zoning matrix contained in Table 18.2 below. The wider policy framework contained in both this Plan and the CDP will also be applied where relevant.

Table 18.1 Buncrana Land Use Zoning Matrix.

The Zoning Matrix illustrates a range of land uses together with an indication of their broad acceptability in each of the land use zones.

⁴⁶ Funded by Dept of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media in 2022 to establish Night-Time Economy Advisor and Night-Time Economy Committee(s).

Please note that the broad acceptability of uses on designated Opportunity Sites and Settlement Consolidation Sites is set out in specific policies contained in Chapter 18 of this Plan.

Y= Acceptable in Principle; O=Open for consideration; N= Not acceptable

Land Use Zoning	New Residential (Phase 1)	New Residential (Phase 2)	Urban Core	Established Development	Strategic Residential Reserve	Open Space & Recreation	Business & Enterprise.	Rural/ Agricultural	Community Infrastructure	High Amenity	Tourist facility
Amusement Arcade/Casinos	N	N	O ¹	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Agricultural Buildings	N	O	N	O	O ²	N	N	O	N	O	N
Car Park (other than ancillary)	N	N	O ³	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Betting Office	N	N	O ⁴	O ⁴	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Cafe	N	N	O	O	N	O	O	N	N	N	O
Cemetery	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	O	Y	N	N
Cinema	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Community/Recreational /Sports	O	N	O	O	O	O	O	O	Y	N	O
Creche/Playschool	O	N	Y	O	N	N	O	N	Y	N	N
Cultural Uses/Library	O	N	Y	O	N	N	N	N	Y	N	O
Dancehall/Disco	N	N	Y ⁵	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Data Centre	N	N	N	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	N
Funeral Home	N	N	Y	O	N	N	O	N	O	N	N
Garage/Car Repair	N	N	Y	O ⁶	N	N	O	N	N	N	N
Guesthouse / Hotel / Hostel	N	N	Y	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Hot Food Takeaway	N	N	Y	O ⁷	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Industry (light)	N	N	Y	O ⁸	N	N	O	N	N	N	N
Industry (General)	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N
Medical Consultancy/Healthcare	N	N	Y	O	N	N	O	N	O	N	N
Motor Sales	N	N	N	O	N	N	O	N	N	N	N
Nursing Home	N	N	Y	O	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N
Offices	N	N	Y	O ⁹	N	N	Y ⁹	N	O ⁹	N	N
Park/Playground	O	O	O	O	N	Y	N	O	Y	N	O
Petrol Station	N	N	O	O	N	N	O	N	N	N	N
Place of Worship	O	N	Y	O	N	N	O	N	Y	N	N
Playing Fields	O	O	O	O	O	O	N	O	O	N	O
Pub	N	N	Y	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Restaurant	N	N	Y	O	N	N	O	N	N	N	O
Residential	Y	Y	Y	Y	O ¹⁰	N	N	O	N	N	N
Retail	N	N	Y	O ¹¹	N	N	O ¹⁵	O ¹¹	N	N	N
School/Education	N	O	Y	O	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N

Land Use Zoning	New Residential (Phase 1)	New Residential (Phase 2)	Urban Core	Established Development	Strategic Residential Reserve	Open Space & Recreation	Business & Enterprise.	Rural/ Agricultural	Community Infrastructure	High Amenity	Tourist facility
Solar Energy Generation (other than exempted dev. or microgeneration ¹⁹)	N	N	O	O	O ¹³	N	O	O ¹⁴	N	N	N
Tourist Related Facilities	N	N	Y	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	O
Warehouse/Store/ Depot	N	N	O	O	N	N	O	N	N	N	N

Footnotes to accompany land-use zoning matrix

- 1 Refer to Chapter 17, Policy TC-G-P-4.
- 2 Proposals for agricultural buildings within lands zoned as Strategic Residential Reserve (SRR) must be designed and located so as not to compromise the future residential development potential of the SRR zoned lands.
- 3 Refer to specific policies on car parking as set out in Policy Gen TP – 7.
- 4 Betting offices will not be permitted where it is considered that they may have a detrimental impact on the established character or residential amenities of an area.
- 5 Dancehalls/discos will not be permitted where it is considered that they may have a detrimental impact on the established character or residential amenities of an area.
- 6 Light industry will not be permitted where it is considered that the proposal may have a detrimental impact on the established character or residential amenities of an area.
- 6 Garages/car repair will not be permitted where it is considered that they may have a detrimental impact on the established character or residential amenities of an area.
- 7 Developers are advised to have regard to, inter alia, the economic development policies of the County Development Plan.
- 8 Developers are advised to note that professional services, where the services proposed are provided principally to visiting members of the public, will generally be directed to the defined urban core.
- 9 Developers are advised to have regard to, inter alia, the economic development policies of the County Development Plan.
- 10 Proposals for multiple (i.e. 2 or more) residential units will not be considered on Strategic Residential Reserve lands. Proposals for single dwellings may be considered where they accord with the Councils housing policies and where they are located and designed so as not to compromise the future residential development potential of the SRR zoned lands.

11. Developers are advised to note that proposals for retail development in areas zoned Established Development shall be assessed in accordance with the provisions of the Retail Strategy as set out in the County Development Plan.
12. Proposals for retail development on lands zoned as Strategic Residential Reserve and Rural/Agriculture shall only be considered where they comprise proposals for a farm shop selling goods that are produced on the subject landholding. Other types of retail shall not be permitted at these locations.
13. Proposals for microgeneration shall be dealt with on a case-by-case basis having regard to all relevant policy provisions of this Plan, the County Development Plan and other statutory guidance.
14. Proposals for solar energy generation on lands zoned Strategic Residential Reserve may be considered where, inter alia, such proposals are located and designed so as not to compromise the future residential development potential of the SRR zoned lands.
15. Proposals for solar energy generation on lands zoned Local Environment may be considered where, inter alia, it can be definitively demonstrated that such proposals would have no significant negative impact on the landscape setting or the biodiversity quality of the area.
16. Proposals for retail development on lands zoned as Business and Enterprise shall only be considered where the retail element of the proposal is clearly ancillary to the parent/main use of the site, comprises a maximum of 10% of the total floor area of the subject development, and where the goods being sold are a product of that 'main use'. Notwithstanding the foregoing, proposals for retail uses on General Employment lands shall not be permitted if such use would be detrimental to the retail function of the town centre; these matters will be assessed on a case by case basis in accordance with the provisions of the Council's Retail Strategy.
17. Proposals for retail development on lands zoned as Local Environment shall only be considered where they comprise proposals for a farm shop selling goods that are produced on the subject landholding. Other types of retail shall not be permitted at these locations.
18. Proposals for microgeneration shall be dealt with on a case-by-basis having regard to all relevant policy provisions of this Plan, the CDP and other statutory guidance.

18.2 Shorefront

Buncrana's shorefront location and existing associated green infrastructure is one of its key assets. The town is within close proximity to several beaches and to Fahan marina (a large privately-operated marina, located to the south of the town providing berthing for up to 250 leisure craft). The coastal location is a valuable recreational asset facilitating swimming, sailing, angling/fishing, boat touring and other water-based activities. There are six piers and slipways providing access to the sea but these are concentrated in the heart of the town where parking and launching is very difficult. The main pier provides berthing for the Lough Swilly Ferry, a number of small fishing boats and for the RNLI search and rescue boat. All of these services are vital for the commercial and economic growth of the area.

18.2.1: RRDF - 'Repowering Buncrana'

The 'Repowering Buncrana' Rural Regeneration and Development project includes a series of measures that will work in an integrated way to strengthen the shorefront, enhance walking and cycling, provide quality shore front amenities, integrate art and biodiversity into our urban landscape and critically work to counter the disconnect between Main Street and the shore front. The project funded under the

Government’s Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF)^[1] will also seek to reuse a vacant town centre building to accommodate new job creation bringing much needed employment opportunities to Buncrana, increasing the number of people in the town centre ~~resulting in~~ delivering increased footfall, additional business spin offs and economic spend. The project was successful in securing funding or project development work under the third call of the RRDF for Category 2 applications. The funding secured will enable the progression of the project through the statutory approval and detailed design stages to a highly developed status as a shovel ready capital works project and onwards delivery.

The project includes the following interventions:

1. A new iconic pedestrian bridge over the Mill River connecting the Inishowen Greenway Project and Amazing Grace Park to a transformed harbour/pier environment,
2. The creation of a high performance promenade and Shore Front Green including enhanced walkways, beach access, public realm & festival gathering space and development of a new bespoke public/civic shore green users building,
3. Enhanced connectivity between the new Shore Front Green environment and the Main Street and commercial core of the town with targeted public realm improvements,
4. Enhanced Shore Front walkway and promenade along the Fishing Green, with dramatic re-imagining of the Amazing Grace viewing point,
5. Onwards connection of the promenade to Swan Park, Buncrana Castle and Cockhill Road, and
6. The repurposing and extension of a vacant heritage building to create bespoke office accommodation.

These interventions were identified as ‘Place Standard Priorities’ and ‘Key Spatial Recommendations’ in the ‘Strategic Strengths and Future Strategic Direction’ study and the Repowering Buncrana Project now proposes to give effect to their delivery.

Buncrana: Place Standard Priorities		
1	2	3
<p>Facing the Swilly</p> <p>To capitalise on Buncrana’s natural & heritage resources particularly the coastline, securing environmental protection & climate action, enhanced walking & cycling and enhanced liveability</p>	<p>Greenway & blueway networks</p> <p>To expand and improve walking/ cycling networks in order to connect places and communities and contribute to repowering the town centre as the hub of economic and social life</p>	<p>Enabling economic diversity</p> <p>To enable economic diversity, resilience and growth in innovation, business and the tourism and creative sectors establishing Buncrana as a high performing destination for investment and spend and a key component in our Regional Brexit response</p>
4	5	6
<p>Quality of life & liveability</p> <p>To enhance the physical environment creating an attractive and inclusive place offering high quality of life and enhanced liveability</p>	<p>Enabling the community</p> <p>To enable, engage and leverage the community, businesses & private sector, in improving Buncrana’s Place Standards and implementing a place-based proposition to harness the unique natural, built, community, cultural and economic assets of Buncrana</p>	<p>Gateway in the North West City Region</p> <p>To repower Buncrana as a critical urban Gateway charging the North West City Region as a model of place-standards for physical, social, environmental and economic success</p>

Fig. 18.1 – The Six Place Standard Priorities of the Repowering Buncrana - A North West Place Standard Project.

^[1] gov.ie - Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (www.gov.ie)



Fig 18.2 – A spatial and conceptual representation of the six interventions proposed by the Repowering Buncrana – A North West Place Standard Project.

BC-S-O-1:

To protect and enhance the character, setting and natural heritage of the shorefront in Buncrana, which is identified as an area of 'Open Space and Recreation' on the Buncrana Land-Use Zoning Map, in order to secure its existing and future amenity, and tourism and ecological value.

BC-S-O-2:

To support the progress and implementation of the 'Re-powering Buncrana' – A North West Place Standard Project as funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) and to support any future subsequent phases of the project that provides for strategic regeneration and development of the town in accordance with the Six Place Standard Priorities of the Project.

BC-S-P-1:	To support the principle of the following development proposals within the shorefront ' <i>Open Space and Recreation</i> ' zoning, subject to compliance with all other relevant policies of this Plan and the County Development Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Development ancillary to existing established uses that support the tourism product in Buncrana. b. Public realm and active travel interventions that serve to enhance the amenity value of the area. c. Community-based recreation projects. d. The development of marinas, jetties, facilities for outdoor water-based activities and harbour facilities for maritime leisure developments. Proposals shall only be permitted where they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. would not significantly impact on the visual amenities, character and environmental quality of the area. ii. would not intrude significantly on seaward views. iii. are of a scale and character appropriate to the host environment and are of an enduring high-quality design.
BC-S-P-2:	To protect the coastal walkways in Buncrana as important tourism, recreation and amenity resources for the town
BC-S-P-3:	To ensure that development proposals that would have a negative impact on the use of Buncrana Pier shall not be permitted.
BC-S-P-4:	To support the principle of the development of a flagship tourism project, such as a Marine Discovery Centre, in Buncrana subject to all material planning considerations, national and regional guidelines, all relevant policies of this Plan and having regard to environmental and conservation designations including the requirements of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

18.3 Town Centre/Urban Core

The original town centre of Buncrana was concentrated around Upper and Lower Main Street. The centre now extends eastwards from Lower Main Street into the extended town centre area at Ardaravan Square. The retailing offer in the town is diverse and is characterised by a mix of both independent businesses and a number of larger footprint national stores. The Strategic Study findings noted strong public support for the current town centre focused retail offer and a desire that this pattern would be maintained and supported through land use policy. In addition to ensuring greater commercial life and vibrancy in the town centre, the Strategic Study concluded that the town needs further consolidation, and that an enhanced retail offering is key to ensuring this happens.

Proposals for retail development in the town centre will be governed by the County Retail Strategy as set out in Chapter 7.

18.3.1 Car Parking

The town centre is already served by a large supply of public car-parking. There is a total of approx. 800 on-street and public car-parks spaces. The previous practice of new development proposals having to provide for onsite car parking can have a negative impact upon the ability to deliver an appropriate high quality development proposal within an urban context and thus the preference in this Plan is for developments to utilise public parking facilities where surplus car parking is available within easy walking distance or where public parking facilities are to be delivered at a location that will facilitate the development. In those circumstances it will be necessary for the developer to make a financial contribution towards the provision of those facilities.

18.3.2 Vacancy, Derelict Sites and Regeneration Opportunities.

Vacant and derelict properties in the town centre have become increasingly unattractive. Analysis published by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly⁴⁸ identifies the increase in the scale of the issue affecting the town.

Vacant and Derelict commercial stock, (NWRA, Regional Vacancy and Dereliction Analysis, 2022).

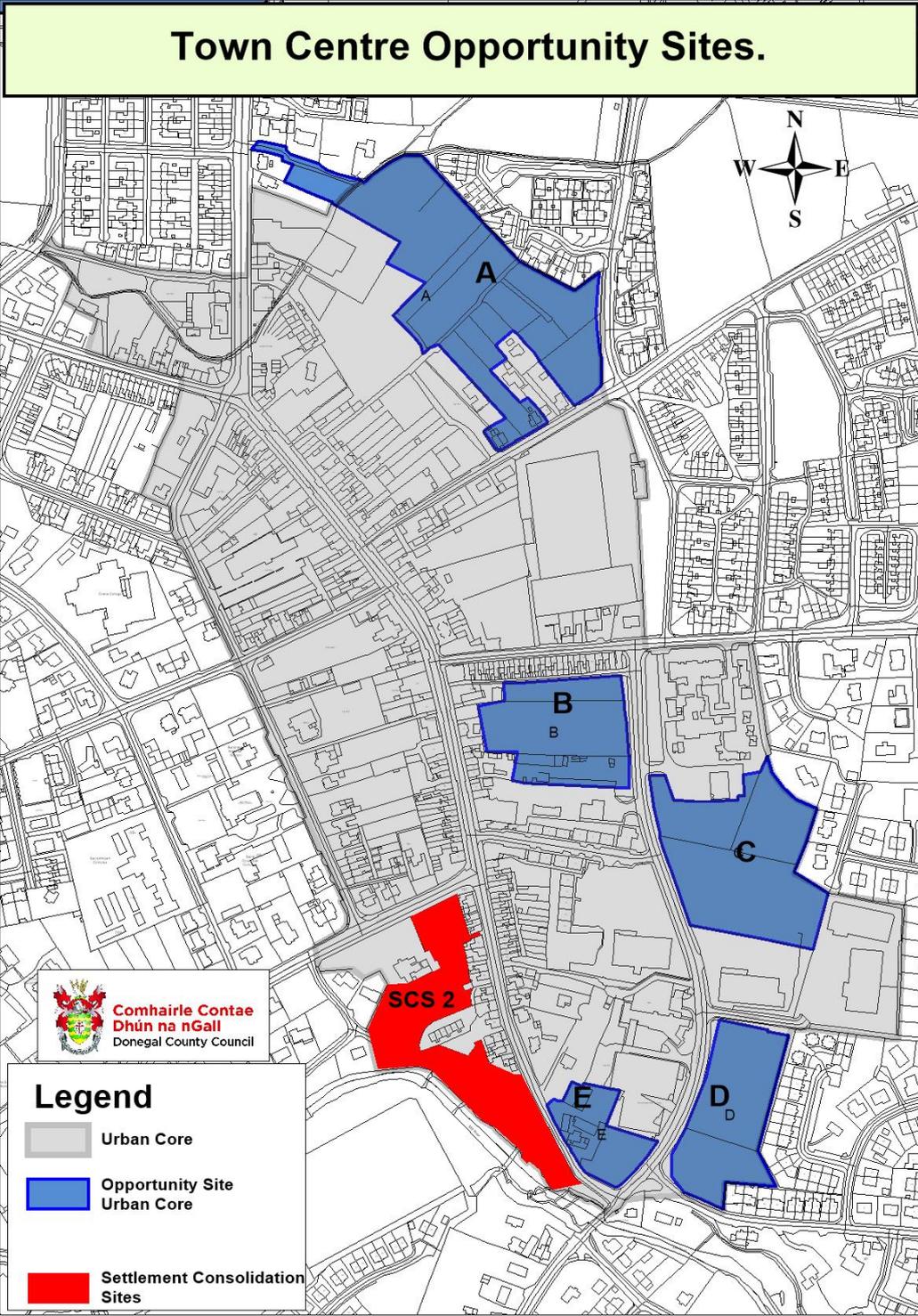
Vacant commercial stock 2015	Vacant commercial stock 2020	Absolute change (2015-2020)	% Change (2015-2020)	Commercial Vacancy Rate (2020).
Buncrana 44	61	17	38.6%	14.8%

Unsurprisingly, the Strategic Study identified the importance of encouraging brownfield infill development and promoting the re-use/re-purposing of vacant premises in the urban core thus driving the vibrancy of the urban core and making it more attractive to future investors.

18.3.3 Backland Development

While most development has occurred along Main Street, the development of Ardaravan Square demonstrated how underutilised and/or landlocked backlands can achieve compact development within the Town Centre. The Health Service Executive's Primary Care Centre development opened during 2022 was also developed on a centrally-located brownfield site. The figure below identifies a further five town centre brownfield opportunity sites.

⁴⁸ Regional Vacancy and Dereliction Analysis (January 2022), Northern and Western Regional Assembly



(Fig.18.3 - Town Centre Opportunity Sites)

18.3.4 The Development of a Night-Time Economy

The Chamber of Commerce has sought to introduce measures and initiatives to help encourage and develop the evening and night-time economy in Buncrana especially during major festivals such as Halloween, Christmas and, in 2022, the Pride festival. The collaborative sharing of the Halloween

festival between DCC and Derry City & Strabane District Council (DC&SDC) in 2021 and again in 2022 is another such example.

The Council's Economic Development Directorate has been exploring the opportunities presented in a pilot programme from the City & County Managers Association's 'Business, Enterprise, Innovation, Urban/Town Economic Renewal' (BEIUR) Committee to develop and create a vibrant night-time economy (NTE) in Buncrana. This opportunity for funding emerged from the 2020 Taskforce on the NTE and as a priority within the current programme for Government. A new two-year post of a night-time economy advisor is being created to engage with the community, businesses, venues and artists to "stimulate the night-time economy", tailoring plans for a more vibrant and safe night-life for the area.

18.3.5 Urban Design Quality

Buncrana's Urban Core contains a range of uses including restaurants and takeaways, accommodation, amusement arcades, and comparison and convenience retailing common to many relatively small-scale towns. This presents challenges in terms of facilitating such proposals in design terms, whilst seeking to maintain a sense of pride in the streetscape. The objective of the Planning Authority must be to strike the appropriate balance in this regard.

Objectives

BC-TC-O-1	To sustain and enhance the role of Buncrana as the retail and services hub of the Inishowen peninsula.
BC-TC-O-2	To strike the appropriate balance between facilitating the continued contribution of the Main Street commercial sectors to the town's retail and services offering with the need for the further enhancement of the streetscape and public realm.
BC-TC-O-3:	To secure the development of the brownfield 'Town Centre Opportunity Sites' identified on Fig 18.3.
BC-TC-O-4:	To revitalise the public realm and built environment of the Market Square.

Policies

BC-TC-P-1:	To require the incorporation of strong street frontage into the design of developments located adjacent to the Inner Relief Road within the town centre.
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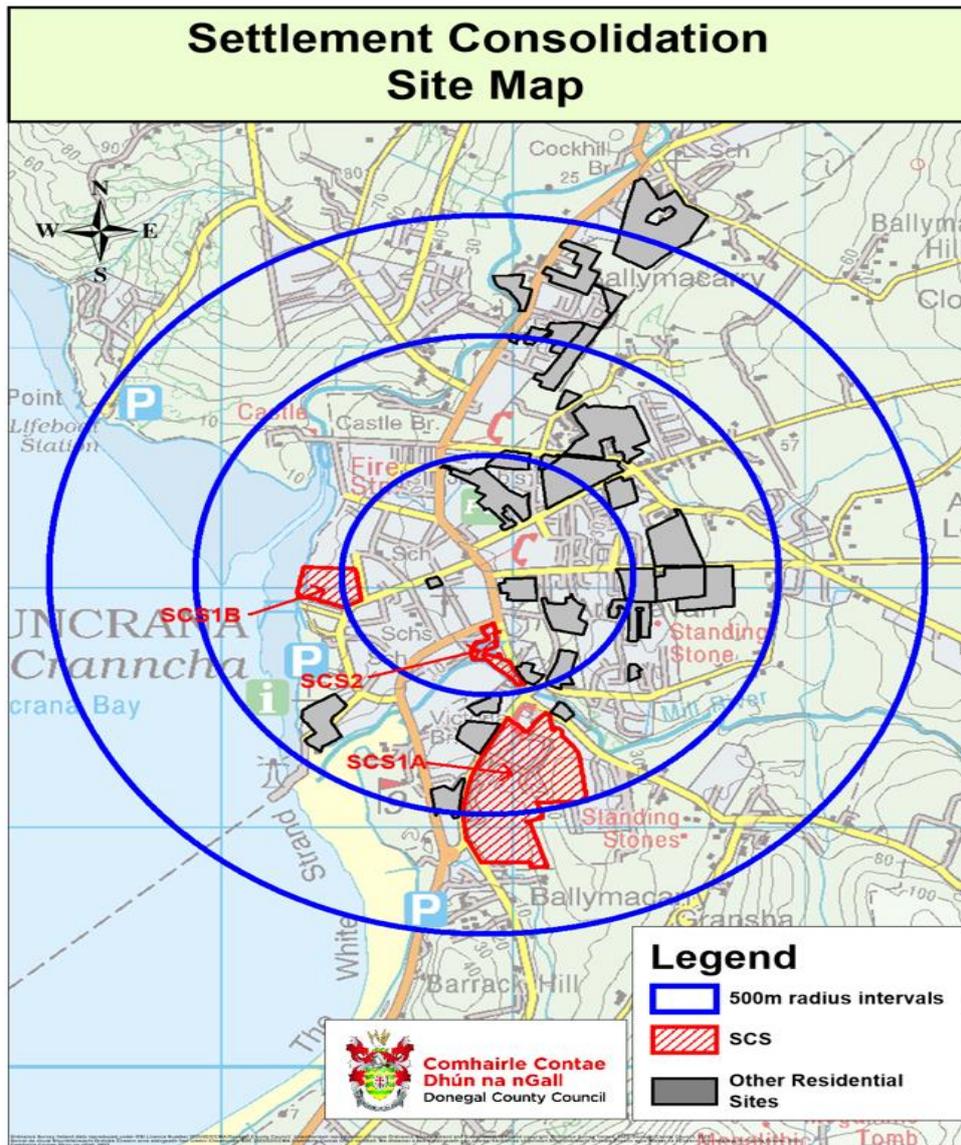
18.4 Regeneration

18.4.1 Settlement Consolidation Sites

The Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DHLGH, June 2022) provides for the identification of key town centre and edge of town core sites which are of particular strategic scale and importance as 'Settlement Consolidation Sites'. Such sites should be located within the existing built-up area such that they have a critical role to play in achieving the Core Strategy and the NPF policy objective for consolidation and compact growth. Having regard to the town's industrial heritage and the downturn in the textile manufacturing industry within Buncrana, 2 no. significant brownfield sites are identified on Fig. 18.4 below. These are the former Fruit of the Loom sites labelled 'SCS 1a'

and 'SCS 1b'. A third site is located within the town core and is the site of a now vacant large former shirt factory known as 'Clubman'. This site offers potential for brownfield town core regeneration and reuse of a strategically located building and site. The development of the 3no. SCS sites could assist in the wider regeneration of the existing built-up area with the potential to deliver significant housing provision or commercial, employment and or mixed use development.

Fig. 18.4: Settlement Consolidation Sites



BC-RG-O-1:

To secure the development of the brownfield 'Settlement Consolidation Sites' and Opportunity Site 4 as referred to below and identified on Fig 18.4.

Settlement Consolidation Site SCS1A – Ballymacarry: This site (12.6 Ha) originally contained the former Fruit of the Loom factory. Approximately half of the site is currently occupied by a large-scale industrial coal cleaning and distribution operation. Adjacent uses are industry/enterprise and

residential. The site benefits from key access on the southern side of the town to the Letterkenny – Derry economic corridor and also benefits from proximity to the Inner Relief Road. The remainder of this site may be appropriate for a mix of uses within the overall site including residential, light industrial, commercial and bulky goods retail. Developments should have regard to the existing adjacent road network and the residential amenities of adjoining properties. There are potential flooding issues associated within this large site arising from the steep hill to the east therefore any proposal will be required to comply with the Flood Risk Objectives and Policies of this Plan.

BC-SCS-P-1A:

Support the principle of the significant redevelopment of the site to provide for housing, commercial (subject to the retail policies of this Plan), or employment uses and/or a mixed-use development of the aforementioned uses. Such significant redevelopment proposals shall require the agreement with the Planning Authority of a comprehensive masterplan.

Settlement Consolidation Site SCS1B This brownfield site located on the shorefront was the former Fruit of the Loom dyeing plant but is currently an unoccupied vacant commercial /industrial building of substantial size and scale. This site is prominent, coastal and is situated between low-density residential lands to the north and east and a large public amenity area to the south. The western side forms part of a coastal walk. This site could lend itself to a mixed-use development of high architectural design that may include appropriate commercial, residential, retail and leisure uses that should harness the amenity, coastal and tourism elements at this prime location. Any proposed development will be required to integrate with and protect the amenity shore walk and the Lough Swilly Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Lough Swilly Special Protection Area (SPA). Any proposal shall be of a massing and scale that respects the sensitive location, and the scale and massing of any surrounding properties. Any proposal may also be considered on a phased basis subject to proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

BC-SCS-P-1B:

Support the principle of the significant redevelopment of the site to provide for housing, commercial (subject to the retail policies of this Plan), or employment uses and/or a mixed-use development of the aforementioned uses. Such significant redevelopment proposals shall require the agreement with the Planning Authority of a comprehensive masterplan.

Settlement Consolidation Site SCS2**BC-SCS-P-2:**

Support the principle of the significant redevelopment of the site to provide for housing, commercial (subject to the retail policies of this Plan), or employment uses and/or a mixed-use development of the aforementioned uses. Such significant redevelopment proposals shall require the agreement with the Planning Authority of a comprehensive masterplan.

Swilly Road (Opp Site 4): This brownfield site housed the former Swilly Hotel. The photograph below shows the disused hotel in 2009 having fallen into disrepair and just prior to its demolition. This is a locally prominent site highly visible from various parts of the town and surrounding hinterland. The site is close to the town centre and existing public amenity areas and the shorefront and would therefore be suitable for residential, leisure, tourism, marine or a mixed-use development.

Any development must be of a high architectural and environmental quality having regard to the coastal, prominent location adjoining an SAC and SPA.

BC-OPP-P-4:

Support residential, leisure, tourism, or marine uses. Proposals shall be required to:

- a) ensure any development does not materially detract from any aspect to/from the shorefront and/or from any of the approach roads into/out of the town;
- b) ensure any development reflects and respects the characteristics of the site as one of the most important and prominent sites within the town;
- c) respect neighbouring building heights and orientation; and
- d) include permeability to and from the site for active travel.

18.5 Zoned Employment Lands

Whilst the traditional large-scale manufacturing operations (Fruit of the Loom, Clubman Shirt Factory) are no longer present in the town, the skills and industrial tradition are still very evident in the local hinterland as evidenced by the presence of a strong 'Indigenous Engineering cluster' in the hinterland of Buncrana inclusive of:

- E&I Engineering: based close to the border in Bridgend and approx. 10km from Buncrana; and
- Inishowen Engineering: located in Drumfries, around 10km north of Buncrana.

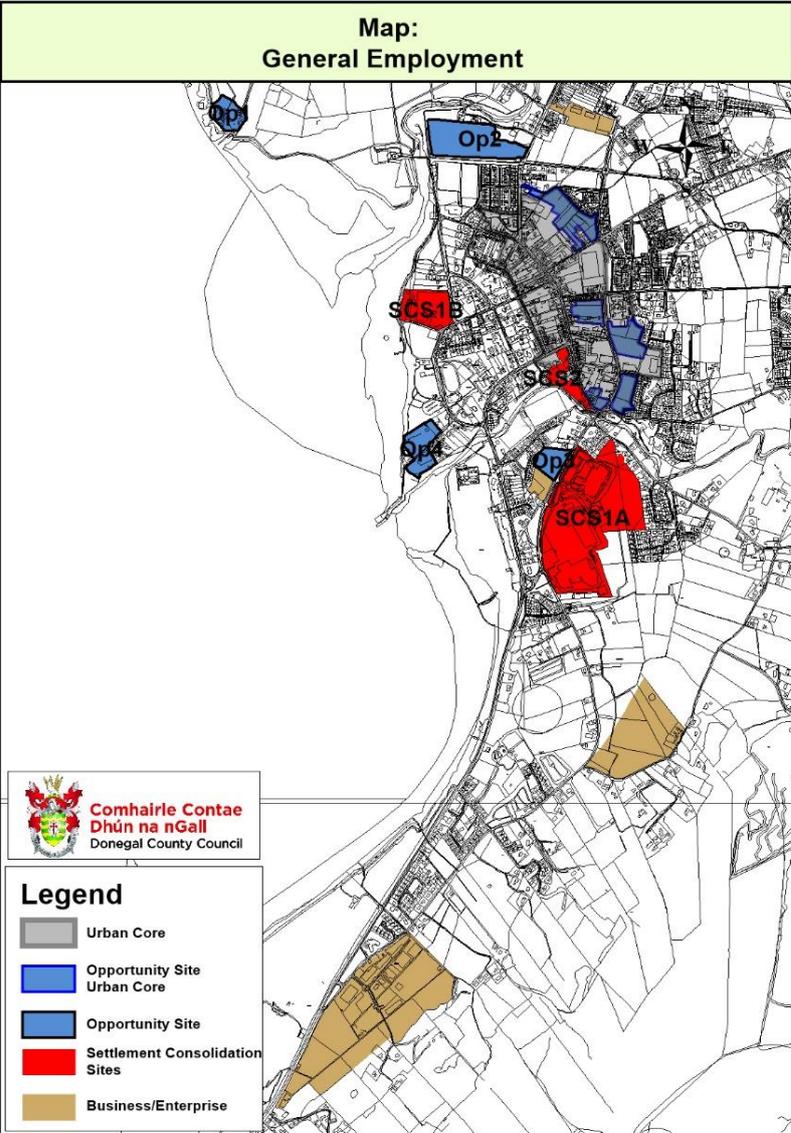
While it is estimated that almost 80% of E&I Staff come from the Derry City and Strabane District Council area, both employers offer significant opportunities in establishing the town and the wider North West as a cutting-edge engineering centre of excellence. The skills-needs of such a proposition, however, need to be further investigated. Notably this is a strong concluding recommendation from the ICLRDs Strategic report.

It is noted that the majority (combined Lands at Milltown Industrial estate and Lisfannon Industrial estate totals 21.6 ha) of lands currently zoned for 'General Employment' use are at this current time largely developed with limited capacity to accommodate future development. This has necessitated the review of current zoning for GE purposes to provide for the growth and employment ambitions of the town and region into the future. Arising from this review, this Plan identifies an appropriate mix of lands that will have sufficient capacity to accommodate new economic developments. In doing so, regard has been had to infrastructural capacity in relation to water and waste-water, environmental and conservation designations, vehicular access, opportunities for the clustering of economic developments, the capacity of the town centre and the capacity for new economic activity on brownfield or infill sites, in addition to the requirement to ensure compact growth and sustainable mobility. In general terms and subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, provision has been made for Economic Development on lands zoned:

- (a) 'General Employment';
- (b) Within the Town Centre 'Opportunity Sites';
- (c) At 4 no. identified 'Opportunity Sites'; and
- (d) Additional 'General Employment' lands to the south-east of the town and located just north of the existing Lisfannon Industrial estate.

(e) At 3 no. Settlement Consolidation sites.

Fig 18.5 General Employment Zonings



Objectives:

BC-ZEL-O-1:	To grow the industrial and office-based sectors in Buncrana inclusive of ensuring that there is sufficient zoned and appropriately located lands to attract such uses.
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18.6 Active Travel, Permeability and Connectivity

18.6.1 Sustainable Mobility

Chapter 8.1 sets out the national and regional policy context for this active travel, permeability and connectivity section of the Buncrana Plan.

As well as the benefits to the environment and the population by reducing pollution, noise and traffic congestion and contributing to healthy more active lifestyles, in the case of Buncrana active travel facilities can also be considered as tourism assets to the town. Buncrana has a significant advantage in this regard as there is already a strong network of popular cycle/walkways which extend along the Shore Front into Swan Park and along the Crana River. It also extends along the shores of Lough Swilly to Ned's Point/Fr Hegarty's Rock and beyond to Stragill Strand.

This Plan identifies additional walking and cycling 'Active Travel' schemes to further influence movement around the town by way of creating choice and options (see Fig:18.8 below). In this regard, there exists considerable scope for the development of additional walkways along natural corridors between the town centre and the suburbs. Examples include (see Fig 18.7):



- Along the Owenkillew River – on both sides – from Victoria Bridge to the Old Mill with a spur to St Mary's Road (via St Oran's Drive);
- Along the Crana River – northwards from the Tullyarvan Mill - parallel to the Cockhill Road; and
- Extending Swan Park to the Castle Bridge (along the southern bank of the Crana River).

These green corridors will enable more pedestrian access to and from the town centre, thereby enhancing mobility and assisting in desire lines and accessibility to town centre businesses. Further development in active travel outside of the town could see the extension of the coastal path for walking and cycling to Fort Dunree and completing the Greenway loop around Inishowen.

National Transport Authority's (NTA) National Cycle Connect Network.

Cycle Connect is Ireland's National Cycle Network which aims to identify a National network for cycling to improve sustainable travel by providing the potential for more trips on a safe, accessible and convenient cycling network, connecting more people to more places. Proposals for cycling links in key cities, towns and villages in each county are included in the plan, in addition to connections between the larger towns, villages and settlements. The plan also incorporates existing and planned cycle routes such as Greenways and Blueways. The draft proposals envisage an extensive cycling network across the country to create an overall comprehensive cycle network for Ireland and includes identified

Fig 18.7: Councils' potential for Future Active Travel Infrastructure.

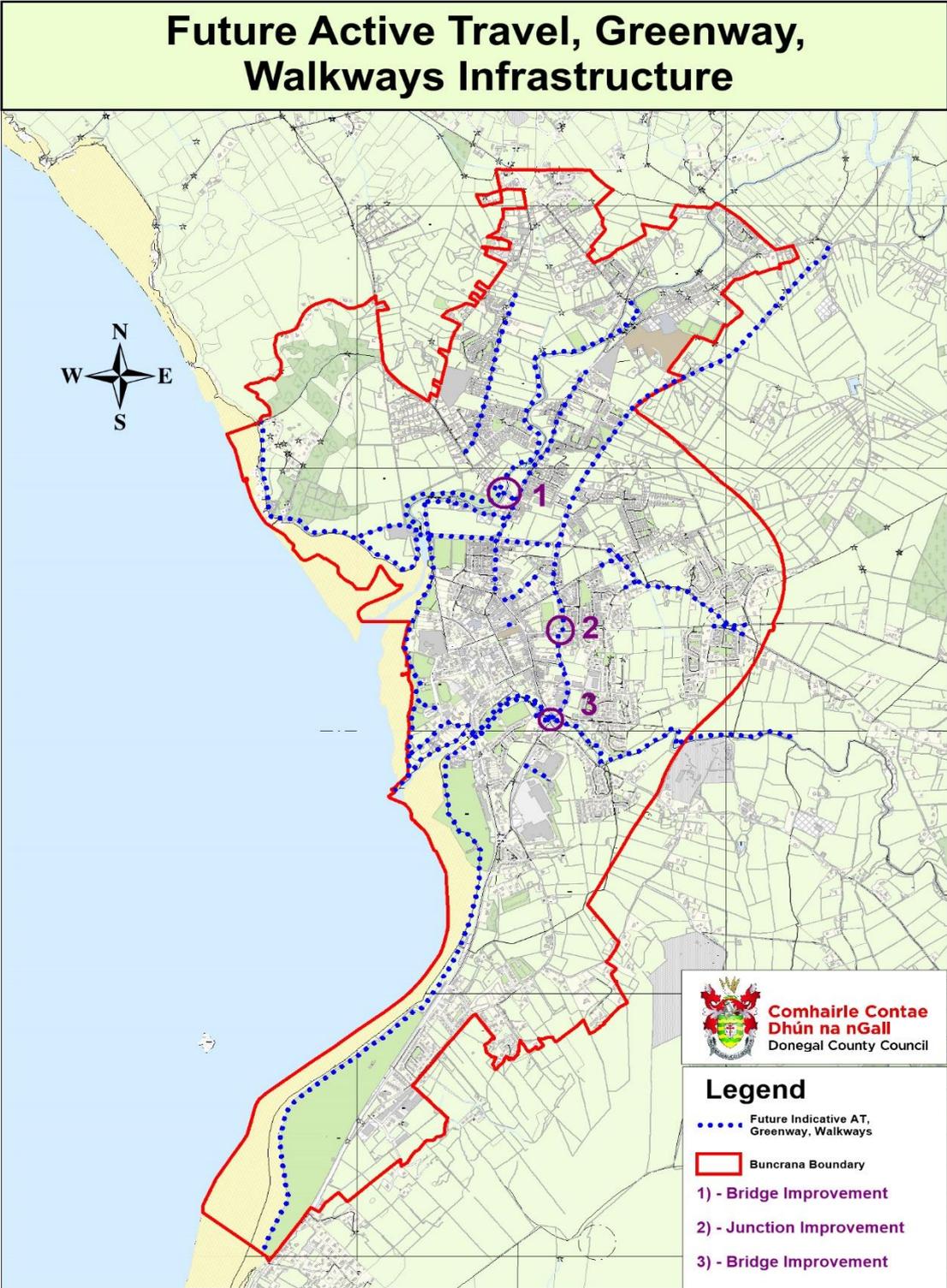


Fig 18.8: Future Potential Buncrana Active Travel Schemes,

Transport/Sustainable Mobility Strategy for Buncrana		
Location/Name	Nature of Scheme	Key benefits
Aghilly Road Scheme – leading to Hillhead Road.	Currently included in Specific Improvement Programme. Scheme currently at design stage, Part 8 consent Complete and CPO initiated.	Narrow carriageway, widened footpath. General overall network improvements for walking and cycling.
Slavery Road Scheme	Currently underway as an Active travel scheme (Funded by National Transport Authority.)	Footpath extensions and improvements due to gaps in network. Safety and essential network improvement scheme.
Westbrook Bridge (Fig 18.7 No.1.)	New Pedestrian Bridge connecting to Slavery active travel Scheme.	Safety and improvement scheme. A new pedestrian bridge would facilitate improved pedestrian segregation at an existing substandard dangerous junction.
Buncrana Inner Relief Road.	Included in the county's Specific Improvement programme. Department of Transport funding achieved for partial redesign of exiting junctions. (Maginn Av/Mc Carter	Development of a multi modal corridor for redistributing traffic and provision of walking, cycling and multi modal infrastructure.
Mill Bridge (Fig 18.7, No .2.)	Proposed pedestrian bridge which is an aspect of wider Buncrana Inner Relief scheme, which is included in the Specific Improvement programme for the town.	Current narrow carriageway with restricted footpath width, with 2-way traffic giving way on bridge. It would be proposed that the footpath would be removed to increase carriageway widths on what is a protected structure. In turn it would be proposed to introduce a Pedestrian Bridge along the outside of Mill bridge, which will require land negotiations and procurement
Mill River Link (Fig 18.7, No. 3).	Creation of river walk along Mill river and connecting to the amenity with Amazing Grace Park and onwards to the new	Mill River alongside GAA grounds linking to the R238 and onwards Provision of NW Greenway connectivity from south of the town to the shorefront, Swan Park and future potential Greenway schemes. wider shorefront network and onward network

	pedestrian bridge connection to the Pier.	connections for walking and cycling Funded through Repowering Buncrana RRDF Project.
Cockhill Road	Network improvement to include reduction in carriageway widths, reallocation of road space, removal of on-street parking and active travel infrastructure for walking and cycling.	The current carriageway has sufficient widths for the introduction of wide footpaths/Cycleways from the upper main street towards Westbrook bridge. This proposal would require the removal of existing on street parking. Benefits include creation of network connectivity for pedestrian/cycling between Slavery area and town centre, as well as creating further network improvements for the schools campus link towards Aghilly and the three schools site.
Causeway Road	Network improvements for Walking and Cycling infrastructure to create greater connected network.	

18.6.2 The Inishowen Greenway

The Inishowen Greenway (formerly known as the 'NW Greenway') project is a major regional North-West and cross border infrastructure project. Providing active travel Infrastructure through the development and delivery of 46.5km of cross-border greenway across a number of individual routes. One route connects Buncrana with Derry City with a spur to Newtowncunningham, incorporating the local villages Bridgend, Burnfoot, Fahan and Lisfannon and extending to 28.7km. The longer-term overall infrastructure ambition is the development of a regional 'Inishowen Greenway' through Inishowen with further routes connecting, Buncrana with Carndonagh, Moville, Quigleys Point and Muff. Chapter 8.1 and Table 8.2 of County Development Plan sets this out in more detail.



The public consultation conducted during the preparation of the 'Strategic Strengths and Future Strategic Direction of Buncrana', identified an extremely enthusiastic local attitude to the delivery of the Greenway to the town and a strong desire for its extension to the Shore-green, to the Town Centre, and onwards spurs to Carndonagh and Malin Head.



BC-AT-O-1	Deliver the projects listed in Table entitled ‘Transport/Sustainable Mobility Strategy for Buncrana’ Fig 18.8.
BC-AT-O-2:	To continue to work with Transport Infrastructure Ireland to progress and ultimately carry out and develop the Inishowen Greenway network and the further support future potential extension of the Network in Buncrana and to onward destinations within the Inishowen peninsula to create a Regional Network of Greenway infrastructure.
BC-AT-P-1:	<p>To require that development proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a.) provide for suitable connectivity and permeability (for walking, wheeling, cycling and/or vehicular as appropriate) between adjoining land parcels; and (b.) have due regard to the ‘indicative walking routes’ identified on the Buncrana Land-Use Zoning Map and to the active transport/sustainable mobility projects identified on Fig 18.8 titled ‘Transport/Sustainable Mobility Strategy for Buncrana’, and reserve corridors for the required routes and/or construct sections of the required routes, in consultation with the Council’s Roads Department <p>Proposals that fail to provide for adequate connectivity and permeability or fail to have due regard to the indicative access routes identified on map 18.7 shall not be permitted.</p>

18.7 Housing

18.7.1. Population and Housing Targets

The housing targets and consequent zoning provisions of the Core Strategy targets the delivery of 566 units for Buncrana over the life of the Plan.

18.7.2 Background and Core Strategy Requirements

There has been a severe shortage of new housing completions in the Buncrana area over the last decade particularly on zoned residential lands⁴⁹. There is also a considerable local social housing waiting list. The CDP Core Strategy has set an ambitious target of 566 units and an associated zoned land requirement of 16.2ha for Buncrana over the plan period 2024-2030. Overall, there is a need to facilitate an adequate supply, range and mix of high-quality housing at compact, serviced, sustainable, accessible, and socially inclusive locations in Buncrana. The approach has therefore been to identify new residential land use zonings to achieve this objective. In this regard, these residential zonings exceed the Core Strategy zoning requirement in order both to allow sufficient flexibility to allow residential sites to come forward and to retain pre-existing residential zonings on a phased basis in accordance with the Development Plan Guidelines. The site areas are set out in the table below.

Table 18.1: Residential Zonings And Associated Site Area

Site Ref	Zoned as Primarily Residential, Opportunity Site, Town Centre or Settlement Consolidation Site, with Residential Provision	Site Area (ha)
NR 1.1	New Residential Phase 1	2.22
NR 1.2	New Residential Phase 1	4.6

⁴⁹ There were no housing completions on zoned residential lands during the period 2018-2024.

NR 1.3	New Residential Phase 1	.92
NR 1.4	New Residential Phase 1	1.86
NR 1.5	New Residential Phase 1	1.03
NR 1.6	New Residential Phase 1	2.91
NR 1.7	New Residential Phase 1	1.57
NR 1.8	New Residential Phase 1	1.18
NR 1.9	New Residential Phase 1	1.32
NR 1.10	New Residential Phase 1	0.58
NR 1.11		3.42
NR 1.12		3.88
Total NR 1		25.49
NR 2.13	New Residential Phase 2	1.03
NR 2.14	New Residential Phase 2	1.8
NR 2.15	New Residential Phase 2	0.30
NR 2.16	New Residential Phase 2	6.3
NR 2.17	New Residential Phase 2	0.48
NR 2.18	New Residential Phase 2	1.86
NR 2.19	New Residential Phase 2	0.60
NR 2.20	New Residential Phase 2	0.45
Total of New Residential sites		31.24
OPP site 2	Opportunity Site	4.51
OPP site 3		1.17
OPP site 4	Opportunity Site	2.0
SCS 1A	Opportunity Site	12.6
SCS 1B		2.4
Total for OPP sites		22.68
TC1	Town Centre	2.56
TC2	Town Centre	1.0
TC3	Town Centre	1.58
TC4	Town Centre	0.98
TC5	Town Centre	0.67
SCS2	Settlement Consolidation Site	1.28
Total for TC and SCS		8.07

Approach taken in Review of Buncrana LAP as mandated (Development Plan Guidelines 2022):

1. Apply Core Strategy requirements – 16.2ha;
2. Due regard to adopting a sequential approach and prioritizing centrally located serviced lands;
3. Infrastructural assessment and scoring on all sites existing and proposed;
4. Avoid de-zoning serviced lands;
5. Adopt phasing approach where a surplus exists and where there is a sound planning rationale for doing so.

BC-H-P-1	(1.) (a.) Require that proposals for the development of Sites NR1.1 and NR 1.2 are accompanied by a site-specific flood risk assessment, unless otherwise agreed with the Planning Authority; (b.) Require that proposed layouts for the development of all NR sites provide sufficiently for separate modes for walking and cycling including active travel permeability through the sites; (c.) Require that layout proposals for the development of site NR1.4, NR 1.5, Nr 1.6, and 1.7 provide for vehicular, pedestrian and cycle connectivity to the public roads located within the vicinity of said sites with suitable provision of safe active travel along the entire northern and southern site frontages of NR 1.6, 1.7 and 1.8.
	(2.) Require that any proposed layout for the development of site NR1.6 incorporates: active travel (pedestrians and cycling) facilities westwards towards the town centre along the Hillhead Road, and eastwards to the existing footpath network; and the realignment of the public road to ensure safe site vehicular access and egress.
	(3.) Require that any proposed layout for the development of site NR2.14: (a.) preserves the proposed Buncrana Inner Relief Road corridor; (b.) provides for vehicular access to the site from the Cockhill Road; and (c.) incorporates active travel facilities in all directions including to the future Inner Relief Road.
	(4.) Require that proposals for the development of site NR2.16: (a.) preserves the proposed Buncrana Inner Relief Road and Outer Relief Road corridors; and (b.) provides for active travel (pedestrian and cycling) access from the site to: the established neighbourhood services in Cockhill to the north of the site; and the proposed Inishowen Greenway to the east.
	(5.) Require that proposals for the development of site NR2.17: (a.) preserves the proposed Buncrana Inner Relief Road corridor; and (b.) provides for active travel (pedestrian and cycling) access from the site to the Inner Relief Road.

18.8 Opportunity Sites

The Opportunity Sites identified hereunder present a wide range of development opportunities by reason of their strategic location, scale, nature and/or current use. The text and associated policies below provide guidance as to the types of development that the Planning Authority would deem appropriate on each site.

Ned’s Point (Opp Site 1): This scenic coastal site comprises a battery and ordnance ground with stone revetments, ditches and a low tower dating from 1812, a small pier, a deep-sea diving centre and RNLI lifeboat station and slipway within a small clearing in a wooded area on the shores of Lough Swilly. Part of the site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA). The Fort is historically and architecturally important (NIAH)

BC–OPP–P-1:	Facilitate a sensitive, heritage-led regeneration and development project for tourism purposes. Proposals shall be required to incorporate: a) the sensitive reuse/refurbishment of the existing structure; b) a massing and scale that respects the sensitive coastal location of the site; c) measures to ensure that there is no damage to the natural environment; and
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- d) measures to protect the existing coastal walk as a public amenity and as a direct linkage to the town core.

Cockhill Road (Opp Site 2): This is an 'Edge of Town Centre' site located beside high quality community and recreational facilities. A portion of the site is currently occupied and in use by McGonagle Bus company for their depot base, overnight parking and maintenance. The site is also close to Swan Park and the historic access to Buncrana Castle (a Protected Structure)

- BC-OPP-P-2:** Support light industry, residential, employment or economic development uses. Proposals shall be required to
- a) respect and harness the context and setting of the Buncrana Castle Protected Structure and wider local context;
 - b) retain and integrate existing mature trees within the site

Greenfield Site, McCarter Road (Op Site 3): This site occupies 1.4 ha and currently benefits from excellent road access directly fronting onto Looking Glass Brae, the completed section of the inner relief road. This site is adjoined by an existing light industrial use comprising builders merchant and hardware store with predominantly established medium density residential immediately surrounding. The lands have remained undeveloped as PR for a considerable number of years and their suitable future development potential, having regard to residential amenities of adjoining properties is suitable for either solely residential or solely light industrial.

- BC-OPP-P-3:** Support either solely comparison retail/light industry, or solely residential uses.

