

CHAPTER 4

TOWNS & VILLAGES





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4.0 Towns & Villages

4.1 Introduction

One of the main tenets of the **National Planning Framework** is delivering compact growth within the heart of our towns and villages and is a new direction in planning for the country's future growth. This ambition has cascaded down through the **Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies** and is central to the delivery of the recently published **Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland** and **Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025**. This chapter sets out the policies and objectives that will protect and enhance the unique identity and character of our towns and villages and improve quality of life and well-being. This will be delivered through good placemaking underpinned by urban design, with the creation of attractive vibrant town centres and public spaces that promote and facilitate positive social interaction and support the needs of a healthy active inclusive community.

The settlement structure in the County consists of different categories of settlements ranging from large urban towns to small rural villages. These settlements have an important function at a local, county and regional level. The ongoing evolution and regeneration of our towns and villages is vital in providing important retail uses, and also the provision of a range of other uses.

4.1.1 Climate Change

Kerry County Council will seek to incorporate the policies of the National Climate Action Plan, The European Green Deal, and the principles of The European New Bauhaus into the regeneration of all the towns and villages as part of its commitment to tackling the challenge of climate change.

The future development of towns and their revitalisation will focus on the development of higher-density neighbourhoods, co-working opportunities, smarter use of information technologies, reduction in vehicular traffic and the development of a circular economy.

4.1.1.1 Renovation Wave Strategy

The Renovation Wave Strategy is a new concept which seeks to achieve a deep renovation of a significant amount of the existing building stock across the EU. It is used as a mechanism to reduce energy consumption and consequently carbon emissions and has been identified by the EU as one of the flagships for the Recovery and Resilience Facility that will help rebuild our economy after Covid 19. In addition, the 2030 Climate Target Plan points to energy efficiency as an essential component for action and identifies renovation as key to closing the energy efficiency gap and delivering further energy savings by 2030. It is the policy of the council to encourage the renovation and reuse of existing underutilised properties.

4.2 Urban Regeneration and Compact Growth

Kerry County Council recognises that there is a changing profile and function of towns and villages and that they have faced considerable challenges in recent years to retain vibrancy and vitality. Building critical population mass and addressing the challenges of town centre/village renewal is a key objective of this Plan to ensure the long-term sustainability of many of the settlements in terms of sustainable jobs growth and retail sales.

Kerry's towns and villages all have their own strengths and character from a social, cultural, heritage and economic perspective. They create local distinctiveness, identity and sense of place and are traditionally where major social and economic activity takes place. They are a place for people to meet, shop, engage with their community, act as central places for rural areas, and also provide a base for local government and public services.



4.2.1 Policy Context

Town Centres First

The Programme for Government 2020 committed to a ‘Town Centre First’ policy approach, founded on the Town Centre Health Check research, to ensure that our cities and towns become vibrant places for living and working in by bringing vacant and urban building stock back into use.

The Town Centre First approach recognises the town centre’s role at the core of a vibrant community. The approach prioritises a Town Centre First approach to the regeneration of our towns and villages, using the Town Centre Health Check (TCHC) framework to gather data and lead actions. The Government has indicated that it is committed to this approach and it is anticipated that further policy at a national level will be developed in this area over the lifetime of the Plan. Where appropriate public services like education, health and government offices should be located in town centres, adding to the overall mix of facilities, amenities and activities which are on offer.

When considering advancing local authority initiatives, and submitted development proposals, the Council will adopt the town centre first approach in a manner consistent with the principles of compact growth and mixed-use development, as committed to in the ‘Programme for Government’.

Kerry County Council aims to achieve this through consolidation, active land management and by prioritising development on infill and brownfield sites. The Plan aims to provide a suitable mix of housing and supporting amenities, co-ordinated investment in infrastructure to support economic competitiveness and create an attractive, high-quality living and working environment. A tailored approach to urban development will be applied and will be linked to the emerging objectives and actions of **Housing for All** and to investment through the **National Rural and Urban Regeneration and Development Funds**, with a particular focus on:

- Tackling vacancy, dereliction, and underutilisation of properties/land
- Encouraging a balance between employment and population growth
- Reversing the stagnation or decline of many smaller settlements, by identifying and establishing new roles and functions and enhancement of local infrastructure and amenities
- Addressing the legacy of rapid unplanned growth/edge of town growth, by facilitating amenities and services catch-up

By engaging an integrated approach to making the town centre more accessible to visitors through a variety of methods, including improved signage, public realm and by highlighting key buildings, parks, and open spaces it is hoped the deep historical and cultural identity of the town centre will emerge and that towns will become more appealing as a place to live, work and visit.

It is the policy of the Council to recognise and emphasise the potential for greater residential and commercial use within the historic cores of the towns and villages where many opportunities for intensification of residential uses exist.

It is Council policy to be proactive in piloting combined local authority and private investment to stimulate high quality individual housing or private site development to attract population growth and further investment in villages, subject to resource availability.