18.9 Roads

Section 18.6: 'Active Travel, Permeability and Connectivity' sets out this Authority's commitment to developing further the active travel offering in Buncrana. Notwithstanding, this Plan also retains longstanding road projects as contained in previous plans for Buncrana, namely the Inner Relief Road and the Outer Relief Road. The Inner Relief Road has been developed incrementally but is not yet complete. The Outer Relief Road is a more long-term solution that could in time alleviate traffic pressures in the town and thereby provide further opportunities for reimaging the town centre.

In addition to the general transportation objectives and policies of this Plan as contained in Chapter 8.1, the Transportation objectives and policies that are specific to Buncrana are set out below:

Objectives:

- BC-R-O-1:** To protect the corridors and routes and acquire the lands necessary for transportation improvement and projects as identified on the Land Use Zoning Map', subject to all other objectives and policies contained within this Plan.

Policies:

- BC-R-P-1:** New development affected by the proposed Inner Relief Road and Outer Relief Road corridors shall be designed to anticipate and mitigate the operational and environmental impacts of the road, including noise impact. New individual accesses (excluding farm access) will not be permitted direct access onto these roads. A noise impact assessment report may be required in the assessment of any planning application and the setback requirement that will be required will be informed by that assessment.

18.10 Water and Wastewater



There are currently two strategic Wastewater investment and improvement projects underway for Buncrana:

1. Buncrana Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade project:
The proposed works at Buncrana Waste-water Treatment Plant (WwTP) include upgrading to a 17,700 PE with a 25 year design horizon to provide secondary treatment of effluent for the town including the environs of Ludden and Fahan. These works are proposed on the site of the existing waste-water treatment plant located within the town. Currently at detailed design stage it is anticipated that this project will commence construction in 2024.
2. Uisce Éireann, working in partnership with Donegal County Council, plans to deliver the Buncrana Sewerage Scheme. This scheme includes upgrades to the sewer network in order to address flooding, overflow and capacity deficiencies. Stormwater storage holding tanks will be provided to reduce the risk of overflows during storms and the scheme will result in improved water quality in the receiving waters. Other benefits will be ensuring compliance with Urban Wastewater Treatment Regulations 2001 and the EPA Wastewater Discharge Licencing and to provide for growth and development in Buncrana and the surrounding areas. This project is due to commence construction during 2023.

18.11 Surface Water and Flooding

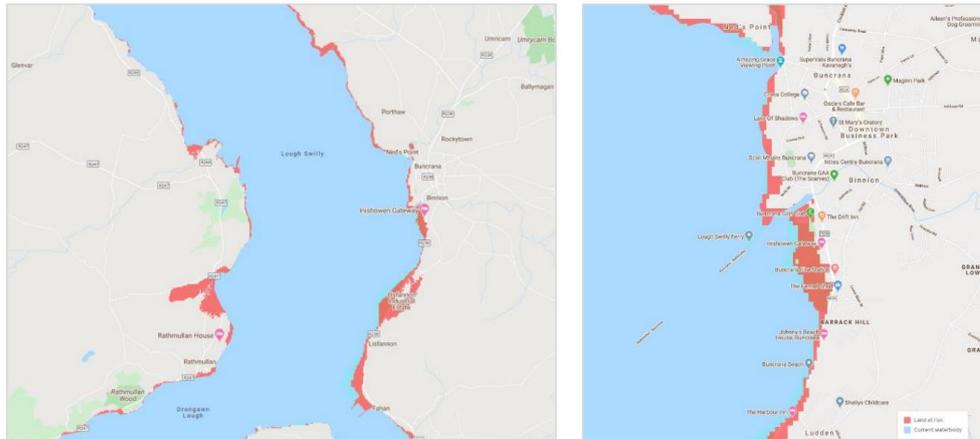
18.11.1

The objectives and the policies of the Council in relation to Flooding are contained in Chapter 8.4 of the County Development Plan and developments will be assessed against the policies contained therein.

The ICLRD Strategic Study reports that coastal communities, such as Buncrana are particularly vulnerable in the face of climate change and rising sea levels. The maps below, supplied by MaREI, (SFI, Research Centre for Energy, Climate and Marine Research and Innovation) clearly illustrates Buncrana's susceptibility to inundation. Buncrana's soft coastline makes it more vulnerable than other

parts of Inishowen, and the south of the town – from the mouth of the Owenkillew and along the southern beaches – is likely to endure the greatest impacts.

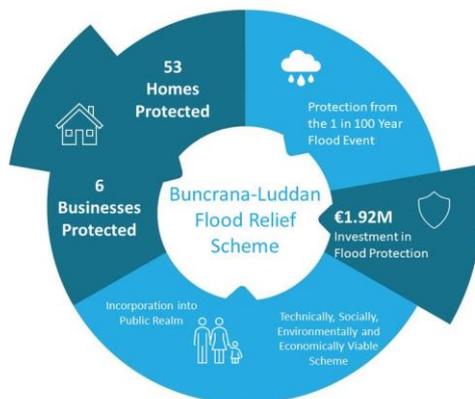
Fig 18.9: Lands anticipated to be below annual flood level in 2050 (Source: MaREI, 2020).



The Office of Public Works’s (OPW) Catchment and Flood Risk Management (CFRAM) study identified Buncrana as a flood risk area. The Plan also set out the measures and policies to be pursued in order to achieve the most cost effective and sustainable management of flood risk. There is a history of coastal and fluvial (river) flooding at Buncrana and Luddan with a recent significant event recorded in August 2017.

As part of the Government’s National Development Plan 2018-2027, €1 billion has been committed to the development of flood relief measures across Ireland. As part of this commitment, a steering group was established between the Office of Public Works (OPW) and Donegal County Council to progress a flood relief scheme to alleviate the risk of flooding for Buncrana and Luddan. In Spring 2021, Consultants were appointed to develop a scheme that is technically, socially, environmentally, and economically acceptable, to alleviate the risk of flooding to the communities of Buncrana and Luddan.

The process will continue to identify appropriate flood risk relief measures and prepare detailed design, drawings and documents to facilitate submission of a planning application as per the Planning and Development Act (2000), the Planning and Development Regulations (2001) and subsequent construction of the scheme⁵⁰.



⁵⁰ Buncrana-Ludden Flood Relief Scheme, Office of Public works, 2022.

Objective

BC-F-O-1:

To support and facilitate the implementation of the Buncrana-Luddan Flood Relief Scheme subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

18.12: Natural & Built Heritage

18.12.1 Natural Heritage

Buncrana and its environs contain a number of important natural heritage resources including those given a formal designation, woodland areas, the shorefront, tree lined rivers and parkland. These resources are important environmental assets in the town and contribute to the quality of life and character of Buncrana, and its attractiveness as a tourism/recreational destination.



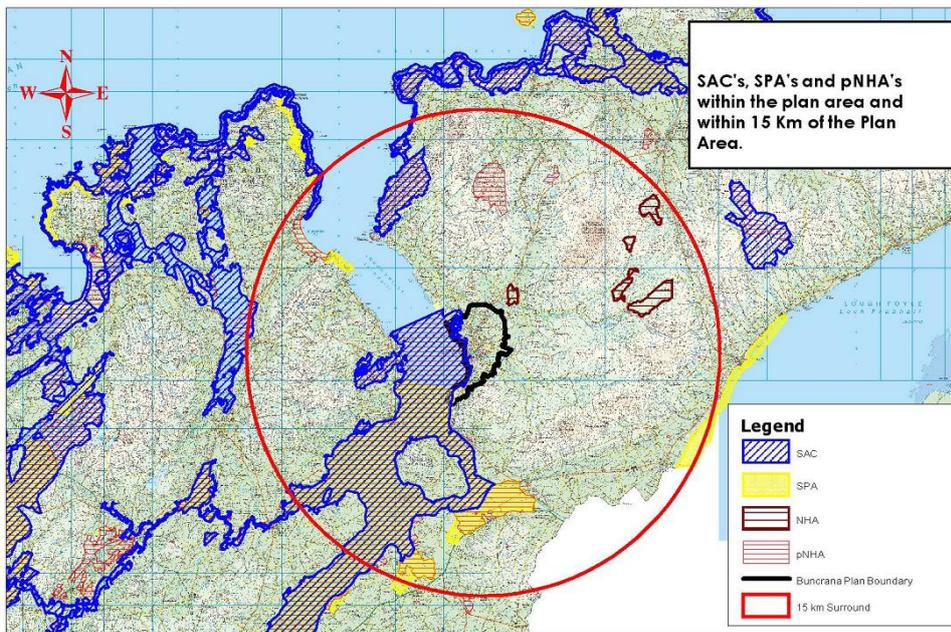
Specifically, EU and national protected sites are set out in the table below. Located on the Lough Swilly SAC and SPA, the protected sites include the wooded valleys that follow the Mill and Crana Rivers into Lough Swilly. Porthaw Glen is also an important natural habitat, which has European protection, i.e. SAC. The Swilly shoreline has a number of important designations, including SAC, SPA and pNHA. It is also a designated shellfish water

Natura 2000 Sites and Natural Heritage Areas.

Site	Code	Name
Special Area of Conservation	002287	Lough Swilly
Proposed Natural Heritage Area	000166	Lough Swilly including Big Isle, Blanket Nook and Inch Lake
Special Protection Area	004075	Lough Swilly

A Strategic Environmental Assessment and an Appropriate Assessment of this Plan have been carried out, in which the protection of the natural heritage of the town is emphasized. The strategy of this Plan in relation to natural heritage ensures that, cumulatively, the objectives and policies of the Plan provide appropriate protection to environmental assets and designated sites and that implementation shall provide adequate mitigation where relevant. Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) specifically requires the protection of the designated species and habitats of Natura 2000 sites. Therefore any project with the potential to impact on the conservation objectives of designated sites is required to take appropriate steps to avoid the deterioration of natural habitats and the habitats species as well as significant disturbance of species for which areas have been designated and maybe subject to Appropriate Assessment.

Natura 2000 and NHA designations



Blue and Green Infrastructure is now recognised as an important concept in land use planning and environmental protection. The Buncrana Strategic Study recognises this with recommendations emerging in this key area. This term describes the network of open spaces, parks, green routes, waterways and urban tree lines. They provide environmental, social, economic and physical benefits and give added value where integrated in the development process. These include:

- Climate change adaptation;
- Biodiversity management and enhancement;
- Water management including drainage and flood attenuation;
- Health and well being;
- Visual amenity and sense and pride of place; and,
- Sustainable mobility.

Ensuring the promotion, protection of existing, and creation of new blue and green infrastructure provides an opportunity for all to live and work in proximity to connected areas of green space to enjoy the benefits of a healthy environment. This Plan seeks to ensure protection of these elements and to create new areas of open space which connect the urban fabric.

Natural Heritage Policies Specific to Buncrana

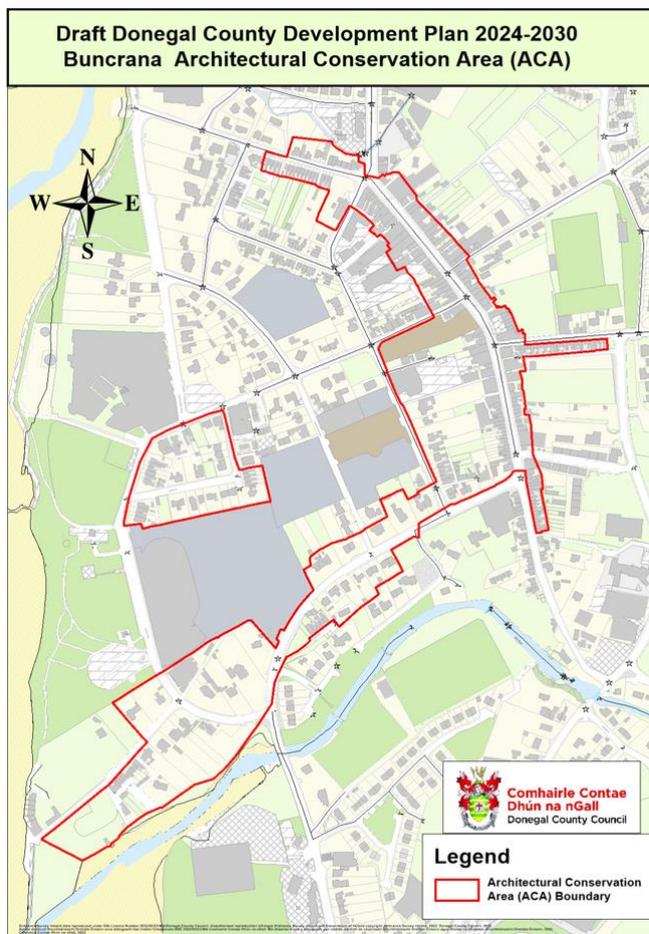
BC-NH-P-1:	To safeguard and enhance the local landscape and natural environment, and coastline, by ensuring any new developments do not detrimentally impact on the character, integrity, distinctiveness or scenic value of the area.
BC-NH-P-2:	It is the policy of the Council to conserve and protect the lands identified as 'High Amenity' on the Zoning Map. Proposals for agricultural or recreational development within the identified area will be considered having regard to all material planning considerations, all other relevant policies of the Plan, National/Regional guidelines and having regard to all environmental and conservation designations.
BC-NH-P-3:	It is the policy of the Council to protect the recreational, environmental and conservation integrity, and the visual quality of all beaches within and adjacent to the Plan area, including Lady's Bay, Buncrana and Lisfannon Beaches.

18.12.2 Built Heritage

The NPF and RSES highlight the importance of incorporating best practice in heritage management into land use planning through the protection of the historic urban fabric, the sensitive reuse of historic properties, the enhancement of places of special cultural or natural significance and the provision of high-quality public realm and recreational spaces. This Plan includes a proposed Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) and Chapter 11. 'Natural and Built Heritage provides objectives and policies in relation to the future sensitive development of all ACAs including retaining the character of the Main Street through traditional shop front design policies, the importance of colour and textures in painting schemes in addition to the importance of correct illumination.

Buncrana is unique in that it has several influences all of which come together and culminate in a scenic coastal and attractive town possessing many built heritage vernacular features and character worthy of protection. These influences are its textile heritage during the 20th century and the importance of its remaining historic features such as O'Doherty's Keep Defence Tower where the town originated from at the mouth of the River Crana. The town has 3 buildings included on the record of Protected structures, including Swan Mill and Buncrana Castle.

Whilst some insensitive shop front additions have occurred in recent times predominately associated with the gaming industry and fast-food takeaways, the character of the Main Street has not been entirely lost. The control of interventions on the Main Street including new shop fronts and modifications to existing fronts will contribute to the achievement of a successful ACA.

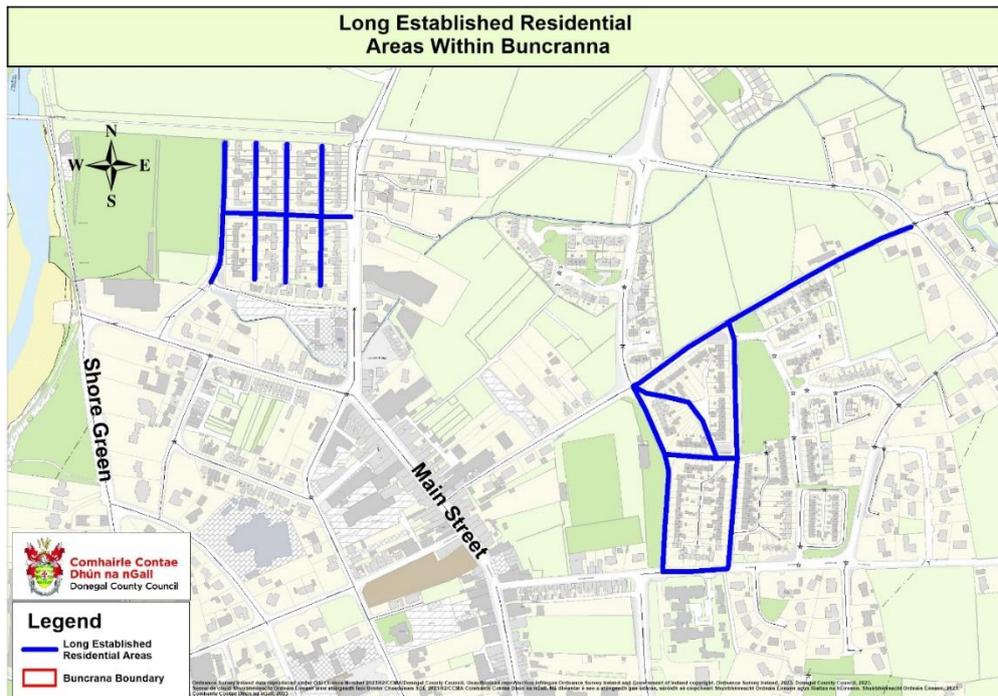


18.13: Long-Established Residential Areas

There are a number of long-established residential areas within the town and it is reasonable to ensure that these communities are protected and not impacted negatively by development activity in and around the town centre. Such areas are to the east of the town core along Ferris Lane, Marian Park and Cluain Mhuire.

POLICY BC-LRA-P-1:

To protect the architectural, cultural and historic value of residential communities within and on the edge of the town centre, as identified on the map below entitled 'Long Established Residential Areas within Buncrana'.



18.14:
Social,

Community & Culture

Buncrana performs as an important service centre in the County where the appropriate level and mix of community, education and health facilities contributes to the capacity of the town to meet the needs of its growing population. Continued support for vibrant and diverse community, education and health sectors within the town is critical in sustaining a good quality of life and in terms of building upon the strategic function of Buncrana as a key service centre. As outlined in the following paragraphs, the type of services established in the town within the community, education and health sectors are of a strategic nature, designed to meet needs at a high level in terms of the hierarchy of service provision and, in a spatial context to service the town as well as a wider geographical catchment within Inishowen.

The Strategic Study makes extremely interesting and pertinent findings and goes on to make several recommendations on community wellbeing and the provision off community facilities.

18.14.2 Education

In recent years the town has faced some key infrastructural challenges including the need for a consolidated multi-school campus. The education needs of the town and the surrounding wider catchment are served by 5 primary schools, 3 secondary schools and an Adult Education and Training Centre. 605 students are currently enrolled at Crana College, while Scoil Mhuire has 850 students enrolled in September 2022.

A number of these schools are currently awaiting the construction of new purpose built facilities to cater for existing students and rising demand. The 3 no. schools listed below are in need of new/improved/permanent accommodation all of which it is anticipated will be provided for in one consolidated location. The community infrastructure site located along the Causeway Road has been earmarked as the preferred site for the multi-school campus. Identified as a result of collaborative work between by the Department of Education and Donegal County Council leading to acquisition during 2021.

- Crana College (Post Primary). Currently sited on 2.76 acres.
- Gaelscoil Bhun Cranncha (All Irish Primary School), currently located in temporary accommodation at the Buncrana Youth and Community Co. Ltd) - approximately 170 pupils.
- Coláiste Chineal Eoghain (All Irish Post Primary), currently operating in rented accommodation at Tullyarvan Mill Complex.
- The Community site located along the Causeway Road identified a risk of flooding and the following policy refers:

BC-ED-P-1:

It is a policy of the Council to require that:

- a. Any development vulnerable to flooding on the Community Infrastructure site along the Causeway Road must be located outside of the flood zones as identified in the Strategic Flood risk Assessment prepared to inform this Plan.
- b. Provision is made for emergency vehicle access to the site, outside of the flood zones.

18.14.3: Health

A state of the art HSE Primary Care Centre officially opened in the town centre in 2022 providing facilities to accommodate a range of primary care services within a 'one stop shop'. The centre provides clinical space accommodating a wide range of public services include GP, public health nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, audiology and ophthalmology. Children and adult mental health services, early intervention services, TUSLA, and dental services will also be available with future capacity for other additional services.

18.14.4 Childcare

Buncrana urban area is currently served by 12 early childhood services and 4 standalone school aged childcare services in accordance with figures held by Donegal Childcare committee (DCCC). Recent consultation with DCCC suggests that there is current capacity in the town for children aged 1-12 years.

Given the anticipated growth for the town over the plan period it is important that suitable childcare facilities are provided in tandem with new development, and in this regard the Council will require the provision of new facilities in accordance with the standards set out in the Government's 'Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2001), which set a benchmark provision of one childcare facility per 75 dwelling units, but which also allow for revised thresholds, having due regard to the existing geographical distribution of childcare facilities and the emerging demographic profile of areas. The scale and unit mix of proposed development will also be a consideration in terms of determining requirements for childcare facilities. In implementing planning policy with regard to childcare in Buncrana, the Council will actively consult with the Donegal County Childcare Committee in order to determine the extent of childcare needs in given areas.

18.14.5 Universal Design

The urban area of Buncrana must be developed in a manner that acknowledges the diverse abilities of its residents, workers and those visiting the town. Donegal County Council recognises that people should be able to use buildings and places comfortably and safely, as far as possible without special assistance and that, as a basic principle of good design, places should be accessible, convenient and pleasurable for all to use. Policy The policies in Chapter 6.2: 'Urban Housing' require that layouts of new residential developments be designed and constructed having regard to best practice in terms of Universal Design, and that a minimum of 30% of units within new residential developments be constructed to universal design standards.

18.14.6 Buncrana Leisure Centre

The proposed redevelopment of Buncrana Community Leisure Centre continues to be progressed by DCC, in collaboration with the Buncrana Community Leisure Centre Committee. A design team for the project was appointed by the Council in 2021, and comprises of consultants for both the Architect-led Design Team which has now been substantially completed, and the next stage of the Consultants design work programmed to continue in 2023, resulting in the securing of statutory approvals and Environmental assessments for the project.

18.14.7 Community Facilities

The town benefits from a vibrant GAA Club facilitating both Gaelic Football and Hurling, whilst young people are targeted through the work of a youth club (including a youth drop- in centre) and soccer club at Cockhill and Castle Avenue. Other sporting facilities are also provided in a private capacity in the town such as the Buncrana Golf Clubs, Buncrana Angling Club, Parkrun along the shoregreen and the Deep Sea Diving Centre at Ned's Point. These groups contribute to the community vitality of the town and also make a significant contribution to the economy, particularly in relation to tourism.

Objectives

BC-SCC-O-1

To support and facilitate the redevelopment of the Buncrana Community Leisure Centre.

18.15 Infrastructural Assessment

The land-use zoning map that accompanies the Buncrana LAP identifies 9 No. sites as 'New Residential phase 1'. The table below sets out high level details of the infrastructure required to serve each site.

Tiered approach to differentiate between serviced and serviceable Primarily Residential lands

Site Ref.	Infrastructural Requirements
PR1	All services available
PR2	All services available
PR3	All services available
PR4	All services available
PR5	All services available
PR6	All services available
PR7	All services available
PR8	All services available
PR9	All services available

PR10	All services available
PR11	All services available

Ballybofey/Stranorlar Area Plan 2024-2030



**Comhairle Contae
Dhún na nGall**
Donegal County Council

Chapter 19 – Ballybofey Stranorlar Area Plan

19.1 Introduction

Ballybofey/Stranorlar is the 3rd largest settlement in Donegal with a population of 4,852, occupies a strategically important location on the Atlantic Economic Corridor between Letterkenny/Derry and Sligo at the junction of the N13/15, and performs important county and sub-regional level sporting, retail, tourism, education, service, employment functions. The Twin Towns also have a well-developed and relatively compact urban structure, a rich social, community, and sporting base, key environmental assets (e.g. Drumboe woods), and adequate environmental infrastructure to facilitate further growth. The completion of the TEN-T Strategic roads project in the coming years will also bring key benefits including enhanced strategic access, reduced traffic congestion, enhanced safety and sustainability mobility options, improved quality of life and air quality benefits. Whilst the high levels of vacancy and dereliction and lack of housing completions remain problematic, government funding initiatives to tackle these issues and the availability of good quality housing lands in close proximity to the urban core can provide part of the solution.. It is therefore considered that with the aid of a suitable planning policy and spatial development framework, Ballybofey/Stranorlar can capitalise on existing key functions and assets to develop as a sustainable, economically prosperous, socially vibrant, accessible, and attractive place with a high quality of life.

19.2 Key Planning Issues for the Ballybofey/Stranorlar Local Area Plan

On the basis of public consultation, engagement with key stakeholders, and on the ground and desktop research, the following key planning related issues for the Local Area Plan are apparent:

- **Housing:** The provision of a mix of new housing units (including social housing) at accessible and socially inclusive locations. In this regard CSO data indicates a very low level of housing completions over the last decade and none of the zoned residential in the previous Local Area Plan has been developed during the lifetime of the plan.

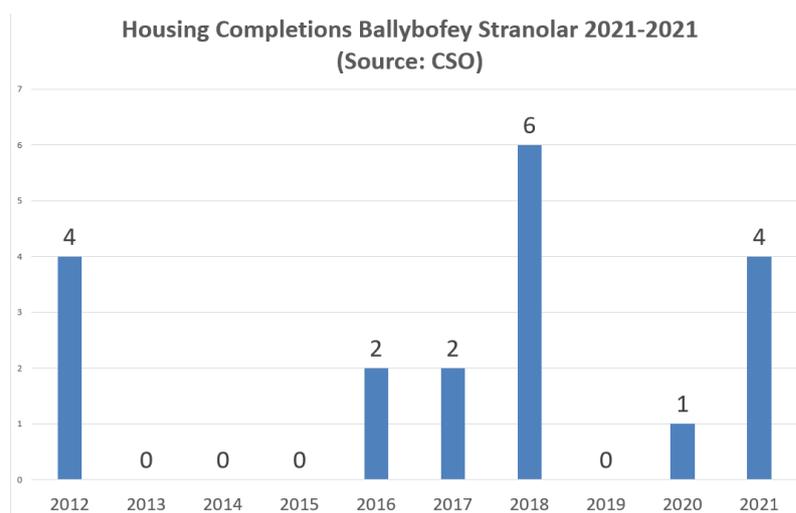


Figure 19.1 Housing Completions in Ballybofey/Stranorlar 2021-2021

- **Urban Regeneration:** The physical regeneration of key urban spaces and the tackling of vacancy and dereliction. In this regard Ballybofey/Stranorlar had a commercial building vacancy rate of 30.2% in Q2 2022⁵¹ and a residential vacancy rate of 8.5% in 2020⁵².
- **Traffic Congestion/Strategic Roads:** The completion of the TEN-T PRIPD strategic road project, improved local access between the Glenfinn Road and the N15 and other road improvements are required in order to tackle traffic congestion in the Twin Towns.
- **Sustainable Mobility:** The provision of new and enhanced walking and cycling infrastructure including extending the existing footpath network, providing new pedestrian crossings and cycle lanes and off road pedestrian and cycling connections
- **Community/Recreational Infrastructure:** The protection and enhancement of existing community/recreational assets (e.g. Drumboe Woods), the provision of new green spaces and recreational corridors and the completion of the Donegal Community Stadium.
- **Flooding:** The management of development having regard to the flood risk located along the River Finn corridor and tributaries in accordance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines.
- **Economic:** The need to strengthen and diversify the economic/employment base of the Twin Town's including enabling expansion of existing, and the attraction of new, employment generating activities.

19.3 Core Strategy Population and Housing Targets

The core strategy insets out an overall settlement hierarchy including population and housing targets and associated residential land zonings allocations for settlements (or groups of settlements) within the county. It identifies Ballybofey/Stranorlar as a County Growth Driver which occupies a strategic position in the County, offering both opportunities and services for those living and working locally but also a base for those working elsewhere. It also highlights the benefits that the SEED urban regeneration and the TEN-T PRIPD strategic roads projects will bring to the twin towns in terms of both a revitalised town centre and easing traffic congestion.

The relevant Core Strategy data for Ballybofey/Stranorlar is detailed in the Core Strategy. In summary, the Core Strategy allocates 566 units or 7.3% of the overall housing target in the county to the Twin Towns. On the basis of a residential density of 35 units per ha this means that overall 16.2ha of zoned land is required to fulfil the core strategy housing targets for Ballybofey/Stranorlar.

19.4 Zoning Matrix

As indicated in Section 15.2 development proposals in Ballybofey/Stranorlar will be considered in the context of the Zoning Objectives detailed in Table 15.1, the Ballybofey/Stranorlar specific zoning matrix below, the policy framework in this plan and the policy framework in the wider CDP. The Zoning Matrix illustrates a range of land uses together with an indication of their broad acceptability in each of the land use zones.

Please note that the broad acceptability of uses on designated Opportunity Sites is set out in specific policies contained in Section 17.8 of this Plan

Y= Acceptable in Principle; O=Open for consideration; N= Not acceptable

For Masterplan areas please see relevant masterplan policies.

⁵¹ GeoDirectory Commercial Buildings Report Q2 2022

⁵² Regional Vacancy and Dereliction Analysis NWRA January 2022

Table 19.1 - Land use zoning matrix for Ballybofey/Stranorlar

Land Use	Urban Core	New Residential (Phase 1)	New Residential (Phase 2)	Established Development	Opportunity Site	Business/Enterprise	Community Infrastructure	Open Space and Recreation	Rural/Agricultural
Amusement Arcade/Casinos	O ¹	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Agricultural Buildings	N	N	O ²	N	N	N	N	N	Y
Car Park (Standalone)	O ³	N	N	N	N	N	N	O ⁴	N
Betting Office	O ⁵	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Café	Y	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N
Caravan Parks	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Cemetery	N	N	N	N	N	N	O	N	N
Cinema	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Community/Recreational /Sports	O	O	O	O	O	N	O	O ⁶	N
Creche/Playschool	Y	O	N	O	O	N	O	N	N
Cultural Uses/Library	Y	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N
Dancehall/Disco	Y ⁷	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Data Centre	N	N	N	N	O	Y	N	N	N
Funeral Home	Y	N	N	O	O	N	O	N	N
Garage/Car Repair	O	N	N	O ⁸	O	Y	N	N	N
Guesthouse / Hotel / Hostel	Y	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	O ⁹
Hot Food Takeaway	O ¹⁰	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Industry (light)	N	N	N	O	O ¹¹	Y	N	N	N
Industry (General)	N	N	N	N	O ¹¹	Y	N	N	N
Medical/Consultancy/Healthcare	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N
Motor Sales	N	N	N	O	O ¹²	N	N	N	N
Nursing Home	Y	N	N	O	O	N	Y	N	N
Offices	Y	N	N	O ¹³	O ¹³	O ¹³	N	N	N
Park/Playground	Y	O	O	O	N	N	Y	Y	O
Petrol Station	O	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N
Place of Worship	Y	N	N	O	N	N	Y	N	N
Playing Fields	N	O	O	O	N	N	Y	N	N
Pub	Y	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N
Restaurant	Y	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N
Residential	Y	Y	Y	Y	O ¹⁴	N	N	N	O ¹⁵
Retail	Y	N	N	O ¹⁶	O ¹⁷	N	N	N	O ¹⁸
School/Education	Y	N	N	O	O	N	Y	N	N
Solar Energy Generation (other than exempted dev. or microgeneration ¹⁹)	O	N	N	O	O	O	N	N	O ²⁰
Tourist Related Facilities	Y	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N
Warehouse/Store/Depot	O	N	N	O	Y	Y	N	N	N

Footnotes to accompany land-use zoning matrix

- 1 Refer to Policy GEN-TC-P-4.
- 2 Proposals for agricultural buildings within lands zoned as New Residential (Phase 2) must be designed and located so as not to compromise the future residential development potential of said lands.

- 3 Standalone car parks will only be considered in the urban core where they are not contrary to Urban Regeneration and Town Centre objectives of the LAP.
- 4 Standalone car parks will only be considered in areas zone Open Space and Recreation where they would serve as ancillary infrastructure for recreational amenity.
- 5 Betting offices will be open to consideration on lands zoned Urban Core in accordance with Policy GEN-TC-P-4
- 6 Prospective applicants are advised to have due regard to the flood risk management policies of the wider development plan.
- 7 Dancehalls/discos will not be permitted where it is considered that they may have a detrimental impact on the established character or residential amenities of an area.
- 8 Garages/car repair will not be permitted where it is considered that they may have a detrimental impact on the established character or residential amenities of an area.
- 9 Guest houses of a limited scale may be considered on existing developed sites within lands zoned Rural/Agricultural provided they are compatible with the Rural/Agricultural zoning objective.
- 10 Hot food take will be open to consideration on lands zoned Urban Core in accordance with Policy GEN-TC-P-4.
- 11 Motor sales are considered bulky retail and therefore shall be considered on Opp Sites 1 and 2 (See Policies BS-OPP-P-1 and 2).
- 12 Excluding Opp. Site 3 refer to policy BS-OPP-P-3.
- 13 Developers are advised to note that professional services which provide services principally to visiting members of the public will be directed to the defined urban core in accordance with Policy GEN-ED-P-1
- 14 Excluding Opp. Site 3 refer to policy BS-OPP-P-3.
- 15 Only proposals for single dwellings will be considered on lands zoned Rural/Agricultural in accordance with GEN-H-P-3
- 16 Proposals for retail development in areas zoned Established Development shall be assessed in accordance with the provisions of the Retail Strategy as set out in the wider County Development Plan.
- 17 Bulky retail shall be considered on Opp Sites 1 and 2 (See Policies BS-OPP-1 and 2). Otherwise retail developments shall be assessed in accordance with the provisions of the Retail Strategy as set out in the wider County Development Plan.
- 18 Proposals for retail development on lands zoned as Rural/Agricultural shall only be considered where they comprise proposals for a farm shop selling goods that are produced on the subject landholding. Other types of retail shall not be permitted at these locations.
- 19 Proposals for microgeneration shall be dealt with on a case-by-basis having regard to all relevant policy provisions of this Plan, the CDP and other statutory guidance.
- 20 Proposals for solar energy generation on lands zoned Rural/Agricultural may be considered where, inter alia, it can be definitively demonstrated that such proposals would have no significant negative impact on the landscape setting or the biodiversity quality of the area.

19.5 Housing

Background and Core Strategy Requirements.

There has been a severe shortage of new housing completions in the Ballybofey/Stranorlar area over the last decade particularly on zoned residential lands⁵³. There is also a considerable local social housing waiting list. The CDP Core Strategy has set an ambitious target of 566 units and an associated zoned land requirement of 16.2ha for Ballybofey/Stranorlar over the plan period 2024-2030. Overall, there is a need to facilitate an adequate supply, range and mix of high-quality housing at compact, serviced, sustainable, accessible, and socially inclusive locations in the twin towns. The approach has therefore been to identify new residential land use zonings to achieve this objective.

⁵³ There were no housing completions on zoned residential lands during the period 2018-2024.

In this regard, these residential zonings exceed the Core Strategy zoning requirement in order both to allow sufficient flexibility to allow residential sites to come forward and to retain pre-existing residential zonings on a phased basis in accordance with the Development Plan Guidelines. The site areas are set out in the table below. In this regard Opp Sites 1, 2, 4 and 5 are zoned for a mixture of uses including housing.

Table 19.2: Residential Zonings And Associated Site Area

Site Ref	Zoned as Primarily Residential or As Opportunity Site With Residential Provision	Site Area (ha)
NR 1.1	New Residential Phase 1	0.2
NR 1.2	New Residential Phase 1	0.37
NR 1.3	New Residential Phase 1	0.4
NR 1.4	New Residential Phase 1	1.47
NR 1.5	New Residential Phase 1	1.09
NR 1.6	New Residential Phase 1	1.33
NR 1.7	New Residential Phase 1	3.87
NR 1.8	New Residential Phase 1	4.86
NR 1.9	New Residential Phase 1	0.59
NR 1.10	New Residential Phase 1	1.69
NR 1.11	New Residential Phase 1	2.13
NR 1.12	New Residential Phase 1	3.76
Subtotal		21.76
Opp Site 1	Opportunity Site	17.58
Opp Site 2	Opportunity Site	10.85
Opp Site 4	Opportunity Site	1.37
Opp Site 5	Opportunity Site	0.63
Subtotal		30.43
NR 2.1	New Residential Phase 2	4.39
NR 2.2	New Residential Phase 2	3.23
NR 2.3	New Residential Phase 2	2.68
Subtotal		10.3
	Total Lands Zoned as New Residential Phase 1 or Phase 2 or Opportunity Sites With Residential Provision	62.49

In addition to the identification of residential zonings, a range of site-specific housing policies were also formulated in order to: respond to local challenges and opportunities, ensure high quality properly serviced, well connected, residential development, provide important transport link and safeguard environmental amenities (See housing policies below and site specific policies for Opp. Site 1, 2,4 and 5) detailed in the Economic development chapter)

Policies:

BS-H-P-1	Facilitate residential development proposals which accord with the district level placemaking objectives and principles set out in Section 5.0 of the Ballybofey/Stranorlar Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan within Districts 1,2 and 4 (inclusive) of said publication.
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BS-H-P-2

- a. Ensure that the development of sites NR 1.8, NR 1.11, NR1.12 and provides:
 - (i.) Provides high quality, safe, attractive direct and continuous pedestrian and cycling permeability links to both the N13/Letterkenny Road and the local road leading to Ballybofey/Stranorlar Golf Club.
 - (ii.) Incorporates, where feasible the pre-existing field boundaries and watercourses as part of the site boundaries for, or within any development.
- b. Ensure that any residential development of NR 1.3 provides for: high quality, safe, attractive direct and continuous pedestrian and cycling permeability links between the Glenfinn Road and the Donegal Road.
- c. Require that any residential development proposals on residential site NR 1.6 provides for vehicular access solely via any proposed Glenfinn Street to Donegal Road Link Road (on Site NR 1.3) in the event that said link is selected as the preferred link option between Donegal Road and Glenfinn Road.
- d. Ensure any development of NR 1.7 provides for high quality, safe, attractive, direct and continuous pedestrian and cycling permeability links between the L-3044-2 local road to the northwest and the L-2864-2 local road to the east.
- e. Ensure any development of NR1.10 provides for high quality, safe, attractive direct and pedestrian and cycling permeability links between the Glenfinn road and the railway road/the old railway line to the north of same.
- f. Ensure that any development proposals of NR 1.4 supports the overall place shaping strategy for District 1 of the Ballybofey Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan. including:
 - (i.) The provision of a significant public open/green space including the retention of existing natural heritage features (e.g. mature trees and built heritage features) therein.
 - (ii.) A direct pedestrian/cycling link between the Woodlawn and Ard McCool residential estates.
- g) Require that any development proposal on site New Residential 2.2 is accompanied by a detailed site specific flood risk assessment, does not provide for any residential development within any areas identified as High End Future Scenario Flood Zone A or B and does not otherwise exacerbate flood risk on the site or elsewhere.

19.6 Economic Development and Employment

Ballybofey/Stranorlar is the 3rd largest urban area (Pop 4,852⁵⁴) and employment centre (total jobs 1,878⁵⁵) in Donegal, occupies a strategic location on the N15/N13 Atlantic Economic Corridor and acts the service hub for the Finn Valley. This strategic location and overall regional accessibility will be significantly enhanced with the completion of the TEN-T PRIPD Strategic Roads Project and associated link roads into the Twin Towns. Furthermore, recent upgrades to the Ballybofey/Stranorlar wastewater treatment plant have increased its overall treatment capacity of 9200 population equivalent which provides significant scope for additional economic development.

McElhinney's Department store acts as a destination retail outlet which attracts shoppers, sustains local employment and creates spin-offs for other hospitality and retail outlets. Mulrines is the twin town's leading manufacturing business and employer producing soft beverages for the retail and foodservice at their Donegal Road facility. The Twin Towns also boasts 3 large hotels, a strong

⁵⁴ Census 2016

⁵⁵ Economic Development Unit, Donegal County Council.

convenience retail offering with both national and local operators, a varied hospitality sector including 3 large hotels, café, restaurants and public houses and a variety of smaller retail outlets and services.

Ballybofey/Stranorlar benefits from having a significant quantum of undeveloped serviced land in accessible locations close to the existing N15/Donegal Road, the future TEN-T PRIPD link road and the N15/Lifford Road which can provide appropriate opportunities for a wide range of new business and enterprise opportunities including: bulky retailing, logistics, light engineering/manufacturing, or larger service based employers. Furthermore, the continued importance of IT and financial services sector and the trend toward remote working presents opportunities to attract employers and employees to Ballybofey/Stranorlar as a highly liveable urban centre with a quality recreational, education, sporting, cultural, and environmental facilities/amenities. In this regard the SEED project aims to provide a new contemporary and flexible enterprise space to the rear of the Ritz cinema building, and the Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan has highlighted the future opportunity for a business innovation park on the Old Railway Station/existing bus depot site.

Nevertheless, the latest Q2 2022 Geodirectory Commercial Building Report highlights that Ballybofey has the highest commercial vacancy rate in Ireland at 30.2% which is an increase of 0.9% from Q2 2022. This high vacancy rate is particularly evident around Glenfinn Street, Navenney Street, and parts of both Stranorlar and Ballybofey Main Streets and detracts from the physical appearance of the town and hinders inward investment. Furthermore, research from the Council's economic development unit indicates that Ballybofey/Stranorlar's ratio of total jobs to resident workers (1.227) actually lags behind smaller urban centres such as Donegal Town, and Carndonagh. Overall, there is also a significant need to strengthen and diversify the economic base of the towns by providing opportunities for existing employers to expand and to attract new employment generating activities to the town. Finally, it is considered that the urban core represents the most sustainable location for new professional services (e.g. financial, legal, architects, estate agents, accountancy) in terms of supporting sustainable mobility, town centre vibrancy and tackling commercial vacancy.

Consequently, to capitalise on these strengths and opportunities, address the above issues and strengthen and diversify the employment base of the Twin towns this plan will:

- Provide a sufficient quantum of serviced and accessibly located lands for a variety of new economic/employment generating/commercial developments (including light engineering/manufacturing, logistics, bulky retailing, or service based enterprises) namely on Opportunity Sites 1-2 and on lands zoned Business/Enterprise (See Policies BS-OPP-P-1 to 2 and BS-ED-P-1).
- Support and facilitate the provision of a social enterprise space to the rear of the Ritz Cinema building as integral part of the SEED Project (See Objective BS-TC-O-2 above).
- Facilitate the future provision of a business innovation park on the Old Railway Station/existing bus depot site in accordance with the District 4 Placemaking Strategy of Ballybofey Regeneration and Action Plan.
- Positively facilitate sensitive proposals for the refurbishment and reuse of vacant and derelict buildings for commercial and retail use (See Policy GEN-TC-P-2).
- Facilitate professional services within lands zoned Urban Core in accordance with Policy GEN-ED-P-1.

Objectives

BS-ED-O-1	To strengthen and diversify the economic and employment base of Ballybofey/Stranorlar and capitalise on its strategic economic location.
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Policy

BS-ED-P-1	Facilitate business enterprise proposals (including light engineering/manufacturing, logistics/warehousing, service based enterprises) but excluding retail development on lands zoned BE1 which; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
BS-ED-P-2	Facilitate business enterprise proposals (including light engineering/manufacturing, logistics/warehousing, service based enterprises) excluding retail development on lands zoned BE2. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide access onto the N15/Donegal Road by means of the access points detailed on the land use zoning map. • Ensure the protection of residential amenity of the adjoining residential areas including the provision of environmental buffers with suitable landscaping/planting between commercial developments and adjoining residential areas.

19.7 Transportation and Sustainable Mobility

19.7.1 Introduction/Key Issues

The provision of a safe, sustainable, functional, and convenient transportation system linking key sources to destinations is fundamental to the creation of an economically robust and socially vibrant town with a high quality of life. Currently transport provision in Ballybofey/Stranorlar is predominately road focused and suffers from a number of issues including:

- Traffic congestion arising from strategic traffic traversing the town along the N15/N13 axes and high levels of car dependency.
- Car dependency and low levels of walking and cycling.
- Absence of pedestrian facilities on Drumboe Avenue and the Golf Course Road.
- Lack of continuous footpaths in certain areas (e.g. Chapel Lane, Letterkenny Road, Trusk Road).
- Inadequate pedestrian crossing facilities at key junctions (e.g. N15/Town View Heights, N15/Glenfinn Road, N15/Chestnut Road and on the Lifford Road east of Millbrae).
- A general lack of dedicated cycle lanes and bike parking.
- Lack of intra urban public transport services.
- Poor connectivity between the Glenfinn Road and Donegal Road and between Back Lane and Ballybofey Main Street.
- Traffic bottlenecks/congestion at the N15/Glenfinn Road, N15/Chestnut road, N15/Drumboe Avenue, McClays Corner and Millbrae particularly at peak/school run times.
- Traffic congestion associated with events at the Mart, and the Finn Valley Centre.
- Lack of car parking in proximity to the north of Ballybofey Main Street.
- Lack of bus parking/drop off facilities in general.
- Lack of pedestrian facilities on Golf Course Road.

- Traffic congestion/inadequate pedestrian cycling facilities and poor permeability within Navenny Road/Trusk Road Area.

19.7.2 TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal (TEN-T PRIPD)

Section 1 of the TEN-T PRIPD strategic roads project will provide a new alignment of the N15/N13 to the NW and NE of the urban area and a link road into Ballybofey/Stranorlar. In doing so it will bring significant benefits including improved strategic and regional connectivity, road safety, removal of strategic traffic/easing of traffic congestion, enhanced opportunities for walking cycling and public transport, a more attractive urban environment and improved quality of life. Consequently, the wider development plan and this town Plan provides the necessary planning policy and spatial framework to support and deliver this vital project including the reservation of the necessary lands.

19.7.3 Sustainable Mobility

Traditionally, transportation planning has focused on road based solutions to transportation issues (e.g. additional traffic lanes, right turning lanes, relief roads etc). However, government policy and best planning practice now proactively supports sustainable mobility and active travel modes (e.g. walking, cycling and public transport) as core transportation solutions. In this regard the NPF identifies sustainable mobility as a National Strategic Outcome and the RSES aims to improve active travel infrastructure, prioritise walking cycling and permeability in town and villages and maximise population in proximity to neighbourhood/district centres and public transport nodes. *Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020* emphasises the need to reduce overall travel demand through compact development and supporting walking cycling and public transport. In addition, it is generally acknowledged that to be successful active travel infrastructure must be safe, direct/convenient, legible and attractive and where possible segregated. It is also recognised that a modal shift to sustainable/active travel modes can also bring about tangible environmental (e.g. less noise and traffic pollution), health, social and recreational benefits.

The new River Finn pedestrian bridge and the associated riverside walks demonstrate the potential of such active travel infrastructure. There are also significant new opportunities to sustainably connect sources and destinations (e.g. residential communities with areas of employment, education, retail, services and community/recreational infrastructure and amenities) through new/enhanced active travel infrastructure including the provision of new/enhanced footpaths, new cycling infrastructure, and off road active travel infrastructure, which are set out in the landuse/transportation strategy detailed below.

In particular the *Ballybofey/Stranorlar Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan* sets out a masterplan for the creation of interconnected green arteries including: along the old Donegal Town to Ballybofey railway line, part of the Ballybofey/Stranorlar Railway line, along the river corridor and through the Drumboe woods to Finn Valley College and a new pedestrian bridge over the River Finn to Drumboe Woods, which would significantly aid active travel. The 2012 *Ballybofey and Stranorlar Walking and Cycling Strategy* for the twin towns also highlighted the need to: provide a high quality walking and cycling network linking residents and destinations, improve pedestrian/cycling safety, and encourage more people to walk and cycle.

Furthermore, the Council has appointed consultants to examine the most appropriate option for a new link between the Glenfinn Road and the Donegal Road to enable pedestrian improvements on Glenfinn Street, improve local access between these roads and remove the existing traffic bottleneck at the Glenfinn Street/Donegal Road junction. In the interim the plan will continue to reserve the route of the approved Mulrines Link Project as a means of achieving such a link.

The Council is also currently examining options to improve pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and traffic flow in the Navenny Road/Trusk road area which will improve overall permeability in this area. The necessary planning process have been completed for projects to provide a new footpath, pedestrian crossing and parking arrangements on Millbrae and a new pedestrian bridge and associated connecting footpaths over the Burn Darnett on Trusk Road.

It is also important that new residential areas provide direct/convenient, legible and attractive connections to adjoining existing and proposed developments and local services and amenities. In this regard future connections have been identified in the transport/sustainable mobility strategy, and on the accompanying land use zoning map for the LAP.

In addition, it is acknowledged that the provision of both electric vehicle charging points for visitors at publicly accessible locations are essential for sustainable private transport and will therefore be supported by the plan.

Notwithstanding the consultation and research undertaken to identify the transport priorities for this Plan the preparation of a more detailed Local Transport Plan for Ballybofey/Stranorlar would provide an additional important evidence based tool to inter alia: understand current travel patterns and services, provide a detailed analysis of key issues and opportunities, establish key transport objectives, identify and assess transport options, and formulate active travel, public transport and roads based strategies interventions to deliver these objectives. It is therefore an objective of this plan to prepare such a plan.

Parking and Other Transport Issues.

It is increasingly recognised that the traditional development management approach to new parking provision related to development size/type has often lead to a low density/car dominated development pattern which is detrimental to the creation of compact/consolidated, pedestrian friendly and attractive town centre. It also noted that both Ballybofey and Stranorlar town centres currently benefit from spare capacity in existing publicly accessible car parks and that the centres are generally within walking and cycling distances of existing residential areas. Consequently, this informs a general approach of only considering parking proposal in areas zoned urban core in exceptional circumstances including secure and attractive parking for residential developments in accordance with the Urban Design Manual, and parking for commercial developments where such parking cannot otherwise be catered for by existing spare capacity in adjacent on-street or publicly accessible parking spaces and otherwise accords with the town centre objectives of the plan. Otherwise, outside of the urban core parking will be required for new developments in accordance with Policy T-P-13 of the wider development plan including disabled and cycle parking provision. Finally, as Ballybofey/Stranorlar has a significant quantum of undeveloped backlands in sustainable location the key access points into these lands have been reserved as part of plan (See land use zoning map) to ensure their future developability.

Transport/Sustainable Mobility Strategy for Ballybofey/Stranorlar:

The above context informs the following overall land use/transportation strategy for Ballybofey/Stranorlar in the following table and associated map:

Table 19.3 Transport/Sustainable Mobility Strategy for Ballybofey/Stranorlar.

Map Ref.	Location/ Name	Priority/Project Description	Key Benefits
Strategic Roads			
1.	General	Section 1 of the TEN-T PRIPD including strategic realignment of the N15/N13 and provision of the associated link road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved strategic/regional connectivity. Reduced traffic congestion and air pollution. New sustainable mobility opportunities
Sustainable Mobility			
2.	General	A compact development form including locating residential development adjacent to jobs and retail, education and community services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced travel demand. Facilitate modal shift toward walking, cycling and public transport.
3.	Drumboe Avenue	Provision of pedestrian facilities	Enhanced/safer active travel connectivity to/from St Columba's College.
4.	Drumboe Avenue to Drumboe Road	Provision of an active travel link	Enhanced permeability between Drumboe Avenue and Finn Valley College/Drumboe Road.
5.	Millbrae	Shared footpath/cyclepath on the eastern side, a pedestrian crossing at the northern end of and new roadside parking arrangements on Millbrae.	Enhanced/safer connectivity for pedestrian and vulnerable road users between residential areas in Stranorlar and St Mary's Primary School and Finn Valley Centre.
6.	Sessiagh (O'Neill)	Pedestrian/cycling connectivity over the Burn Daurnett and associated connecting footpaths (PG 21/04 refers).	Enhanced/safer pedestrian and cycling connectivity between Sessiagh (O'Neill) and Ballybofey Town Centre.
7.	Letterkenny Road (N13)	Active travel infrastructure including new sections of footpath on the south eastern side of the Letterkenny road.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable development of compact residential sites NR 1.11 and NR 1.12 Improved connectivity between Letterkenny Road residential areas and Stranorlar Town centre/Finn Valley Centre/local primary schools.
8.	Chapel Lane	Active travel and parking improvements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced/safer active travel connectivity between the Dunwiley area and Stranorlar Town centre. Improved parking arrangements.
9.	Dunwiley Road (Southern end)	Footpath Completion	Enhanced/safer active travel connectivity between the Dunwiley Road area and Stranorlar Town centre/Finn Valley Centre/local primary schools.
10.	Old Stranorlar to Strabane Railway Line	Active travel link along the old Stranorlar to Strabane Railway Line Note: Indicative Route Shown. Final route will be	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct connectivity between residential areas in eastern Stranorlar and St Mary's Primary School/the Finn Valley centre. Part of future wider greenway network.

Map Ref.	Location/ Name	Priority/Project Description	Key Benefits
		determined by a formal Route Selection Process.	
11.	Old Stranorlar to Donegal Town Railway Line	Greenway along the old Stranorlar to Donegal Town Railway Line Note: Indicative Route Shown. Final route will be determined by a formal Route Selection Process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct connectivity between southern residential areas and town centre areas. • Part of future Stranorlar to Donegal Town greenway.
12.	Millbrae-Navenny Road to Ballybofey Town Centre.	Active travel improvements including footpath improvements and cycling facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced/safer active travel connectivity between southern residential communities and Ballybofey Town Centre and Finn Valley Centre and Stranorlar Primary Schools. • Enhanced recreational loop around Ballybofey/Stranorlar.
13.	Navenny Road and Trusk Road area	Active travel improvements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced town centre permeability. • Improved Pedestrian/cyclist safety.
14.	River Finn Pedestrian Bridge	Recreational link to Drumboe Woods.	Direct connection between Ballybofey Main Street and Drumboe Woods
15.	General	The provision/improvement as necessary of other network of walkways and cycleways.	Improved connectivity between existing and new residential communities and employment, retail and community/recreational services and amenities and sporting facilities.
16.	Golf Course Road	Footpath Extension	Enhanced pedestrian connectivity to local sporting amenity (Ballybofey Golf Club).
17.	N15 axis through Ballybofey and Stranorlar	General active travel improvements (e.g. provision of additional pedestrian crossings)	Enhanced active travel connectivity permeability and safety.
Sustainable Mobility and Local Roads			
18.	Glenfinn Street And Donegal Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian improvements on Glenfinn Street. • New enabling link between Glenfinn Street and Donegal Road <p>Note: The existing approved Mulrine's link has been mapped however an Options Selection Process to identify the most optimal solution is currently in progress.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced/safer pedestrian and cycling connectivity between Glenfinn road area and the town centre. • Improved overall connectivity between the Glenfinn Road and Donegal Road areas.
19.	Millbrae/N15	Improvements to junction of Millbrae/N15 and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced safety, • Improved pedestrian facilities.

Map Ref.	Location/ Name	Priority/Project Description	Key Benefits
		reconfiguration of existing parking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced traffic congestion.
20.	Trusk Road to Donegal Road	Developer led connection (including road, footpaths and cycling infrastructure) between Trusk Road and Donegal Road via Opp Site 2.	Improved pedestrian, cycling and vehicular connectivity between Trusk Road and Donegal Road.
21.	Logue's Bridge	Replacement bridge with suitable vehicular, pedestrian and cycling facilities subject to consideration of the finalized Section 1 TEN-T PRIPD design.	Improved/safer local pedestrian, cycling and vehicular connectivity.
Parking/Traffic Management			
22.	N15 (From 80kph speed limit sign at western end of Ballybofey/Stranorlar to Cappry 60kph speed limit sign)	Provision of Active Travel Facilities	Enhanced active travel infrastructure and associated safety benefits.
23.	Back Lane	Off road car parking provision as part of wider placemaking strategy within Ballybofey Stranorlar Regeneration and Action Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced traffic management. Improved pedestrian permeability.
24.	Finn Valley Centre	Additional/overflow Parking to cater for events including via dual use of parking within adjacent existing or future developments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced traffic management. Reduced traffic congestion.
25.	Bus Parking	Provision of general bus parking area within Ballybofey/Stranorlar.	Alleviate traffic congestion arising from inappropriate parking of buses.
26.	Ballybofey Town Centre	Provision of loading bays.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevent vehicle parking on footpath. Reduced traffic congestion.

Objectives and policies to address the abovementioned transportation issues, and implement the above land transport/sustainable mobility strategy for Ballybofey/Stranorlar are set out below.

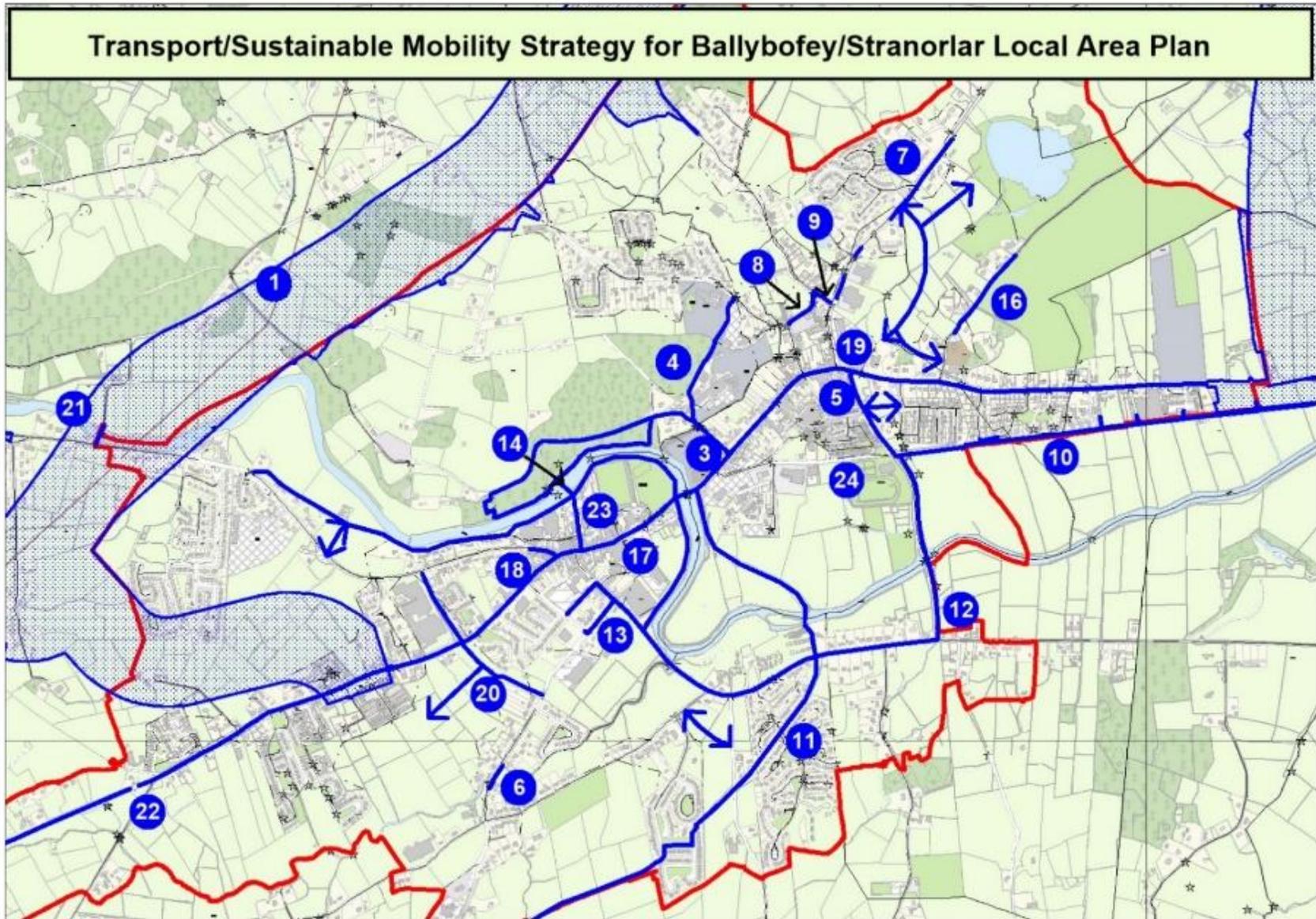
Objective

BS-T-0-1	Should there be any ostensible or apparent conflict between, on the one hand, the Objectives, Policies and/or provisions of the Local Area Plan herein providing for the development of Section 2 of the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal (TEN-T PRIPD) and, on the other hand, any other Objectives, Policies and/or
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	provisions of the Local Area Plan, those Objectives, Policies and Provisions which provide for the development of the TEN-T PRIPD shall take priority over all or any other provisions of the Local Area Plan and any such other provisions or Objectives shall be read and construed as subservient to and not in any material way contravening so much of the Objectives, Policies and provisions contained within this Plan as provide for the development of the TEN-T PRIPD.
BS-T-O-2	Deliver the projects listed in Table ??? the Transport/Sustainable Mobility Strategy above.
BS-T-O-3	Seek to prepare a detailed Local Transport Plan for Ballybofey/Stranorlar during the lifetime of the plan in accordance with relevant National Best Practice Guidance.

Policies

BS-T-P-1	<p>It is a policy of the Council to support and facilitate the appropriate development, extension and improvement of the TEN-T network within the Ballybofey/Stranorlar area subject to environmental, safety and other planning considerations. In this regard it is a specific policy of the Council to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Progress and ultimately carry out/implement the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal within Ballybofey/Stranorlar as one of critical strategic importance to Donegal subject to the granting of the required statutory approvals for same and the terms and conditions of any such approvals (if granted). b) Reserve the preferred route corridor for Section 1 of the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal within Ballybofey/Stranorlar as shown on the Zoning Map for the purposes of the project and the ancillary facilities to service the same and not to permit other development within those corridors where such development may prejudice the carrying out/implementation of the said project. c) Facilitate any development related to the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal within BallybofeyStranorlar within lands zoned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TEN-T PRIPD/Established Development. • TEN-T PRIPD/Opportunity Site. • TEN-T PRIPD/Rural/Agricultural. • TEN-T PRIPD/Open Space and Recreation.
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19.8 Flooding

Ballybofey/Stranorlar lies within the catchment of the River Finn, which flows sinuously west to east through the urban area and is joined by a number of tributaries including notably the Burn Daurnett, the Backless/Kilross and the Mullagharry streams.

The OPW's national CFRAMs Programme mapped, and identified measures to manage, flood risk in certain areas including Ballybofey/Stranorlar. The associated mapping available on floodinfo.ie indicates that:

- Flood Zone A (i.e. 1:100 year/1% Annual Exceedance Probability flood risk area) covers a significant portion of the plan area including areas to the south of Railway Road and along the Burn Daurnett.
- Flood Zone B (i.e. 1:1000 year/1% Annual Exceedance Probability flood risk area) covers a significant part of Ballybofey Town Centre.

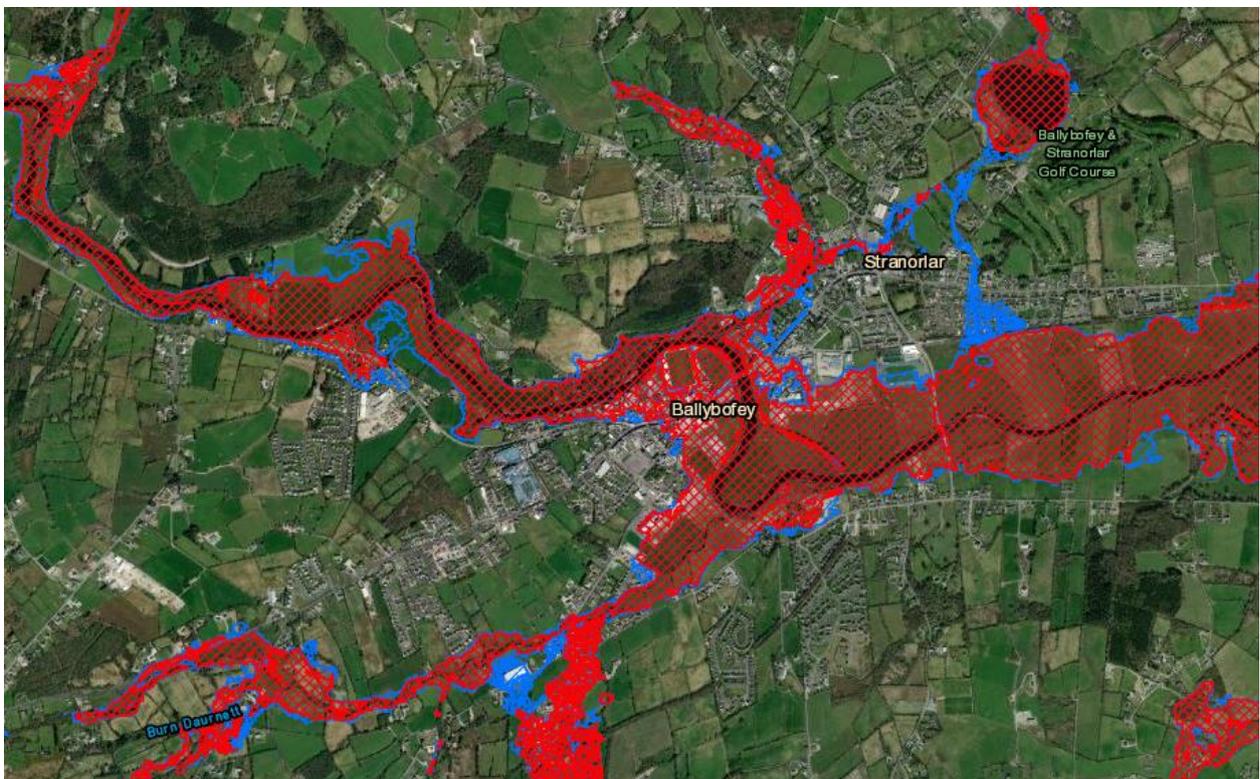


Figure 19.2 High End Future Scenarios Flood Zone A and Flood Zone B

The 2009 Flood Risk Management Guidelines adopts a precautionary approach to flooding and sets out a sequential approach including: avoiding development at risk from flooding, substituting a land use development where avoidance is not possible, justifying a proposed land use in strategic circumstances where avoidance/substitution is not possible and mitigating any residual flood risk. The guidelines identify a hierarchy of flood risk areas and the types of development acceptable in same namely:

- Flood Zone A: Water Compatible Development (e.g. open space, outdoor sports and recreation)
- Flood Zone B: Less Vulnerable Development (e.g. Retail, leisure, warehousing, commercial)
- Flood Zone C: High Vulnerable Development (e.g. Dwellings, Essential infrastructure, Schools)

Chapter 8.4 of the wider Development Plan sets out appropriate flood risk management policies for the entire county including Ballybofey/Stranorlar in accordance with the above Guidelines.

Furthermore, in accordance with these guidelines this town Plan specifically:

- Only provides for appropriate water compatible development types in Flood Zone A by zoning these areas Rural/Agricultural and Open Space and Recreation.
- Facilitates mixed use town centre development including residential development within Flood Zone B within part of Ballybofey and Stranorlar town centres in accordance with a development plan justification test as part of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment of the wider development plan as inter alia this area is essential to facilitate the regeneration and expansion of the centre of the urban settlement.

The Ballybofey/Stranorlar Flood Relief Scheme aims to identify, design, and deliver a scheme to alleviate flood risk in the twin towns. The scheme must be technically, socially, environmentally and economically acceptable to the community and also meet the standards of the EU Floods Directive.

The viable scheme identified as part of the national CFRAM study (2018) is currently subject to project level assessment. It comprises mainly of construction of hard defences and associated works in locations within the towns and surrounding areas, chiefly along the banks of the following water bodies: Finn, Burn Daurnett, Goland, Carrickmagrath, Sessiagh, Cooladawson, Treanamullin, Magherapaste, and Lough Alaán as well as its associated watercourses.

The identification of preferred measures is currently ongoing as part of the project level assessment and once complete the relevant planning consents will be sought. The project team have worked proactively with adjacent projects to overcome flood related challenges and realise co-benefits and as the scheme progresses opportunities to develop new and existing public realm interfaces such as bankside walks of the various rivers will be considered, where possible.

Policy

BS-F-P-1	Support and facilitate the implementation of the Ballybofey/Stranorlar Flood Relief Scheme subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive.
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19.9 Urban Regeneration and Town Centre Development

The creation of a socially and economically vibrant, multifunctional, visually attractive, and sustainably accessible urban environment is critical to strengthening the overall capacity of Ballybofey/Stranorlar and fulfilling its role as a |County Growth Driver in the context of the wider development plan.

The Twin Towns currently provides a robust retail, hospitality and service offering for the Finn Valley and beyond including: the iconic McElhinney's Department Store (which provides a destination retail outlet with significant local economic spinoff), national and multinational convenience retail stores, cultural facilities (e.g. the Butt Hall Centre/Balor Arts Centre), 3 large hotels, a number of café's restaurants and public houses, and a variety of smaller retail outlets and services. In addition, Ballybofey Main Street, Navenny Street, and part of Stranorlar Main street, displays a relatively strong urban structure and stout streetscape with a good sense of enclosure with many buildings of a vernacular character. In this regard it is important the that the Plan continues to facilitate retailing, hospitality, service and cultural needs of the town.

However, notwithstanding these key assets, a number of key urban regeneration/town centre challenges and issues are evident namely:

- **Vacancy and Dereliction:** The town centre suffers from a high level of commercial and residential vacancy which is particularly prevalent around Ballybofey Main Street, Navenny Street, Glenfinn Street, the Diner Site on, and the eastern end of, Stranorlar Main Street. This not only detracts from the physical appearance and liveability of the town centre, but also affects the commercial viability of existing developments and deters further investment.

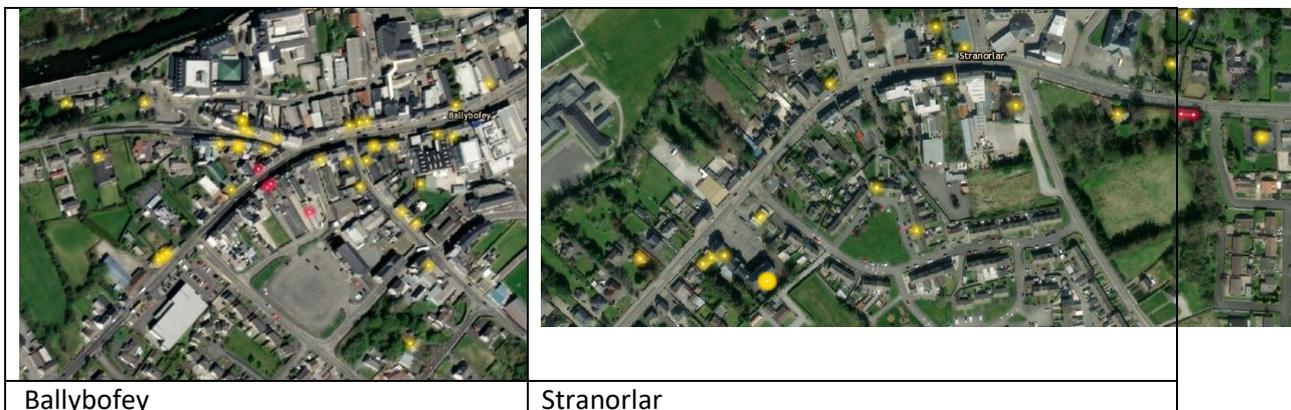


Figure 19.3 Vacant and Derelict Properties Within Ballybofey/Stranorlar (Source Geodirectory)

- **Traffic Congestion:** The town centre suffers from significant traffic congestion along the N15/13 axes and a key junctions (e.g. Ballybofey Main Street with Glenfinn Street, Navenny Street and Chestnut Road and at McClay's Corner) arising high volumes of strategic traffic and a general over reliance on the car. This negatively impacts on quality of life, the viability of local business and the visual appearance of the town.
- **Vehicle dominated/poor pedestrian urban environment:** Whilst pedestrian infrastructure has improved in recent years a significant portion of the town is vehicle dominated both socially and visually which hinders active travel and detracts from the overall townscape and quality of life.
- **Lack of Central Civic Space/Poor Public Realm:** Both Ballybofey and Stranorlar Town centre lack central civic spaces for people to meet and socially interact in, to host events and act an identifiable and attractive focal point for the town. In addition, whilst Ballybofey Main Street and Stranorlar Main Street benefit from a continuous footpaths and sporadic planting these area would significantly benefit from public realm improvements including: hard and soft landscaping, planting, seating etc.
- **Lack of Urban Green Space:** Public consultation for the Ballybofey/Stranorlar Regeneration Strategy identified the lack of a public park as a significant deficiency. The provision of a high quality green space with passive and active recreation within the urban core would provide an important recreational and visual amenity, enhance the overall liveability of, and attract visitors to, the twin towns.
- **Underutilised Backlands:** Whilst Ballybofey town centre generally has a high density urban core areas along Chestnut Road, to the north of Back lane and also to the rear of Stranorlar Main Street remain relatively underutilised for a town centre location.
- **A lack of direct connectivity Between Ballybofey Town Centre and Drumboe Woods:** Drumboe woods represents invaluable recreational asset and green space in close physical proximity to the Ballybofey Town Centre however its useability is restricted by the lack of a direct physical access across the river Finn.

The SEED Project (led by the Council's Regeneration and Development Team) aims to tackle a significant number of these issues by the delivery of 3 transformative and inte- related urban regeneration interventions in the centre of Ballybofey Town Centre including:

- The provision of new open accessible multiuse Civic space at the heart of the town for people to meet/gather in, to host events, and businesses to spill out onto with a permeable paved surface

with landscaping and seating, bespoke canopy, public convenience, a new façade and canopy structure for the Ballybofey shopping arcade and a enhanced link to the replacement car park.

- The restoration and extension of the Old Ritz cinema (a NIAH Structure) including: the restoration of the heritage entrance block, and a new contemporary and a flexible enterprise space to the rear.
- A new 2 no. storey replacement car park with additional capacity on the lands to the Ballybofey shopping centre and associated enhanced pedestrian avenue connecting to the above new civic space.



Figure 19.4: SEED Urban Regeneration Project

In addition, the Council endorsed Ballybofey/Stranorlar and Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan provides an ambitious, long-term vision and conceptual framework for the regeneration of 7 key urban districts based on local placemaking strategies including many innovative proposals to address town centre issues and capitalise on local regeneration opportunities. These proposals include, for example:

- The provision of a centrally located public park (Pentland Park) adjoining Ballybofey Town Centre (District 5 refers).
- A new mixed-use development on the disused Fire Station/Diner site in Stranorlar including landscaping/public realm works and community led housing (District 2).
- The provision of a multiuse community hub and accessible living accommodation on the site of the Old St Mary's National School (District 3).
- Future pedestrian enhancements on Ballybofey Main Street, Navenny Street and Glenfinn street and improved pedestrian connectivity between Ballybofey Main Street and Back lane (District 6).



Figure 19.5 Ballybofey/Stranorlar Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan Districts

However, it is also recognised that the proposals within the strategy are conceptual in nature and will require further feasibility studies, public consultation with relevant stakeholders, and detailed design refinement. In addition, many of the regeneration proposals are dependent on the completion of other enabling infrastructure projects (e.g. the TEN-T PRIPD, an alternative link between the Glenfinn Road and the Donegal Rd). In this regard the placemaking objectives and principles within the strategy may be achieved either by the proposals outlined in the strategy or by alternative proposals which may emerge from further study, consultation, and design work.

Consequently, this Plan provides a flexible policy framework which accords with the district level placemaking objectives and principles outlined in Section 5.0 of the regeneration strategy (including alternatives to the interventions proposed therein) but also manages new development in a manner which protects the key opportunities identified in the strategy.

In terms of tackling vacancy and dereliction in the urban core there now exists a range of initiatives and supports including the Town Centre First Initiative, the Croi Conaithe Towns Funds, energy retrofit supports, local authority supports (e.g. Buy and Renew, Repair and Lease and the Long terms leasing schemes) to aid the refurbishment and reuse of Vacant and Derelict town centre properties for both residential and commercial purposes. In this regard, based on Geodirectory vacancy and dereliction analysis and field surveys, the following priority areas in need of urban regeneration interventions within Ballybofey Main Street, Navenny Street, Glenfinn Street, and Stranorlar Main Street have been identified as in Figure 17.6 below.



Figure 19.6 Priority Areas in Need of Urban Regeneration Interventions.

In particular it is considered that increasing town centre living can bring significant benefits including enhanced socio-economic vibrancy, facilitation of more accessible and age friendly housing options, higher use of active travel modes (i.e. walking and cycling), and a more sustainable housing solutions through the reuse of existing building stock. Consequently, this plan will support proposals for the sensitive refurbishment and reuse of vacant and derelict town centre properties including the amalgamation and extension of existing properties and where appropriate the creation of new infill urban housing schemes. Certain uses (e.g. takeaways and bookmakers) can negatively impact on the liveability and visual attractiveness of the town centre if not carefully managed. Consequently GEN-TC-P-4 seeks to avoid the over concentration of such uses and other ensure that they do not impact on residential and visual amenities of the area.

In order to ensure that the town centre continues to function as the retailing, hospitality, service and cultural centre of Finn Valley hinterland it is important that the plan supports a wide variety of retail convenience and comparison retailing, day and night time hospitality, professional services and cultural developments.

In addition in accordance with best practice urban design and placemaking it is considered that new town centre development in Ballybofey/Stranorlar should provide for: buildings of a high architectural quality which contribute to a sense of place, quality public realm, a generally fine grain of development, a strong streetscape/sense of enclosure (including adhering to/extending established buildings lines and providing 2 no. storey developments on street frontages), promote active frontages, and respects the scale, design and character of the adjoining streetscape. In this regard it is considered that the urban design policies contained in Policy TV-P-4 provide an appropriate urban design policy framework to guide developments within Ballybofey/Stranorlar

town centre. Furthermore, in order to ensure a more accessible and pedestrian friendly and visually attractive urban environment it is important that new development is sited and designed in a manner which priorities pedestrian and cycling access and reduces the physical and visual dominance of vehicles and Policy GEN-T-P-3 will assist in achieving this aim.

From a heritage perspective the town Centres of Ballybofey and Stranorlar benefit from several buildings on the Record of Protected Structures (e.g. St Mary’s Church, Reformed Presbyterian Church, Presbyterian Manse , Stranorlar Church Ballybofey Bridge, Allied Irish Bank, and Market House) and several other buildings on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. They also retain much of their original character with a strong streetscape and many buildings of a traditional design (e.g. 2 storey gable ended pitched roof design, a vertical emphasis to fenestration, a narrow plot width and generally a fine grain of development). Collectively, these built heritage assets create a sense of place and identity for the Ballybofey/Stranorlar and therefore require protection and, where appropriate, sensitive reuse and redevelopment. In this regard the Built and Architectural Heritage Policies of the wider development plan provide a suitable framework for the protection, and, where appropriate, the sensitive reuse and redevelopment, of structures on the RPS, NIAH and other vernacular architecture within the Twin Towns.

Urban Regeneration and Town Centre Development related objectives and policies are set out in Section 14.4.4 and below. **Note: The town centre of Ballybofey/Stranorlar has been zoned as Urban Core in the accompanying land use zoning map.**

Objectives

BS-TC-O-1	Sustain and enhance the town centre’s role as the retail, hospitality, tourism and cultural hub of the Finn Valley.
BS-TC-O-2	Fully implement the SEED Project including the provision of a new Civic Square, restoration/extension of the Old Ritz cinema, and provision of a new 2 no. storey replacement car park with associated enhanced pedestrian link.
BS-TC-O-3	Implement projects which achieve the placemaking objectives and principles set out in the Ballybofey/Stranorlar Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan in consultation with all key stakeholders and subject to resource availability.

Policies

BS-TC-P-1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate and support appropriate development proposals/projects which accord with the district level placemaking objectives and principles set out in Section 5.0 of the Ballybofey/Stranorlar Regeneration and Action Plan including suitable alternatives to the proposals identified in said strategy, subject to compliance with national flood policies and the flood policies of this Plan. Collaborate with relevant stakeholders and funding agencies to achieve said placemaking objectives. Ensure that all development proposals do not hinder the achievement of/are not contrary to the abovementioned District Level placemaking objectives and principles.
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19.10 Recreation, Community and Natural Heritage

The creation of a liveable, healthy, and sustainable environment which provides a high quality of life to residents, attracts visitors, and protects and enhances biodiversity is crucial to Ballybofey/Stranorlar’s future success.

The Twin Towns already command a niche role as Donegal’s **primary sporting centre** being home to the MacCumhaill Park (the County’s GAA stadium) and Finn Park the home of Finn Harps Football

Club. The Finn Valley Leisure Centre and adjoining Finn Valley Athletic Club contain a swimming pool, gym and full athletics track and provide an invaluable recreational asset for the urban and wider area. In addition, the Ballybofey Golf Club and local football clubs provide important local sporting amenities. In this regard Opp. Site 3 and the associated Policy BS-RCNH-P-10 provides for the expansion of the Golf Club.

Moving forward the **Donegal Community Stadium Project** will provide a modern fully enclosed, stadium with a capacity of 6,130 and feature two covered seated stands, two covered terraces (suitable for future seating) as well as state of the art dressing rooms, clubrooms and corporate facilities in an accessible location which will act as the new home for Finn Harp's Senior and underage teams. The project is being funded by Government's Large Scale Sports Infrastructure Fund, the FAI, and Donegal County Council, and will significantly enhance Ballybofey/Stranorlar's sporting and recreational offering. In addition, the Council is also progressing the important Stranorlar **Multi-Use Sports Facility** Project to the south of railway road (including multi-purpose all weather sports pitch, grassed walking/running track, and runoff area) which will considerably enhance the overall sporting and community infrastructure of the twin towns and the site for same has accordingly been zoned Open Space and Recreation. In addition the area to the south of the Finn Valley Centre and the Donegal Community Stadium has been zoned as Open Space and Recreation which will facilitate additional playing pitches or other recreational uses subject to compliance with the Habitat Directive and Flood Risk Management guidelines. Opportunity Site 5 (adjoining the Base) will also provide a suitable location for additional sports/recreational or community facilities or housing.

Furthermore, Policy BS-RCNH-P-9 recognises the need for, and supports the provision of, additional parking facilities for the Finn Valley Centre to cater for both buses and separately additional general parking demand during special events.

The **Drumboe Woods and Environs area** provides a unique, picturesque, and accessible recreational and natural heritage asset within walking and cycling distance of Ballybofey/Stranorlar's urban core. The area includes broadleaf, mixed and coniferous woodlands, agricultural pasture lands, nature trails, and the remains of Drumboe Castle and Drumboe Martyrs Site and more elevated visually vulnerable lands.

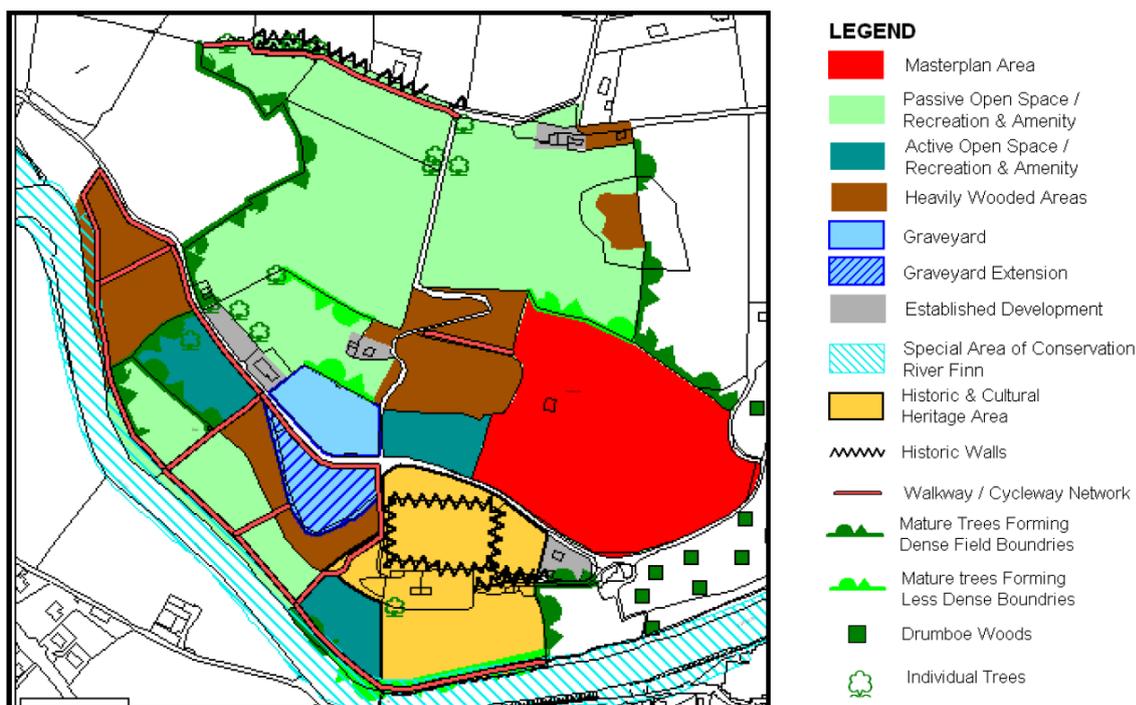


Figure 19.7: Drumboe Castle and Environs Masterplan Area

The 2018 Seven Strategic Town Local Area Plan zoned Drumboe Woods as Recreational and Amenity and set out a detailed localised master plan for Drumboe Castle/Castle Gardens and Drumboe Cemetery area which reserves areas active and passive open space, recreational, amenity and a graveyard extension, provides for new walkways, and protects Drumboe Castle/stables and adjacent areas, and heavily wooded areas. In addition, Part 8 approval (Part 8 PG 19/03 refers) has also been granted for a significant community/recreational/sports facility on the Castle Gardens including public park, playground, walkway, pedestrian crossing carpark, and a multi-use pitch.

The **Drumboe and Environs Feasibility Study** commissioned by BASICC in conjunction with the Council identifies key priorities and options for the sustainable development of a wide area extending from Drumboe Woods to Creggan Woods. The study identified recreational space, environmental focus, exercise opportunities and food/beverage offerings as key priorities for the area from public consultation and highlighted several recreational/tourism related economic opportunities. It sets out a sitewide strategy including: establishing biodiversity corridors, restoring habitats, a network of entrances and linkages, creating convenient car parks, celebrating/utilising heritage assets, managing biodiversity threats, protecting what already exists, connecting with the town, and extending the area's recreational offering. The study

In particular it also identifies site specific opportunities for:

- **Area 1: Drumboe Woods** including a new footbridge across the River Finn, a new greenway standard pathway linking Drumboe Woods Abbey Woods, Holy Well Woods and Creggan Woods, a new non-denominational graveyard, the re-use of existing Drumboe Castle stables as an equestrian centre, and a Donegal Nature Centre for the Castle Gardens area.
- **Area 2: Abbey Woods and the Holy Well Woods:** including a staircase from Drumboe Avenue to Drumboe Abbey, a green bridge across the TEN-T strategic road, a Barnes Mor View walk and native woodland extensions.
- **Area 3: Creggan Woods and Ironworks:** A forest adventure hub including mountain biking trails, ziplining, archery, glamping, kayaking, and parking infrastructure.



Figure 19.8: Drumboe Woods and Environs Feasibility Study Area (left) and associated proposal for the Castle Gardens Area (right)

It is considered that the abovementioned Feasibility Study, an Open Space and Recreation zoning for Drumboe Woods, and the localised masterplan for Drumboe Castle and Environs (and associated policy requirements) provide a suitable and broadly complimentary planning framework for the sustainable development of the Drumboe Woods and Environs areas based on the principles of protecting the existing natural, historic and community assets, conserving and enhancing biodiversity, and facilitating new recreational/tourism infrastructure and amenities at appropriate locations. However, T-O-1A of the wider development plan requires that the TEN-T PRIPD Strategic Roads Project will take precedence over all other projects. In addition, flexibility may be required in relation to certain opportunities (e.g. the location of a new pedestrian bridge over the River Finn to Drumboe woods). Consequently, this plan:

- Zones Drumboe Woods as Open Space and Recreation.
- Facilitate development proposals which accord the site-specific opportunities identified in the Drumboe Wood and Environs Feasibility Study. **(Policy BS-RCNH-P-4 refers)**
- Otherwise require development proposals to be consistent with the Drumboe Castle and Environs Masterplan and associated specific policy requirements. **(Policy BS-RCNH-P-5 refers)**

As identified in the Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan there is also significant potential to develop a **central urban public park** on lands adjoining the Ballybofey Shopping Arcade and Aldi which would provide a central, accessible, passive and active public amenity space connected to wider green infrastructure linkages for residents and visitors alike. Consequently, this proposal is specifically supported in the relevant Urban Regeneration and Town Centre section.



Figure 19.9: Conceptual Proposal for Pentland Public Park within District 5 of the Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan.

The **River Finn Corridor** sinuously traverses the urban area of Ballybofey/Stranorlar from west to east. In many parts the banks are wooded which significantly adds to their visual character and recreational potential. The existing riverside trails within Drumboe Woods and the new riverside walk from N15 bridge to the western side of MacCumhaill Park demonstrates the recreational value of such infrastructure. Consequently, as highlighted in the Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan (and provided in previous Local Area Plans) there is a significant opportunity to provide new riverside walks and adjoining parkland areas along the River Finn corridor subject to Appropriate Assessment vis-à-vis impact on the River Finn SAC. The development of such green infrastructure is therefore explicitly provided for in plan through both policy and zonings.

Significant sections of both the Stranorlar to Killygordon and the Donegal Town to Stranorlar **historic railway corridors** remain intact and undeveloped within the plan area and also adjoin existing residential developments (e.g. Woodlawn and the Beeches). In many places these corridors are flanked by mature trees or traverse the River Finn Corridor which considerably adds to their visual, recreational and tourism value. The blockage of certain sections of said lines by development since their closure demonstrates the need for robust policy safeguards to prevent further loss. Consequently, these corridors have enormous potential as future recreational and tourism linkages. As such Policy BS-RCNH-P-8 provides for the reuse and redevelopment of these corridors for said uses, requires the provision of appropriate parking and access infrastructure at the end points of such corridors to facilitate such use and also protect the existing lines of mature trees along said corridors.

In terms of Primary **Education** facilities, the twin towns recently benefitted from the completion of the new St Mary's NS on Millbrae consisting of a 24 classroom school, ballcourts and associated play space which caters for 497 pupils (2022/23). Sessiagh O'Neill National School currently caters for 152 pupils (2022/23), recently added a new extension containing a mainstream classroom and learning support room and does not currently require additional facilities. Robertson NS has 94 pupils, and a school extension of 1 classroom, two offices and two Special Education Rooms was completed in 2022. The school has applied for funding for additional accommodation including a mainstream classroom (to replace an onsite prefab), a general-purpose room/PE hall and a

homeschool teacher office. The provision of said additional accommodation would necessitate the relocation of the existing ball courts and play area and therefore suitable lands to the north east of the school have been zoned Community Infrastructure to facilitate same. In terms of **secondary** education the town boasts the modern Finn Valley College Campus and a project to improve and expand facilities at St Columba's college, inclusive of 8 no. general classrooms, 18. No. specialist classrooms, a multi-use hall and special needs education suite, and new pedestrian infrastructure on Drumboe Avenue to provide a total capacity of 1,000 students and students is ongoing. Consultations with the Department of Education regarding future pupil enrolments projections does not indicate the need for new primary or secondary schools in Ballybofey/Stranorlar over the lifetime of the plan. Nevertheless, recent inward migration may generate a need to expand existing education facilities which will be positively facilitated in accordance with the education policies of the wider development plan (See Section). In addition, it considered prudent to facilitate new education facilities on Opportunity Site 2 to cater for any future educational demands including 3rd level or further education facilities.

In addition, St Joseph's Community hospital provides important community health services for older people and future expansion of same is facilitated by the Opp. Site 6 zoning and Policy BS-RCNH-P-10.

Consultations with the Donegal **Childcare** Committee indicates that there is a significant shortfall in available ECCE places in existing childcare providers consequently there may be demand for new purpose-built childcare facilities within Ballybofey/Stranorlar during the lifetime of the plan. As such new standalone childcare facilities will be facilitated at sustainable locations within the plan area and may be required in tandem with any new large-scale residential development in accordance with the Childcare policies of the wider development plan and government childcare guidelines.

Ballybofey/Stranorlar benefits from rich **natural heritage** assets including: the River Finn Special Area of Conservation/the River Finn Corridor, the Drumboe Woods, and Environs Area, Lough Alaán, Dunwiley Woods, treelined historic Railway Corridors and a biodiversity rich rural hinterland including pockets of deciduous woodland, mature field boundaries/hedgerows, water courses and associated aquatic habitats.

The **River Finn Special Area of Conservation (SAC)** is host to a number of Annex 1 habitats and Annex II species including the Atlantic Salmon and the Otter which are likely to be found within the plan area. The SAC site synopsis specifically notes that The River Finn is one's of Ireland's premier salmon waters and is important in an international context in having a stable spring salmon population. It also notes that Otter is widespread thought the system and its habitat includes wet grassland and marsh dominated by rushes. The River Finn SAC and the abovementioned qualifying interests will be protected through the application of Policy BIO-P-1 of the wider development plan which requires all development proposals to comply with the requirements of the habitats directive including undertaking Appropriate Assessment as necessary and by the zoning framework of this LAP which precludes significant development within the SAC.

The environmental amenities of the Drumboe Woods and Environs will be protected and sustainably developed as detailed above. Other key areas of Natural Heritage such as Dunwiley woods, and part of the River Finn Corridor have also been zoned Open Space and Recreation whose zoning objective precludes significant development. Policy BS-RCNH-P-8 below specifically protects existing mature trees along the Railway Corridors. Finally, the natural heritage in the rural hinterland of Ballybofey/Stranorlar will be afforded significant protection by zoning said area as Rural/Agricultural whose zoning objective restricts development to limited one off housing and small scale economic development.

Objectives

BS-RCNH-O-1	To support and strengthen Ballybofey/Stranorlar as a sporting centre of excellence including the completion of the Donegal Community Stadium, and the Stranorlar Multi-Use sports facility
BS-RCNH-O-3	To protect, enhance, and, where appropriate, sustainably develop key natural heritage assets in Ballybofey/Stranorlar including: Drumboe Woods and Environs area, the River Finn Corridor and areas of rural local environment within the hinterland of Ballybofey/Stranorlar.
BS-RCNH-O-4	To collaborate with the Ballybofey and Stranorlar Co-op Livestock Mart in their identification of a suitable alternative location.

Policies

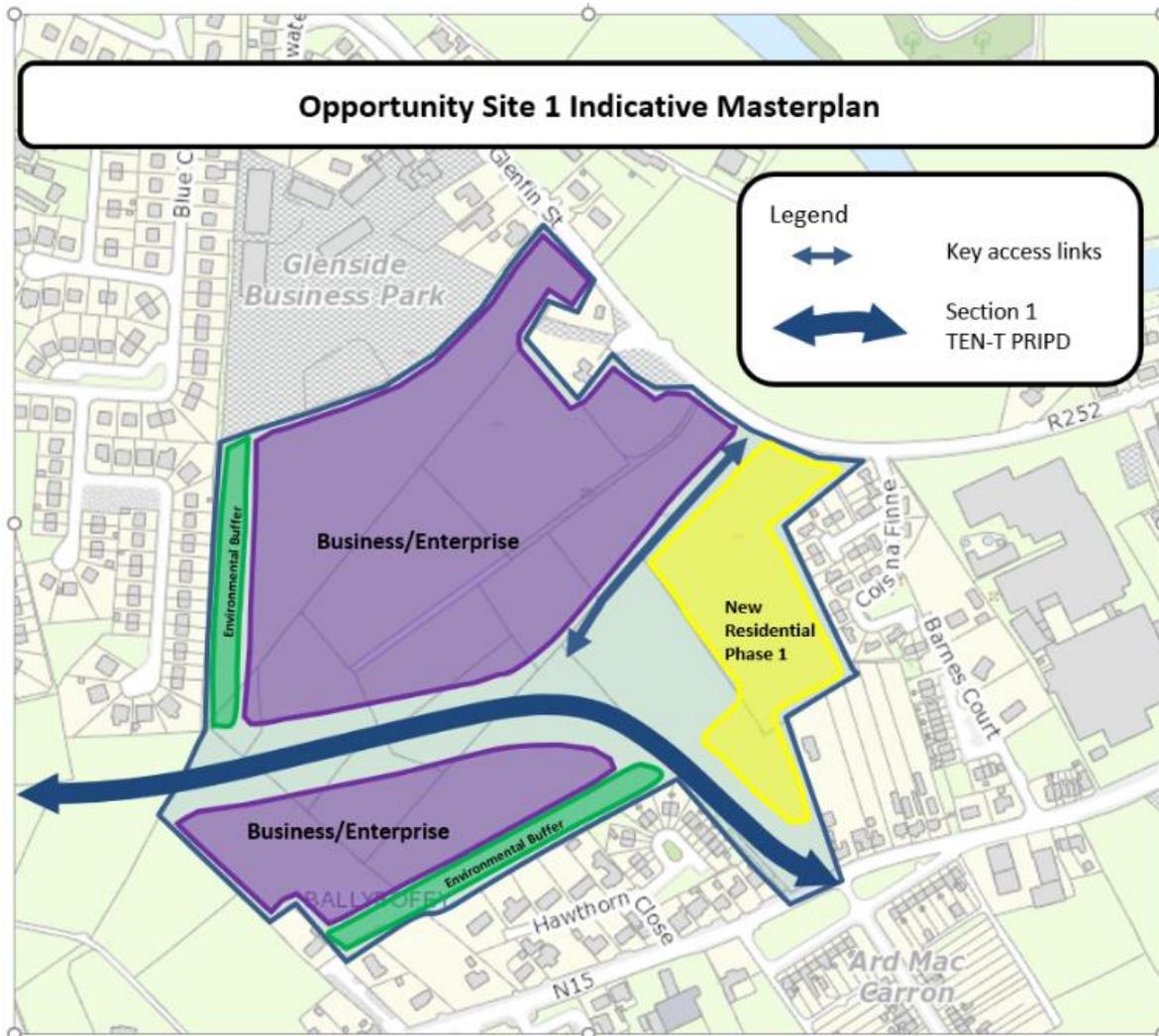
BS-RCNH-P-1	Facilitate development proposals which accord with the proposals in the Drumboe Wood and Environs Feasibility Study including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) The site specific opportunities identified in said study. b) The entrance and linkages identified therein.
BS-RCNH-P-2	Facilitate development proposals within the Drumboe Castle and Environs Masterplan Area (See Figure 16.10 refers) in accordance with the following planning criteria: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Castle Gardens Facilitate proposals for biodiversity enhancement, passive and active recreational use and/or interpretative facilities which accord with the Options for this area in the Drumboe Woods and Environs Feasibility or similar alternative proposals. 2. Active Open Space, Recreation, Amenity and Tourism Zoning Facilitate active recreational, amenity and tourism related developments proposals including outdoor pursuit centre, bike hire, walkway, cycleway, picnic areas, and ancillary small-scale retail development (e.g. café, craft shop, fishing tackle), which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect the character of the area and does not detract from the unique recreational, historical, cultural, and social value of the area. • Can be sensitively integrated into the host landscape • Are of the highest architectural quality particularly having regard to scale and the quality of materials. • Retain and incorporate existing site boundaries save where it is necessary to remove same for traffic safety/access reasons and include a detailed landscaping scheme. • Include a detailed landscaping scheme. 3. Passive Open Space, Recreation, Amenity And Tourism Zoning Facilitate passive recreational developments including walkways, seating, and signage, which do not compromise the character of the area. 4. Historical and Cultural Heritage Area Zoning Safeguard the existing built, archaeological, and cultural heritage of this area in accordance with the built and archaeological policies of the wider development plan. 4. Graveyard and Graveyard Extension Zoning Protect the use of this land as an existing graveyard and provide for a graveyard extension. 5. Heavily Wooded Zone

	<p>Safeguard the existing woodland and facilitate limited proposals for passive recreational use.</p> <p>7. Established Development Zone Conserve and enhance the quality and character of these established areas and ensure the protection of residential amenity therein.</p> <p>8. Walkways/Cycleways a) Protect and enhance existing walkways/cycleways. b) Reserve the identified routes for, and facilitate the development of new, walkways/cycleways.</p> <p>9. Individual Trees, Field Boundaries Historic and Stone Walls Protect the individual tree, field boundaries, historic walls and stone walls identified on the masterplan map save where a justifiable case is provided for their removal.</p> <p>10. Roads Ensure that any road improvements are or a sensitive/subtle design and retain the character and amenity value of the area.</p>
BS-RCNH-P-3	<p>Positively support and facilitate the provision of a central urban public park on the lands to the east of the Ballybofey shopping Arcade which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides high quality, age and disabled friendly and socially inclusive active and passive recreational infrastructure, playground, hard and soft landscaping and planting, a suitable performance space and a community garden. • Incorporates pollinator friendly and biodiversity areas and nature based water management solutions.
BS-RCNH-P-4	<p>Support and facilitate the development of high quality, age and disabled friendly and environmentally sensitive riverside recreational walks which maximise the retention of existing environmental features subject to the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive.</p>
BS-RCNH-P-5	<p>a) Support and facilitate the reuse/development of historic railway corridors in the plan area as recreational and/or tourism linkages/greenways. b) Require such proposals to provide appropriate access and parking infrastructure at start/end points of said corridors or demonstrate that such infrastructure is already available within close proximity to said points. c) Protect the existing lines of mature trees along the route of historic railway corridors save where their removal is essential for the re-use of the corridors as recreational/tourism/active transport infrastructure.</p>
BS-RCNH-P-6	<p>Facilitate proposals for additional parking facilities to cater for buses serving the Finn Valley Complex.</p>
BS-RCNH-P-7	<p>Facilitation the future expansion of Ballybofey/Stranorlar Golf Club and/or St Joseph's community Hospital on Opp. Site 6</p>
BS-RCNH-P-8	<p>Ensure that any development proposal on the Community Infrastructure Zoning adjoining Robertson National School be accompanied by a detailed site-specific flood risk assessment, only provides for water compatible ancillary educational infrastructure (e.g. outdoor sports and recreational facilities) and does not otherwise exacerbate flood risk on the site or elsewhere.</p>

19.11 Opportunity Sites

A number of Opportunity Sites have been identified which collectively can fulfil a variety of development roles including Business/Enterprise development, bulky retail, multiple residential development, expansion of St Joseph's Community Hospital or Ballybofey and Stranorlar Golf Club and sports/recreation or community development. Site specific policies for these Opportunity Sites

are Detailed below. In addition, an indicative Masterplan for Opp. Site 1 is set out below to guide its development.