Town Centre Health-Check (TCHC)

The National Planning Framework (NPF) 2040 supports the revitalisation of the historic county town. The Heritage Council – RGDATA National Pilot TCHC training programme has been a catalyst for bringing key stakeholders together to ensure a vibrant future for towns and to enhance the quality of life for citizens and visitors alike.



The Town Centre Health-check programme raises awareness, understanding and appreciation of the critical role that historic town centres play and the wide-ranging impacts that their vitality and viability have on overall socio-economic, environmental, and cultural growth and development, and on quality of life for citizens and visitors alike. The local authority has a key role to play in this area, both by directly carrying out works in town centres and also by coordinating the work of relevant stakeholders.

A number of Town Centre Health Checks have been carried out across the county. The council will continue to undertake and support the preparation of these reports. The results of each of these analyses will inform policy responses and initiatives in collaboration with communities and stakeholders to support the vibrancy and vitality of town centres.

4.2.2 Brownfield Sites

A number of these development sites have been specifically identified as opportunity sites. These sites will be a key focus for the delivery of sustainable compact growth objectives. These sites are strategic in nature and scale and have been or will be subject to a regeneration plan or master plan. The sites are identified in the three town plans of Tralee, Killarney, and Listowel and in the existing and future local area plans.

4.2.3 Vibrant Cores and Compact Growth

The pattern of urban growth targeted in the NPF and RSES is population and employment led, recognising that enterprise development is drawn to urban locations by market forces, accessibility, innovation supported by higher education institutions and quality of life. Kerry County Council is committed to a plan led approach to regeneration and compact development to sustain existing and create new sustainable communities in line with the shared vision of the NPF and RSES and to transition to a low carbon, climate resilient county.

COVID 19 has had a huge impact on all of our lives. The global pandemic has highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of our urban areas and at the same time has generated ideas for change and adaptation for the future of towns and villages. Remote working has become a reality for many people and there are opportunities for co-working hubs which would decrease travel and commuting and would also help in revitalising our town centres in terms of increased footfall which would in turn support local shops and businesses.

This plan aims to harness these new employment opportunities and maximise new funding streams to improve the quality of Kerry's Towns and Villages by applying the principles of Placemaking. Placemaking involves supporting existing communities, and the creation of new sustainable communities by providing accessible, safe, and distinct built environments that reflect the unique character, heritage and identity of each settlement supported by the creation of safe and attractive public places.

Urban Regeneration and Compact Growth

It is an objective of the Council to:

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| KCDP 4-1 | Support and facilitate the objectives and actions in Housing for All (HfA) to regenerate towns and villages, to tackle dereliction, vacancy, to deliver site assembly opportunities and to promote the sustainable development of land to achieve compact growth and increased population in these centres. |
| KCDP 4-2 | Facilitate and support the sustainable development of towns and villages of sufficient scale and quality to be drivers of growth, investment, and prosperity. |
| KCDP 4-3 | Preserve the architectural heritage of towns and villages and promote conservation-led regeneration and the re-use of buildings where possible. |

KCDP 4-4	Target a range of current national funding mechanisms to facilitate the rejuvenation of town centres and public realms in towns and villages.
KCDP 4-5	Support Town Centre Health Check Reports in the county's towns and use the results to inform policy responses and initiatives in collaboration with communities and stakeholders.
KCDP 4-6	Facilitate and support the development of an Action Plan for Town Centre Renewal for Key Settlements in collaboration with communities and stakeholders.

4.2.4 Placemaking

Quality design and placemaking are emphasised throughout the NPF and RSES, as mechanisms to improve quality of life for all. The NPF states that: “quality of design is critical for making places attractive and distinctive. Architectural quality and well-designed spaces can help to enhance our urban areas and create desirable places in which people want to live, work or visit and contribute to ongoing quality of life and well-being.”

Placemaking is a people centred approach to the planning, design and management of all public spaces and built form areas. It has been shown to have a positive effect on the vitality and vibrancy of our town centres and villages. Creating a sense of place fosters engagement and a sense of belonging within our settlements encouraging economic vitality and enhancing the character of our urban spaces. It can enhance wellbeing through the provision of green space, active space, and social space. In addition to achieving compact growth, placemaking strengthens the connection between people and the place they live and work and serves the needs of the whole community.

Placemaking encompasses the following:

- Urban Design and Built Environment
- Accessibility and Mobility
- Public Realm
- Sustainable Travel
- Sense of Place
- Healthy Communities
- Environment and Green Infrastructure
- Enterprise Development



Figure 4.1: The Place Diagram – From the Project for Public Spaces, Inc.



It is the policy of the Council to support initiatives to strengthen and improve the physical environment of towns and villages and encourage positive place-making. The council promotes the development of a quality public realm and supports the initiatives for renewal and regeneration of the towns and villages by placing a particular focus on identified ‘retail core areas’ and designated regeneration and opportunity sites.

Placemaking
It is an objective of the Council to:
KCDP 4-7 Ensure the creation of attractive, liveable, well designed, high-quality urban places that are home to diverse and integrated communities that enjoy an enhanced quality of life and well-being.

4.2.5 Urban Design and Built Environment

People friendly Universal design is essential in the creation of an attractive urban environment that can be used by all people. Sustainable models of urban development can deliver quality and maximise the advantages and opportunities of more compact growth based on increased population and employment density. The quality of design is critical for making places attractive and distinctive.

The council will promote high architectural quality and well-designed spaces in order to enhance urban areas and create desirable places in which people want to live, work, or visit and contribute to ongoing quality of life and well-being.

As the majority of future population growth will need to be accommodated in urban areas, it is critical that the Key Towns and the other main towns of the County are in a position to sustain balanced regional development by attracting people and investment.

The quality of the urban environment on offer in these urban areas is critical in this regard and urban design has a key role to play in creating and maintaining successful places. The defining qualities of successful urban places include a pride of place, ease of movement, quality of the public realm and inclusivity.

Kerry County Council has sought to improve the overall appearance of the County’s towns and villages in recent years through Pride of Place Initiatives, Tidy Towns Initiatives, Built Heritage investment schemes and through policies contained within Local Area Plans and through effective development management and enforcement.

It is the policy of the Council to work closely with local communities in implementing village design plans that have been prepared in a public consultation process whilst ensuring that such plans are consistent with adopted Local Area Plans and development objectives contained in the County Development Plan.

The role of urban design in creating sustainable communities with particular reference to design and layout of housing schemes needs to be promoted.



Figure 4.2: Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide 2009



It is the policy of the council to ensure that development proposals are cognisant of the need for proper consideration of context, connectivity, inclusivity, variety, efficiency, distinctiveness, layout, public realm, adaptability, privacy and amenity, parking, wayfinding, and detailed design.

Urban Design and Built Environment

It is an objective of the Council to:

- KCDP 4-8** Facilitate and support initiatives to strengthen and improve the physical environment of the towns and villages with enhanced streetscapes, appropriate shopfront design and provision of improved street lighting, public footpaths, and street furniture.
- KCDP 4-9** Facilitate and support the undergrounding of cables in urban areas.
- KCDP 4-10** Facilitate and support the implementation of Village Design Plans and other community led projects, in a sustainable manner, to enhance village environments and promote consultation and engagement with local communities and stakeholders.
- KCDP 4-11** Ensure compliance with TII Publications DN-GEO-03084 (The Treatment of Transition Zones to Towns and Villages on National Roads) in the interests of consistency in design approach and road safety.
- KCDP 4-12** Promote the guidance principles set out in the 'Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide' (2009), and in the 'Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets' (2019) and promote a more pedestrian friendly environment through the provision of traffic calming measures and improved pedestrian infrastructure.

4.2.6 Accessibility and Mobility

Improved Accessibility and Mobility are essential to ensure that town centres across the County are accessible and accommodate all forms of transport, especially sustainable transport options. Accessibility is a measure of how people of all ages and abilities can use an area. Car park locations, surface quality, pavement and building design can all contribute to the level of accessibility in a given area. Enhancing accessibility, to ensure that everyone can enjoy the amenities and services of town centre areas, is therefore essential. To reverse the trend of car dependency in town centres, and increase enjoyment of town centre areas, it is critical to enhance mobility. Efforts are needed to make town centres across the County more pedestrian and cyclist-friendly to ensure that sustainable modes of travel are encouraged and supported.

4.2.6.1 10-Minute Town

The typical suburban development pattern seen in recent decades in our towns has consisted of individual housing areas often resulting in poor connectivity between these residential areas and key community facilities.

The transport networks associated with this development pattern have been centred on private vehicles, with little attention paid to pedestrian and cycle accessibility. This has fostered car dependency and has tended to undermine the viability and attractiveness of more sustainable modes of travel in towns and villages across the county. Regional Planning Objective 176 of the Southern RSES sets out a detailed objective to attain sustainable, compact settlements within the 10-minute town concept.

The '10-Minute' Town concept is about creating compact connected communities, that can provide high quality and safe links to public transport, services, green spaces and to other neighbourhoods, which will reduce the need to travel and therefore reduce carbon emissions.



Our urban communities need sufficient densities to sustain important local services, public transport networks and realise 10-minute town concepts. A critical mass density is required which can only be achieved by consolidation, compact growth, and walkable communities.

Significant economic, health, climate action and social benefits are to be derived from the realisation of the 10-minute town concept and requires thoroughly integrated land use and transport as well as a proactive, infrastructure led approach to the promotion of attractive active modes. It will be complemented by the Town Centre First policy outlined in the Programme for Government which takes a strategic approach to regeneration of settlements to promote residential occupancy in our towns and villages.

Accessibility and Mobility

It is an objective of the Council to:

- KCDP 4-13** Ensure that all new town centre developments, including developments relating to the enhancement of civic spaces and streetscapes, are based on the principles of universal access.
- KCDP 4-14** Facilitate the development of sustainable compact settlements with the “10-minute” town concepts, whereby, a range of community facilities and services are accessible in short walking and cycle timeframes from homes, with walkways and link routes to Greenways or are accessible by high quality public transport services connecting people to larger scaled settlements delivering these services.
- KCDP 4-15** To prioritise walking routes and to deliver a high level of priority and permeability for walking, cycling and public transport modes, in accordance with the principles of movement, place and permeability as laid out in the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets 2019, All to ensure when consolidating development of higher densities within existing urban centres we create accessible, attractive, vibrant, and safe, places to work, live, shop and engage in community life.