**BS-OPP-P-1
(OPP Site 1)**

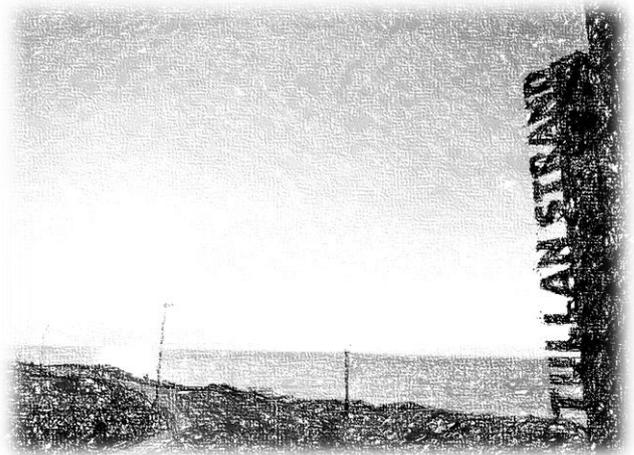
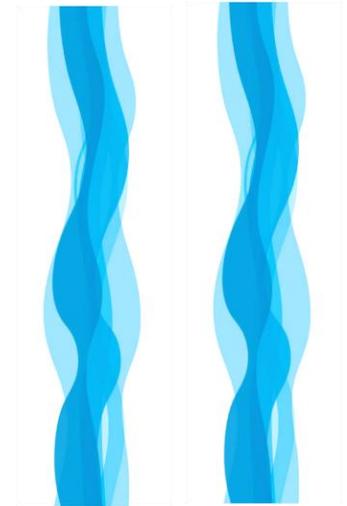
Facilitate business/enterprise (including light engineering/manufacturing, logistics/warehousing, service-based enterprises) and multiple residential development proposals on Opp. Site 1 which accord with the Opp. Site 1 indicative Masterplan and:

- Do not prejudice the delivery, strategic functionality, road safety, and carrying capacity of, the Section 1 TEN-T PRIPD link road. In this regard any multimodal access enabling permeability across and to this Opp Site 1 shall be via a single strategic access point the location and design of which shall be subject to the strict agreement of Donegal County Council.
- Facilitate, in conjunction with the aforementioned the provision of safe, quality, and direct local transport links including, public and private vehicular, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure between the Section 1 TEN-T PRIPD Link road and the Glenfinn Road.
- Provide for a high-quality active travel friendly design/layout within any retail or service based enterprises which creates strong building frontages along adjoining access roads and priorities pedestrian/cycling access.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the protection of residential amenity within existing and future residential areas including the provision of a densely-planted environmental buffer along the eastern boundary of the adjoining Blue Cedars estate. • Retain and integrate existing environmental features/mature field boundaries where feasible.
<p>BS-OPP-P-2 (Opp Site 2)</p>	<p>Facilitate business/enterprise proposals (including light engineering/manufacturing, logistics/warehousing, service based enterprises) multiple residential development and education proposals on Opp Site 2 which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for a developer led high quality, safe, attractive, and direct local transport link including road, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and designed in consultation with the DCC Road Design Section between the Donegal Road and the Trusk Road. • Provide for development led high quality, safe, attractive, direct local transport link including road, pedestrian and cycling connectivity between Opp. Site 2 and the undeveloped lands to the south west. • Ensure the protection of residential amenity of the adjoining residential areas including the provision of a densely-planted environmental 10m buffer between commercial developments and adjoining residential areas. • Retain and integrate existing environmental features/mature field boundaries where feasible.
<p>BS-OPP-P-3 (Opp Site 3)</p>	<p>Facilitate the expansion of the adjacent golf course or hospital facilities on Opportunity Site 3 which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide access onto the Lifford Road by means of the existing vehicular accesses points detailed on the Zoning Map. • Ensure the protection of the environmental and residential amenities of the adjoining uses including the provision of environmental buffers (minimum 10m) with suitable landscaping/planting between commercial developments and adjoining residential properties/the Ballybofey and Stranorlar Golf Course/St Joseph’s Community hospital.
<p>BS-OPP-P-4 (Opp Site 4)</p>	<p>Facilitate proposals for the re-development of the existing mart site including multiple residential development or business/enterprise (including light engineering/manufacturing, logistics/warehousing, service-based enterprises but excluding bulky retail) on Opportunity Site 4.</p>
<p>BS-OPP-P-5 (Opp Site 5)</p>	<p>Facilitate proposals for multiple residential development, sports/recreational or community facilities on Opportunity Site 5.</p>

Bundoran Area Plan

2024-2030



Comhairle Contae
Dhún na nGall
Donegal County Council

Chapter 20 – Bundoran Area Plan

20.1 Introduction

Bundoran is a key tourism destination located in southwest Donegal. Accessed via National Primary Route N15, Bundoran is the first 'Wild Atlantic Way' discovery point in County Donegal for those travelling north along this national route and is well-positioned as a base for those wishing to explore the north west. The town provides a diverse range of tourist accommodation and entertainment functions, benefits from high quality coastal resources and natural amenities and has been recognised as a Tourism Destination Town by Fáilte Ireland.

The importance of the tourism industry to the economy of Bundoran cannot be overstated. Recent figures show that Bundoran hosts in the order of 1.7 million visitors annually, who in turn spend approximately €94 million in the local economy⁵⁶. It is clear therefore, that the sustainable development of Bundoran going forward is inextricably linked to the management and improvement of existing tourism assets coupled with the addition of new facilities necessary to support the town as a leading tourism destination. This plan therefore sets out a planning policy framework to ensure that new development in Bundoran supports and enhances the town's special economic function as a tourism centre in an environmentally conscious and sustainable manner. The plan also identifies regeneration opportunities within the town as a means of addressing urban dereliction and stimulating new economic, cultural and residential development.

20.1A Core Strategy Population and Housing Targets

The core strategy sets out an overall settlement hierarchy including population and housing targets and associated residential land zonings allocations for settlements (or groups of settlements) within the county. It identifies Bundoran as a Service Town with a specific focus on tourism.

The relevant Core Strategy data for Bundoran is detailed in Chapter 3. In summary, the Core Strategy allocates 121 units or 1.57% of the overall housing target in the county to the town. On the basis of a residential density of 35 units per ha, this means that overall 3.5ha of zoned land is required to fulfil the core strategy housing targets for Bundoran.

20.2 Zoning Matrix

As specified in Policy GEN-DM-1 in the General Introduction (see Chapter 17), development proposals in Bundoran will be considered in the context of their compliance with the zoning objectives as set out in Table 20.1, the corresponding zones identified on Map 17.1 entitled 'Bundoran Land Use Zoning Map', and the zoning matrix contained in Table 20.1 below. The wider policy framework contained in both this Plan and the CDP will also be applied where relevant.

The Zoning Matrix illustrates a range of land uses together with an indication of their broad acceptability in each of the land use zones.

Please note that the broad acceptability of uses on designated Opportunity Sites is set out in specific policies contained in Section 20.9 of this Plan

⁵⁶ Source: Discover Bundoran, Economic Impact of Tourism study (2018)

Y= Acceptable in Principle; O=Open for consideration; N= Not acceptable

Table 20.1 - Land use zoning matrix for Bundoran

Land Use	Zoning	Urban Core	New Residential (Phase 1)	New Residential (Phase 2)	Established Development	Open Space and Recreation	Caravan Park	High Amenity	Community Infrastructure	Opportunity Site	Tourism	Regeneration	Rural/Agricultural
Amusement Arcade/Casinos		O ¹	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Agricultural Buildings		N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y
Car Park (other than ancillary)		O ²	N	N	O	N	N	N	O	O	O	N	N
Betting Office		O ³	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	O	N
Cafe		O	N	N	O	N	O	N	N	O	O	O	N
Caravan Parks		N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	O	N	N
Cemetery		N	N	N	N	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	N
Cinema		Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Community/Recreational /Sports		O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	N
Creche/Playschool		Y	O	O	O	N	N	N	O	O	N	O	N
Cultural Uses/Library		Y	N	N	O	N	N	N	O	O	O	Y	N
Dancehall/Disco		Y ⁴	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Data Centre		N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	O	N	N	N
Funeral Home		Y	N	N	O	N	N	N	O	O	N	N	N
Garage/Car Repair		O ⁵	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	O	N	N	N
Guesthouse / Hotel / Hostel		Y	N	N	O	N	Y	N	N	N	O	O	N
Hot Food Takeaway		O	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Industry (light)		Y	N	N	O ⁶	N	N	N	N	O	N	N	N
Industry (General)		N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	O ⁷	N	N	N
Medical Consultancy/Healthcare		Y	N	N	O ⁸	N	N	N	O ⁸	O ⁸	N	O ⁸	N
Motor Sales		N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	O ⁹	N	N	N
Nursing Home		Y	N	N	O	N	O	N	O	O	N	O	N
Offices		Y	N	N	O ⁸	N	N	N	O ⁸	Y	N	O ⁸	N
Park/Playground		O	O	O	O	Y	Y	O	Y	O	O	O	N
Filling Station		O ¹⁰	N	N	O ¹⁰	N	N	N	N	O	N	N	N
Place of Worship		Y	N	N	O	N	N	N	Y	N	N	O	N
Playing Fields		N	O	O	N	Y	O	O	O	O	O	N	N
Pub		Y	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	O	N
Restaurant		Y	N	N	O	N	O	N	N	N	O	O	N

Land Use	Zoning	Urban Core	New Residential (Phase 1)	New Residential (Phase 2)	Established Development	Open Space and Recreation	Caravan Park	High Amenity	Community Infrastructure	Opportunity Site	Tourism	Regeneration	Rural/Agricultural
		Residential	Y	Y	Y	O	N	O	N	N	N ¹¹	N	Y
Retail	Y	N	N	O ¹²	N	N	N	N	N	O ¹³	N	O	N
School/Education	Y	N	N	O	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	
Solar Energy Generation (other than exempted dev. or microgeneration)¹⁴	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	O	N	N	O	
Tourist Related Facilities	Y	N	N	O	O	Y	N	N	N	Y	O	N	
Warehouse/Store/Depot	O	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	

Footnotes to accompany land-use zoning matrix

- 1 Refer to Policy TC-G-P-4.
- 2 Refer to specific policies on car parking as set out in Section 17.6, Policy GEN-T-P-7
- 3 Betting offices will not be permitted where it is considered that they may have a detrimental impact on the established character or residential amenities of an area.
- 4 Dancehalls/discos will not be permitted where it is considered that they may have a detrimental impact on the established character or residential amenities of an area.
- 5 Garages/car repair will not be permitted where it is considered that they may have a detrimental impact on the established character or residential amenities of an area.
- 6 Light industry will not be permitted where it is considered that the proposal may have a detrimental impact on the established character or residential amenities of an area.
- 7 Developers are advised to have regard to, inter alia, the economic development policies of the County Development Plan.
- 8 Developers are advised to note that professional services, where the services proposed are provided principally to visiting members of the public, will generally be directed to the defined urban core.
- 9 Motor sales will not be considered on Opportunity Site 1, due to the visual exposure of these lands as viewed from the national road network.
- 10 Developers are advised to have regard to, inter alia, the economic development policies of the County Development Plan.

- 11 Proposal seeking to resolve the existing, unfinished housing development on Opportunity Site 3 will be considered by the planning authority on their merits and having regard to all other relevant considerations, refer Section 20.9, Policy BN-OPP-P-3.
- 12 Developers are advised to note that proposals for retail development in areas zoned Established Development shall be assessed in accordance with the provisions of the Retail Strategy as set out in the County Development Plan.
- 13 Proposals for retail development on Opportunity Sites shall only be considered where the retail element of the proposal is clearly ancillary to the parent/main use of the site, comprises a maximum of 10% of the total floor area of the subject development, and where the goods being sold are a product of that 'main use'. Notwithstanding the foregoing, proposals for retail uses on Opportunity Sites shall not be permitted if such use would be detrimental to the retail function of the town centre; these matters will be assessed on a case by case basis in accordance with the provisions of the Council's Retail Strategy.
- 14 Proposals for microgeneration shall be dealt with on a case-by-basis having regard to all relevant policy provisions of this Plan, the County Development Plan and other statutory guidance.

20.3 Coastal Zone

The coastal zone at Bundoran (which incorporates both the rugged shoreline adjoining the town boundary on the northern side and the town centre area north of Atlantic Road) is a critical asset, having a local amenity value, a national-level tourism value and an international-level ecological value, being part of the Donegal Bay Special Protection Area (SPA). Dedicated coastal walking routes (the West End Cliff Walk and the Rougey Walk) offer a means of exploring the area and link in with other amenities such as Bundoran's outdoor sea water swimming pools – the Thrupenny Pool and the West End Pool. Further east, the coastal zone also hosts Bundoran's golf course whilst the town centre area north of Atlantic Road is home to amenities such as the 'Waterworld' water park, the 'Bundoran Adventure Park' and kiosks offering refreshments.

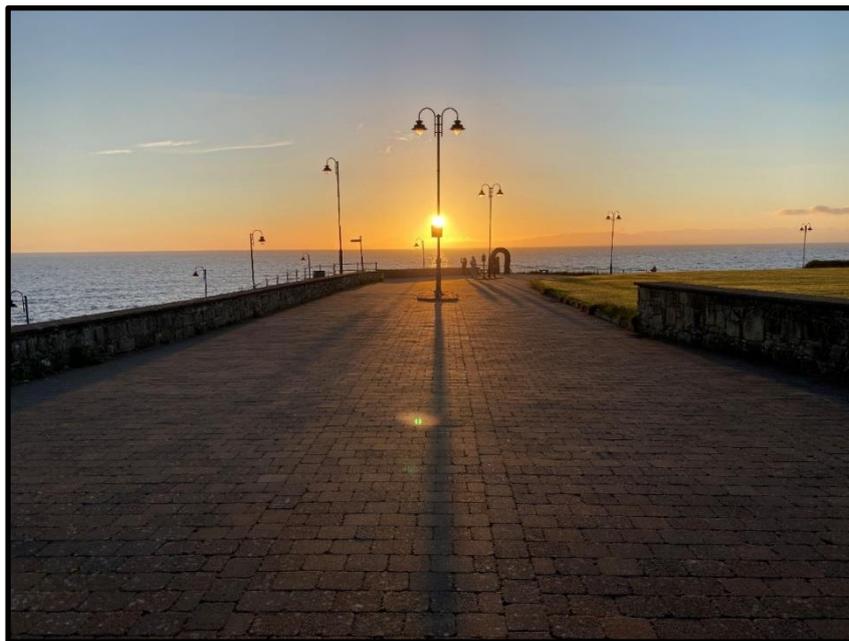


Figure 20.1 - Bundoran Promenade

In terms of the future development of the coastal area at Bundoran, the critical considerations centre on the need to maintain and enhance the quality of the natural and built environment whilst facilitating development that is appropriate in terms of use and designed in such a way that is sensitive to the host environment. In view of these considerations, this Plan designates the entire coastal zone as a High Amenity Area (see map 20.1 – Bundoran Land Use Zoning Map) where the development focus will be on small scale tourism development, the redevelopment of brownfield lands, provision of facilities ancillary to existing uses that support the tourism product in Bundoran and consideration of infrastructural works and water-based development proposals appropriate to the coastal zone (e.g. enhancement of pier facilities, use of pier facility for commercial and recreational purposes, facilities for outdoor water-based activities etc.). With regard to the area north of Atlantic Road, the Council will endeavour to prepare a master plan to guide future development in a manner that appropriately balances environmental, social and economic considerations in this sensitive coastal location.

Objective

BN-CZ-O-1	To protect and enhance the character, setting and natural heritage of the coastal zone in Bundoran, which is identified as a High Amenity Area on the Bundoran Land-Use Zoning Map, in order to secure its existing and future amenity, and tourism and ecological value.
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Policies

BN-CZ-P-1	<p>To support the principle of the following development proposals within the High Amenity Area along the seafront, subject to compliance with all other relevant policies of this Plan and the County Development Plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The redevelopment of brownfield sites. b. Development ancillary to existing established uses that support the tourism product in Bundoran. c. Small-scale tourism development. d. Public realm interventions that serve to enhance the streetscape/landscape and offer demonstrable amenity value. e. Community-based recreation projects. f. The development of marinas, jetties, facilities for outdoor water-based activities and harbour facilities for maritime leisure developments. <p>Proposals shall only be permitted where they:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. would not significantly impact on the visual amenities, character and environmental quality of the High Amenity Area. b. would not intrude significantly on seaward views. c. are of a scale and character appropriate to the host environment and are of an enduring high-quality design.
BN-CZ-P-2	To protect the coastal walkways in Bundoran as important tourism, recreation and amenity resources for the town.
BN-CZ-P-3	To ensure that development proposals that would have a negative impact on the use of pier facilities by the Bundoran Lifeboat Station shall not be permitted.

BN-CZ-P-4: To ensure that any future development or expansion of the golf course at Bundoran respects the landscape character and visual sensitivity of its coastal location and has due regard to the natural heritage of the area.

Actions:

BN-LAP-1: The Council will investigate options to link the West End Cliff Walk and the Rougey Walk in recognition of the potential economic, social and health benefits offered by such coastal walking routes.

BN-LAP-2: To prepare a cohesive masterplan for the shorefront area of Bundoran to guide the future sustainable development of this area.

20.4 Town Centre/Urban Core

20.4.1 Urban Design Quality

Bundoran’s Urban Core contains a mix of tourism and entertainment offerings such as restaurants and takeaways, accommodation, amusement arcades, comparison and convenience retailing. This presents challenges in terms of facilitating such proposals in design terms whilst seeking to maintain a sense of pride in the streetscape that was once one of the key attractions of the town.. The objective of the Planning Authority must be to strike the appropriate balance in this regard and in so doing, the Planning Authority will be guided by the suite of policies set out under Section 20.4.3 and Chapter 5 of this Plan.



Figure 20.2 - Town Centre Mural

20.4.2 Retail Development

Previous planning policy for retailing in Bundoran made reference to two separate retail cores in the town; one along the Eastend's Main Street that was seen as being primarily focussed on the needs of tourists, and a second in the area around Station Road, which was seen as catering more for the convenience and comparison needs of the local community. However, the need to distinguish between these areas in a retail sense has become less apparent, particularly in the context of the diversification of Bundoran's economic and employment base. As such, this Plan supports retailing generally throughout the town centre area, be it geared towards tourists or residents of the town, and utilises the policy framework set out in the County Retail Strategy (see Chapter 7 of the CDP) to guide the sequential development of retail uses within the Area Plan boundary.

20.4.3 Amusement Arcades

Amusement arcades and similar premises contribute to the entertainment offering of Bundoran; however, the nature of these uses is such that potential exists for conflict with neighbouring uses. Furthermore, such developments can have a detrimental impact on the streetscape as a result of inappropriate signage and lighting or the use of blacked-out or obscured windows, which fail to provide active visual engagement between the users of the street and the buildings that define those streets. The need for a varied entertainment offering in Bundoran is recognised however, and as such the Council will continue to support the principle of developing such entertainment premises within the urban core of Bundoran, subject to certain provisos as set out in Policy TC-G-P-4 the General Introduction section.

Objective

BN-TC-O-1: To strike the appropriate balance between facilitating the continued contribution of the Main Street commercial sectors to the town's tourism offering with the need for the further enhancement of the streetscape and public realm.

20.5 Regeneration

Vacancy and dereliction are issues in many settlements in the County, and indeed throughout the State. Analysis published by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly⁵⁷ indicates that Bundoran had 246 vacant or derelict residential properties in 2020 and furthermore had 33 vacant or derelict commercial properties. This represents a significant challenge for the town in terms of its economic and social wellbeing (particularly being a town that is heavily dependent on tourism) but also in terms of delivering sustainable settlement patterns, most notably the compact growth of the settlement.

The West End of Bundoran has a particular issue in terms of the extent of vacancy and dereliction, most notably in the vicinity of the 'Ulster Tourist House' premises. This Plan therefore identifies that particular location as a 'Regeneration Area' on the land-use zoning map (map 20.1) in order to support targeted actions aimed at addressing vacancy and dereliction, inclusive of applications under funding programmes such as the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF). The Plan also identifies regeneration opportunities on Opportunity Site 3 (site of the former 'Single Street' service station) whereon proposals will be considered for, inter alia, the resolution of the existing unfinished

⁵⁷ Regional Vacancy and Dereliction Analysis (January 2022), Northern and Western Regional Assembly

housing development at that location and/or proposals to re-use or otherwise rehabilitate the site of the former filling station. In addition to the foregoing, the urban core of Bundoran also contains a number of potential regeneration opportunities (e.g. the former Hamilton Hall, the former site of the Astoria Ballroom, the former Council office site) and the zoning objectives for the urban core (refer Table 17.1) allow for the consideration of mixed-use regeneration opportunities at all of these central locations.

In relation to derelict and dangerous buildings the Planning Authority will, where appropriate, use its powers under prevailing legislation in order to address and remedy issues where they arise.

Objective

BN-REGEN-O-1	To seek the development and renewal of areas within Bundoran that are in need of regeneration, and in particular the Regeneration Areas identified on the Bundoran land-use zoning map (map 20.1 refers) in order to prevent (i.) adverse effects on existing amenities in such areas, (ii.) urban blight and decay, (iii.) anti-social behaviour or (iv.) a shortage of habitable houses or of land suitable for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses.
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20.6 Employment and Economy

In 2016, Bundoran had a total of 723 resident workers, giving a 'jobs:resident workers' ratio of 0.813⁵⁸, indicating a net outflow of workers from the town. Analysis undertaken by the Western Development Commission⁵⁹ showed Bundoran to have the second highest share of people working in hospitality in the western region (21.7% of employees working in hospitality), a sector with a high share of part-time and seasonal jobs⁶⁰. Statistics such as these point to the nature of employment in Bundoran (which is to a large degree focused on a seasonal tourism industry) and support the proposition that there needs to be support for Bundoran as a 'year round' destination in order to maximise the employment opportunities arising in the tourism sector.

Notwithstanding the clear importance of tourism, diversification of the local employment base could only serve to strengthen the economic future of Bundoran and accordingly, this Plan offers opportunities for other employment-generating opportunities within the town centre and on specifically designated Opportunity Sites within the LAP boundary (refer to Section 20.9 below for detailed policy in relation to identified Opportunity Sites).

Objective

BD-EE-O-1	To diversify the local economic base in Bundoran to contribute towards year-round employment opportunities and increased service provision.
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⁵⁸ Source: Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework

⁵⁹ Accommodation & Food Service Sector in the Western Region (March 2019) Western Development Commission

⁶⁰ Across all sectors it has the second lowest average number of hours worked per week at 26.6 hours, nationally. SOLAS and National Skills Council (2018)

20.7 Active Travel, Permeability and Connectivity

A critical consideration in the future development of Bundoran will be to provide for suitable connectivity and permeability throughout the urban area. The benefits of this would be multi-faceted, facilitating a shift from carbon-intensive journeys to zero-carbon modes such as walking and cycling and also providing convenient and more direct access between residential and employment areas and community facilities. In a Bundoran context, the provision of active travel infrastructure also enables access to some of the magnificent natural assets that the town has to offer; potential examples in this regard include the possibility of connecting the currently separated West End Cliff Walk and Rougey Walk, the potential to develop a riverside path adjacent to the Bradogue River and the potential to provide active travel infrastructure to serve Tullan Strand. Opportunities also exist for linking Bundoran to other settlements via active travel modes, and indeed plans are already advancing for the creation of an active travel scheme linking Bundoran to Ballyshannon.

To the southeast of the town centre, the Bundoran land-use zoning map identifies a number of critical 'indicative access routes' that could connect the Drumacrin Road with Regional Road R280, thereby addressing the pinch points on the road network that currently exist at Drumacrin. The preferred and most direct route for any link road would be to take a spur off the existing roundabout adjacent the cinema in the town centre and travel directly east towards Drumacrin, passing through the Dartry View Caravan Park and greatly improving connectivity from the town centre.. Given the importance of forming a link between Drumacrin and the R280, the Council will seek to ensure that sections of link road are constructed (or appropriate corridors reserved) as part of development proposals along the indicative route corridors. Applicants for development on the lands concerned will be required to consult with the Council's Roads Department in this regard.

Bundoran benefits from relatively good interconnectivity between the Main Street and Atlantic Road via a series of linkages (Promenade Road, Brighton Terrace, Rennison's Lane, Central Lane, Meehan's Lane and Astoria Road) that allow for pedestrian and vehicular movement from the town's commercial core towards the coastal zone of the town. However, from the point of view of making Bundoran town centre a vibrant and attractive place, these linkages are not being used to their full potential and suffer from limited numbers of active frontages; lack of wayfinding signage; lack of appropriate streetlighting, street furniture and a cohesive urban design approach; and inadequate pedestrian paths and cycle facilities.

It is a provision of this Plan to address the aforementioned deficiencies and to support the revitalisation of the existing links between Main Street and Atlantic Road as part of a fully considered regeneration strategy for the town centre; seeking to maximise synergies between the two busiest areas of the town and ensuring that valuable urban space is used to its full potential. To this end, the Council will continue to work with all relevant stakeholders in the town in devising regeneration proposals.

During the peak of the summer tourism season, the town centre area suffers from significant traffic congestion, which in turn impacts negatively on environmental quality, visitor experience and economic activity. The introduction of a one-way traffic system in the town centre area has the potential to greatly enhance the town centre environment, and would facilitate streetscape, public realm and active travel improvements via the reallocation of road space for other uses. It is therefore a provision of this Plan to consider options for the introduction of such a one-way system, in conjunction with active travel measures throughout the town.

Transport/Sustainable Mobility Strategy for Bundoran:

The above context informs the following overall land use/transportation strategy for Bundoran in the following table and associated map:

Table 20.2 Transport/Sustainable Mobility Strategy for Bundoran

Map Ref.	Location/ Name	Priority/Project Description	Key Benefits
Sustainable Mobility			
1.	General	A compact development form including locating residential development adjacent to jobs and retail, education and community services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced travel demand. • Facilitate modal shift toward walking, cycling and public transport.
2.	One-way system within the urban core	Re-routing of traffic to allow for a one-way system along the Main Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved town centre environment • Reallocation of road space to allow for public realm, streetscape and active travel improvements • Provide additional safety for road users
3.	Links between Drumacrin and urban core	Creation of vehicular, pedestrian, wheeling and cycling linkages between the Drumacrin Road and the urban core of Bundoran.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable ease of movement from the urban core towards the eastern side of the town. • Reduce traffic movements on Drumacrin road, which is substandard in terms of width and alignment. • Enable access to future potential development lands
4.	Creation of active travel infrastructure adjacent the Bradoge River	Develop a fully accessible pathway, cycleway adjacent to the banks of the Bradoge River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a valuable amenity resource for the town. • Facilitate sustainable connectivity between zoned residential lands and the urban core. • Enable access to future potential development lands, via sustainable modes of travel
5.	Links between Main Street and Atlantic Road	Improve linkages between Main Street and Atlantic Road (Promenade Road, Brighton Terrace, Rennison's Lane, Central Lane, Meehan's Lane and Astoria Road), by means of a cohesive urban design approach; fully accessible paths; cycle facilities; wayfinding signage; street furniture; street lighting and a consistent palette of materials. Encourage active frontages along these linkages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve interconnectivity between the busiest areas of Bundoran • Provide for significant environmental enhancements • Provide additional safety for road users • Provide for security through design (street lighting, passive surveillance).
6.	Delivery of Ballyshannon-	Creation of a cycle route along Regional Road R267	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of a dedicated cycle track between Ballyshannon and Bundoran,

Map Ref.	Location/ Name	Priority/Project Description	Key Benefits
	Bundoran active travel scheme, with onward connectivity into the urban area of Bundoran		<p>with consequent significant improvements in terms of road safety for cyclists.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a valuable amenity and recreational resource for the town.

Objectives

BN-AT-O-1	To deliver the projects listed in Table 20.2 Transport/Sustainable Mobility Strategy for Bundoran above.
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Policies

BN-AT-P-1	<p>To require that development proposals:</p> <p>(a.) provide for suitable connectivity and permeability (for walking, wheeling, cycling and/or vehicular as appropriate) between adjoining land parcels; and</p> <p>(b.) have due regard to the 'indicative access routes' identified on the Bundoran land-use zoning map (map 20.1) and to the active transport/sustainable mobility projects identified in Table 20.2 and reserve corridors for the required routes and/or construct sections of the required routes, in consultation with the Councils Roads Department</p> <p>Proposals that fail to provide for adequate connectivity and permeability or fail to have due regard to the indicative access routes identified on map 20.1 shall not be permitted.</p>
BN-AT-P-2	To require that development proposals adjacent to the Bradogue River provide for the retention of a minimum 10m wide strip from the edge of the river bank to allow for the creation of an active travel route and amenity area.

20.8 Housing

Bundoran recorded a population of 1963 in the 2016 census and is recognised as a 'Service Town' town in the County Settlement Hierarchy, as set out in Chapter 3 – Core Strategy.

The Core Strategy of the County Development Plan 2024-2030 sets a housing target of 121 units for Bundoran over the 6-year plan period, resulting in a residential zoned land requirement of approximately 3.5 hectares⁶¹. This requirement is provided for on sites ref. NR1.1, NR1.2, NR1.3 and

⁶¹ Based on a density of 35 units per hectare

NR1.4; which cumulatively provide for approximately 5.2 Ha of residential land within easy reach of the town centre and where all servicing requirements can be met over the lifetime of the plan.

In addition to these sites however, and in accordance with the provisions of 'Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2022)⁶², the land use zoning map for Bundoran also identifies a number of other suitably located and serviced/serviceable residential sites that were previously zoned in the County Development Plan 2018-2024 and that remain available to contribute towards housing supply in the town (site refs. NR2.1, NR2.2, NR2.3, NR2.4 and NR2.5 refer). These sites are zoned as 'Phase 2' residential and will only be released where there is evidential market failure in respect of delivery on Phase 1 sites (Policy **GEN-H-3** refers). The site areas are set out in the table below.

Residential Zonings And Associated Site Area

Site Ref	Zoned as Primarily Residential or As Opportunity Site With Residential Provison	Site Area (ha)
NR 1.1	New Residential Phase 1	1.6
NR 1.2	New Residential Phase 1	2.09
NR 1.3	New Residential Phase 1	1.17
NR 1.4	New Residential Phase 1	0.3
Subtotal		5.16
NR 2.1	New Residential Phase 2	2.87
NR 2.2	New Residential Phase 2	0.6
NR 2.3	New Residential Phase 2	1.37
NR 2.4	New Residential Phase 2	1.88
NR 2.5	New Residential Phase 2	2.7
Subtotal		9.42

20.8.1 Key Considerations for New Residential Sites

In all cases, developers will be required to comply with the urban housing policies of the County Development Plan and to provide relevant infrastructural services to support development and create high quality residential environments with a sense of place and connectivity to the wider area. Furthermore, the principles of sustainable, inclusive and environmentally friendly design must be incorporated into development proposals. In addition to the foregoing, the planning authority would also note the following key considerations in respect of certain 'New Residential' sites –

BN-H-P-1

a. Ensure that development proposals for site NR 1.1:

- Include analysis of the local surface water drainage network. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and nature-based solutions shall be employed for the management of surface water.
- Include consideration of potential flood risk – detailed flood risk assessment may be required.
- Incorporate car and active travel connectivity within the site from the Regional Road R280 towards the Drumacrin Road

⁶² Section 4.4.1 of the Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities states that 'It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that zoned housing land in an existing development plan, that is serviced and can be developed for housing within the life of the new development plan under preparation, should not be subject to de-zoning'.

- Provide for car and active travel connectivity to the adjoining residential lands to the south).
- Provide for a footbridge to the town centre.

b. Ensure that development proposals for NR 1.2:

- Include analysis of the local surface water drainage network. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and nature-based solutions shall be employed for the management of surface water.
- Include consideration of potential flood risk – detailed flood risk assessment may be required.
- Incorporate car and active travel connectivity within the site from the Regional Road R280 towards the Drumacrin Road, and to the adjoining residential lands to the north and south.

c. Ensure that development proposals for NR 1.3:

- Include analysis of the local surface water drainage network. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and nature-based solutions shall be employed for the management of surface water.
- Include consideration of potential flood risk – detailed flood risk assessment may be required.
- Incorporate car and active travel connectivity within the site towards the Drumacrin Road, and to the adjoining residential lands to the north.

d. Ensure that development proposals for NR 1.4:

- Include analysis of the local surface water drainage network. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and nature-based solutions shall be employed on site for the management of surface water.
- Provide for additional public lighting.

20.8.2 Key Considerations for 'New Residential, Phase 2' Development Lands

Should there be evidential market failure in respect of housing delivery on lands zoned for first phase residential development, the Planning Authority may consider development of second phase housing lands, in accordance with the provisions of Policy GEN-H-3. Key considerations in respect of the development of second phase lands are set out below.

BD-H-P-1

- a) Ensure that development proposals for site NR 2.1 comply with the following:
- Vehicular access to be provided onto Regional Road R267 from the western end of site. This will necessitate relocation of an existing traffic island.
 - Pedestrian and cycle access to be provided out towards the R267 at the eastern end of the site frontage.
 - Analysis of the local surface water drainage network will be required. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and nature-based solutions shall be employed on site for the management of surface water.
 - Footpath along site frontage to be upgraded and additional public lighting installed.

- b) Ensure that development proposals for NR 2.2 comply with the following:
 - Include analysis of the local surface water drainage network will be required. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and nature-based solutions shall be employed on site for the management of surface water.
 - Footpath along site frontage to be upgraded and additional public lighting installed.
- c) Ensure that development proposals for NR 2.3 include:
 - Analysis of the local surface water drainage network will be required. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and nature-based solutions shall be employed on site for the management of surface water.
- d) Ensure that development proposals for NR 2.4 include:
 - Analysis of the local surface water drainage network will be required. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and nature-based solutions shall be employed on site for the management of surface water.
- e) Ensure that development proposals for NR 2.5:
 - Have due regard for the need for connectivity between the Drumacrin Road and the Town Centre area (refer to land use zoning map, which details indicative routes through the area that are required to aid active travel, connectivity and traffic movement through the area). Developers will be required to engage with the Roads Department of the Council with regard to the provision of suitable linkages (vehicular and active travel modes) as part of any development proposal. Prospective developers may be required to construct sections of access roads as part of any development proposal.

20.9 Opportunity Sites

Bundoran contains 3 No. large opportunity sites, located at both the western and eastern end of the plan area, that are under-utilised and present a wide range of development opportunities by reason of their scale and strategic location proximate to the national road network. The Planning Authority is keen to maximise the potential of these sites and the text and associated policies below provide guidance as to the types of development that the Planning Authority would deem appropriate on each site.

Opportunity Site 1 (Western Gateway): This site of approximately 4.3 hectares lies at the western edge of the Plan area in close proximity to national primary road N15. The Council will consider applications for a number of uses on this site in line with Policy BN-OPP-P-1 below and will require very high quality in terms of design, materials and landscaping, given the sites visually exposed location at the western 'gateway' to the town. Proposals for access to the site shall be via Regional Road R267; direct access onto the N15 will not be permitted.

BN-OPP-P-1

- a) To Support the principle of the following development types on Opportunity Site 1 (Western Gateway), subject to compliance with all relevant policies and standards contained in this plan and the CDP.
 - Office development

- Light industry
 - Medical related facilities/services⁶³
 - Community and recreational use
- b) Require that development proposals provide for a high-quality landmark development, utilising quality materials and finishes and addressing the road network in an appropriate manner.
- c) Require the incorporation of a detailed landscaping scheme with any development proposals.

Opportunity Site 2: This site of approximately 2.7 hectares is located at the eastern periphery of Bundoran and is accessed via Regional Road R267. The site is located in close proximity to national primary road N15 and has potential for a number of uses as set out in Policy BN-OPP-P-2 below.

BN-OPP-P-2

It is a policy of the Council to –

- a) Support the principle of the following development types on Opportunity Site 2, subject to compliance with all relevant policies and standards contained in this plan and the CDP.
- Office development
 - Light industry
 - Nursing home
 - Medical related facilities/services⁶³
 - Community and recreational use
 - Car showrooms
- b) Require that development proposals for Opportunity Site 2 provide for a high-quality landmark development, utilising quality materials and finishes.
- c) Require the incorporation of a detailed landscaping scheme with any development proposals.

Opportunity Site 3: This substantial site of approximately 12.7 hectares is located on the eastern periphery of Bundoran and is bounded by Regional Road R267 to the northwest and northeast, National Road N15 to the east and the Drumacrin Road to the south. The site is partly occupied on its northern side by a disused serviced station, a number of unfinished dwellings and a builders providers. The site is at a strategic 'gateway' location on the eastern edge of Bundoran and has potential for mixed use development in accordance with the provisions of Policy BN-OPP-P-3 below.

BN-OPP-P-3

It is a policy of the Council to –

- a) Support the principle of the following development types on Opportunity Site 3, subject to compliance with all relevant policies and standards contained in this plan and the CDP.
- Proposals that seek to resolve the unfinished housing development located at the northern end of the site.
 - Office development
 - Light industry
 - Nursing home
 - Medical related facilities/services⁶³
 - Community and recreational use
 - Car showrooms
 - Proposals that seek to re-use/refurbish the disused service station at the northern end of the site or otherwise rehabilitate the site

⁶³ Subject to provisions of policy GEN-ED-1

- b) Require that development proposals provide for a high-quality landmark development, utilising quality materials and finishes.
- c) Require the submission of a detailed landscaping scheme with any development proposals.

20.10 Caravan Park Development

There are a number of long-established caravan parks in Bundoran providing additional, much-needed accommodation during the peak of the tourist season in Bundoran and thus driving additional consumer spend in the wider area. Notwithstanding, the temporary nature and physical construction of caravan-type accommodation is such that developments of this nature are not conducive to the creation of a high-quality town centre environment. Accordingly, this Plan carries forward the pre-existing planning policy framework for Bundoran that precludes the development of new caravan parks within the town centre area.

BN-CP-P-1	To preclude the development of new caravan parks within the urban core zoning identified on the Bundoran land-use zoning map (map 20.1).
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20.11 Water and Wastewater Infrastructure

Bundoran is well served in terms of water and wastewater treatment infrastructure. The completion of a new wastewater treatment plant for the town in 2018 has assured that ample wastewater treatment capacity will be available over the lifetime of this LAP. Similarly, Irish water has advised that water supply capacity is available to meet project levels of growth within Bundoran.

20.12 Built Heritage

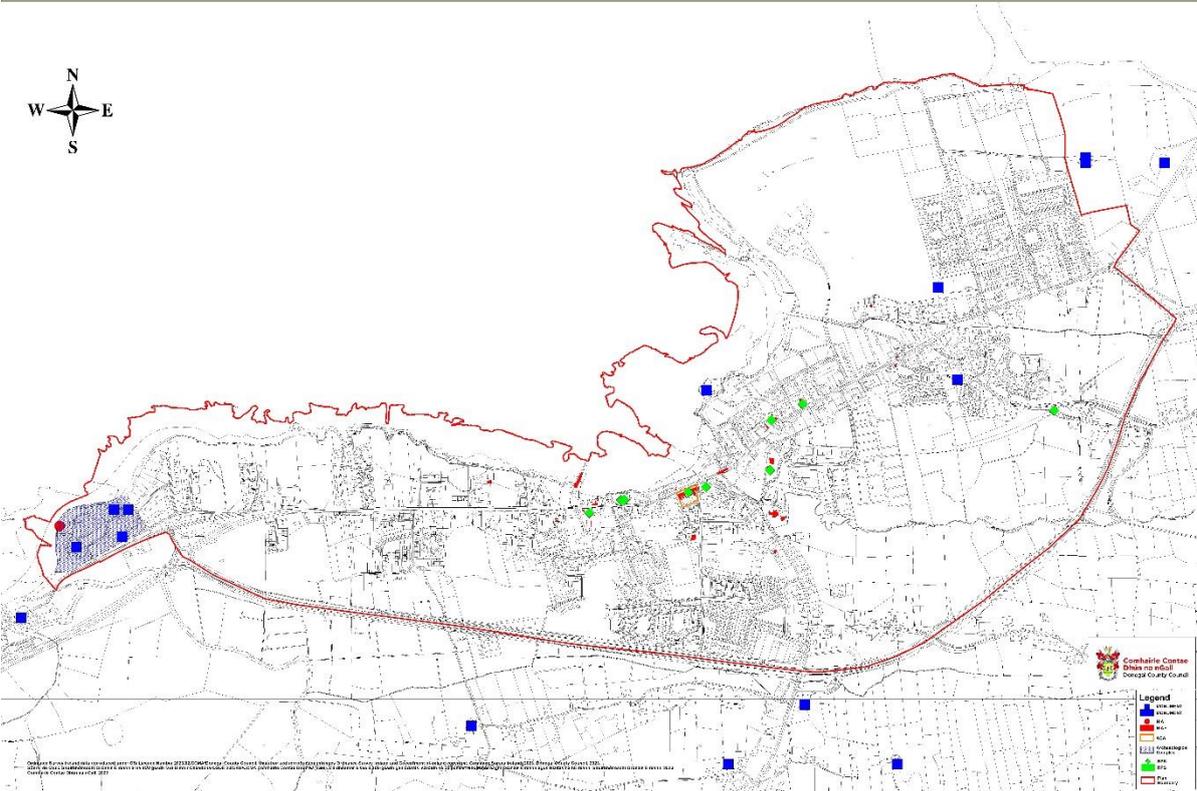
20.12.1 Bayview Architectural Conservation Area

The Bayview Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) comprises a terrace of eight Victorian houses that date from the end of the 19th Century (see map 20.1 for extent of ACA). It is likely that many of the buildings along the terrace were originally built as hotels and other guest accommodation for the many visitors who came to the town. The terrace is an integral element of the built heritage of Bundoran and is a landmark feature along the main approach road into the town from the west. Specific policies relating to development within the ACA are contained in Chapter 11 of the County Development Plan.



Figure 20.3 Bayview Architectural Conservation Area

Map 17.2: Built and Archaeological Heritage



Map 20.2 - Built and Archaeological Heritage, Bundoran

20.12.2 Record of Protected Structures

Map 20.2 herein identifies protected structures within the urban area of Bundoran. Detailed policies in relation to works affecting such structures are set out in Chapter 11 of the County Development Plan.

20.13 Flooding

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment prepared in support of the Bundoran Area Plan has identified certain areas within the plan boundary as being at risk of flooding, most notably (i.) an area on the eastern side of the town at Drumacrin/Finner, (ii.) a corridor adjoining the River Bradoge, which has its estuary in the town centre and (iii.) an area to the immediate north of the N15 bypass road. Where areas of potential significant flood risk (i.e. Flood Zone A or B⁶⁴) exist in particular locations that might otherwise have allowed for highly vulnerable development (e.g. a 'New Residential' area), an 'Open Space and Recreation' zoning has been put in place, thereby only allowing for development deemed to be 'water compatible' and therefore not at significant risk from flooding. Where development deemed to be 'less vulnerable' to flooding is concerned, the Planning Authority will manage risk via the implementation of the policy framework set out in Section 8.4 of the CDP, thus ensuring compliance with the provisions of the 'Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines' and providing for effective adaptation to the increasing threat of flood risk on foot of climate change

20.14 Infrastructural Assessment

The land-use zoning map that accompanies the Bundoran LAP identifies 4 No. sites as 'New Residential (Phase 1)' and 5 No. sites as 'New Residential (Phase 2)'. Table 20.5 below sets out high level details of the infrastructure required to serve each of these sites.⁶⁵

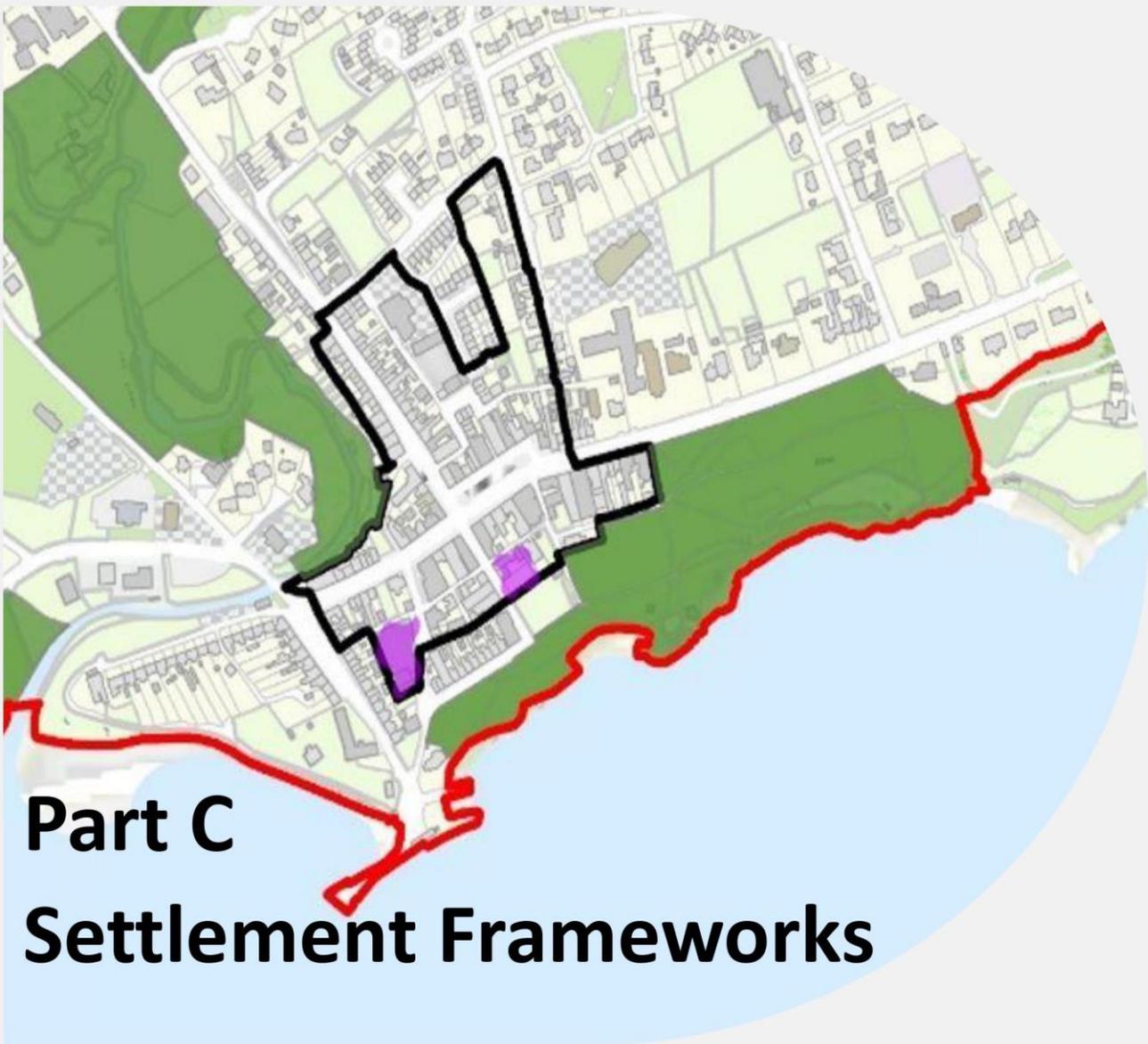
Table 20.5 Infrastructural Requirements of sites zoned for New Residential Development

Site Ref.	Infrastructural Requirements
Phase 1 Residential	
NR1.1	Water and sewer available (capacity assessment required). Additional public lighting required. Drainage assessment required.
NR1.2	Water and sewer available (capacity assessment required). Short extension required to sewer network. Potential requirement for extension of water main. Additional public lighting required. Drainage assessment required.
NR1.3	Water and sewer available (capacity assessment required).

⁶⁴ **Flood Zone A** is defined in the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines as being where the probability of flooding from rivers and the sea is highest (greater than 1% or 1 in 100 for river flooding or 0.5% or 1 in 200 for coastal flooding). **Flood Zone B** is defined as being where the probability of flooding from rivers and the sea is moderate (between 0.1% or 1 in 1000 and 1% or 1 in 100 for river flooding and between 0.1% or 1 in 1000 year and 0.5% or 1 in 200 for coastal flooding).

⁶⁵ This infrastructural assessment has been prepared using a desktop study only. It is expressly stated that no independent verification of any documents or information supplied by others has been made. This assessment makes no representations in relation to other matters that may affect site development costs or indeed matters that may affect the provision of roads, water or wastewater infrastructure; e.g. ground conditions, presence of existing sub-surface infrastructure, archaeology, land acquisition costs, environmental constraints etc. In all cases, prospective developers are strongly advised to engage their own consultants to advise in more detail on potential site serviceability and site development costs. No liability is accepted by Donegal County Council for any use of this infrastructural assessment, other than the purpose for which it was prepared. The infrastructural assessment does not account for any changes relating to the subject matter of the assessment, or any legislative or regulatory changes that have occurred since the assessment was produced that may affect the assessment. Donegal County Council does not accept any responsibility or liability for loss whatsoever to any third party caused by, related to or arising out of any use or reliance on the infrastructural assessment.

	Additional public lighting required. Drainage assessment required.
NR1.4	Water and sewer available (capacity assessment required). Additional public lighting required at entrance. Assessment of roadside drainage required. Potential requirement to relocate existing telecoms/electricity infrastructure cabinets near site entrance.
Phase 2 Residential	
NR2.1	Water and sewer available (capacity assessment required). Additional public lighting required at entrance. Assessment of roadside drainage required. Footpath to be upgraded along site frontage. Relocation of traffic island to facilitate vehicular access to site.
NR2.2	Water and sewer available (capacity assessment required). Additional public lighting required at entrance. Assessment of roadside drainage required. Footpath to be upgraded along site frontage.
NR2.3	Water and sewer available in area (capacity assessment required). Pumped discharge to sewer and/or extensions to network may be required. Network in adjacent estates may provide options for connection. Additional public lighting required. Drainage assessment required.
NR2.4	Water and sewer available in area (capacity assessment required). Extensions to sewer network may be required (Network in adjacent estates may provide options for connection). Drainage assessment required.
NR2.5	Water and sewer available (capacity assessment required). Construction of part of link road to north of site may be required. Additional public lighting required. Drainage assessment required.