4.2.7 Public Realm

The ‘Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets’ (DMURS) (2019), provides comprehensive guidance in relation to developing and enhancing the public realm. It emphasises particularly how the delivery of permeability and high-quality public realm can assist the promotion and delivery of healthy and sustainable communities. It is also recognised that the integration of nature-based solutions in the public realm, to manage for example urban water run-off, can also have co-benefits for biodiversity and water quality.

It is the policy of this plan that all development proposals, whether in established settlements or in new growth areas, should contribute positively to an enhanced public realm and should demonstrate that the highest quality in public realm design is achieved.

It is also the policy of the council and an objective of this plan to identify, connect and protect green infrastructure resources and enhance their environmental and human benefits. This policy will require partnership and stakeholder engagement from state agencies, local communities, and interest groups.

Public Realm

It is an objective of the Council to:

- KCDP 4-16** Facilitate the preparation of Public Realm Plans to address the challenges relating to the development of the town centre, focusing on the physical enhancement and improvement of the town centre through urban design measures and improved traffic management.
- KCDP 4-17** Support retrofitting initiatives in towns and villages for buildings and public realm spaces.



- KCDP 4-18** Protect, enhance and ensure that existing and proposed developments located within or adjacent to areas of Green Infrastructure incorporate any important biodiversity features into the overall development in a sustainable manner.
- KCDP 4-19** Encourage and facilitate, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, the development of green infrastructure that recognises the synergies that can be achieved with regard to the following:
- Provision of open space amenities
 - Sustainable management of water
 - Protection and management of biodiversity
 - Protection of cultural heritage
 - Protection of protected landscape sensitivities

4.2.8 Shop Fronts, Advertising and Signage

The key towns, historic towns and villages of County Kerry have a variety of traditional and contemporary shop fronts which reflect and complement the character of the settlements. Quality shop fronts enhance the overall attractiveness and character of a town/village centre and make an important contribution to the vibrancy of the towns and villages across the County. Commercial businesses must have specific regard to the importance of quality design in terms of shop fronts, signage, and advertisements. Further details can be found in the KCC Shopfront Design Guidelines published in 2018.

Shop Fronts, Advertising and Signage

It is an objective of the Council to:

- KCDP 4-20** Ensure that traditional shopfronts and signage are retained and that works to existing shopfronts, new shopfronts and streetscape developments are in accordance with Kerry County Council's Shopfront Design Guide 2018 and are of a high-quality architectural design and finish.

4.2.9 Enterprise Development

The concept of placemaking is critical from the perspective of enterprise and wider economic development. Creating vibrant, attractive places to live can enable key economic conditions such as attracting and retaining talent and incentivising Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and other investment. Government policy recognises this and placemaking is identified as a key differentiator in Enterprise 2025, Ireland's National Enterprise Policy 2015-2025. (See Chapter 9 Economic Development).

Enterprise Development

It is an objective of the Council to:

- KCDP 4-21** Promote development and actively seek public and private partners to utilise available space, that can generate more jobs and activity within existing towns and villages, subject to developments meeting appropriate planning standards and in line with growth targets.

4.3 Active Land Management

The achievement of compact growth targets and regeneration will be supported through the implementation of active land management measures which promote the development of infill and brownfield lands, and strategically located greenfield sites that support the principles of consolidated growth.

In addition, there are significant portions of well-located lands adjacent to town and villages centres served by public transport facilities, some of which are in public ownership. Building on the higher policy objectives



set out by the Housing for All Plan relating to the delivery of a new approach to active land management and to increase Social Housing Delivery and broader housing delivery, the Council will work together with the Housing Agency and Land Development Agency to facilitate the assembly/acquisition, financing, and appropriate redevelopment of these sites.

The Council will consider interventions such as site assembly using CPO, demolition and clearance or decontamination and the provision of facilitating infrastructure. When sites are acquired the Council will decide on the most appropriate mechanism to ensure appropriate rejuvenation which may include redevelopment for civic or amenity uses, public and private housing or the release of the land back to the market for redevelopment.

The Council will actively source and leverage funds including the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF), Urban and Rural Regeneration and Development Funds, Climate Activation Fund and Disruptive Technologies Fund to achieve compact growth and regeneration of our towns and villages. In this regard priority will be given to projects which result in social and economic rejuvenation and regeneration and the provision of amenities and services where these are deficient.

4.3.1 Sustainable Infill and Brownfield Development

In accordance with RPO 43 Regeneration, Brownfield, and Infill Development a number of sites have been identified in the town plans for potential redevelopment. An increased level of density will be permitted on these sites subject to appropriate design and integration. Additional incentives to develop these lands also applies such as reduced development contributions and parking requirements.

It is an objective of this plan to encourage the redevelopment and renewal of town and village cores rather than continual expansion and sprawl of settlements out into the countryside. A target of at least 30% of new housing should be delivered within the existing built-up areas of settlements on infill and/or brownfield sites.

4.3.2 Development Contributions Scheme 2017

In order to support the redevelopment of brownfield and infill sites in settlements, Kerry County Council's Development Contributions Scheme 2017 contains reductions for developments on brownfield sites and designated opportunity sites and regeneration areas identified in Local Area Plans and Town Development Plans.

4.3.3 Vacant Sites

The Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 introduced a vacant site levy which can be applied annually by a local authority at a rate of 3% increasing to 7% of the market valuation of the vacant site from 2019.

The levy is intended to act as a site activation and release mechanism to incentivise the development of vacant/backland or idle sites in urban areas identified by planning authorities. The levy also intends to ensure a more efficient return on state investment in enabling infrastructure and to counteract unsustainable urban sprawl.

A vacant sites' register has been set up in accordance with section 6 of the Act and Kerry County Council will explore the use of the register and levy in areas there are large tracts of residentially zoned but undeveloped lands and where there are distinct pressures for housing.

One of the key objectives of **Housing for All** is that where land is zoned for residential purposes and permissions granted that these proposals come to fruition as quickly as possible. This strategy has identified future mechanisms for the unlocking of vacant sites and these proposals are likely to be legislated for over the period of the plan.



4.3.4 Derelict and Vacant Properties

Sustainable development practices require vacant or derelict sites within urban areas to be developed prior to greenfield sites on the outskirts of urban areas where development of such sites is achievable. The development of derelict sites and underutilised sites and buildings will be encouraged in urban areas in the interest of achieving the most efficient use of urban lands and to stimulate regeneration. It is a policy of the Plan to identify sites in a poor state of repair or neglect under the Derelict Sites Act 1990. Derelict sites should be sympathetically renovated in keeping with the character of the area and should be finished in suitable materials.

4.3.5 Repair & Leasing Scheme

The purpose of the Repair and Leasing Scheme is to bring vacant properties in need of repair, back into use for social housing. The scheme aims to rejuvenate properties suitable for town centre housing that would otherwise slip from vacancy and low repair costs into dereliction and prohibitive repair costs. The scheme provides a positive contribution to the socio-economic development of the county's towns.

4.3.6 Buy & Renew Scheme

As an alternative and to complement the Repair and Leasing Schemes the "The 'Buy and Renew' scheme aims to support Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) to purchase and renew housing units that require remediation and make them available for social housing use in areas of housing need. The focus under the scheme, is on older stock, and in particular derelict properties which when complete will improve streetscapes and provide much needed accommodation.

4.3.7 Upper Floors/ 'Living over the Shop'

One of the guiding principles of the RSES 2019-2031 is to, 'Set out measures to reduce vacancy and the underuse of existing building stock and support initiatives that promote the reuse, refurbishment and retrofitting of existing buildings within urban centres'. It is desirable to maintain an element of residential use in or close to town centres as it provides night-time activity. Further, a more substantial residential presence adds to the vitality and viability of a town centre. Unfortunately, residential uses in some of our towns and villages have become limited. As such, proposals for the residential conversion of the upper floors of retail and commercial premises will be favourably considered. Any proposed residential use must respect the historic fabric (if relevant), whilst also providing adequate residential amenity.

In recognising the need to protect the historic fabric of our towns/villages while encouraging people to live in upper floors of retail/ commercial premises, it is not always possible or practical to achieve current residential standards. In this regard, at the discretion of the Planning Authority and subject to protecting residential amenity, a reduction in open space and car parking standards may be considered for 'living over the shop' accommodation proposals particularly in town centre locations. Minimum standards in relation to overall floor areas, storage space and natural light must be complied with in order to protect residential amenity.

Active Land Management

It is an objective of the Council to:

- KCDP 4-22** Implement a programme of active land management to tackle dereliction, vacancy and underutilisation of lands and fragmented patterns of land ownership up to and including compulsory acquisitions and support the implementation of Policies included in Housing for all – A New Housing Plan for Ireland in relation to active land management, dereliction and vacancy, including the emerging Residential Zoned Land Tax.
- KCDP 4-23** Prioritise the regeneration of underused town centre and brownfield / infill lands in order to achieve the sustainable delivery of new housing within the existing urban footprint of settlements in the County.