Part C
Settlement Frameworks

PART C

Chapter 21 – Settlement Frameworks

21.1 Introduction

The purpose of this Chapter is to set out spatial planning frameworks and associated land use zoning objectives to guide development within the 53 no. Settlement Frameworks identified in the Settlement Strategy in the Core Strategy, Chapter 3 of this Plan. These frameworks are listed alphabetically within their Municipal Districts (with their associated map numbers) in Table 21.1 below.

The Settlement frameworks are designed to be sufficiently detailed and/or geographically specific to successfully manage the overall pattern and type of development in these town and village locations.

The Settlement strategy has identified 5 Settlement hierarchies which seek to approach the urban structure in a balanced and proportionate manner. All 53 Settlement frameworks are spread across the Service Towns and Rural Settlement layers of the hierarchy which is set out below:

- **Regional Growth Driver** - Letterkenny
- **County Growth Drivers** – Buncrana, Ballybofey/Stranorlar, Donegal Town, Killybegs, An Clochan Liath.
- **Service Towns** – Lifford, Carndonagh, Ballyshannon, Bundoran, Ramelton, Raphoe, Bunbeg-Derrybeg, Milford, Muff, Bridgend.
- **Rural Settlements** – Gaeltacht, Border & WAW Settlements, Satellite towns and Rural settlements with a focus on Regeneration.
- **Open Countryside** .

and to achieve the following planning objectives:

- Create compact urban forms, protect the rural character of adjoining rural areas, and delineate the geographical extent of urban and rural policies of this Plan by setting an outer development envelope/boundary for each settlement.
- Ensure that new residential development is located in close proximity to local services, infrastructure and amenities and takes place in a sequential manner outwards from the settlement core.
- Create vibrant, consolidated, and accessible town centres which are the core of retail, commercial, cultural and community life within the settlements.
- Provide an adequate level of recreational and environmental amenity by protecting existing open/green spaces, reserving sufficient land for amenity purposes and protecting pedestrian linkages.
- Reserve sufficient land for educational, community and tourism purposes in appropriate locations.
- Protect specific development opportunities through the designation of opportunity sites.
- Provide for future road development by protecting infrastructural corridors.

To this end the Settlement Frameworks identify settlement envelopes, town centre boundaries, and land for inter alia residential, amenity, opportunity sites, community & education facilities, regeneration opportunities and TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal and the latter is in the case of Lifford only.

In addition the Settlement Framework also consist of lands that, although not specified as being for a particular use, can be used for a variety of purposes such as community, educational, recreational, health and employment on a case by case basis and will thus help to achieve the abovementioned planning objectives.

The Settlement Frameworks are not designed to be exhaustive in the presentation of all the relevant matters that may be considered in the determining of a planning application, as further issues may evolve over time or may be pertinent in certain site-specific cases.

Table 21.1 List of Settlement Frameworks.

MAP NUMBER	SETTLEMENT
DONEGAL MD	
21.1	AN CHARRAIG (CARRICK)
21.2	BALLINTRA
21.3	BRUCKLESS
21.4	CILL CHARTAIGH (KILCAR)
21.5	DUNKINEELY
21.6	FROSSES
21.7	GLEANN CHOLM CILLE (GLENCOLMCILLE)
21.8	LAGHY
21.9	MOUNTCHARLES
21.10	PETTIGO
21.11	ROSSNOWLAGH
GLENTIES MD	
21.12	AILT AN CHORRÁIN (BURTONPORT)
21.13	ANAGAIRE (ANNAGRY)
21.14	AN BUN BEG/DOIRÍ BEAGA (BUNBEG-DERRYBEG)
21.15	AN DÚCHORAIDH (DOOCHARY)
21.16	AN FÁL CARRACH (FALCARRAGH)
21.17	ARDARA
21.18	BAILE NA FINNE (FINTOWN)

21.19	CREESLOUGH
21.20	DUNFANAGHY
21.21	GLENTIES
21.22	GORT AN CHOIRCE (GORTAHORK)
21.23	LOCH AN IÚIR (LOUGHANURE)
21.24	PORTNABLAGH
INISHOWEN MD	
21.25	BALLYLIFFEN
21.26	BURNFOOT
21.27	CARRIGANS
21.28	CLONMANY
21.29	CULDAFF
21.30	FAHAN
21.31	GLENEELY
21.32	GREENCASTLE
21.33	KILLEA
21.34	MALIN
21.35	MANORCUNNINGHAM
21.36	MOVILLE
21.37	MUFF
21.38	NEWTOWNCUNNINGHAM
21.39	QUIGLEYS POINT
LETTERKENNY /MILFORD MD.	
21.40	CARRAIG AIRT (Carrigart)
21.41	KERRYKEEL
21.42	KILMACRENAN
21.43	MILFORD
21.44	NA DÚNAIBH
21.45	PORTSALON
21.46	RAMELTON
21.47	RATHMULLAN
21.48	CASTLEFIN

21.49	CONVOY
21.50	DRUMKEEN
21.51	KILLYGORDON
21.52	LIFFORD
21.53	RAPHOE
21.54	ST JOHNSON

Land Use Zoning Objectives.

The zoning objectives set out in Table 21.2 below relate to land within the Settlement Framework boundaries and should be read in conjunction with the wider policies contained in Part A of this Development Plan.

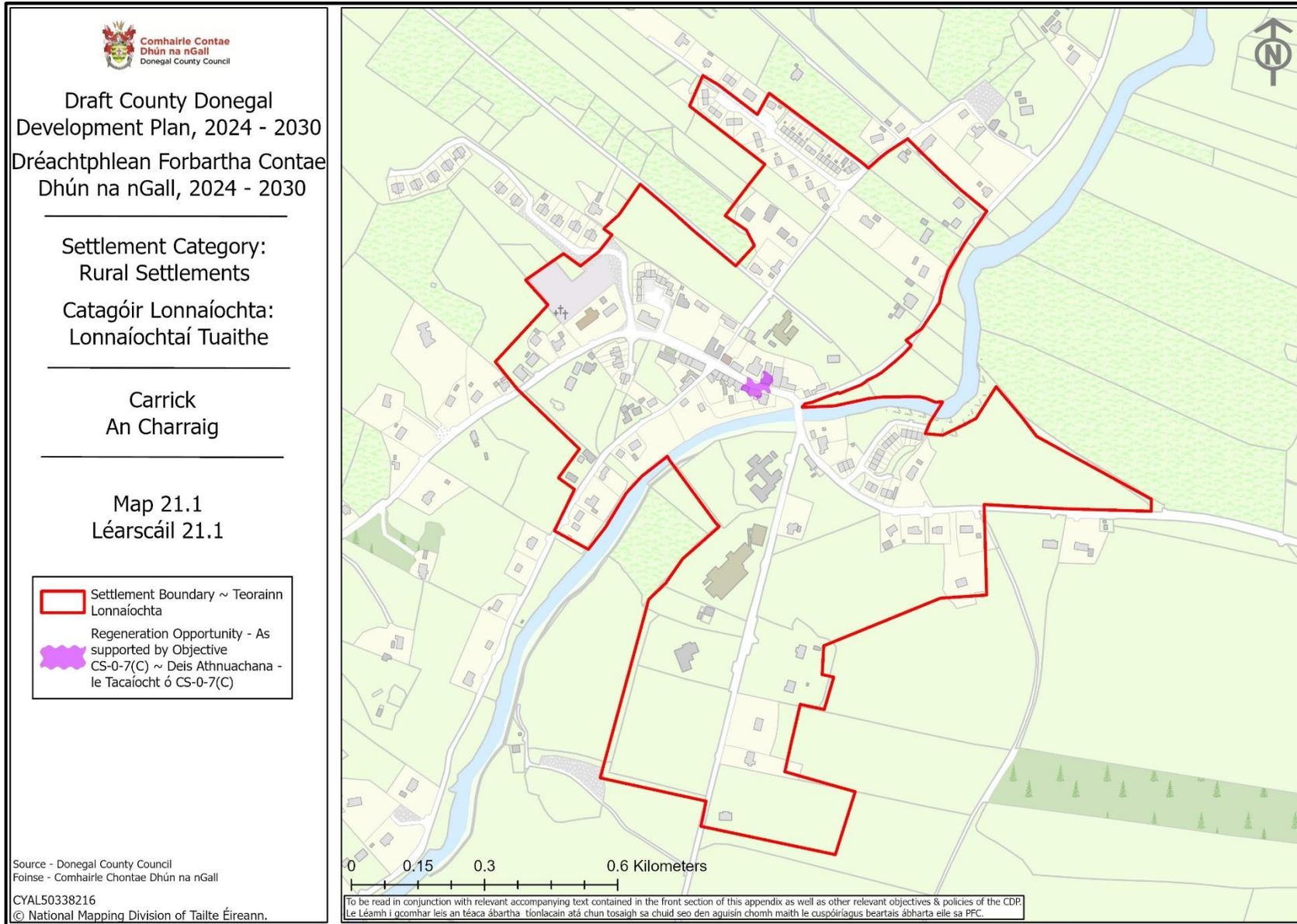
On zoned lands within the Settlement Frameworks, applications may be granted where the Planning Authority considers that the proposed use or development would comply with the zoning objective of the area and would otherwise comply with the policies of the Plan and would be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

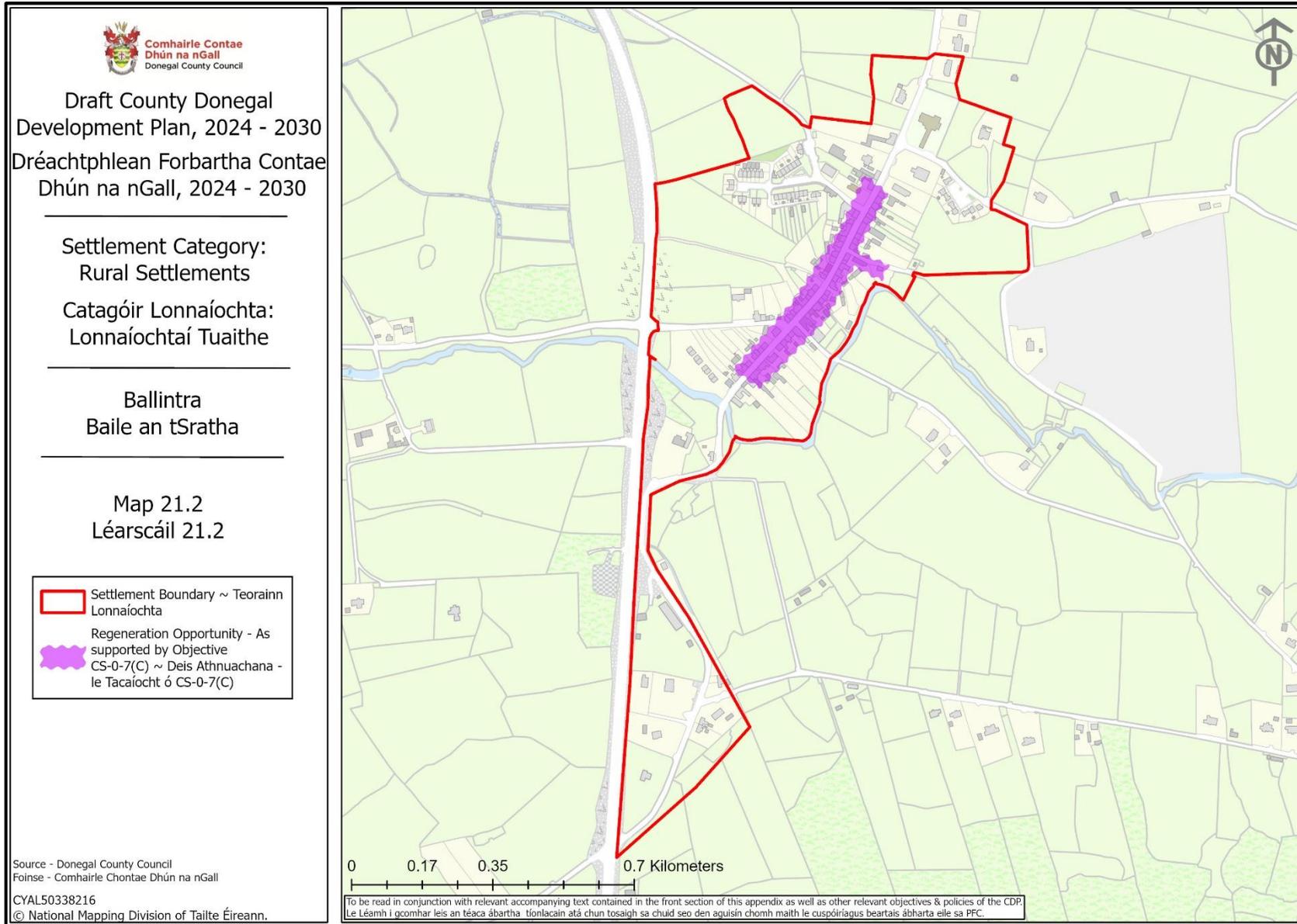
Table 15.2: Land Use Zoning Objectives relating to Settlement Frameworks.

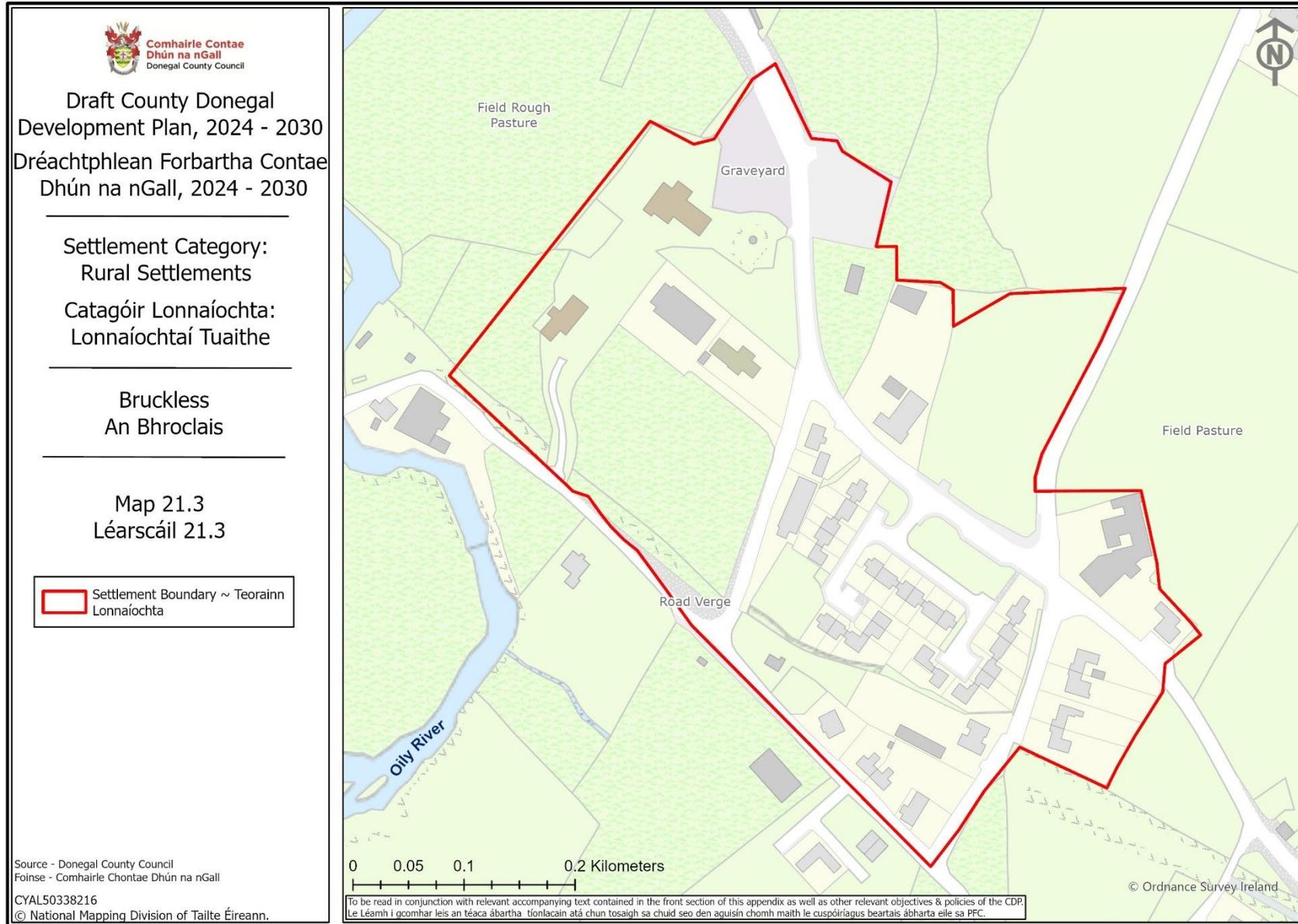
LAND USE ZONE	OBJECTIVE
Amenity	To reserve and enhance land for formal and informal amenity and open space purposes, and to make provision for new recreation, leisure and community facilities
Opportunity Sites	To provide for specific development opportunities that are appropriate in terms of mix of use and compatibility with the wider area whilst recognising features of importance that are specific to the site
Town Centre	To sustain and strengthen the core of towns as the centres for commercial, retail, cultural and community life.
Community & Education (Applies to Milford only).	To reserve land for community and institutional, cultural, recreational, healthcare, and amenity purposes.
TEN-T PRIPD/Amenity (Applies to Lifford only).	To reserve and enhance land for formal and informal amenity and open space purposes, to make provision for new recreation, leisure and community facilities and to provide for the development of the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal.

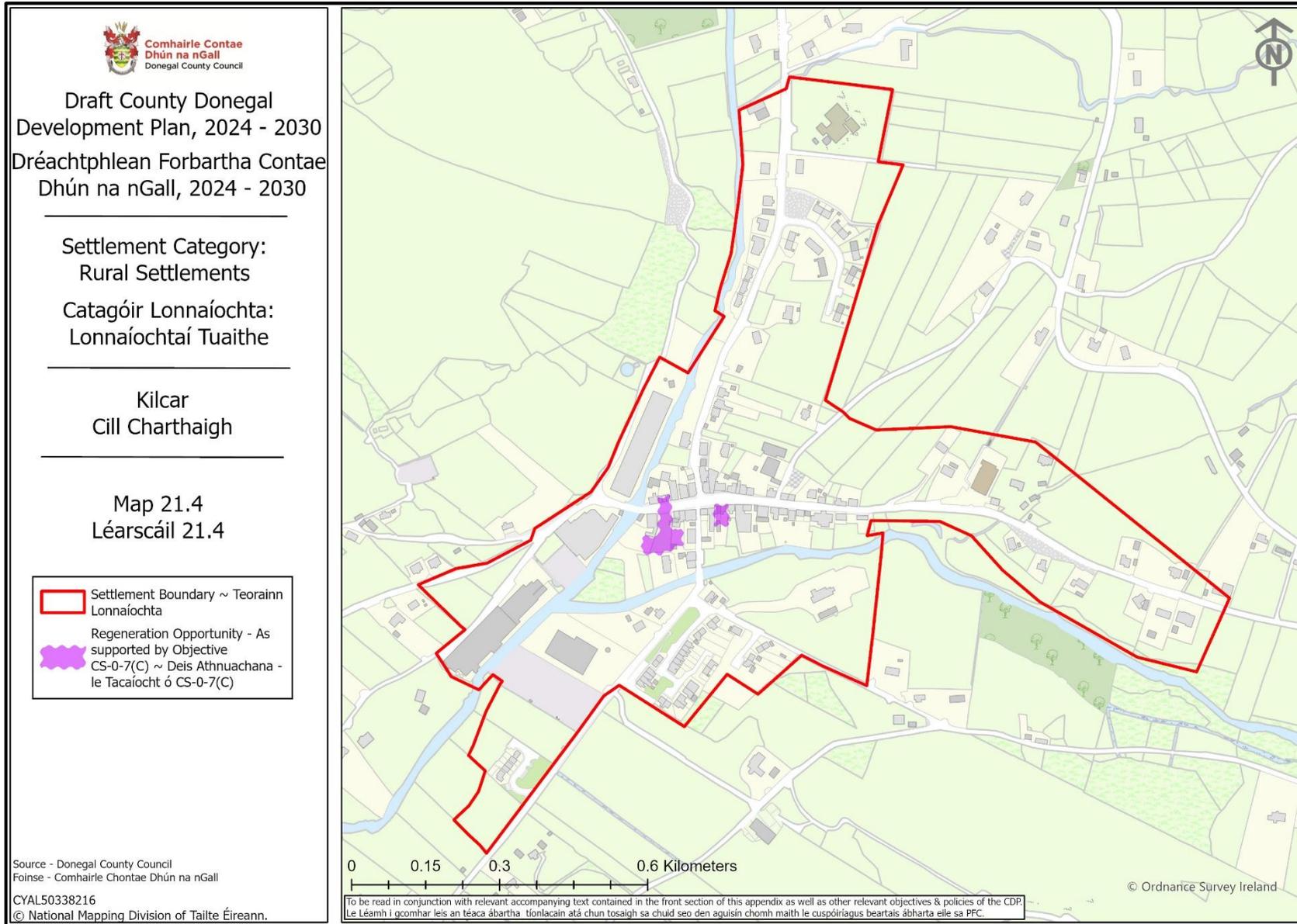
Land Use Zoning Policy relating to Settlement Frameworks.

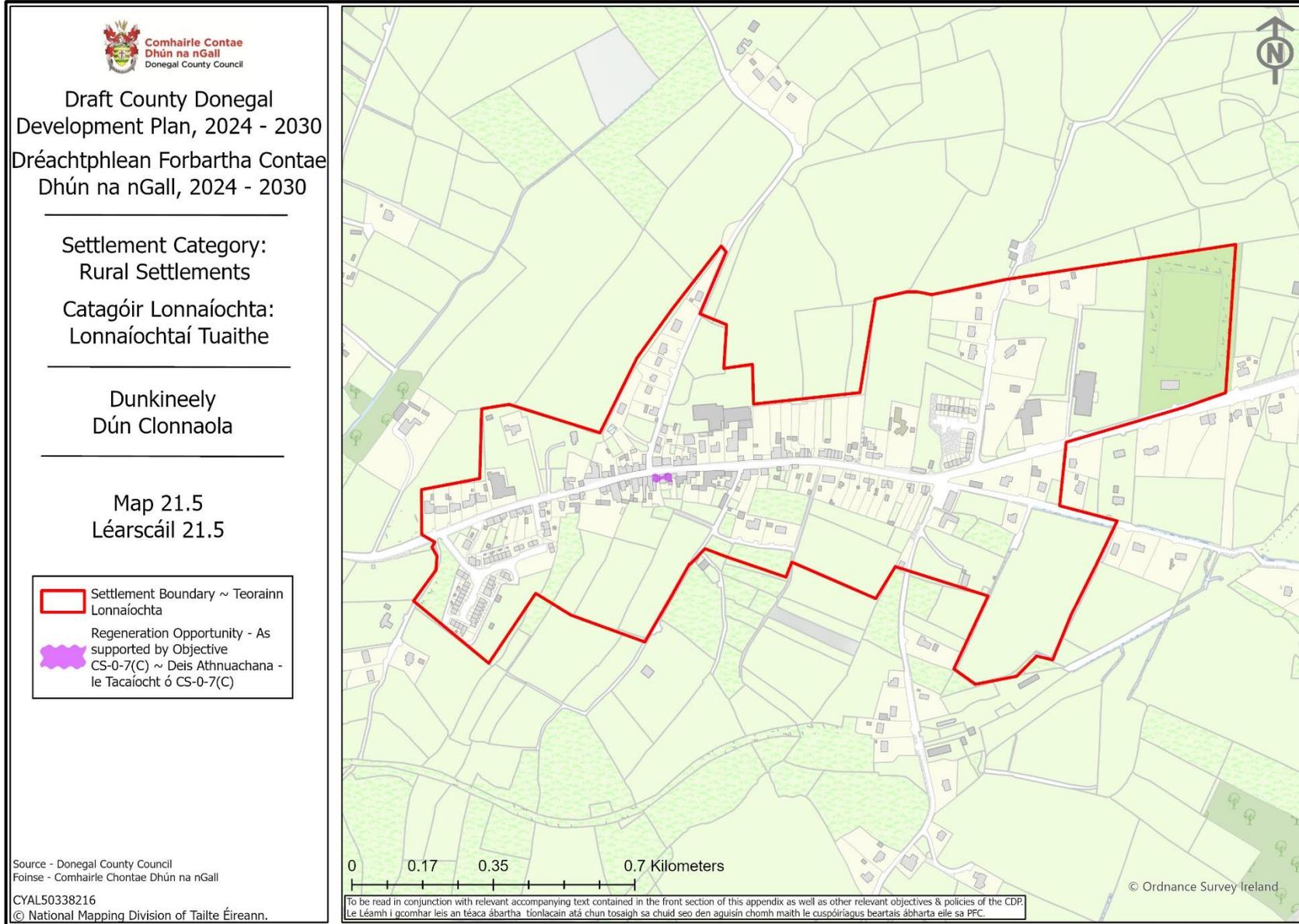
Policy LIFF-OPP-1:	It is a policy of the Council to only consider 'water compatible' development within flood zone A on the Opportunity Site at The Common, Lifford.
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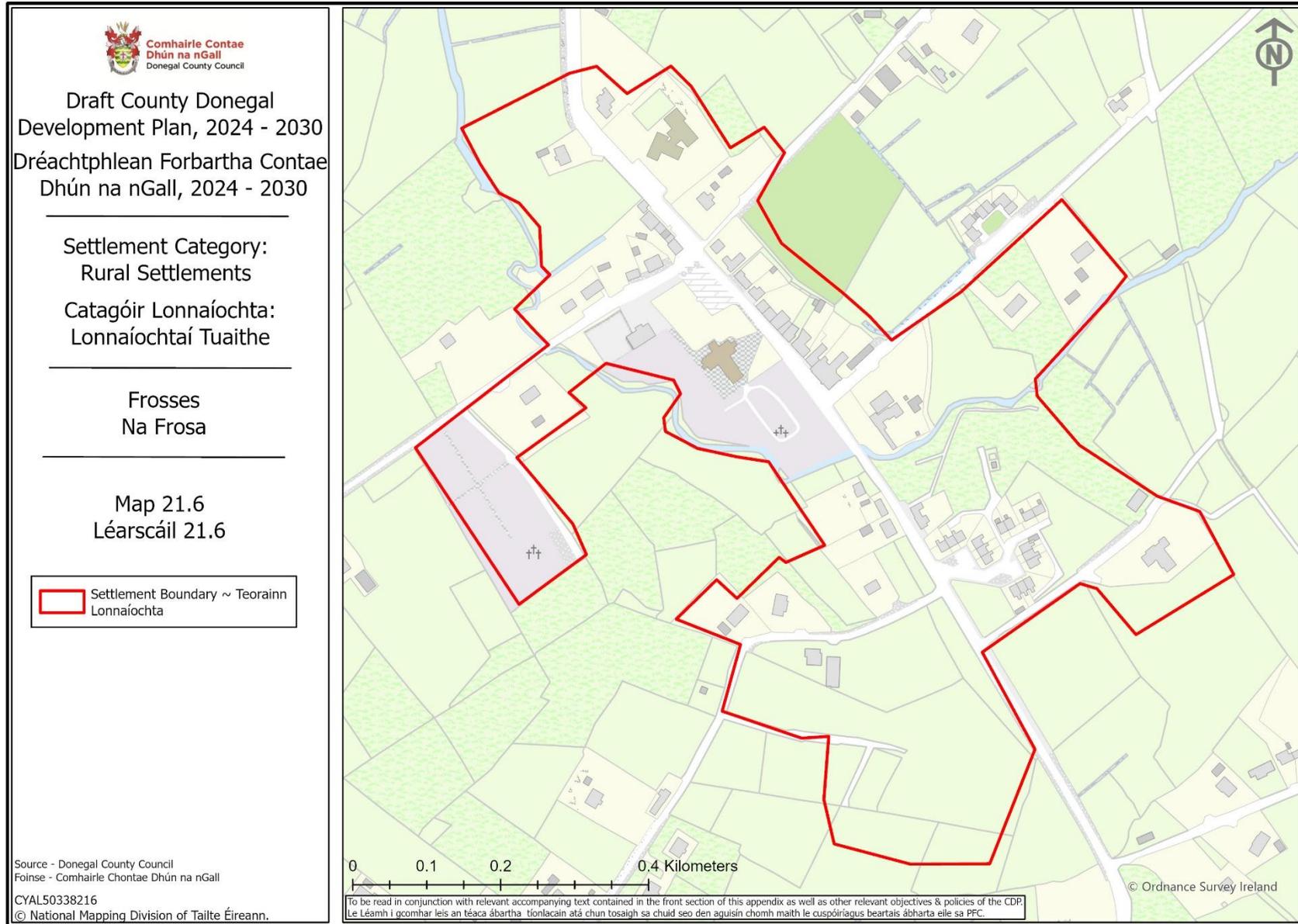