KCDP 4-24	Facilitate the management of a database of strategic brownfield and infill sites to be regularly updated and monitored so that brownfield re-use can be managed and coordinated with multiple stakeholders.
KCDP 4-25	Support the re-use of existing vacant buildings within town/village centres for various uses including co-working facilities.
KCDP 4-26	Utilise, where appropriate, the provisions of Section 48 and 49 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) to generate financial contributions towards the capital costs of providing local and strategic transport infrastructure, services, or projects in the county, and to incentivise and achieve the National Strategic Outcomes of the National Planning Framework.
KCDP 4-27	Promote the development of vacant residential and regeneration sites in all development centres in the County, as appropriate, in accordance with the provisions of Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland.
KCDP 4-28	Use the Derelict Site legislation to identify and address issues of dereliction within the towns and villages of the County and actively seek to use CPO where necessary.
KCDP 4-29	Encourage the development and renewal of areas, identified in the Town and Local Area Plans, having regard to the Core Strategy, that are in need of regeneration, in order to prevent: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adverse effects on existing amenities in such areas, in particular as a result of the ruinous or neglected condition of any land • Urban blight and decay • Anti-social behaviour and • A shortage of habitable houses or of land suitable for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses.
KCDP 4-30	Encourage residential, social and employment uses in existing under-utilised or vacant building stock as a mechanism to combat vacancy in town centres.
KCDP 4-31	Encourage and support the use of town centre regeneration schemes, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repair & Leasing scheme • Buy & Renew scheme • Living over the shop scheme
KCDP 4-32	Promote and encourage the refurbishment and reuse of the upper floors of retail/commercial premises for residential purposes in town and village centres.
KCDP 4-33	Facilitate a flexible approach in relation to development proposals for residential accommodation in the upper floors of retail/commercial premises based on high-quality design that ensures minimum floor areas, storage space and natural light.
KCDP 4-34	Require that a separate and distinctive point of entry with an identifiable address be provided as part of any proposals for residential development in the upper floors of retail/commercial premises.



4.3.8 Residential Densities and Building Heights

The Ministerial Guidelines, Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009) and the Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines (2018) outline appropriate densities and building heights applicable to settlements of various size and location within these settlements. In addition, Circular letter NRUP 02/2021 also gives further clarity in relation to appropriate densities at the edges of larger towns and within small towns and villages. It is an objective of this plan that residential development proposals have regard to these guidelines and allied Ministerial Guidelines, Sustainable Urban Design Standards for New Apartments (2020).

Residential Densities and Building Heights

It is an objective of the Council to:

KCDP 4-35 Ensure that developments have regard to the Ministerial Guidelines, Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments - Guidelines for Planning Authorities the DHPLG (2020), Urban Development and Building Heights – Guidelines for Planning Authorities DHPLG (2018) and Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (Cities, Towns & Villages) DEHLG (2009).

4.4 Retail

Retail centres throughout the County have experienced significant changes and challenges in recent years. Reduced demand for certain retail goods is complex and multifaceted with some commentators contributing it to a lack of central finance, the emergence of the new digital world and online shopping and greater competition from out-of-town shopping centres and retail parks.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also added to the pressures faced by retailers in relation to public health restrictions which has led to a long-term change in consumer behaviour. It has pushed many SMEs to embrace the online trend and the 'shop local' initiative including 'click and collect', and 'selling direct' via smartphone shopping from social media platforms. It is imperative however that experience driven 'bricks and mortar' shops are retained within our retail core areas in key towns, towns, and villages. The creation of retail hierarchies, improvements in sustainable transport, a usable, safe, public realm and good quality design will improve the attractiveness of town centres thus increasing footfall and vibrancy.

4.4.1 Policy Context

The retail planning policy context for the Development Plan is informed by retail guidance documents at the national and regional levels. The National Development Plan (NDP) sets out a broad strategy aimed at promoting more balanced sustainable development (including retail) throughout Ireland. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020 (RSES) identifies Kerry's main towns of Tralee and Killarney as Key Towns highlighting that retail developments in these larger centres are needed to ensure economic vitality and viability within their shopping cores. Notwithstanding this, the smaller towns and villages within Kerry are also recognised for their important retailing function, albeit on a smaller scale, to serve the day-to-day needs of the people in their hinterlands. The RSES further supports the preparation of a Retail Strategy in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012.

It is the policy of the Council to have regard to the 'Guidelines for Planning Authorities, Retail Planning' (2012), in determining planning applications for retail development. These Guidelines have five key policy objectives, namely: -Ensuring that retail development is **plan-led**.

- Promoting **town/village centre** vitality through a sequential approach to development.
- Securing competitiveness in the retail sector by actively enabling **good-quality development proposals** to come forward in suitable locations.
- Facilitating a shift towards **increased access** to retailing by walking, cycling and public transport which combined can deliver **quality urban design** outcomes.



4.4.1.1 Land-Use Planning and Retail

It is the policy of this plan to reinvigorate the retail sector in the towns and facilitate the potential for further retail growth whilst also retaining the historic character of the town centres. Other aspects of town centre enhancement and economic growth will also be progressed.

A multi-faceted approach to land-use planning is required to achieve this objective including:

- The identification of sites to allow for town centre expansion and to accommodate the needs of modern retail formats,
- Public realm interventions to enhance the character, vibrancy, accessibility, and physical appearance of the town,
- Enhancement of the appearance and usability of public spaces,
- Improved car parking and mobility,
- Actions to make streets more pedestrian and cyclist friendly,
- Working in coordination with landowners and relevant stakeholders to optimise the appearance and use of derelict, vacant and under-utilised sites in the town centre.