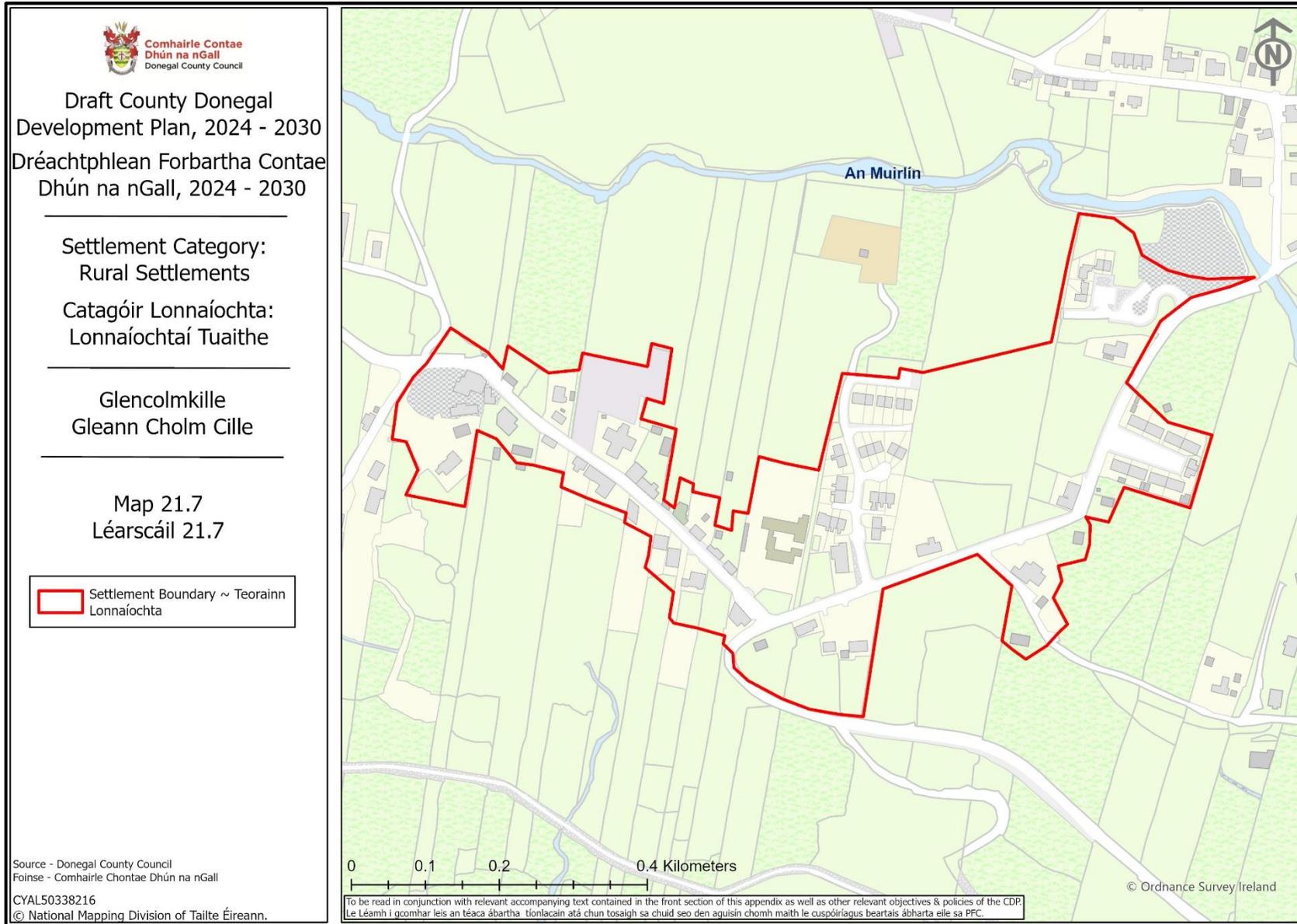


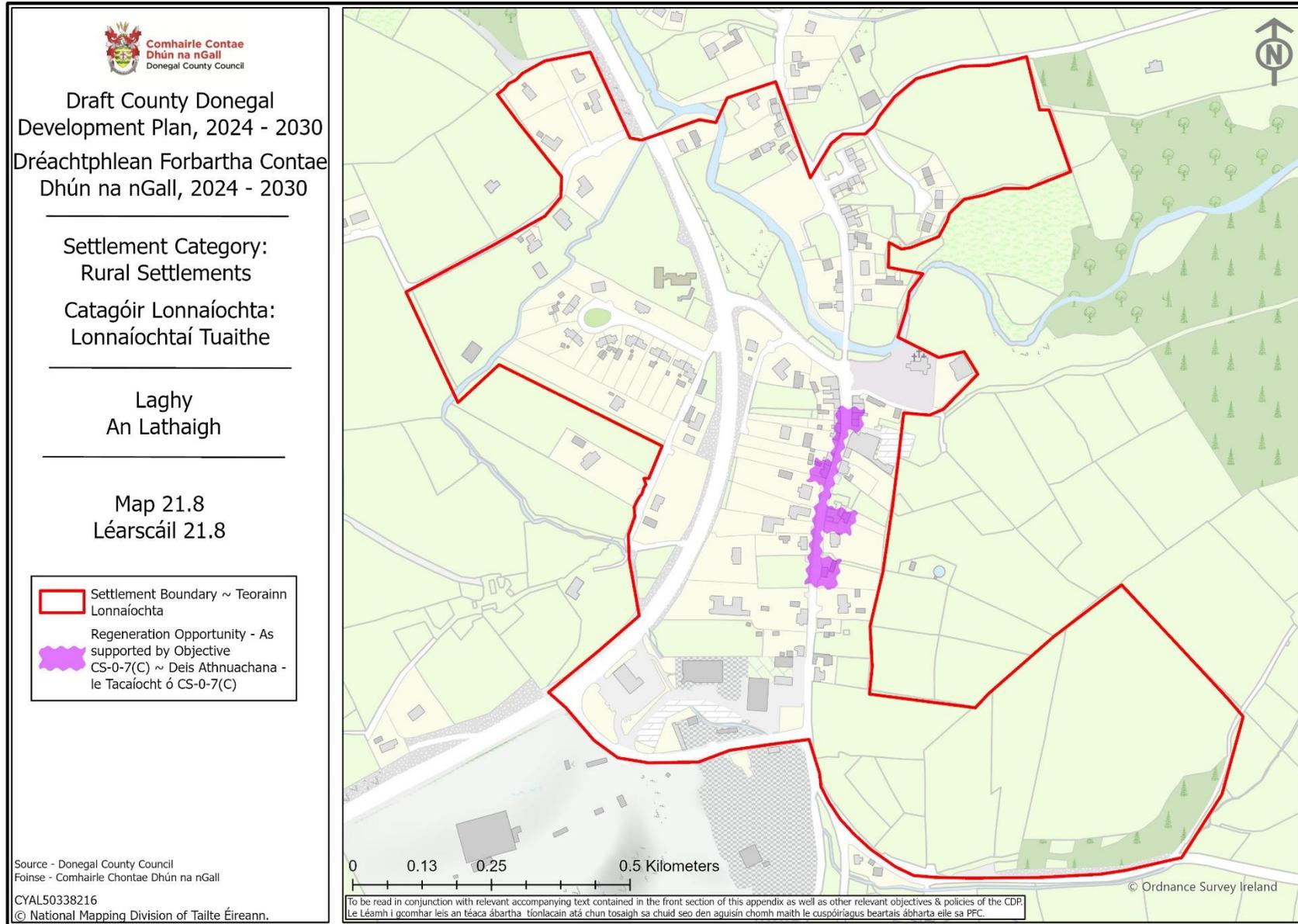


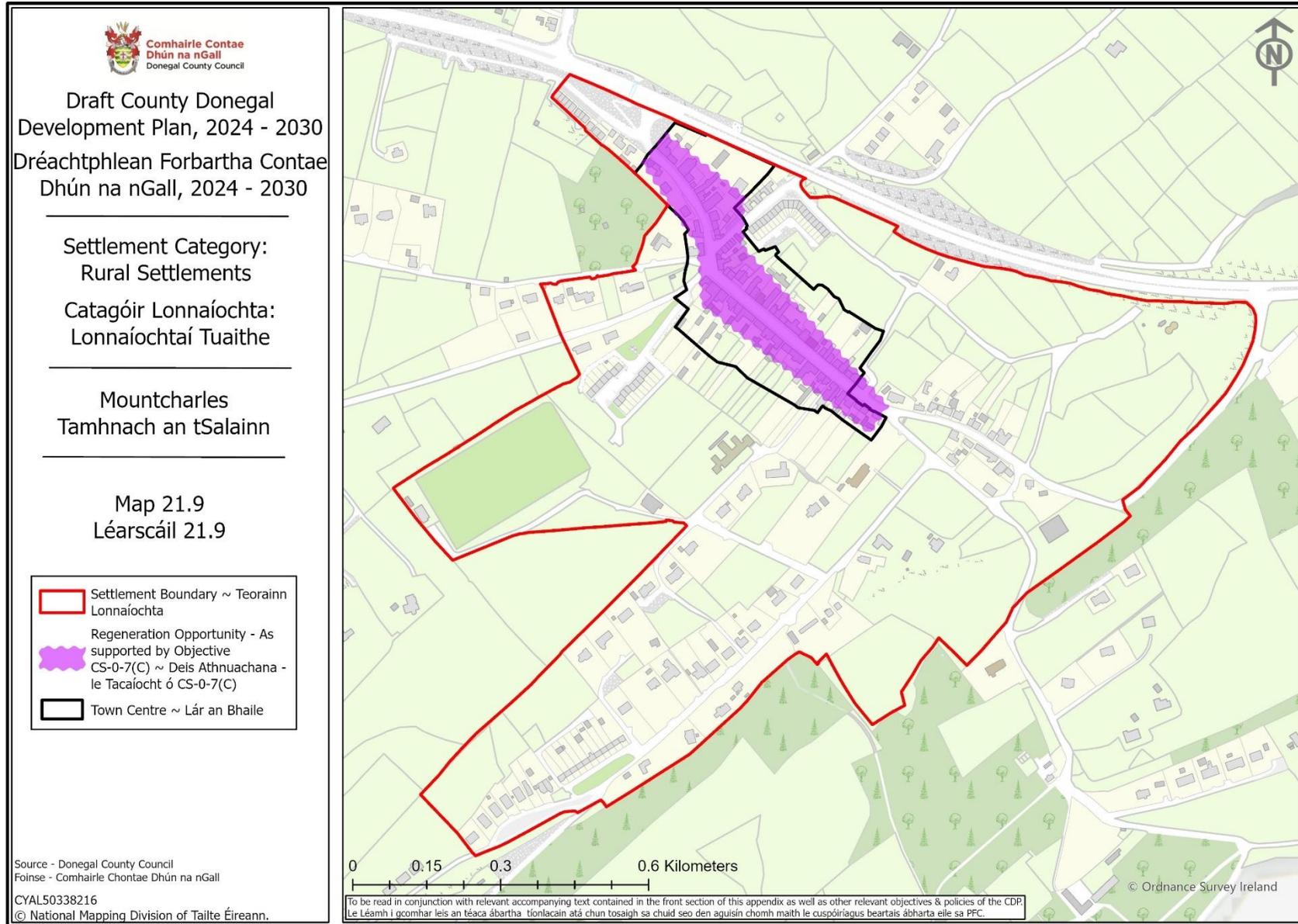


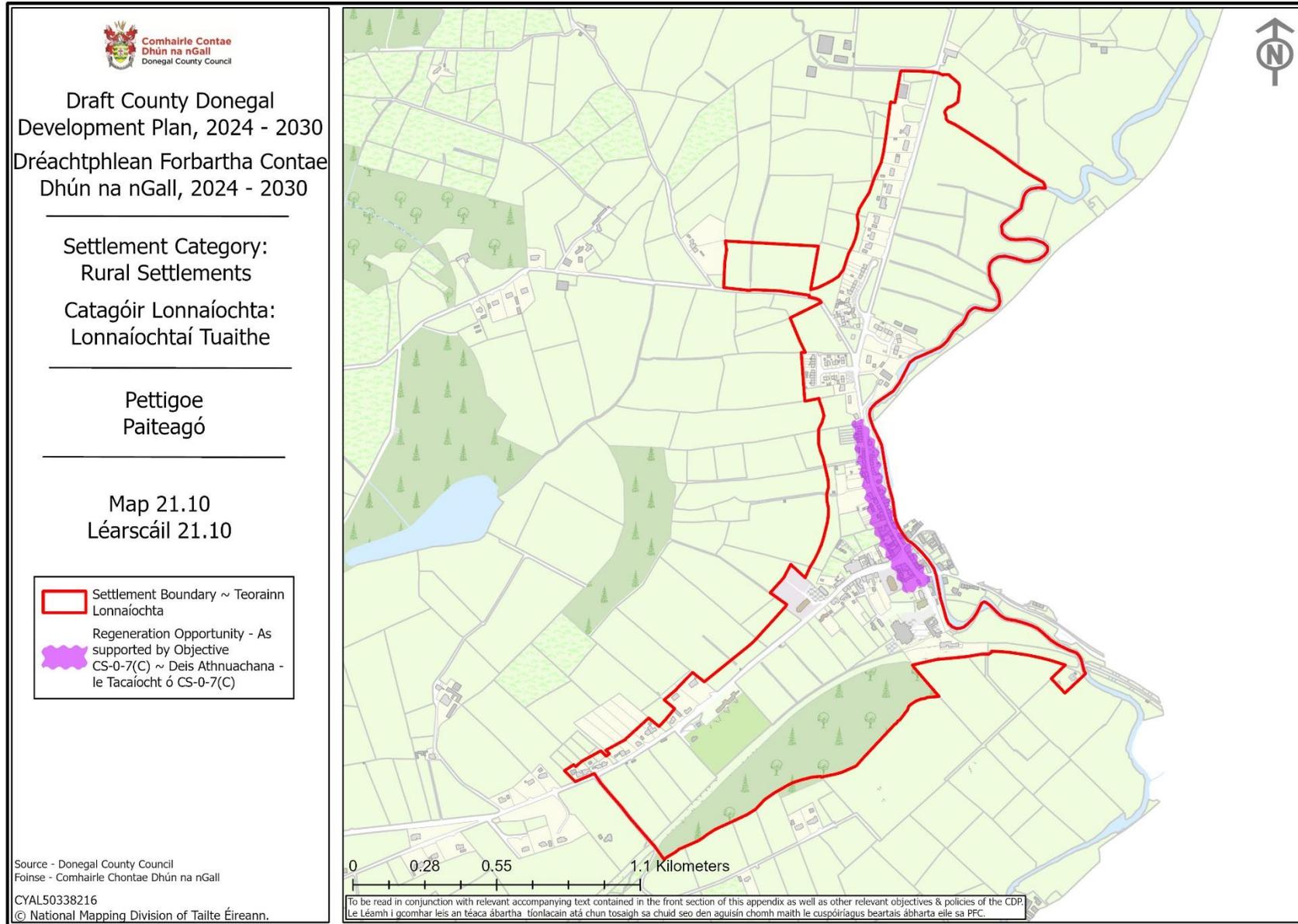


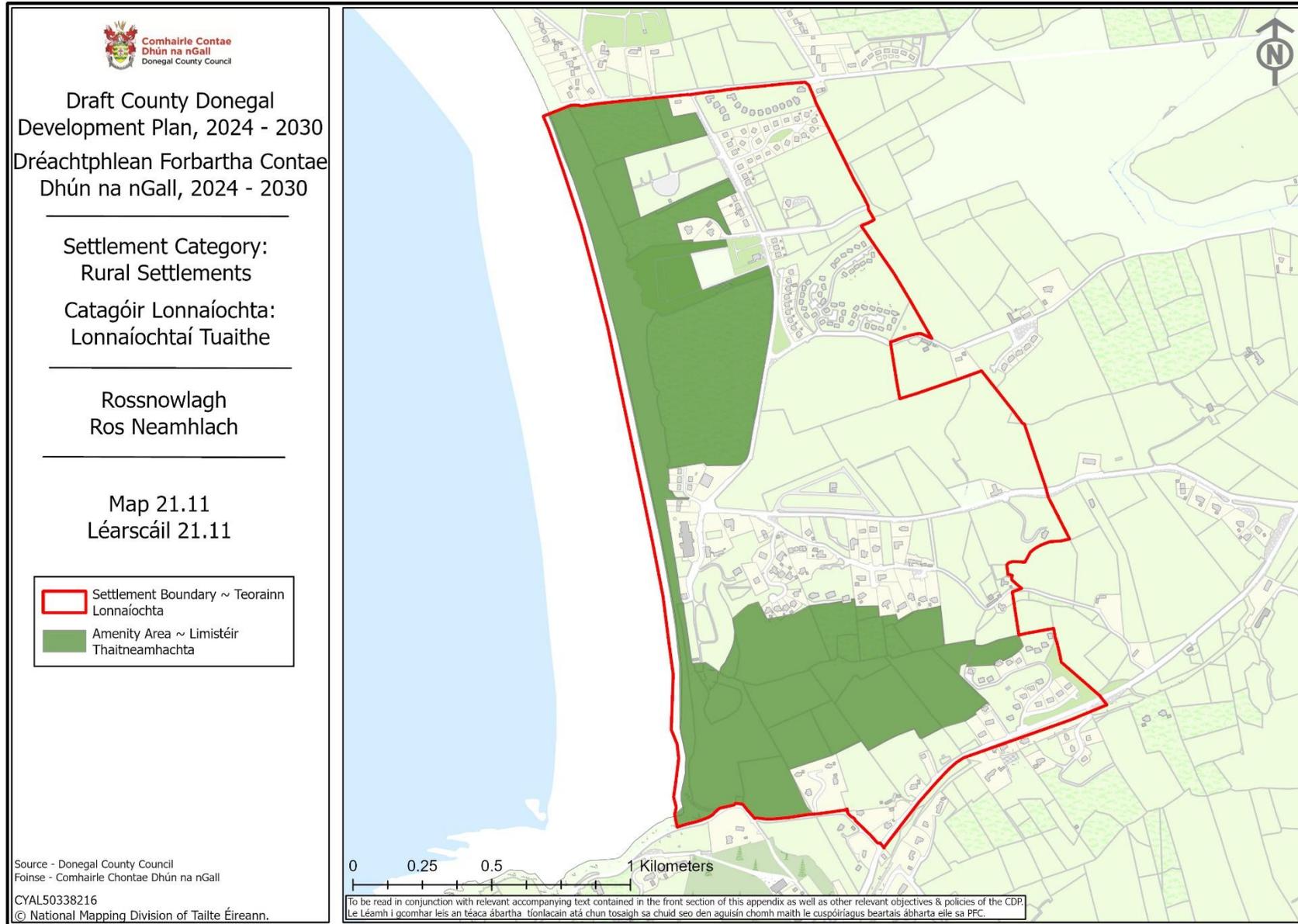


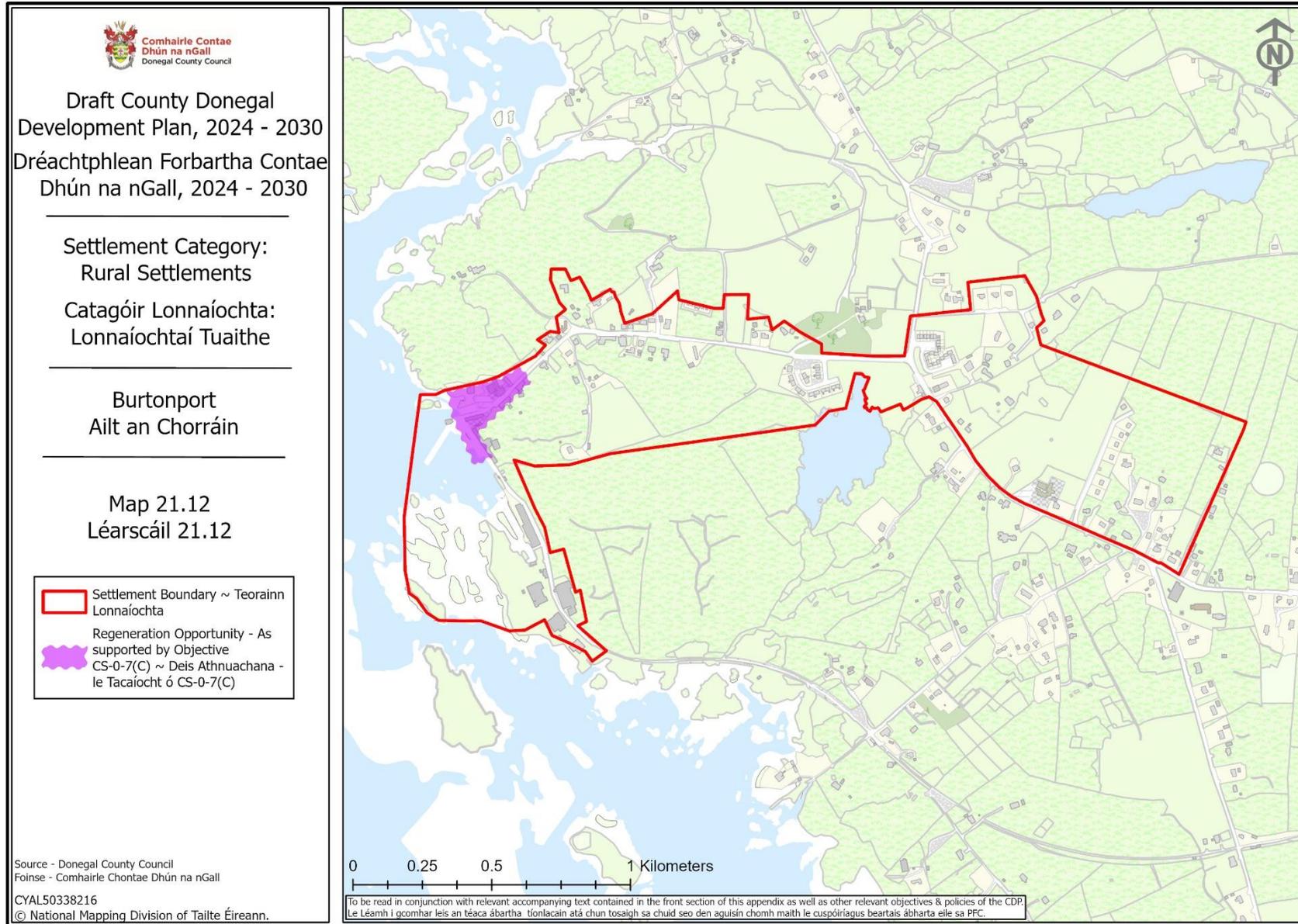


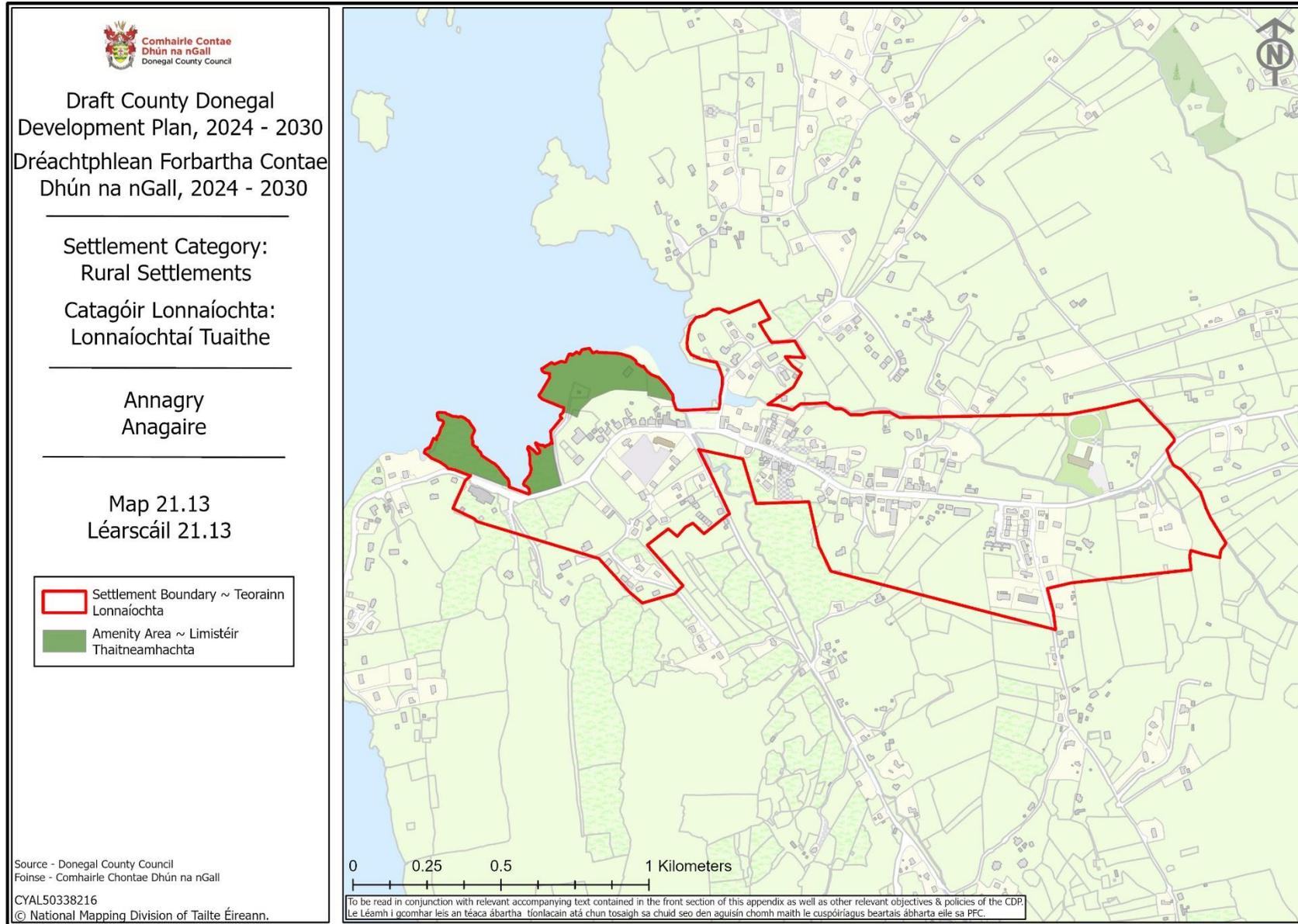


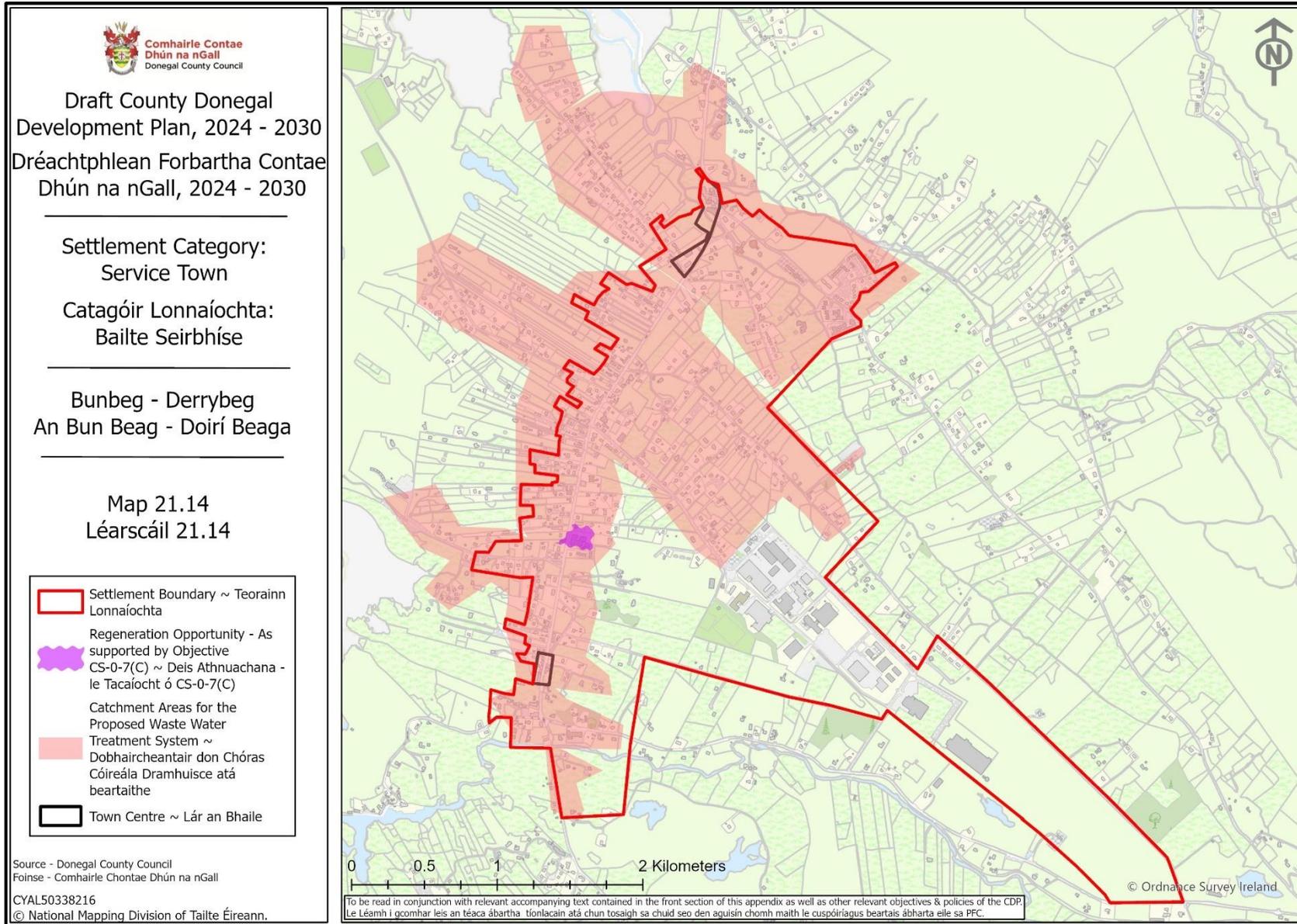


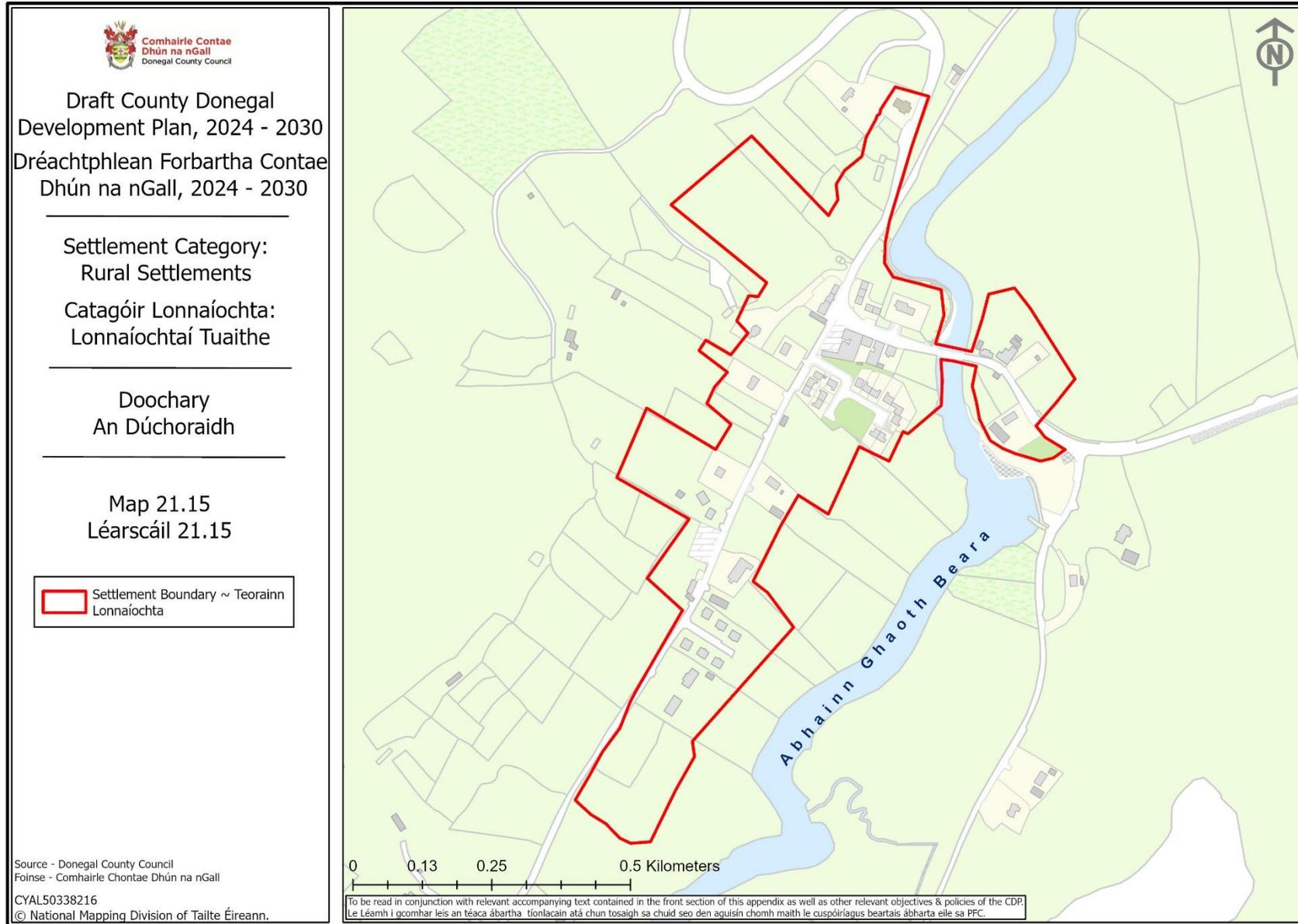


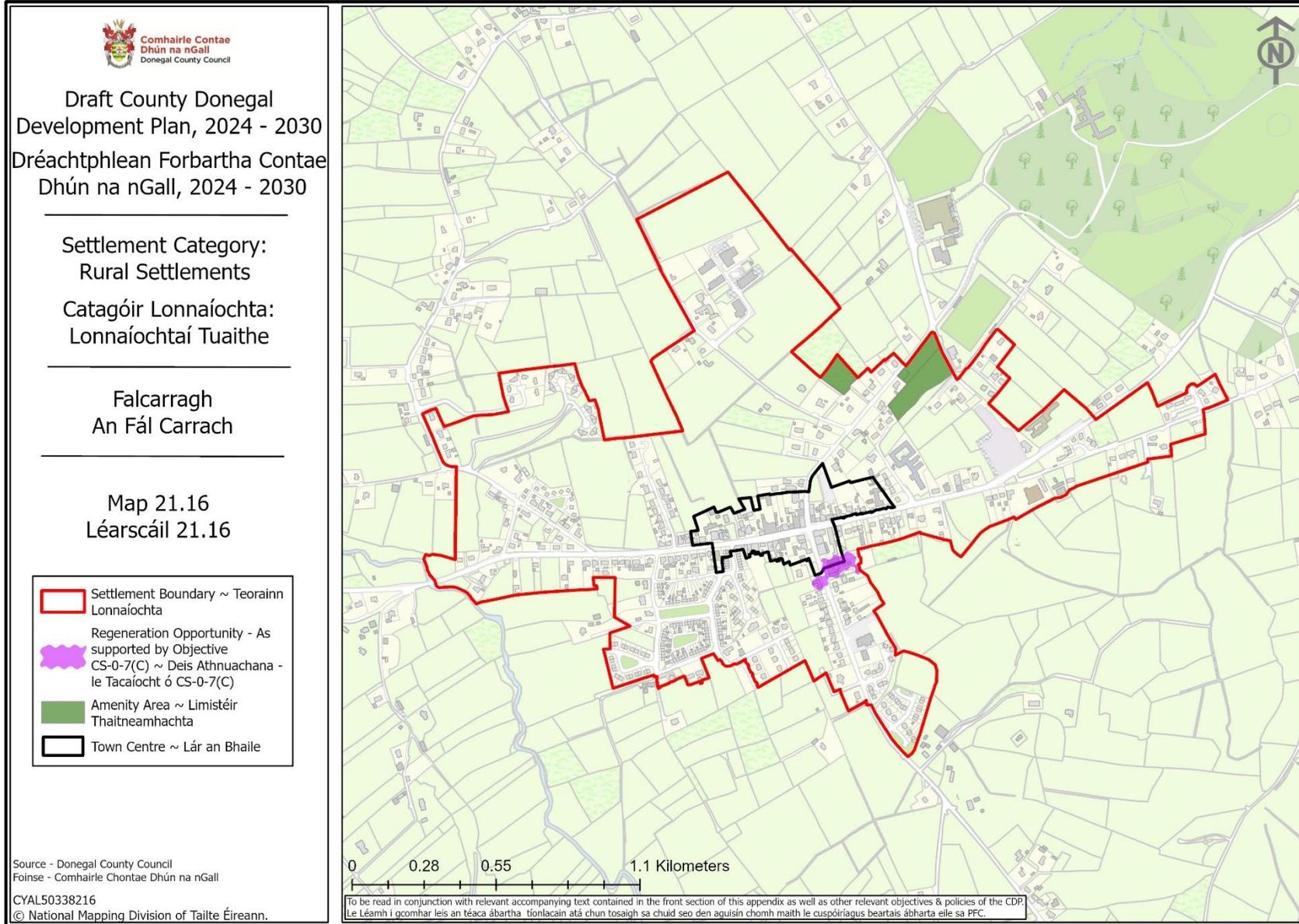


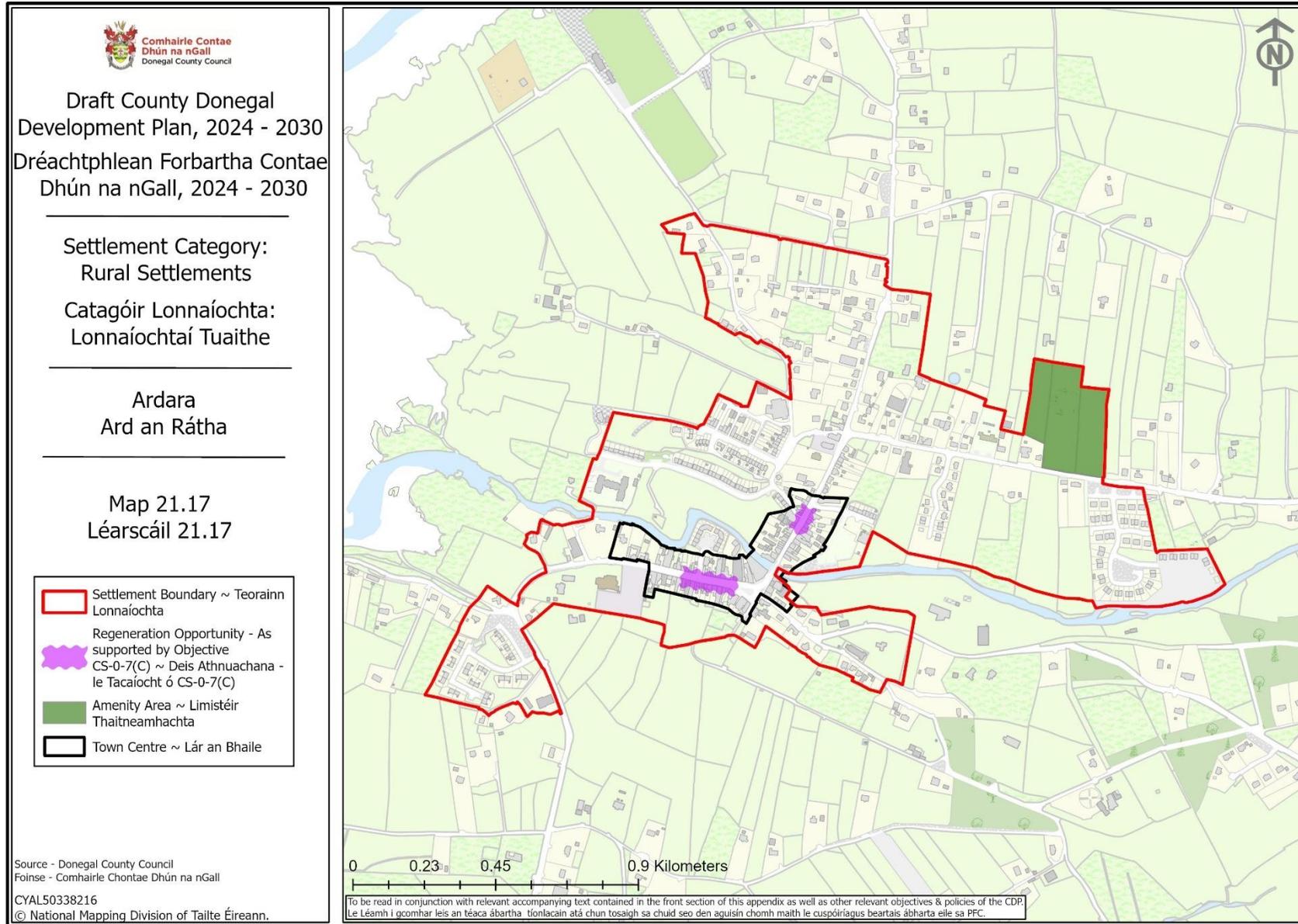


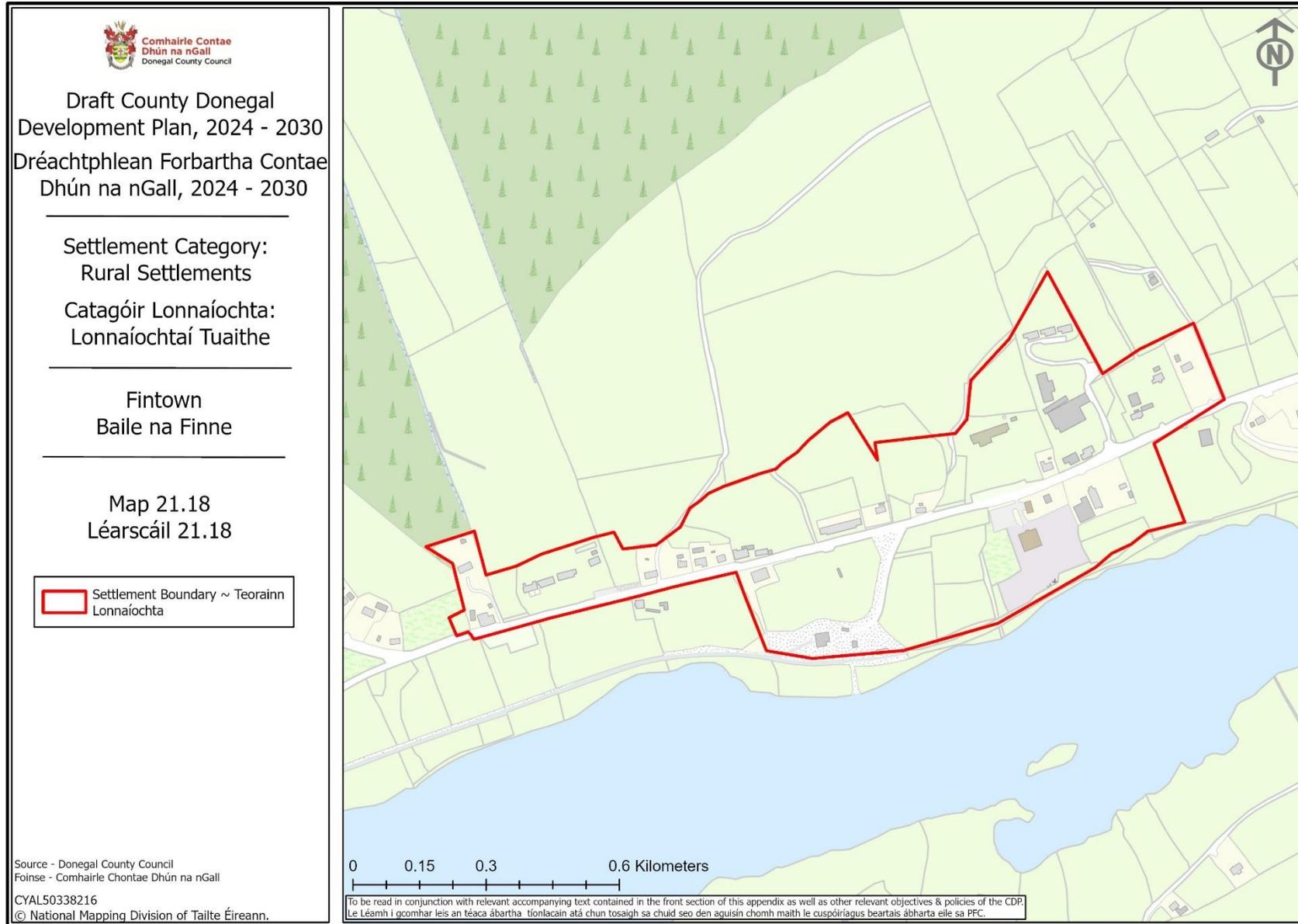


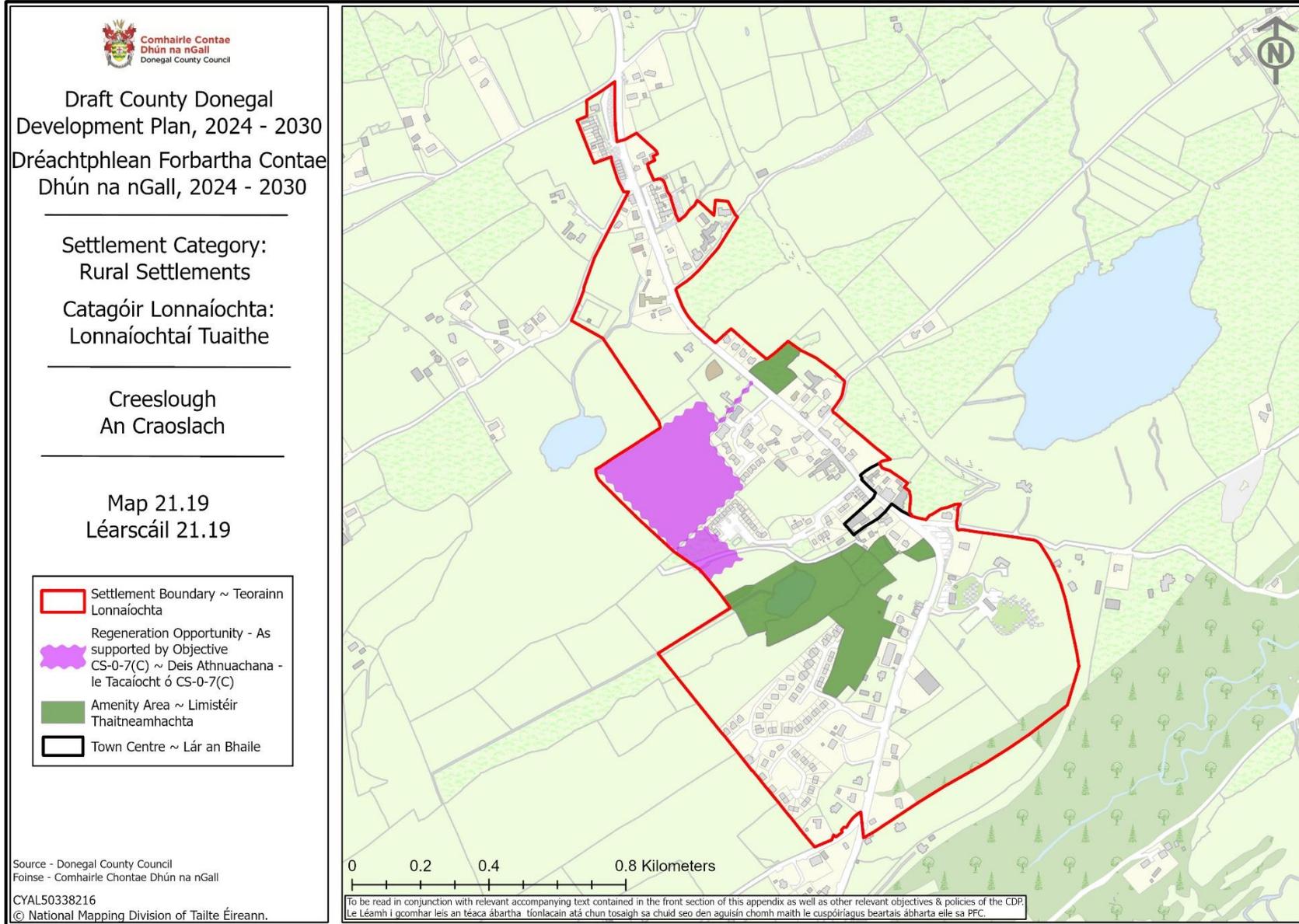


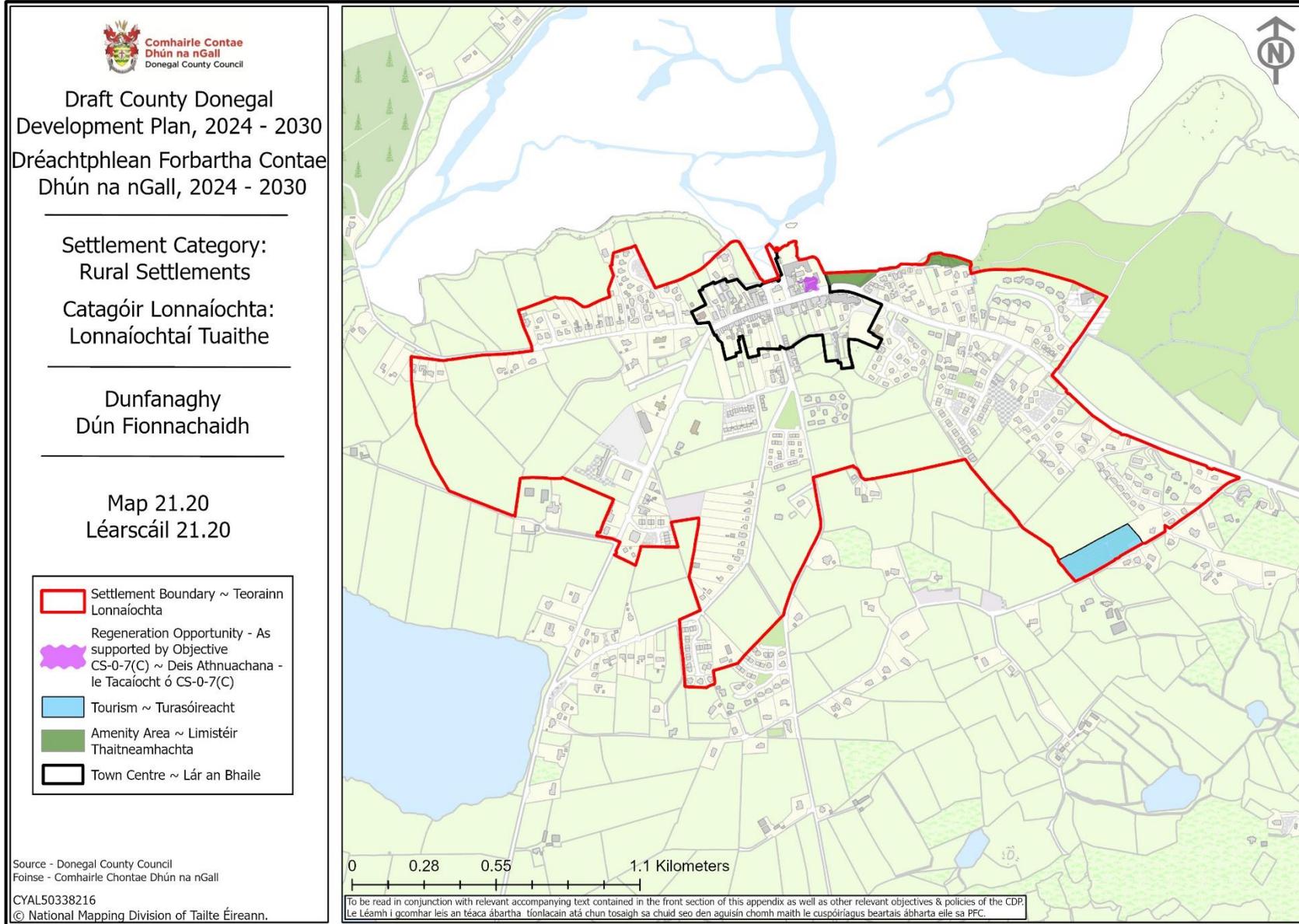


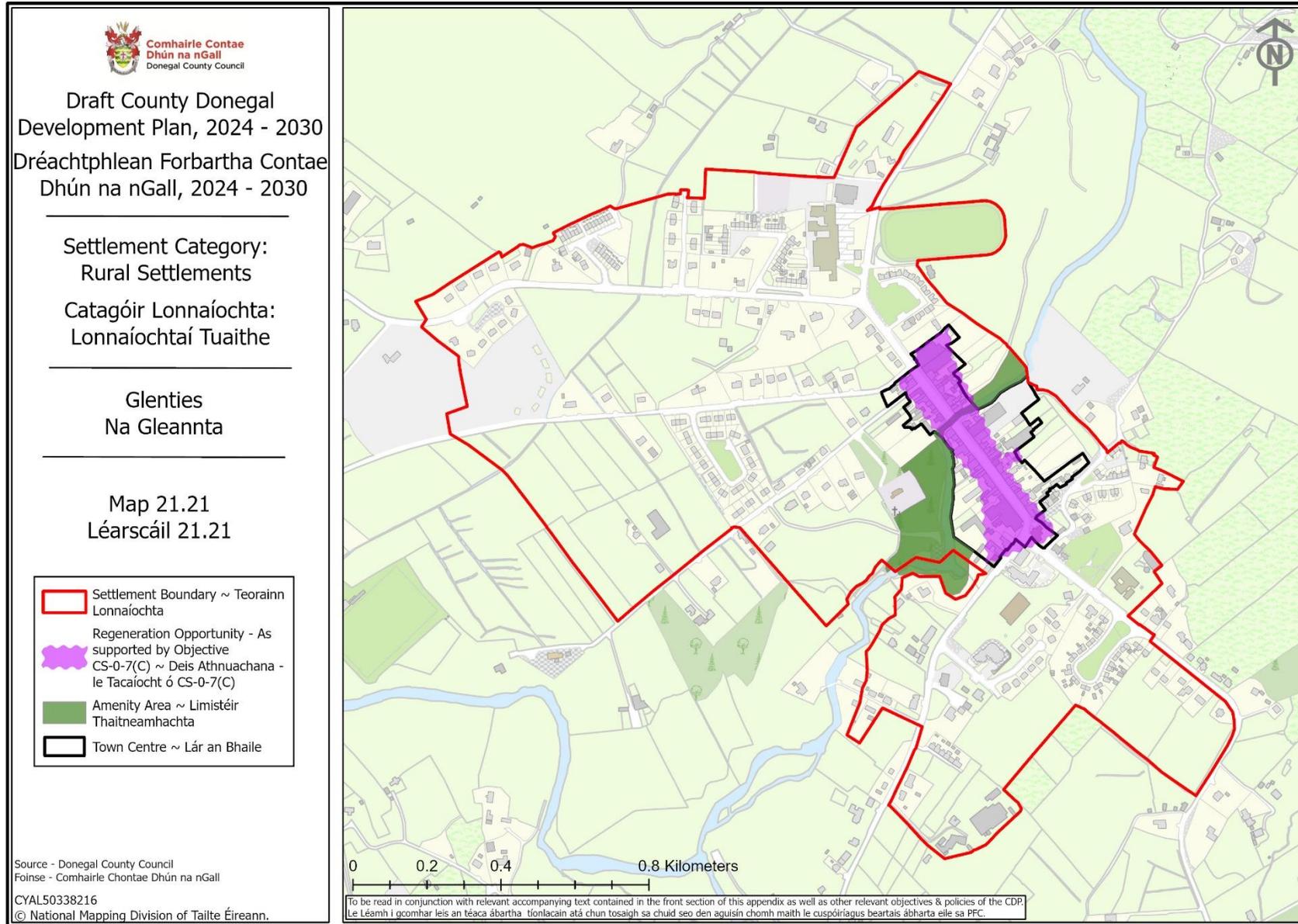


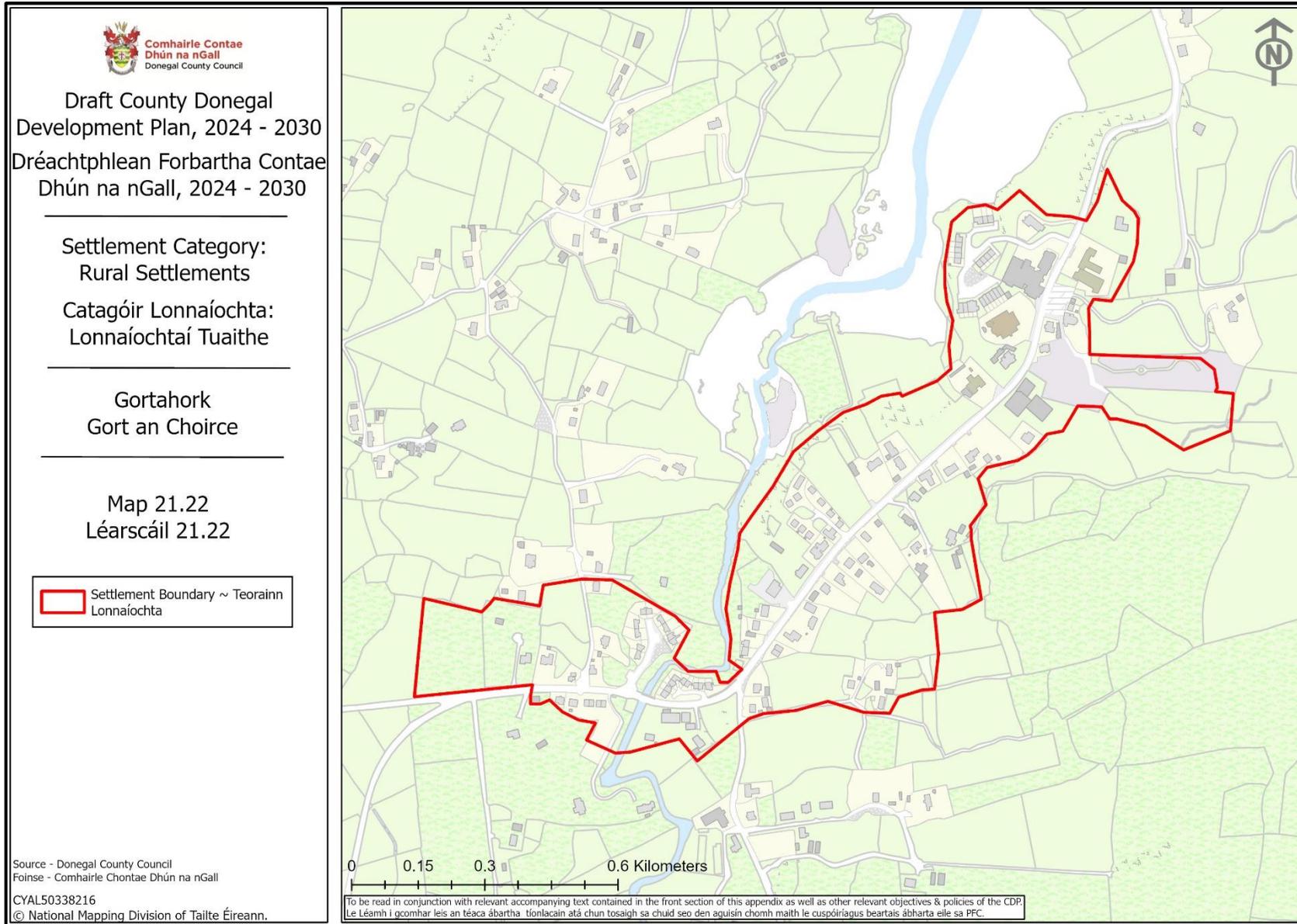


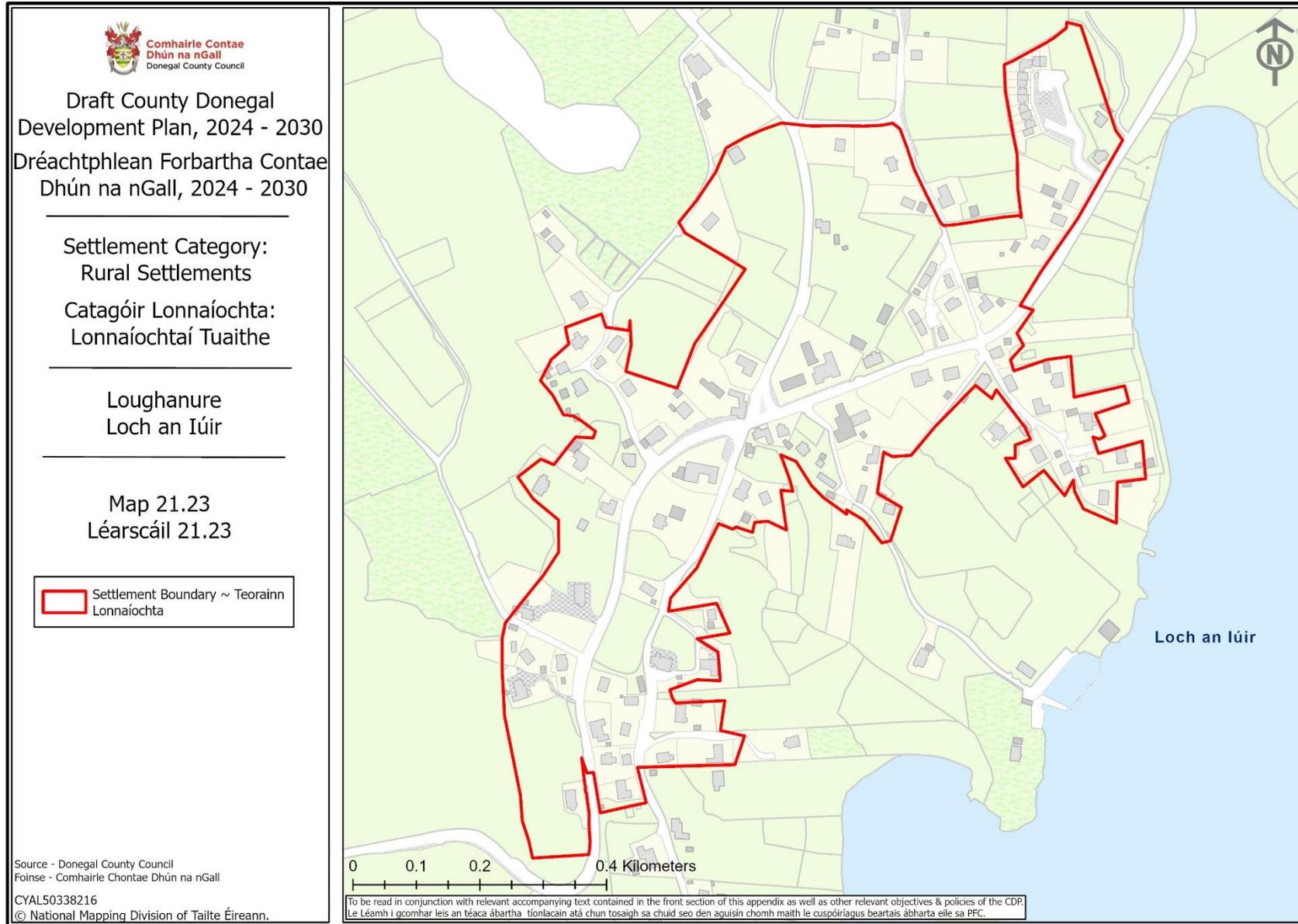


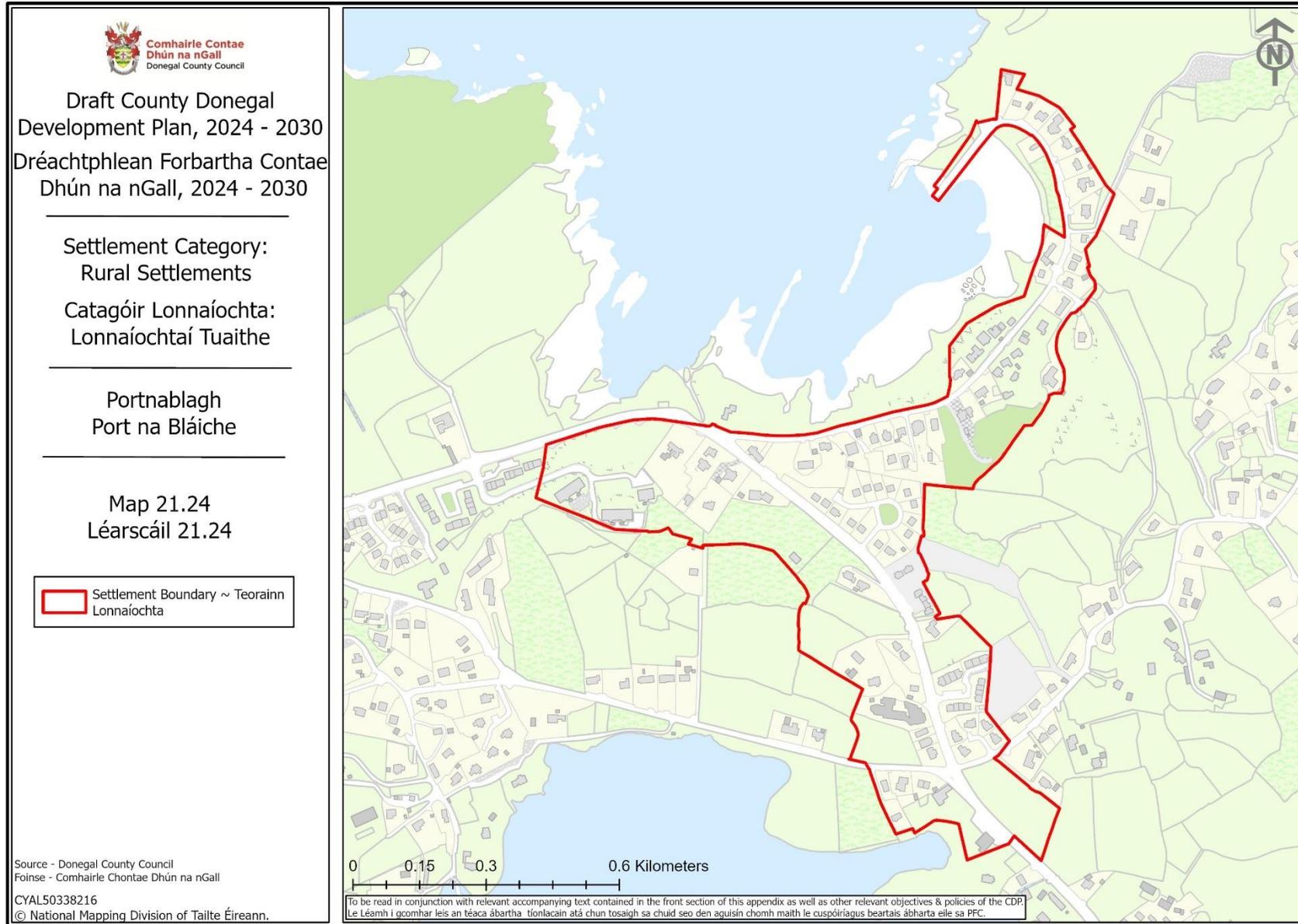


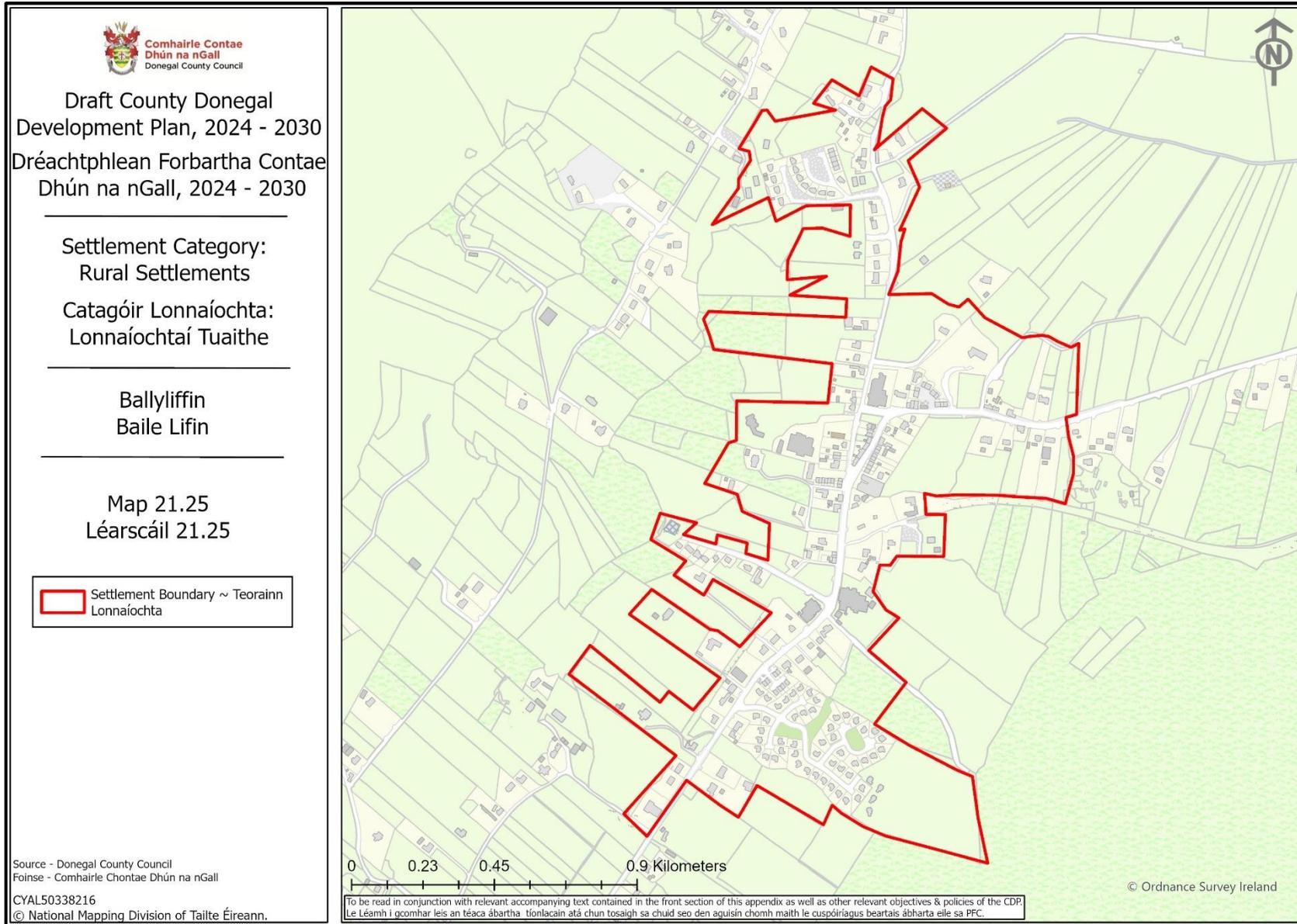


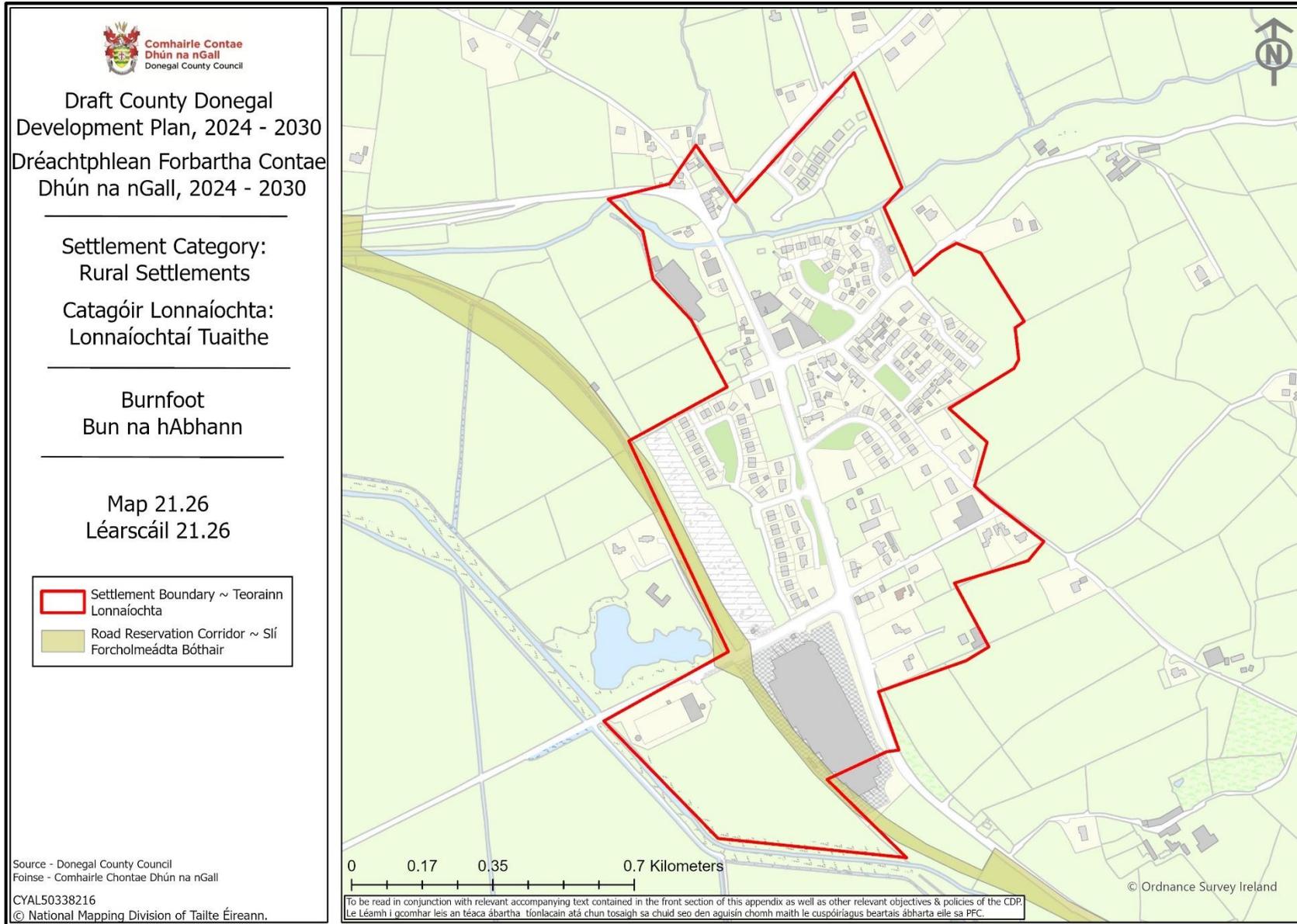


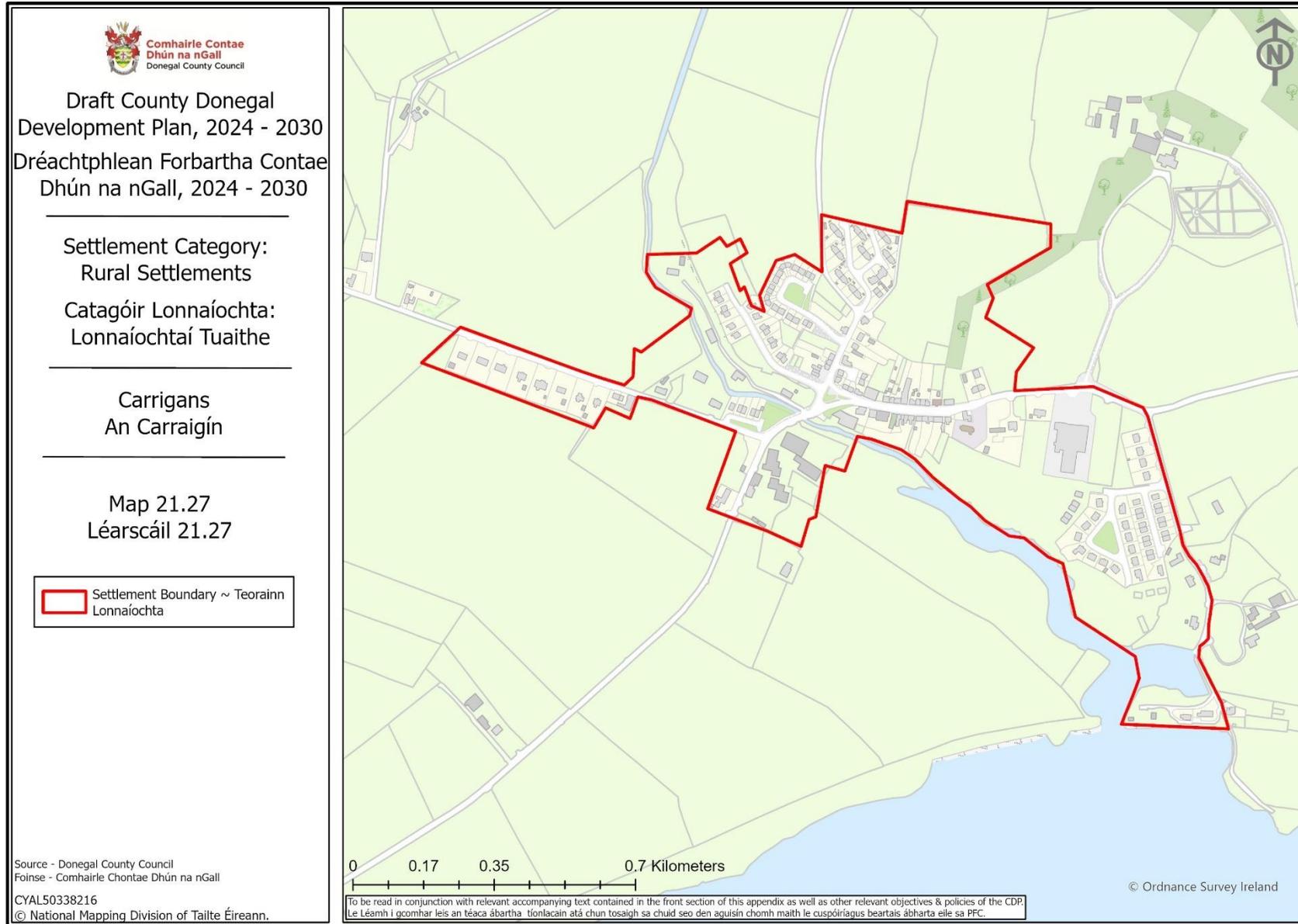


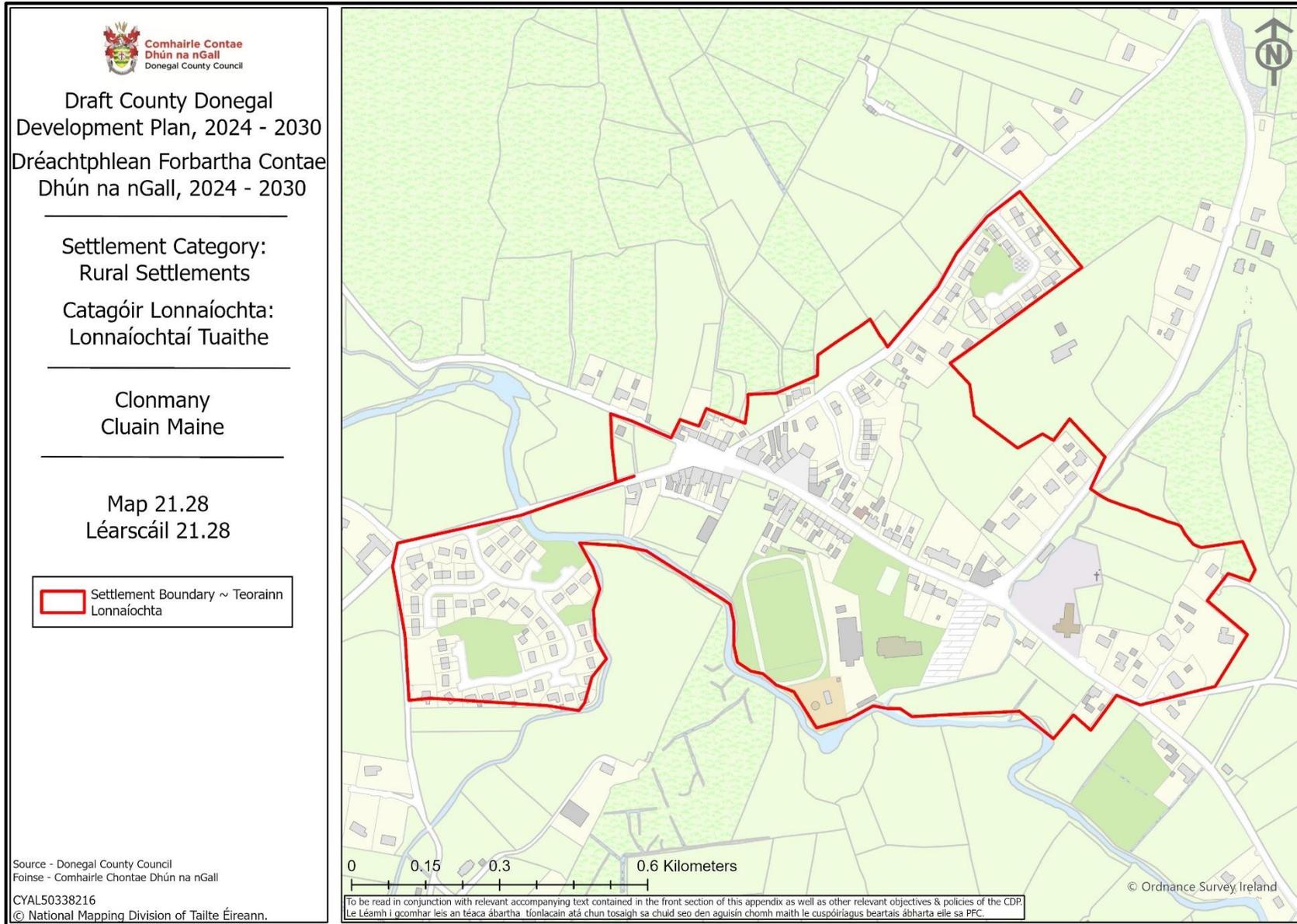


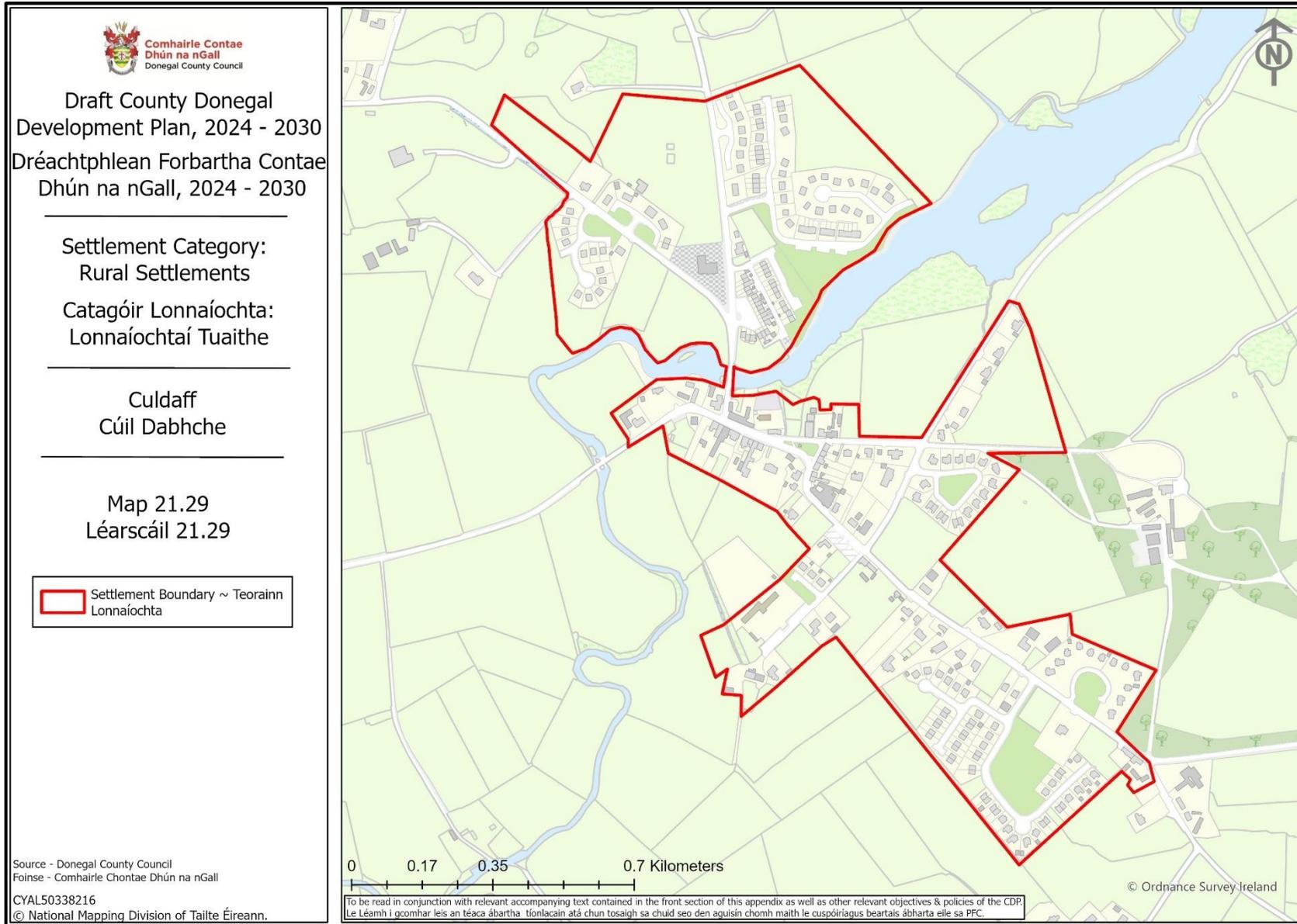




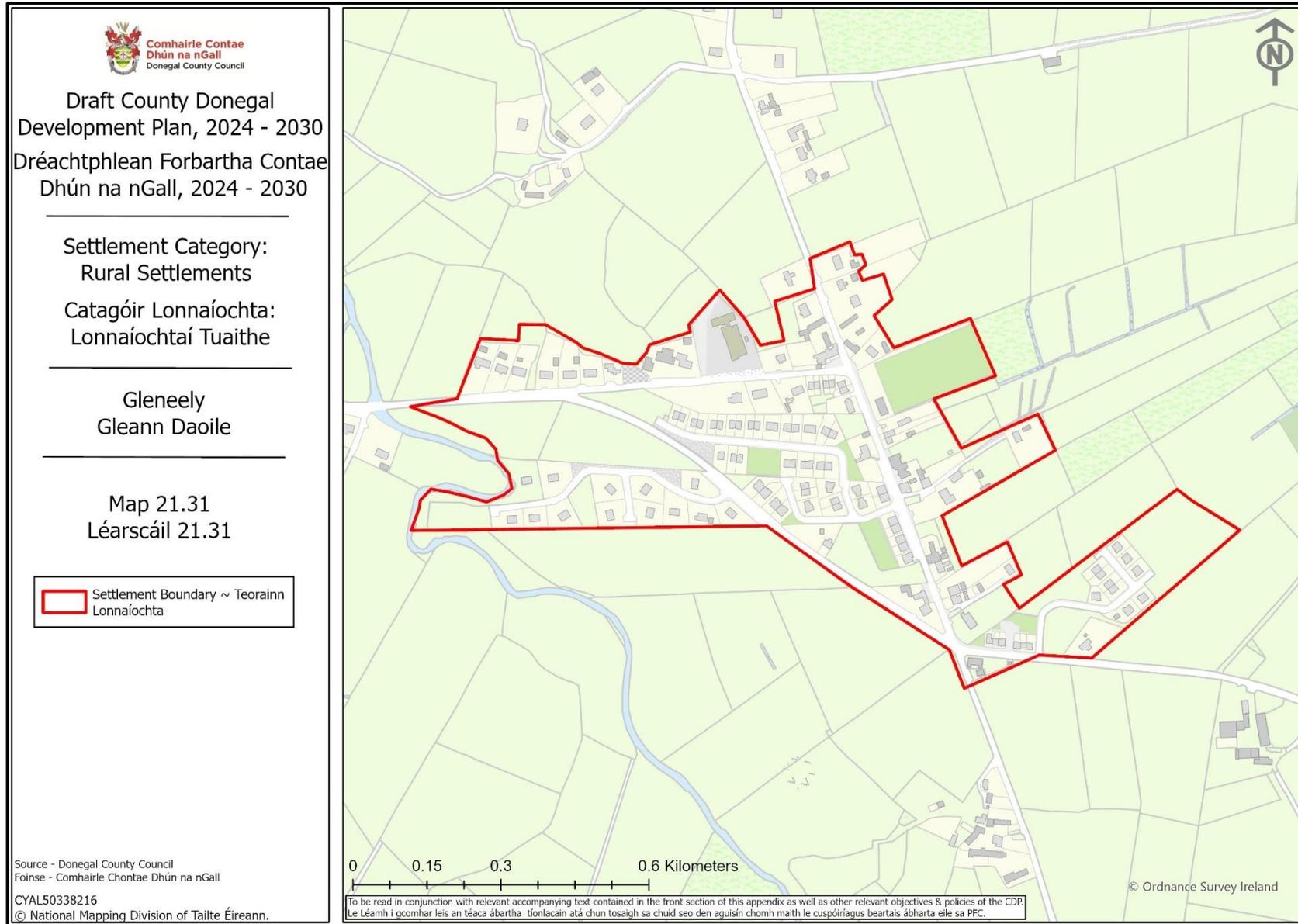


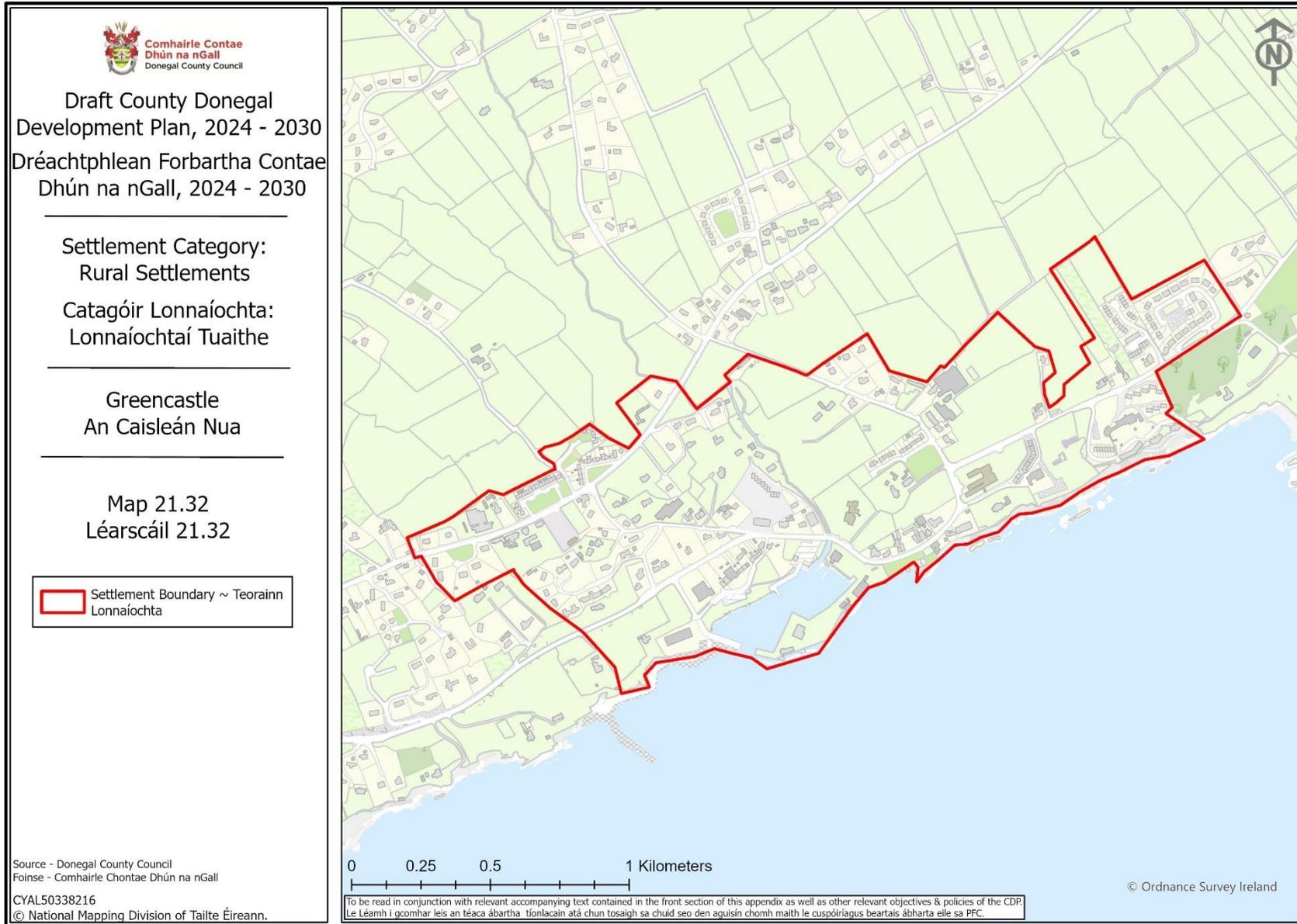


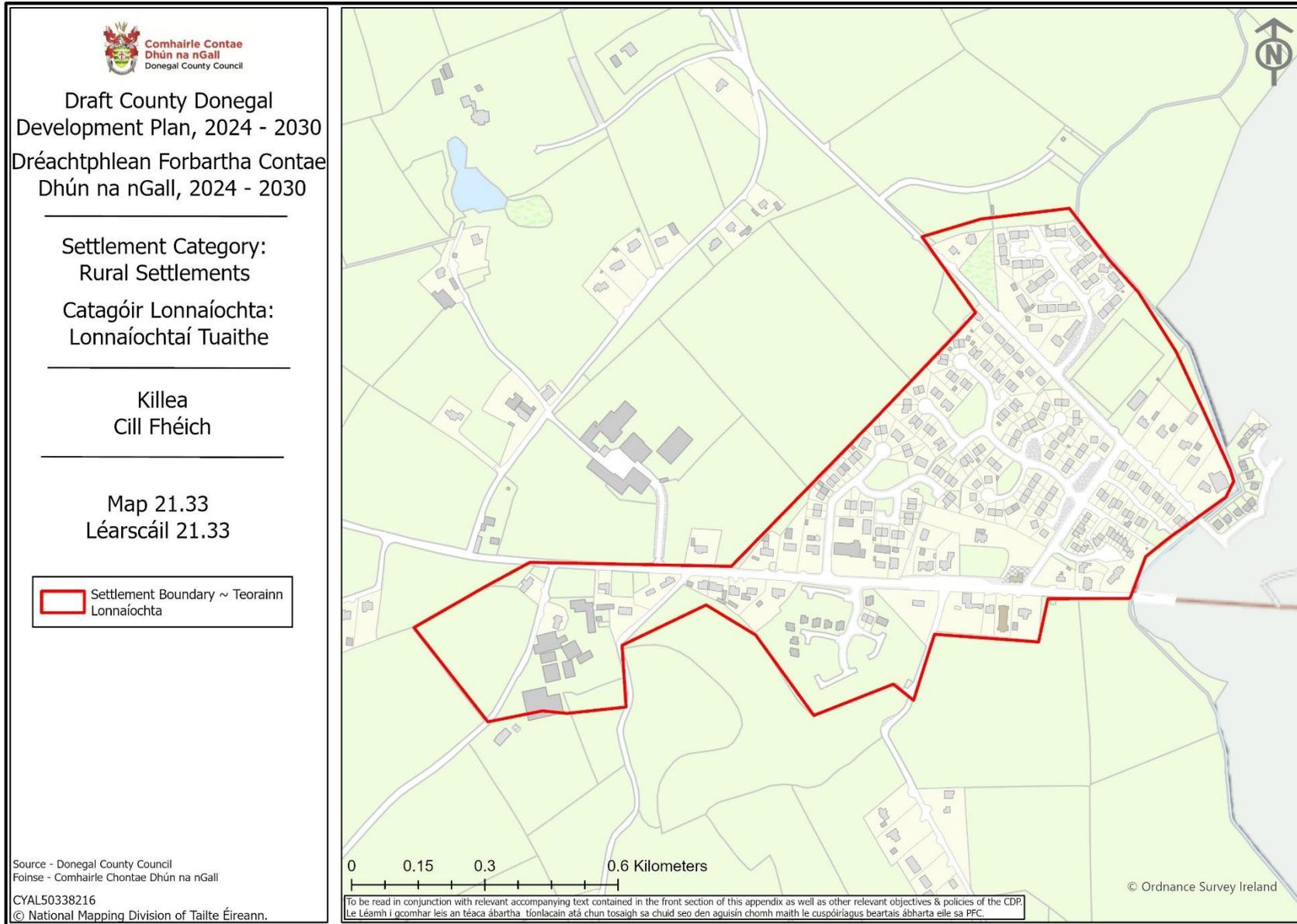


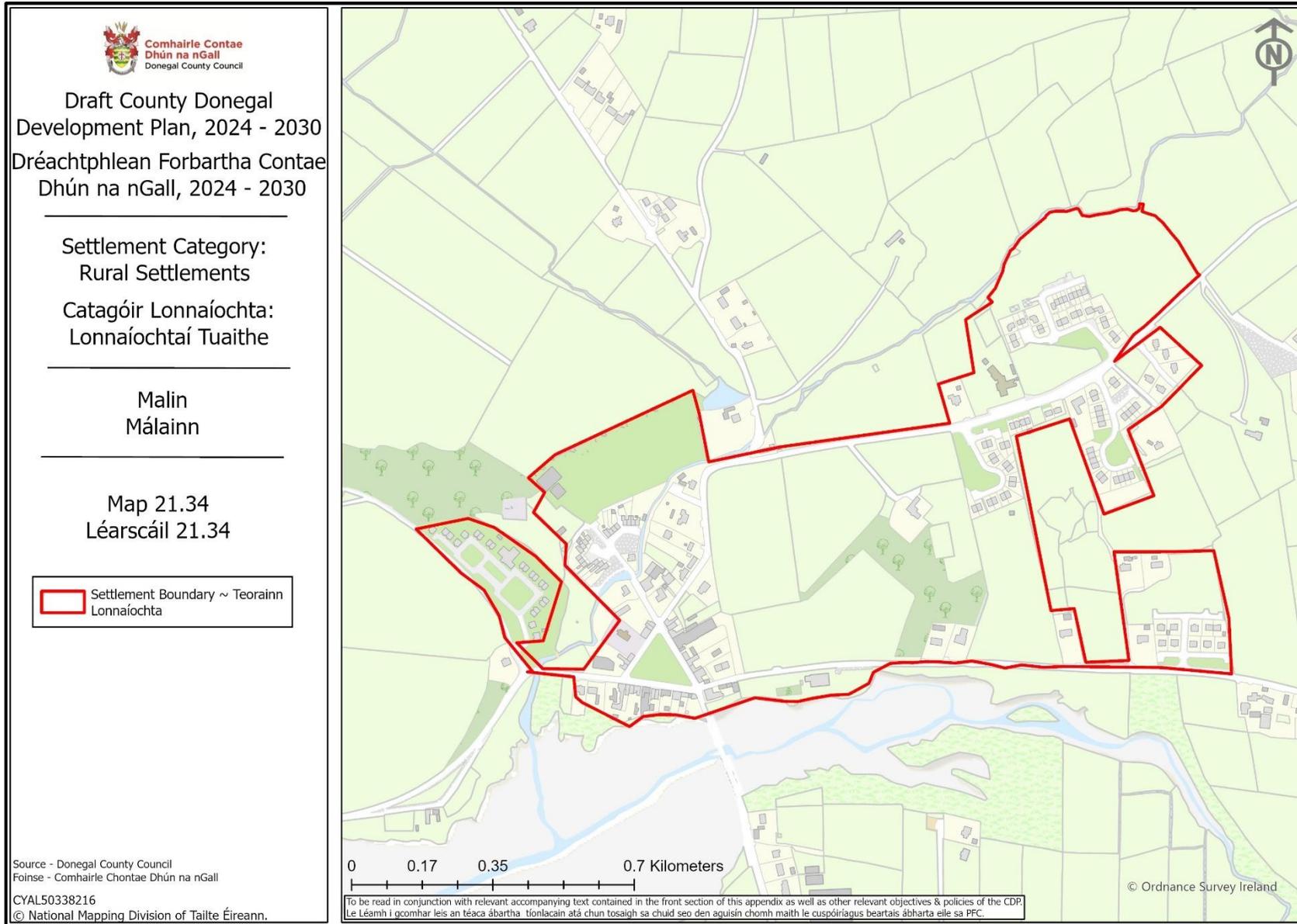


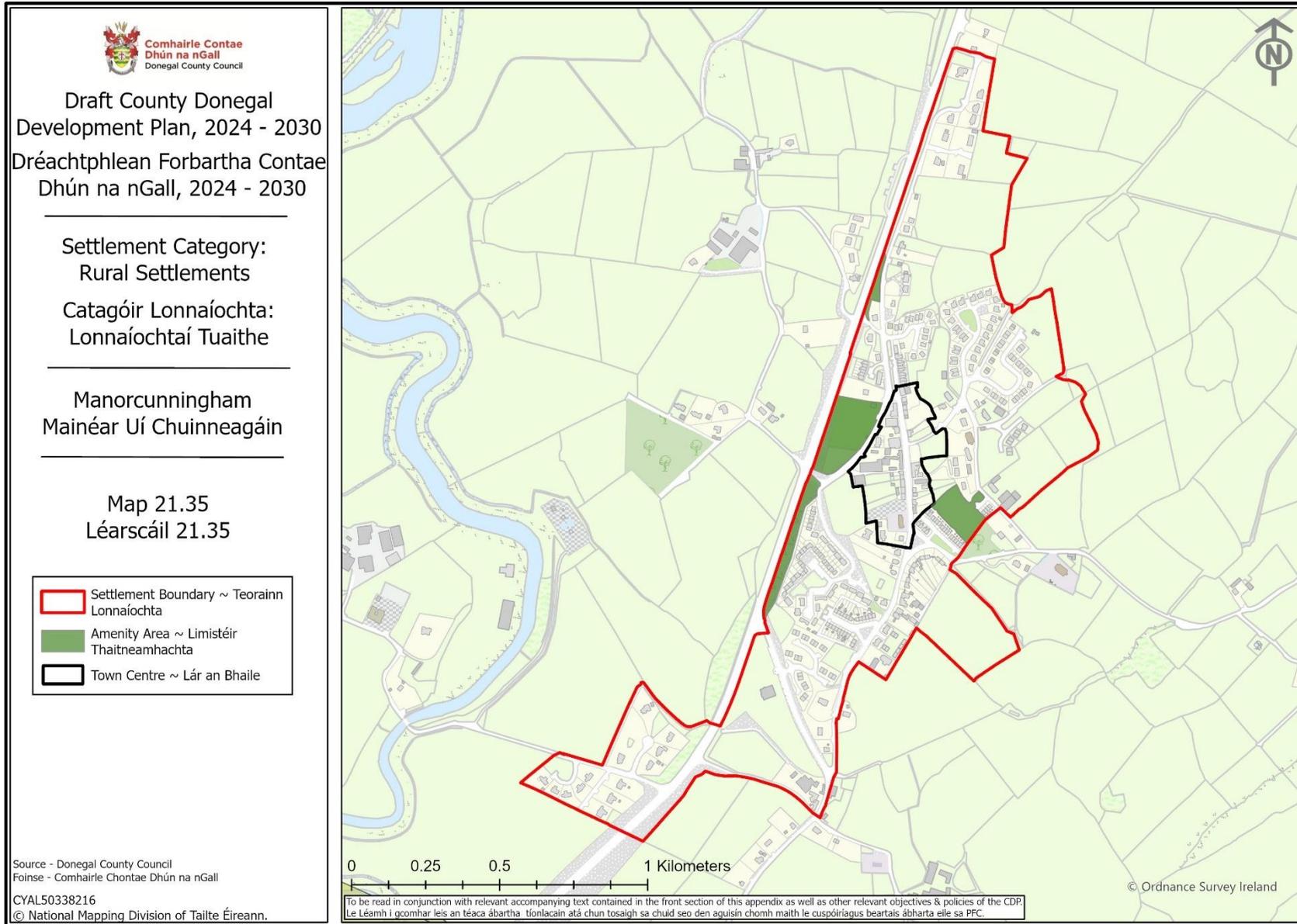


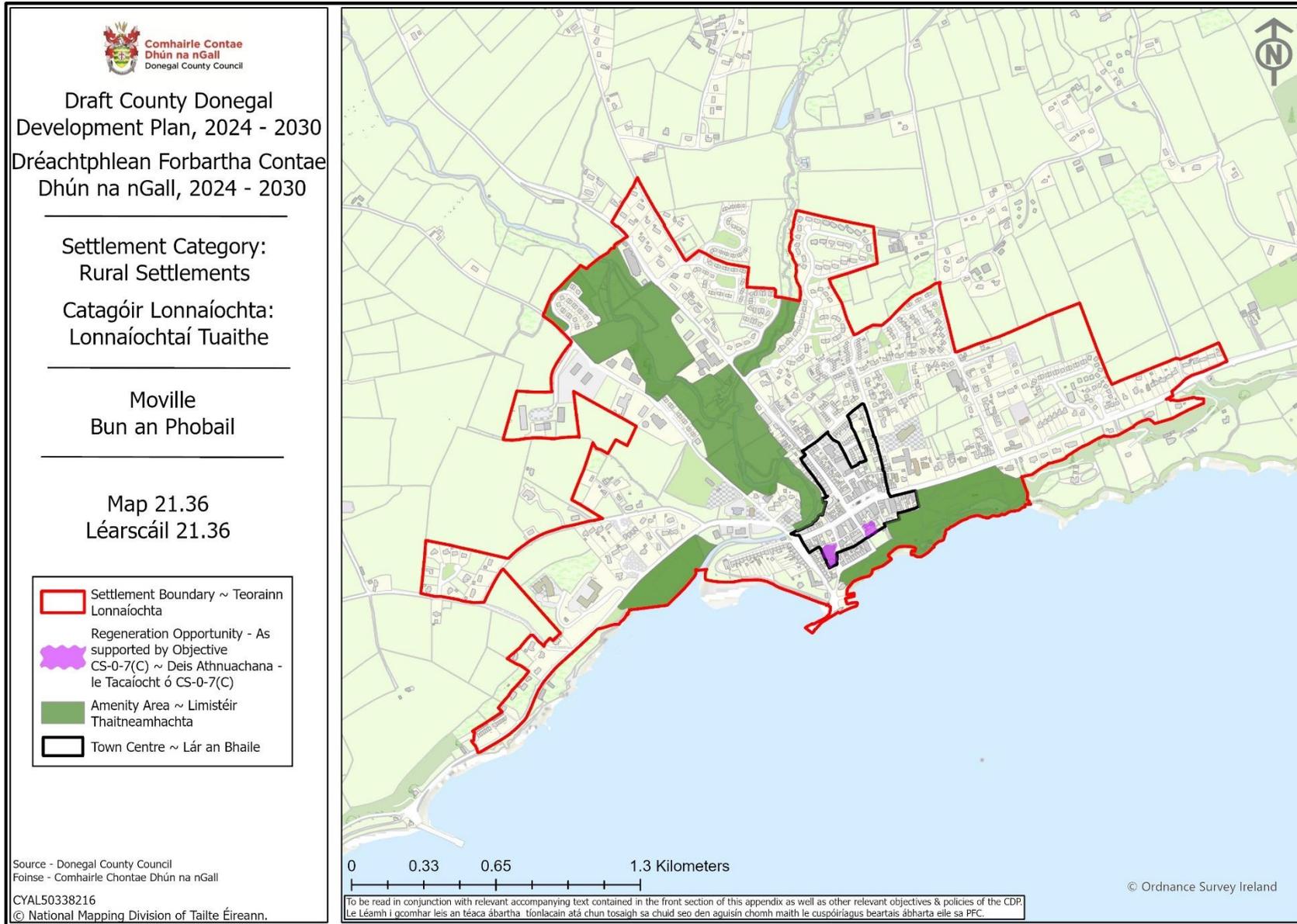


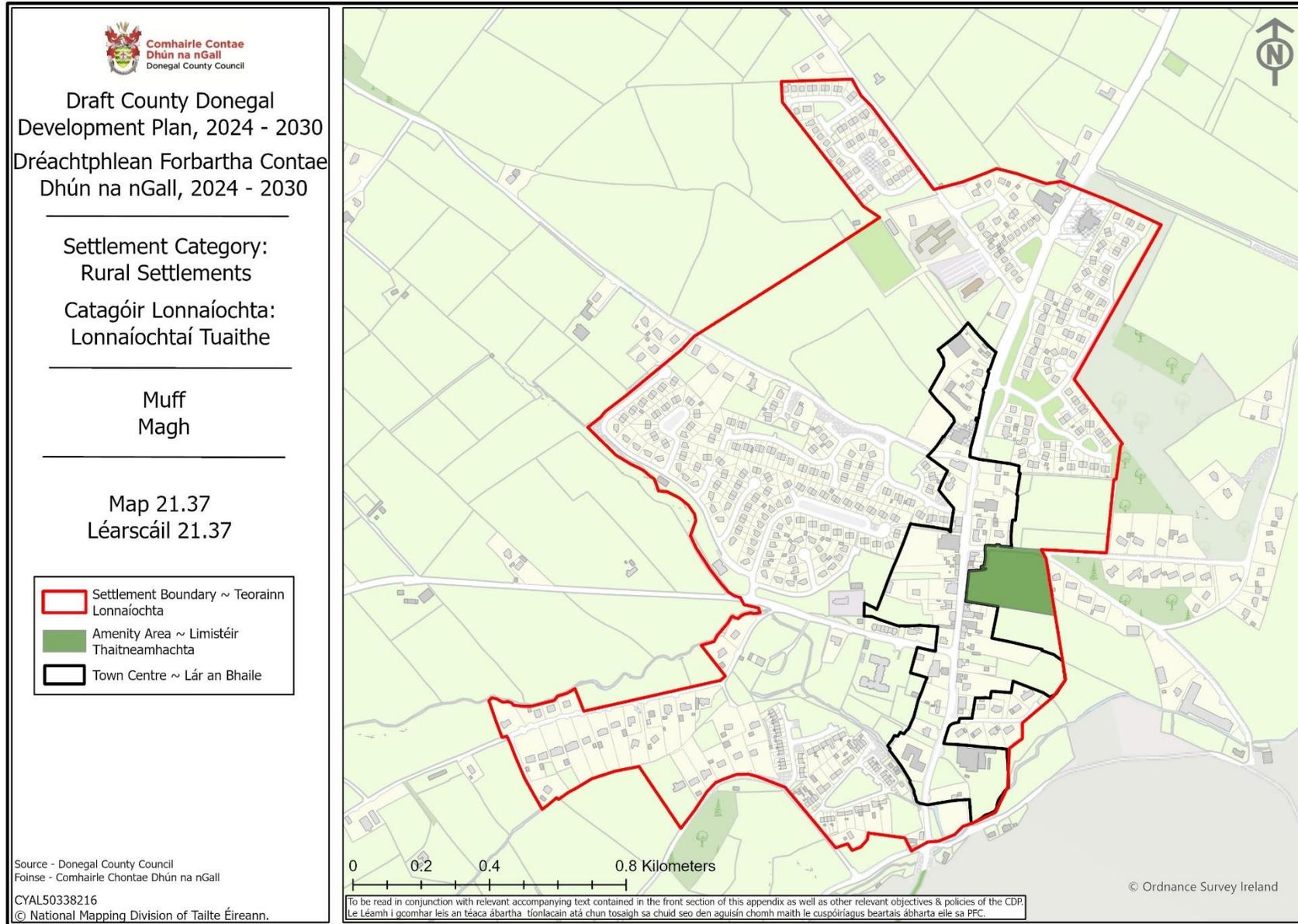


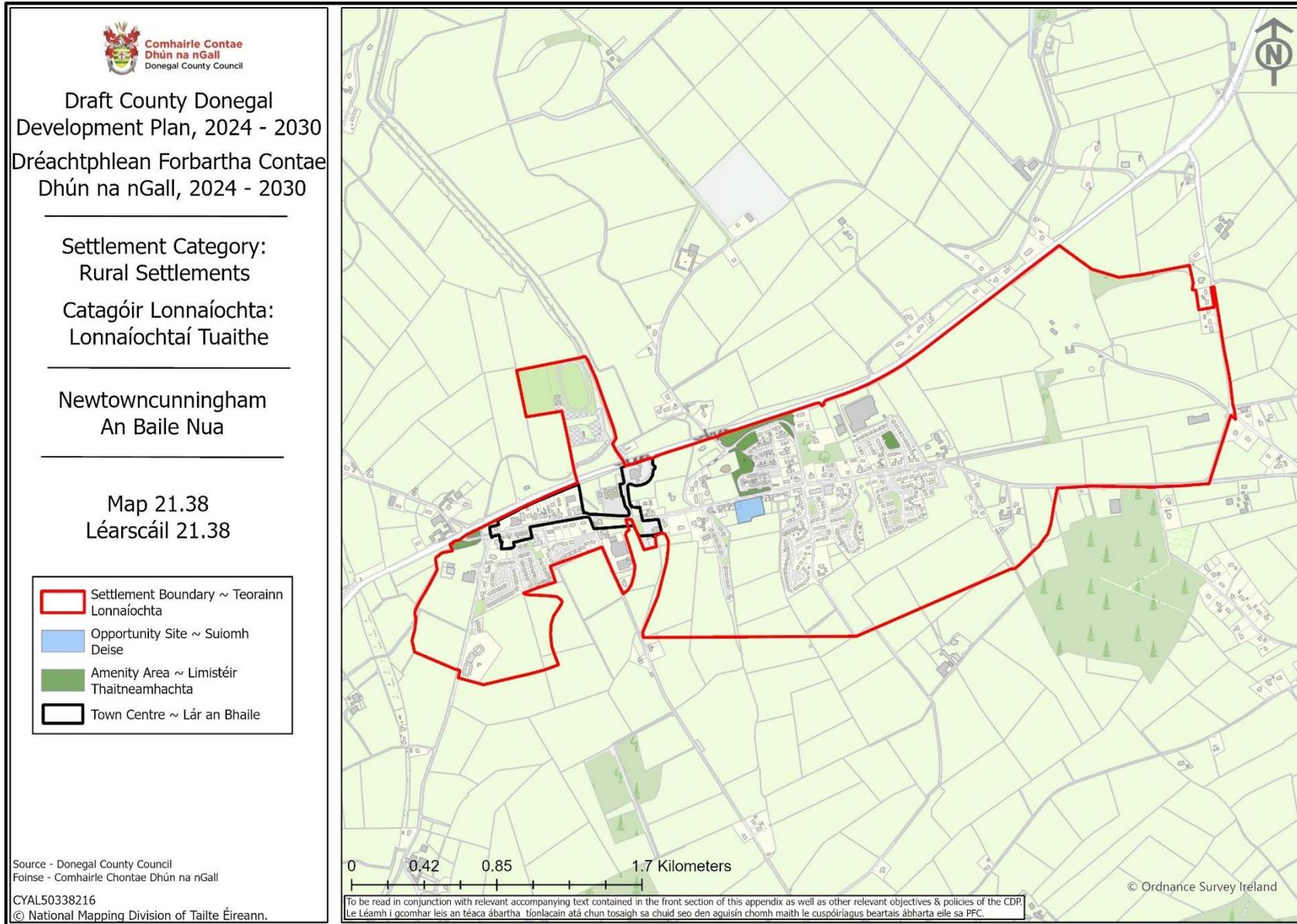




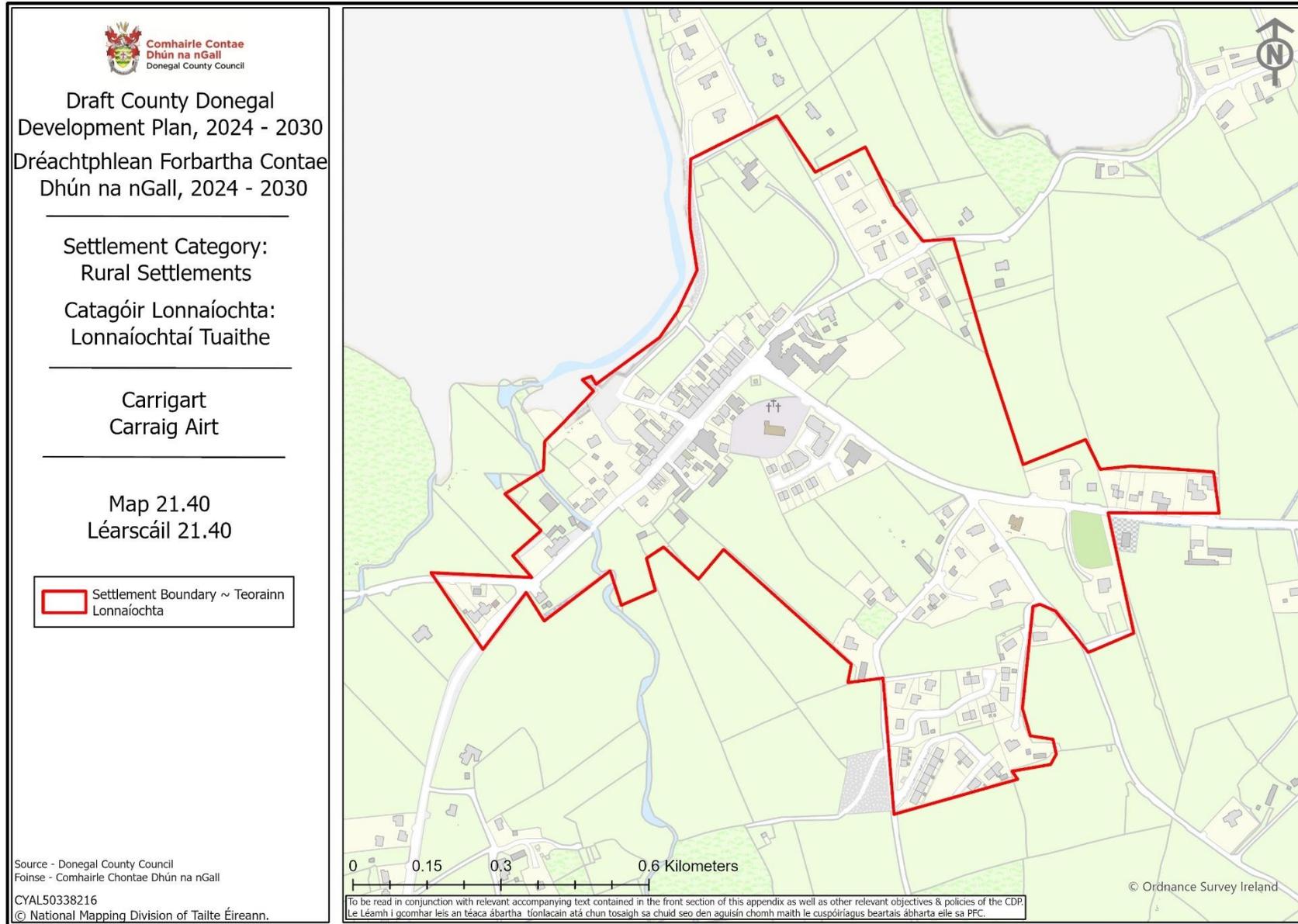


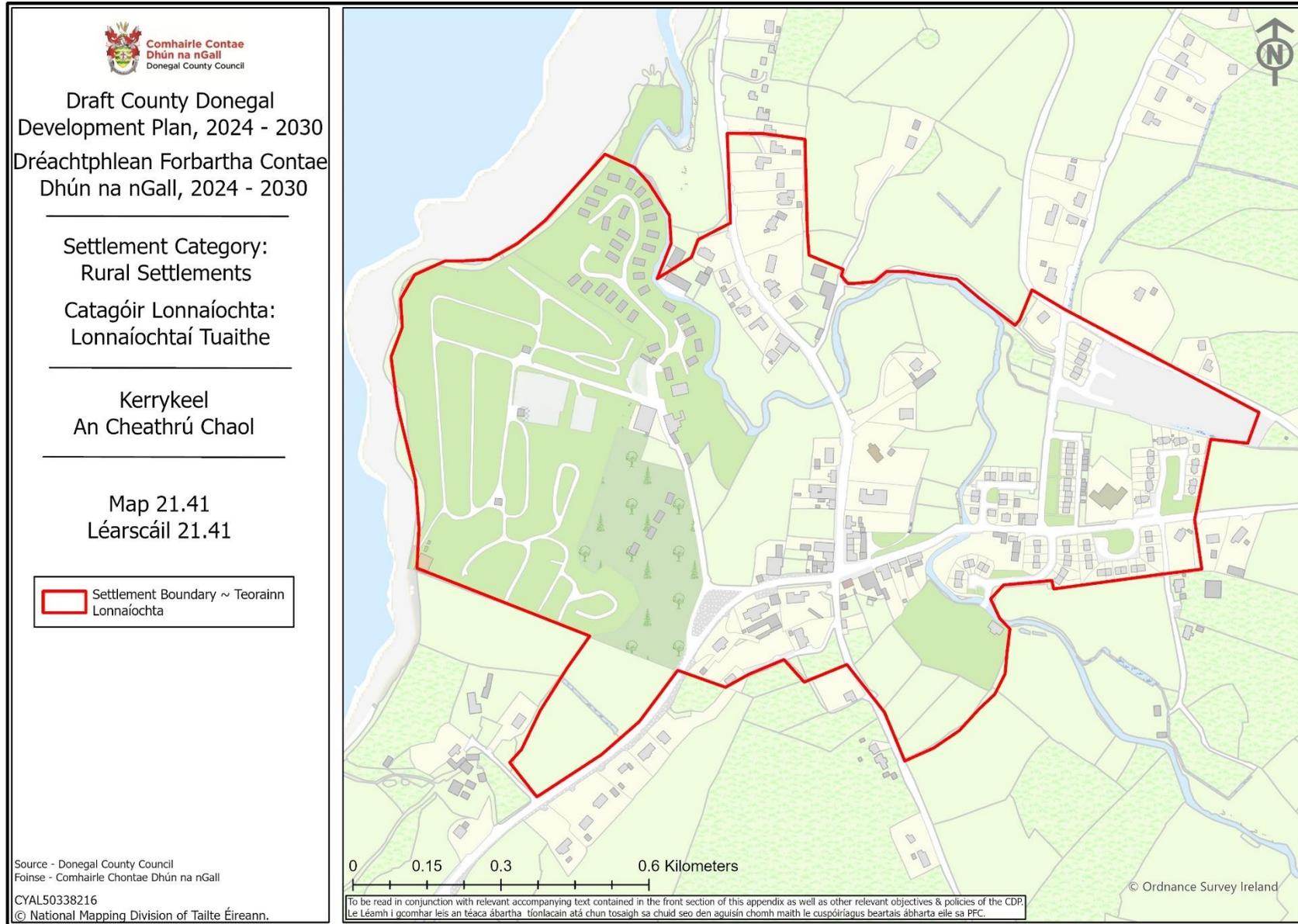


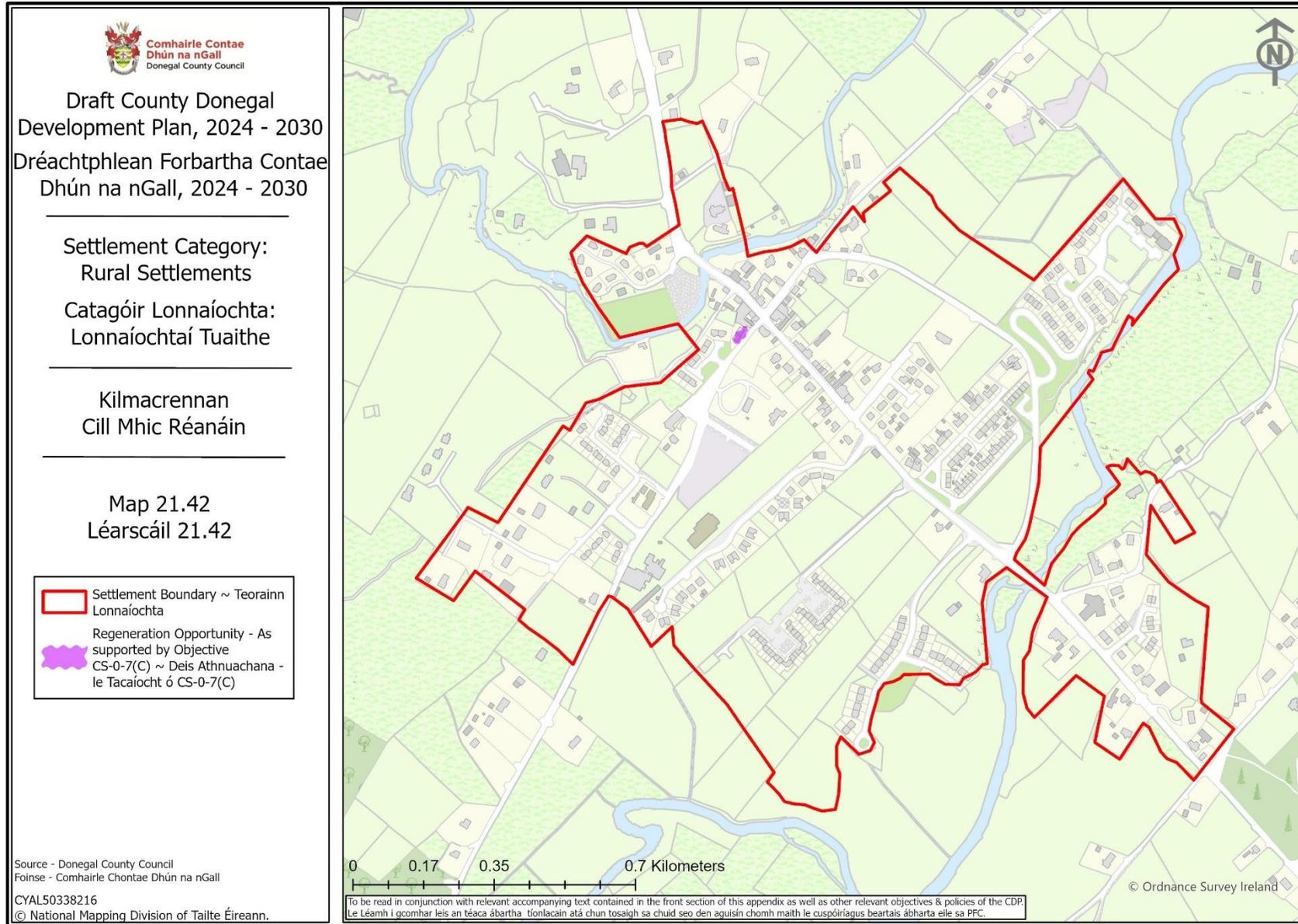


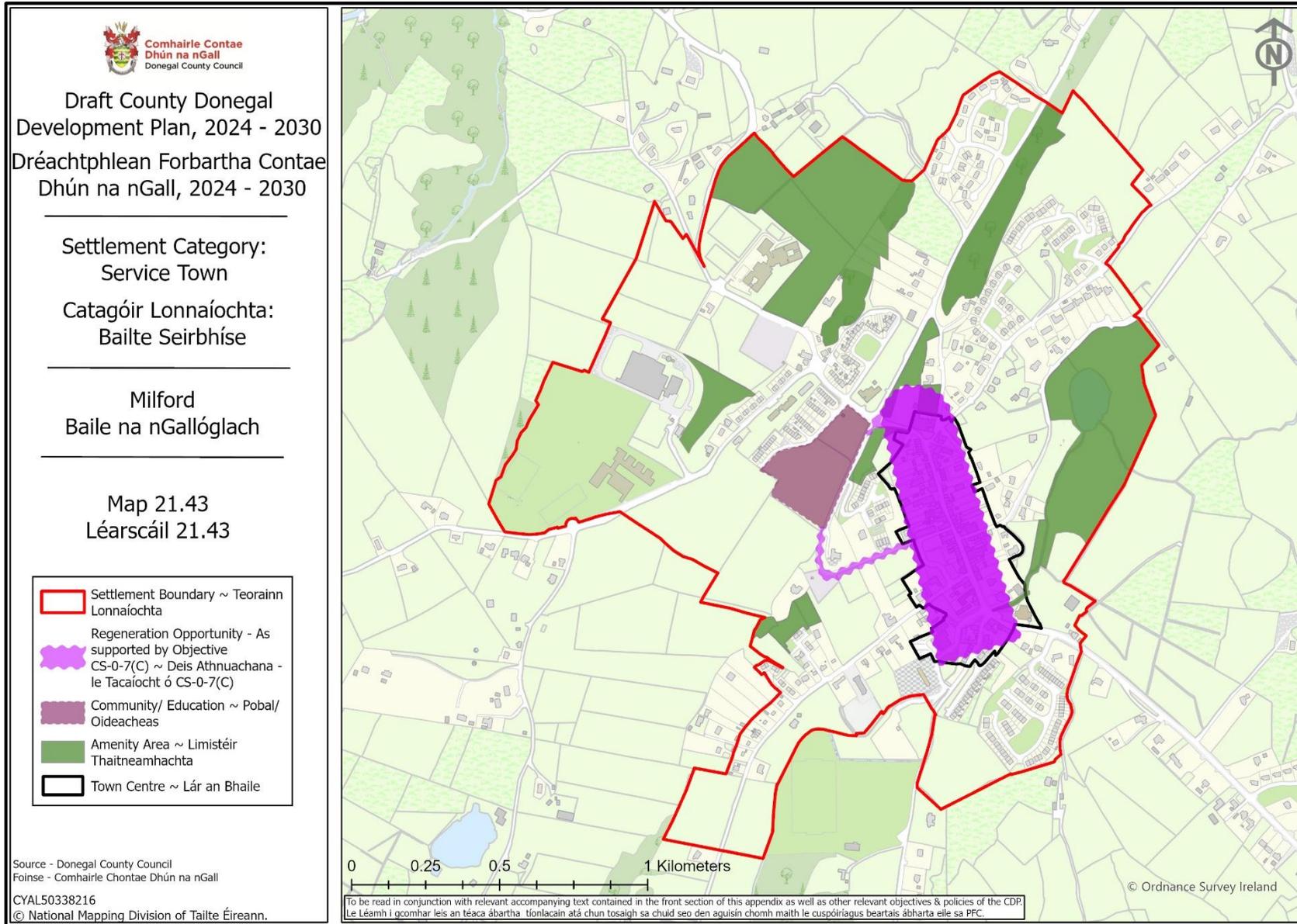


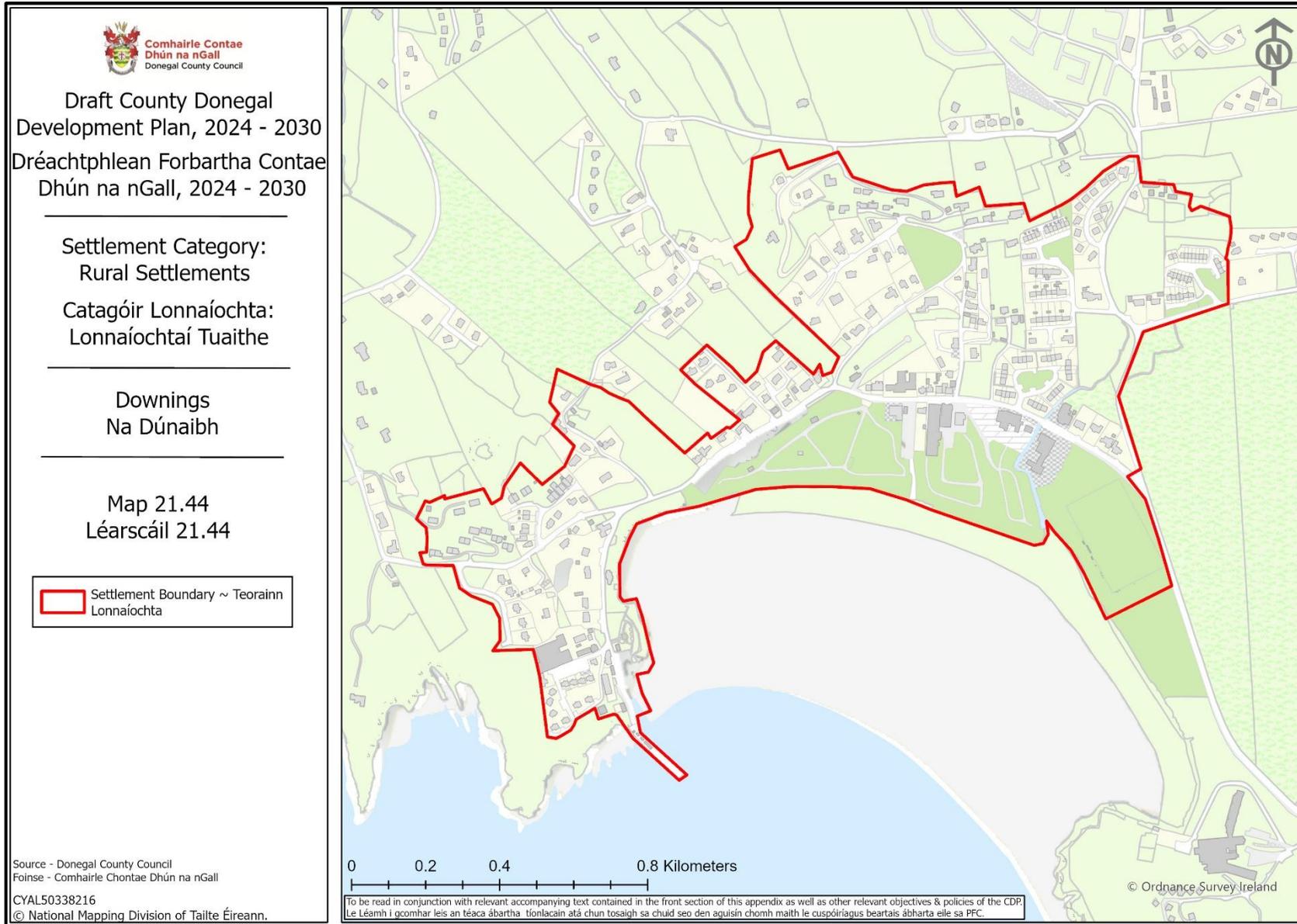


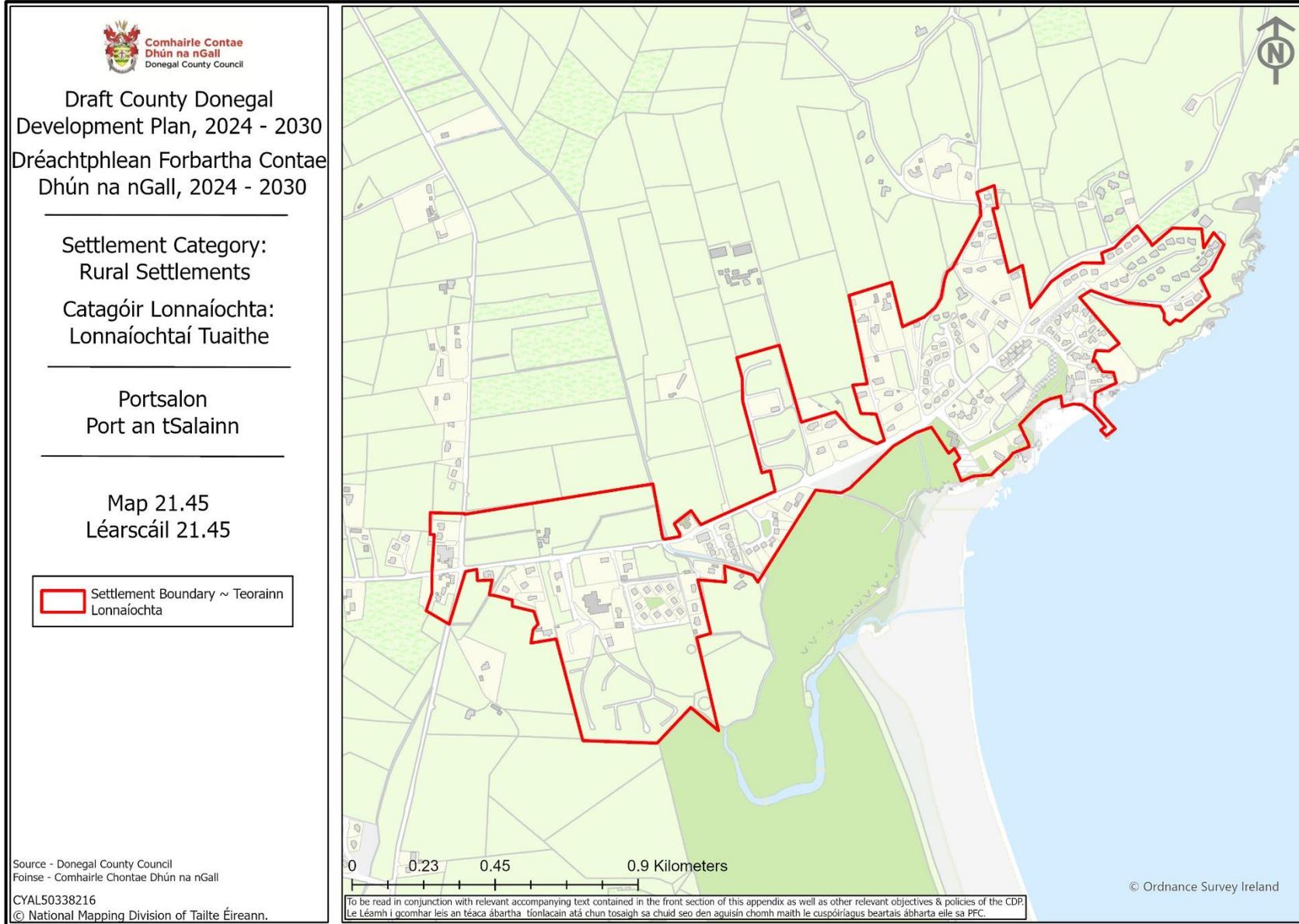


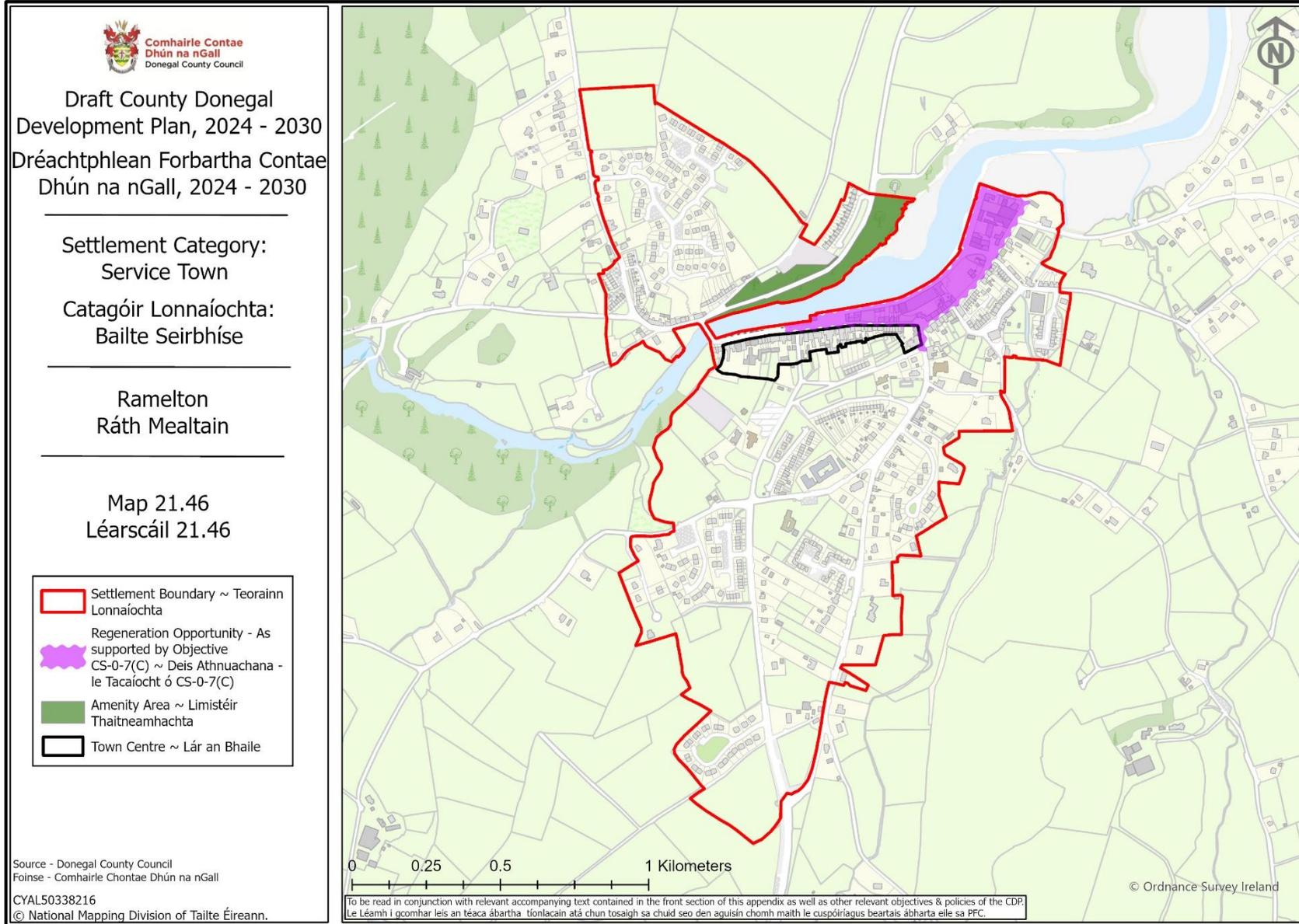


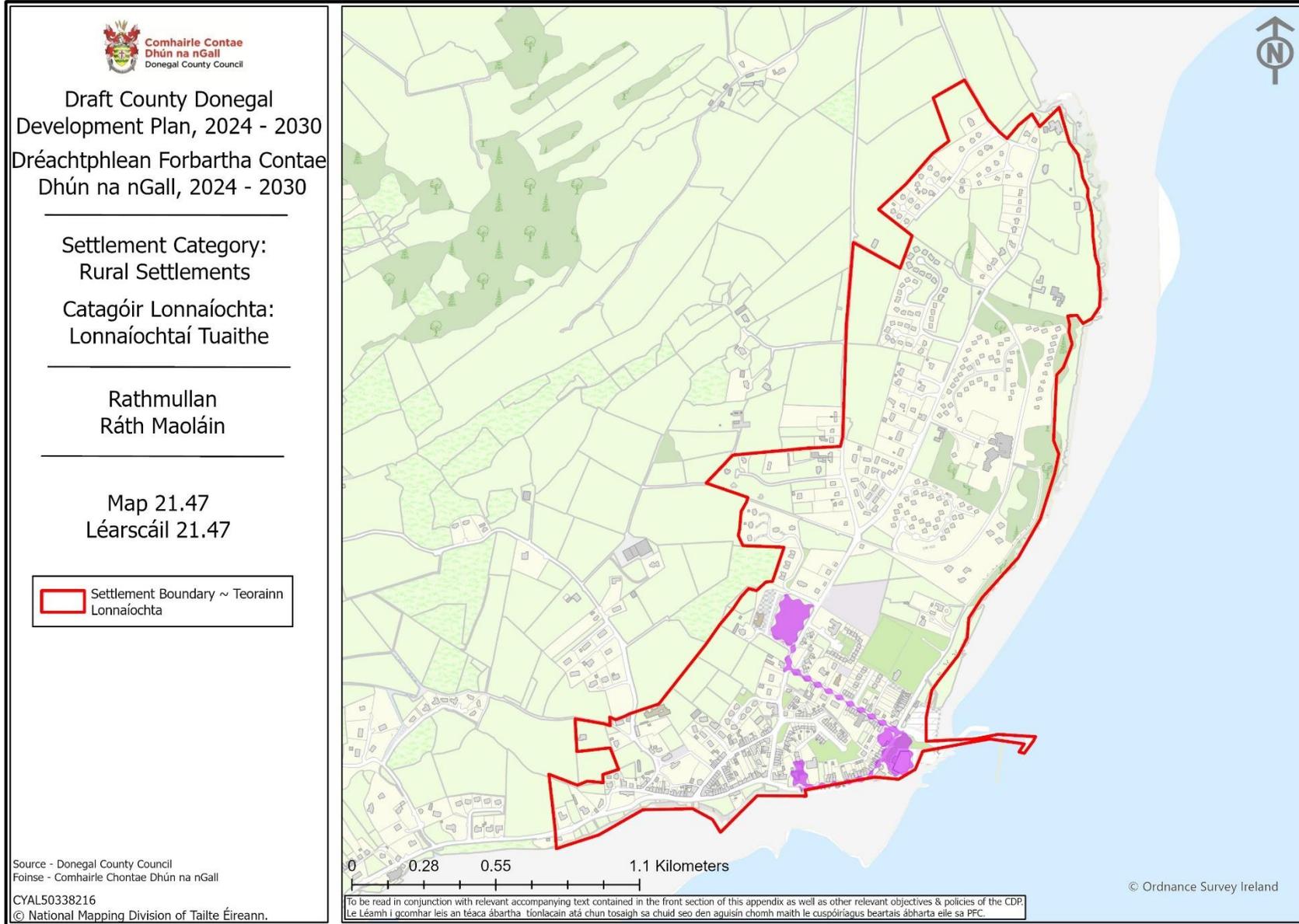


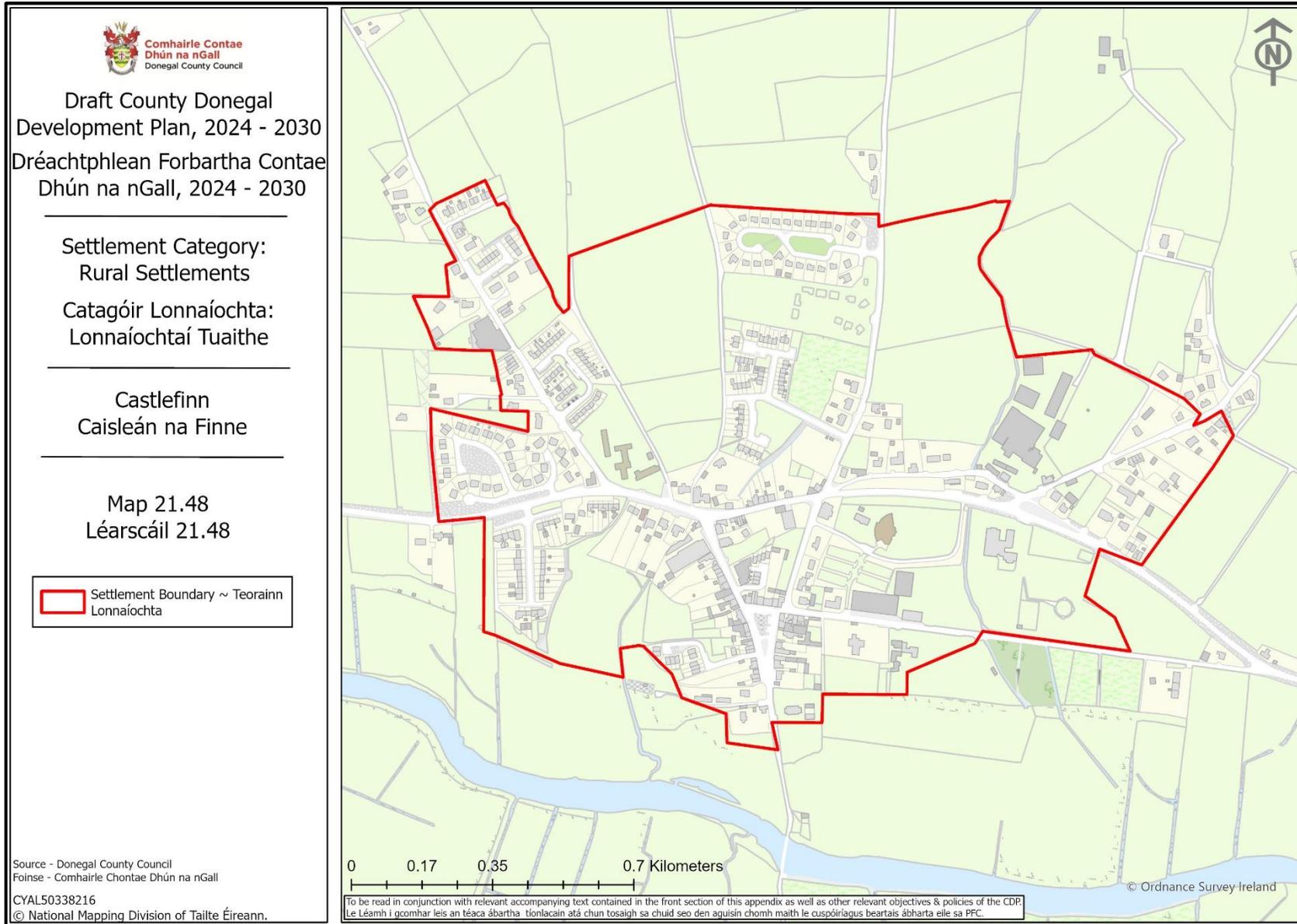


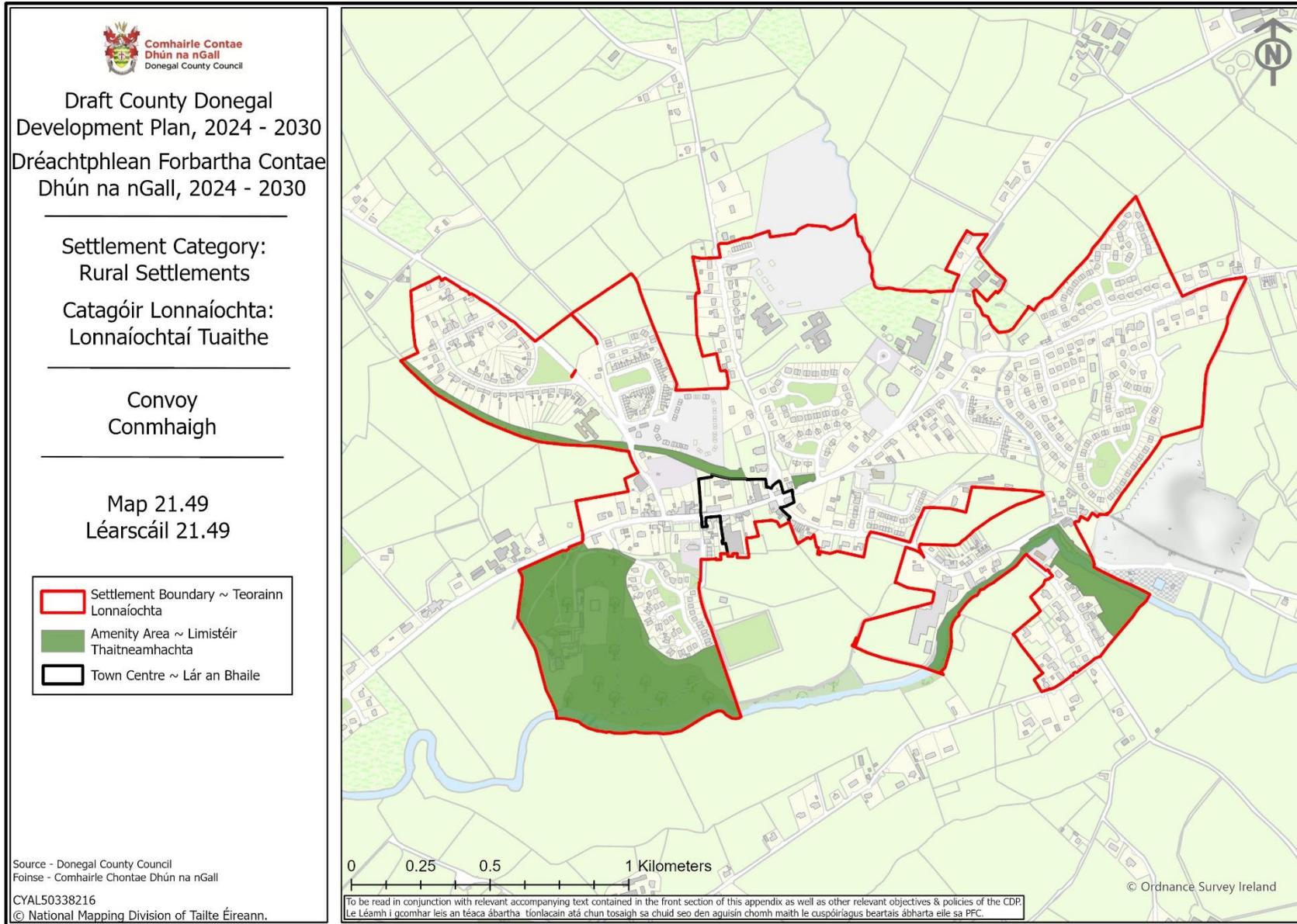


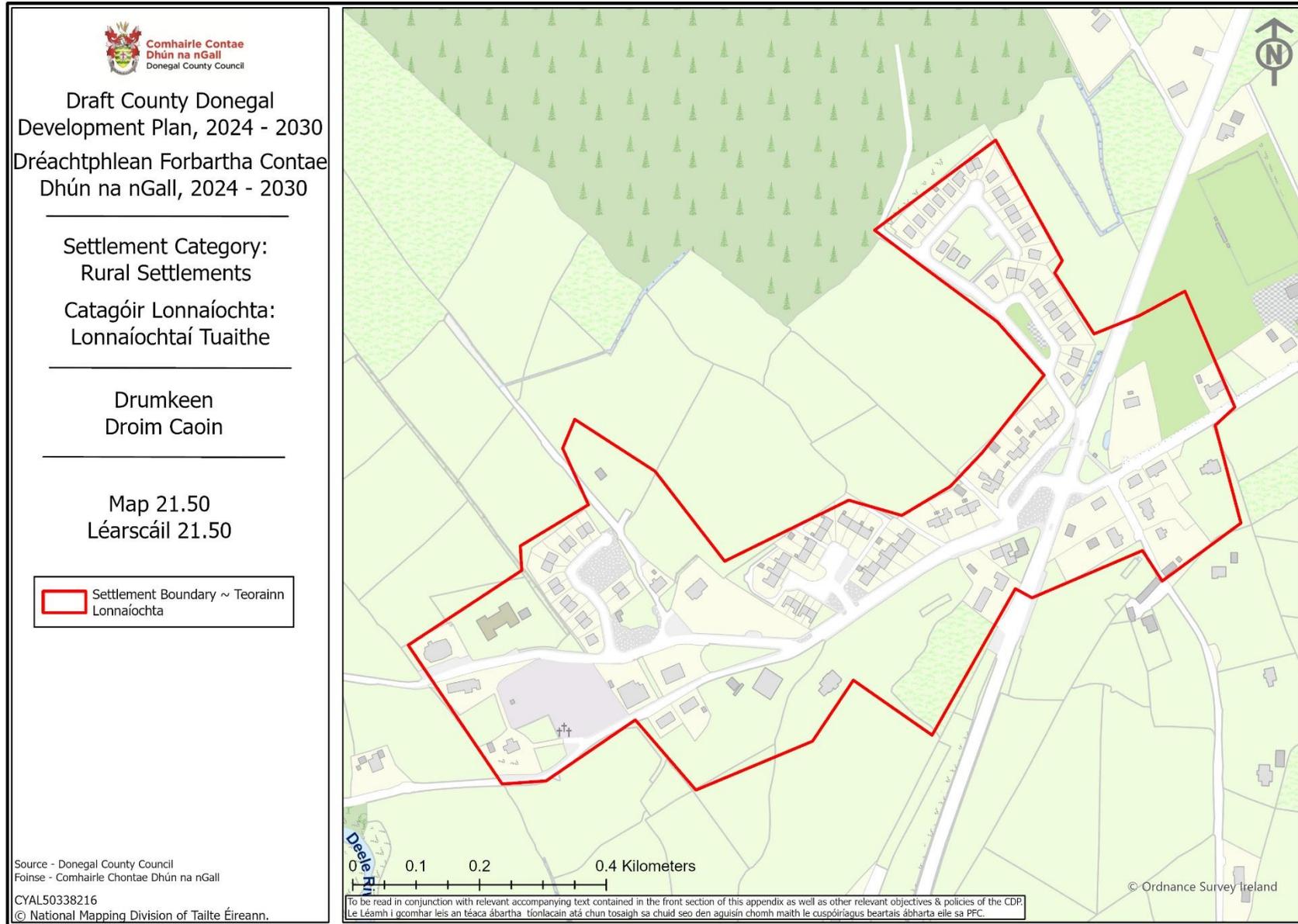


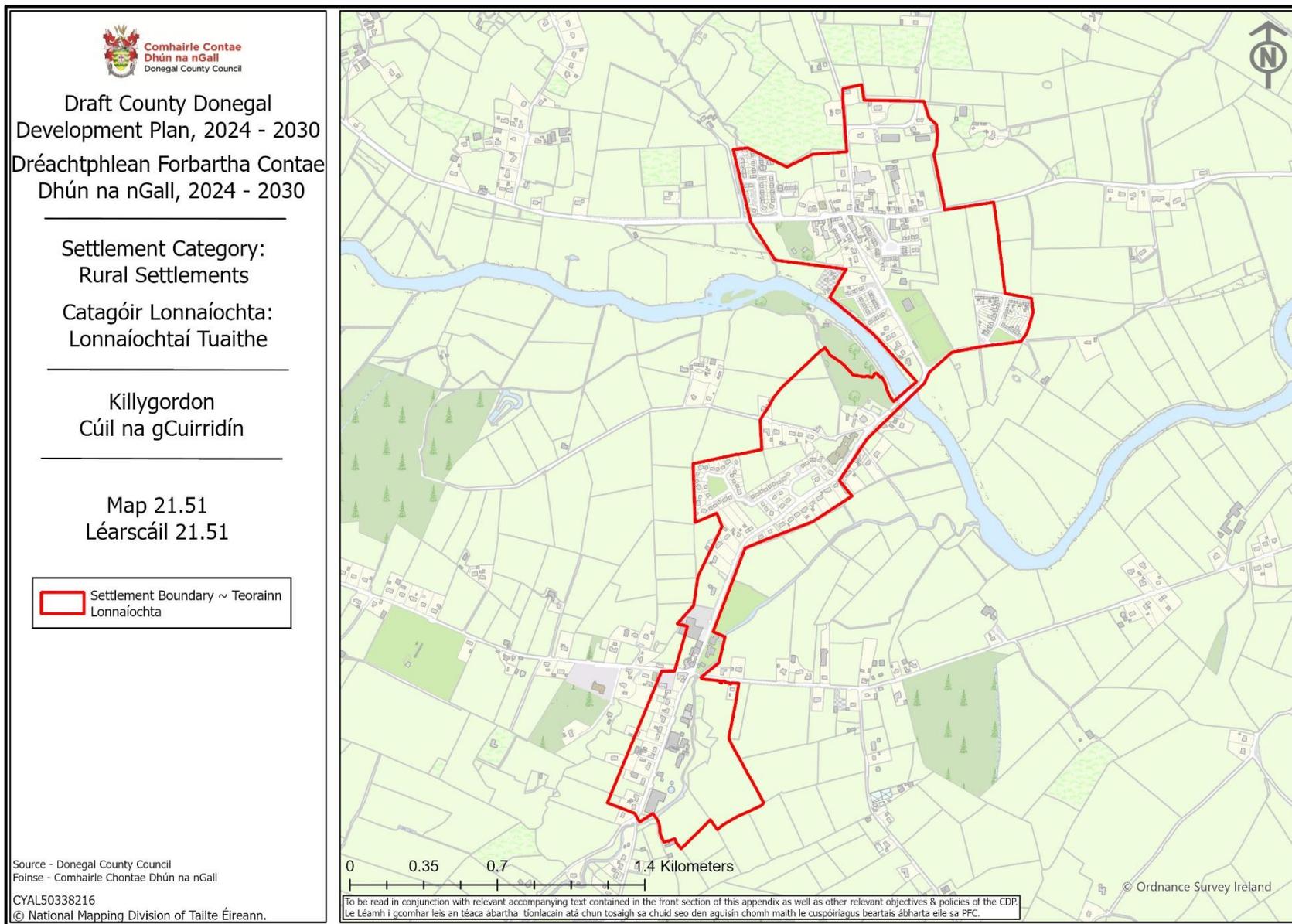


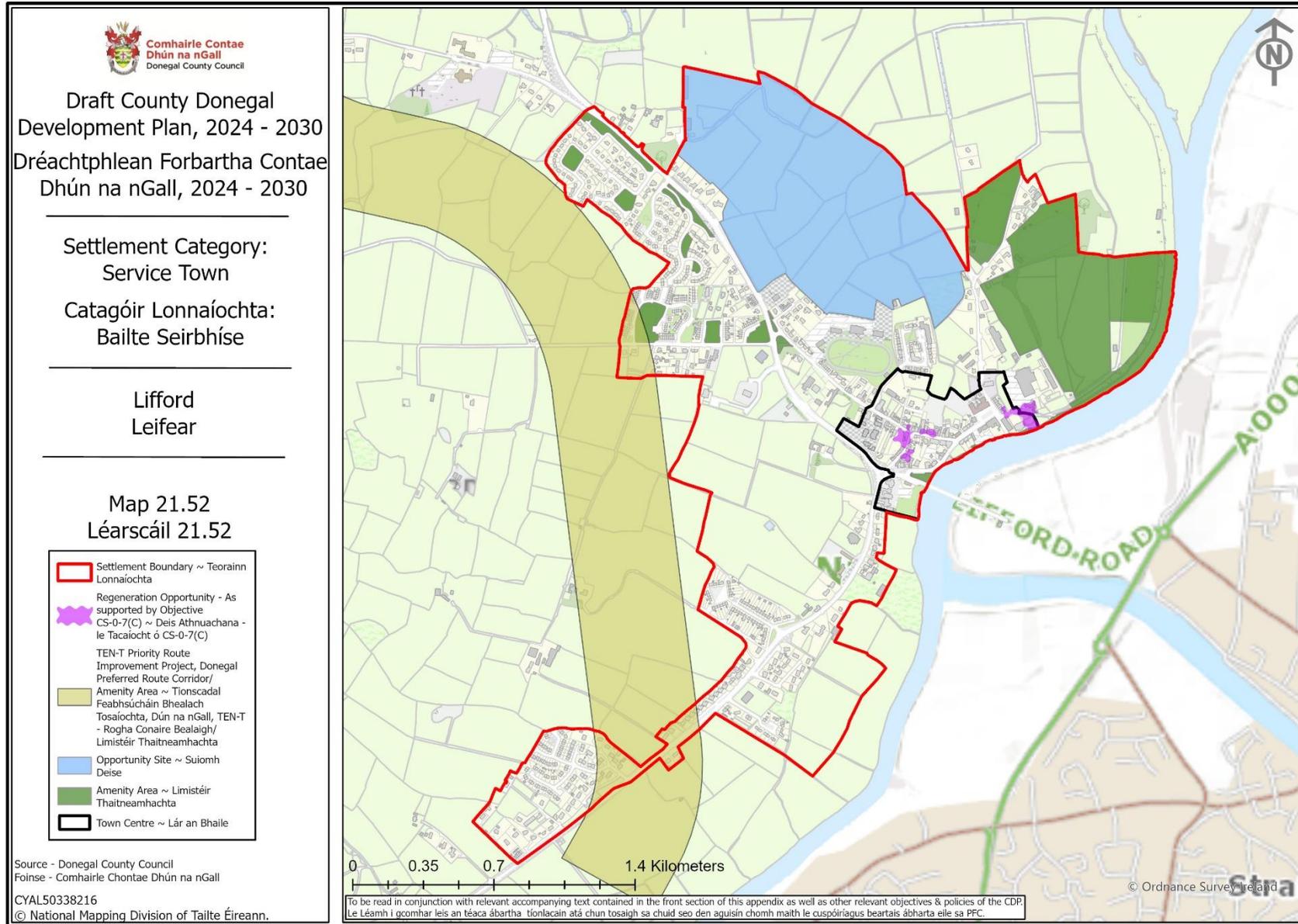


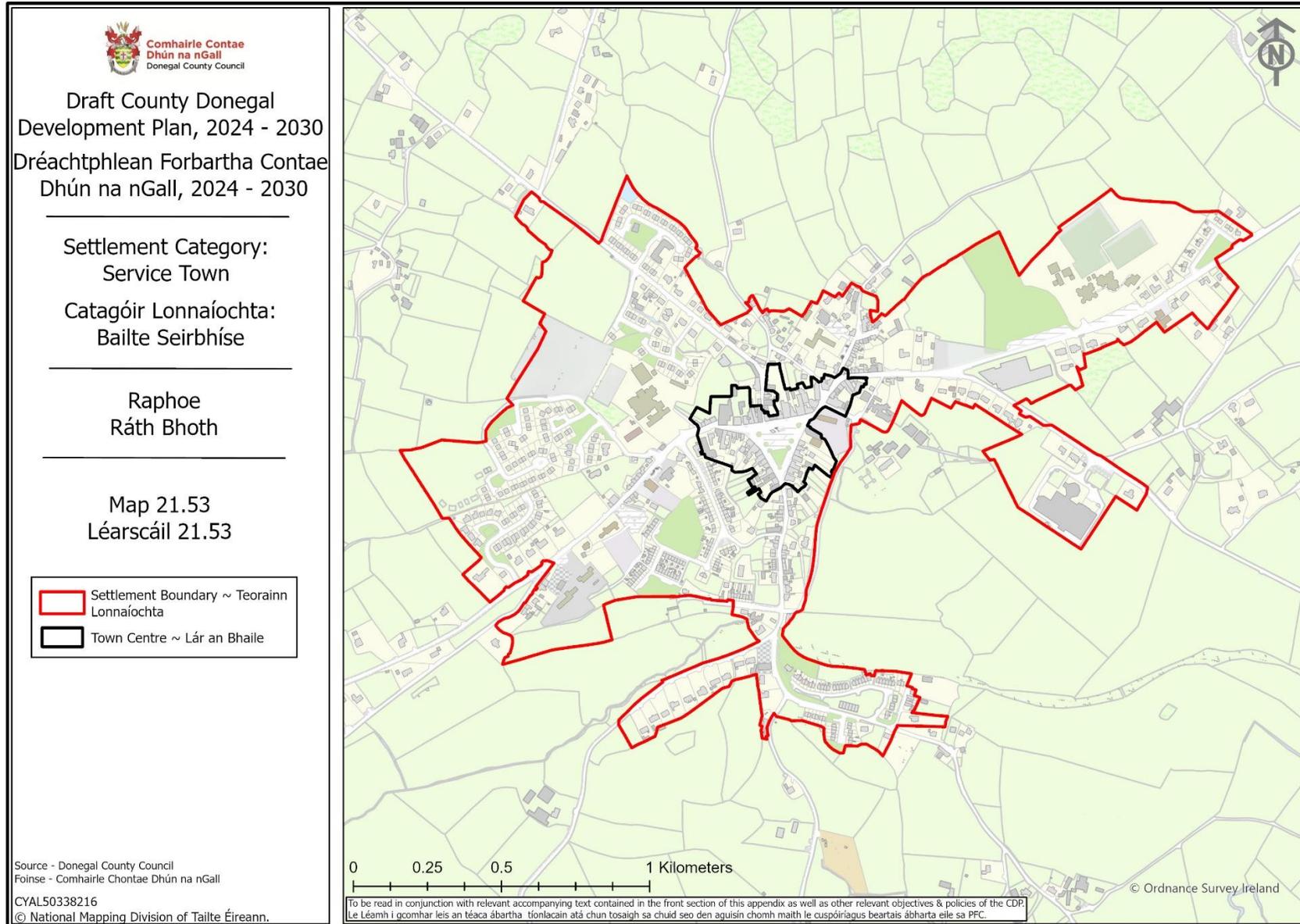












Appendix 1 – Section 28 Statement

Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (As Amended) requires the appending of a statement to the Draft Plan to include information which demonstrates:

'1. How the Planning Authority has implemented the policies and objectives of the Minister contained in Guidelines issued to the Planning Authorities by the Minister regarding any of their functions under the Planning and Development Acts when considering their application to the area, or part of the area, of the Development Plan and the Development Plan, or;