4.4.2 Diversity of Town Centre Uses

Maintaining the health of town or village centres requires diversity in the services on offer to the catchment population. A wide variety of different functions in town and village centres is a key element in ensuring the on-going vitality of an area. This vitality is threatened by an overconcentration of one particular type of outlet.

4.4.2.1 Office/Commercial/Educational Developments

The appropriate locations for office/commercial/educational developments would generally be in the Key, Regional and District town centres. These developments need to be flexible to facilitate growth and will be assessed in accordance with relevant development management standards, the size of the proposal in comparison to the size of the centre, the need to ensure a variety of uses in the centre to fully serve its catchment area and the capacity of the centre to absorb any such proposal. These locations should be well served by existing and/or proposed public transport facilities in line with the principles of sustainable development.

It is the policy of the Council to facilitate significant office/commercial/educational development in town centres zoned mixed use (M2).

4.4.2.2 Leisure and Entertainment

Leisure and Entertainment facilities form an essential component of the mix of use required to ensure town centre vibrancy and vitality. They make a particularly important contribution to retaining vibrancy outside of regular business hours.

4.4.2.3 Evening and Late-Night Uses

A healthy night-time economy contributes greatly to the vitality and viability of a town centre. There is a need to ensure that adequate provision is made for evening and late-night activities such as cafes, restaurants, public houses, taxi offices, hot food takeaways and other similar uses. A vibrant night-time economy brings many benefits including increased visitor numbers, passive surveillance, and the creation of a destination for artistic and cultural events.

4.4.2.4 Outdoor Dining

Outdoor dining can make a positive contribution to the vibrancy and vitality of a town/village centre providing passive supervision, increased footfall, and an enhanced atmosphere.

Outdoor dining has become part of the everyday running of hospitality businesses. It has enabled businesses to make the most effective use of the space they have available, both within their establishments and adjacent areas in the public realm. In particular outdoor dining has been an essential element in assisting businesses



to continue to trade during the COVID 19 pandemic. The Council will continue to facilitate outdoor dining (pursuant to licences under section 254) in areas of the public realm, including footpaths and roads where adequate provision can be made for pedestrian and vehicular safety and settlement car parking requirements.

4.4.2.5 Casual Trading

Casual trading at suitable locations can provide useful seasonal dining and/or services. Such entities can also create a vibrant atmosphere and increase footfall. Care however must be had in relation to such facilities so as to ensure that established traders and rate payers are not undermined.

It is Council policy to designate sites as Casual Trading Areas in suitable locations where deemed appropriate. In the implementation of this policy the Council will have regard to the terms of the Casual Trading Act 1995 (or as may be amended from time to time). It is also Council policy to promote organic producers and producer-only products through supporting 'Farmer Markets' and to promote seasonal and craft markets throughout the county.

Diversity of Town Centre Uses

It is an objective of the Council to:

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| KCDP 4-36 | Facilitate a mix of compatible uses that will contribute to an enhanced provision of a range of town centre uses and to consolidate the retail core of towns, including a mix of day and night-time uses. |
| KCDP 4-37 | Promote the development of the town centre as the primary location for retail and as an attractive location for shopping, business, tourism, residential and community life. |
| KCDP 4-38 | Protect the vitality and viability of town centres by ensuring that all significant retail & office developments, with the exception of neighbourhood shops are located in the town centre. |
| KCDP 4-39 | Facilitate outdoor dining proposals pursuant to a licence under section 254 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) in suitable areas of the public realm including footpaths and roads subject to pedestrian and vehicular safety and maintaining adequate car parking to serve the settlement. |
| KCDP 4-40 | Designate sites as Casual Trading Areas in suitable locations where deemed appropriate. In the implementation of this policy the Council will have regard to the terms of the Casual Trading Act 1995 (or any subsequent review of, or amendment to this Act.). |
| KCDP 4-41 | Promote organic producers, craft makers and producer-only products through 'Farmers Markets' at appropriate town and village centres throughout the county. |

4.4.3 Occurrence of Vacancy

Vacancy is a by-product of reduced demand and is more pronounced in certain towns within the County. Relocation of retailing to more peripheral and out of centre locations has the potential to threaten the vibrancy and vitality of many core shopping areas and this plan aims to address this issue in a plan-led, evidence-based approach. There will be a presumption in favour of town centre developments as opposed to large out of town shopping centres and retail parks.

The main retail/commercial area is predominately located along the main street in towns. It is imperative that the vitality and viability of these areas are protected.

It is an objective of this plan to encourage the sustainable expansion in the range and number of retail and commercial services within the designated towns which in turn will provide local employment and improve



the quality of life of the local community. Future mixed use and other non-residential development will be encouraged in the town core on brownfield and infill sites first where appropriate and on sites zoned for such uses or open to consideration under the relevant zoning.

Occurrence of Vacancy

It is an objective of the Council to:

KCDP 4-42 Support and facilitate measures to reduce town centre retail vacancy.