2. If applicable, that the Planning Authority has formed the opinion that it is not possible, because of the nature and characteristics of the area or part of the area of the Development Plan, to implement certain policies and objectives of the Minister contained in the Guidelines when considering the application of those policies in the area or part of the area of the Development Plan and shall give reasons for the forming of the opinion and why the policies and objectives of the Minister have not been so implemented.'

The table below addresses these requirements.

Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities, June 2022	The Draft Plan has been prepared having full regard to the key elements of the Guidelines. In particular, careful attention was paid to aligning the Draft in terms of: the <u>Core Strategy</u> (refer to the Settlement Strategy, overall housing allocations, and recognition at the national and regional level of Letterkenny as a Regional Centre; <u>Sustainable development and regeneration</u> (refer in particular Chap. 3 Core Strategy, Chap. 4 Climate Change, Chap. 5 Towns and Villages, Chap. 6.2 Urban Housing, and Chap. 7 Economic Development); <u>Climate change</u> (refer Chap. 3 Core Strategy, Chap. 4 Climate Change, Chap 9 Natural Resources Development, and Chap. 11.1 Biodiversity); Heritage and landscape (refer Chap 11 Natural and Built Heritage).
Sustainable Rural Housing Development Guidelines, April 2005	Having regard to the more up-to-date strategic rural housing guidance contained in the NPF, the Draft Plan (refer Chap. 6.3: 'Rural Housing' was prepared to align with the provisions of the national document.
Retail Planning Guidelines, April 2012	The retail policies contained in Chap. 7.6 are generally in line with the key elements of the generic policy framework set out in the Guidelines in terms of, inter alia: preserving the vitality and viability of centres; proportionality of development to settlements in the context of the Core Strategy; and the requirement for retail impact assessment where justified.
Childcare Facilities Guidelines, June 2001	Chapter 12.2: 'Childcare' has been prepared having regard to the Guidelines in relation to the optimum location for new childcare facilities to facilitate localised provision, accessibility and sustainable development (Policy CC-P-3 refers).

Wind Energy Development Guidelines, 2006; & Interim Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Statutory Plans, Renewable Energy and Climate Change, 2017.	Chapter 9: 'Natural Resources Development' is generally consistent with the broad support for renewable energy development contained in these Guidelines. The first paragraphs also note the additional national policy context as contained in NSO8 and NPO55 of the NPF.
Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas-Guidelines for Planning Authorities, May 2009 and; Best Practice Urban Design Manual, May 2009	Addressed in general terms (refer Policy UB-P-7, inclusive of footnote).
Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, July 2022	Addressed in general terms (refer Policy UB-P-7, inclusive of footnote).
The Planning System and Flood Risk Management- Guidelines to Planning Authorities, November 2009	Chapter 8.4: 'Flooding' has been prepared having full regard to the guidelines. A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment was prepared by specialist consultants. The SFRA has had a significant 'precautionary' influence on the three Area Plans and Settlement Frameworks contained in the Draft Plan. The precautionary approach is also reflected in the general policy framework contained in Objective F-O-1 and policies F-P-1 to F-P-4.
The Provision of Schools and the Planning System- Code of Practice for Planning Authorities	Chapter 13.3: 'Primary, Post-Primary and Third Level Education' directly references these Guidelines and includes policies arising (refer Policies CC-P-1, CC-P-2, CC-P-4 and CC-P-5).
Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines, January 2012	<p>A key policy matter contained in these Guidelines of particular significance for Donegal is that of the general presumption against the formation of new accesses, or the intensification of existing accesses, on lands adjoining National Roads to which speed limits greater than 60 kmh apply (as contained in Section 2.5 of the Guidelines).</p> <p>The relevant Draft Plan policy is Policy T-P-12 that provides for possible derogation for the development of one-off rural houses impacting on the National Secondary Road within the section of the N56 National Secondary Road between the Five Points Junction (Killybegs) and the Mountain Top Letterkenny.</p>
Quarries and Ancillary Activities, 2004	Chapter 9.2: 'Extractive Industries' has been prepared having regard to the Guidelines. Refer in particular to Policy EX-P-2.

Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidelines for Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities, 2022	Section 1.2 of the Environmental Report notes the requirement for adherence to these Guidelines and eg. confirms adherence to the key steps in the SEA process inclusive of scoping. The Authority would emphasise that significant resources have been devoted to the preparation of the Environmental Report.
Nature-based Solutions to the Management of Rainwater and Surface Water Runoff in Urban Areas Water Sensitive Urban Design Best Practice Interim Guidance Document	Due regard given. Refer Policy F-P-2 in Section 8.4: 'Flooding.
Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning, Dec. 2020	Methodology applied to inform housing supply targets. Refer Chap. 3: 'Core Strategy', Section 3.6.