4.4.4 Retailing in the County

A successful retail sector that safeguards existing retail floorspace, as well as providing additional floorspace has an important role to play in revitalising towns centres. The aims of this section are to:

- Ensure that the retail needs of the County's residents are met, in so far as possible, within County Kerry
- Promote retail activity in the core areas of towns and villages in the County
- Ensure that town and village centres are pleasant, safe, accessible, and vibrant and attract the public for shopping and social purposes
- Improve accessibility and ease of movement for all forms of transport in town and village centres.
- Ensure the towns and villages fulfil their retail potential, providing retail services appropriate to the scale and function of the settlement and the surrounding hinterland
- Examine mechanisms that will assist in bringing forward and deliver the development of town centre sites as well as the redevelopment/rejuvenation of underutilised, vacant, and derelict sites for appropriate town centre uses

It is the policy of Kerry County Council to support the vitality and viability of existing town and village centres and facilitate a competitive and healthy environment for the retailing sector into the future, by ensuring that future growth in retail floorspace responds to the identified settlement hierarchy, the town centre first / sequential approach, the appropriate protection of the built environment and the needs of the projected population of the settlement area.

Retailing in the County

It is an objective of the Council to:

KCDP 4-43 Complete a town centre and retail strategy for the entire county within the lifetime of this plan.

KCDP 4-44 Require that new significant retail development be directed to the higher Levels in the Retail Hierarchy for the County and specifically to the core retail areas identified for these settlements.

KCDP 4-45 Ensure that sufficient lands are appropriately zoned for retail development in the settlements of County Kerry to support a level, quantum and form of retail activity that is appropriate to the position of the settlement on the Settlement Hierarchy for the County.

KCDP 4-46 Have regard to the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities and associated Retail Design Manual (2012) in the assessment of planning applications for all retail developments.

KCDP 4-47 Encourage the sustainable expansion in the range and number of retail, commercial and community services/facilities within the settlements in tandem with population growth which in turn will provide local employment and improve the quality of life of the local community.



KCDP 4-48	Maintain and strengthen the vitality, viability and regeneration of the County's Key Towns, Regional Towns, District Towns, Villages, and other settlements by providing for civic, leisure, cultural and tourism attractions while ensuring that retailing remains a core function of these centres, in line with the Retail Hierarchy.
KCDP 4-49	Support the measures and actions identified in the report 'Local Authority Retail Support: Improving our Cities and Towns, June 2015' and the Town Centre Action Plan outlined in 'A Framework for Town Centre Renewal 2017' to address the negative issues associated with vacancy and to ensure that the potential benefits associated with retailing activities is captured for the County's town and village centres.
KCDP 4-50	Ensure the development of Regional Towns as sustainable, vibrant, and prosperous Town Centres within the Retail Hierarchy for the County to meet the retailing needs and offer sufficient retail choice to their local populations and catchment populations.
KCDP 4-51	Facilitate and encourage appropriate year-round retail uses in tourist town centres.
KCDP 4-52	Encourage and facilitate where possible appropriate sustainable retail developments in vacant retail units in town centres.

4.4.4.1 Retail Hierarchy

In keeping with the approach required in the Retail Planning Guidelines (2012) and having regard to the Core Strategy, this table below outlines the retail hierarchy for the county.

Retail Hierarchy	Settlement Hierarchy	Appropriate level of Retail Development
Level 2	Key Towns	Key Towns should offer a full range of types of retail services from newsagents to specialist shops, large department stores, convenience stores of all types, shopping centres and a high level of mixed uses. Key Towns should be well serviced by public transport.
Level 3	Regional Towns	Regional Towns will vary in terms of scale of provision and the size of catchment. Generally, where the town is not close to a Key town and there is a large catchment there should be a good range of comparison shopping with a mix of uses and services. These towns should contain at least one supermarket and smaller scale comparison department store to cater for local needs.
Level 3	District Towns	District Towns should generally provide for one small supermarket ranging in size commensurate with its population and surrounding catchment, a limited range of local shops, supporting services such as a health centre, community facilities and recreation uses. This type of centre should meet the day to day needs of the local population and surrounding catchment.
Level 4	Villages	These centres should meet the basic day to day needs of the surrounding population. These shops can present as a rural focal point with a local post office near to the local primary school or GAA club.
Level 5	Small Village Settlements	These small villages settlements serve smaller rural catchments. They provide local services (often a single shop) with some smaller scale rural enterprises in a number of such villages.

Table 4.1: Summary of Appropriate Level of Retail Development



4.4.4.1.1 Key Towns

Tralee is the highest order retail town in the County having the greatest sphere of influence, catchment population and range of retail facilities and as such is the foremost centre of comparison goods. Killarney is recognised for its importance in tourist retailing and is well connected by public transport and also serves a large population catchment. Both towns have a significant retail base, including both convenience and comparison goods. Additional large-scale comparison shopping should be encouraged to locate in these two Key town centres.

Key Towns

It is an objective of the Council to:

- KCDP 4-53** Encourage sustainable large-scale convenience and comparison retail development in the County to be principally focused at appropriate locations in the Town Centres of the Key towns of Tralee and Killarney in line with the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities and associated Retail Design Manual (2012).
- KCDP 4-54** Develop and promote the Key towns of Tralee and Killarney as sustainable, vibrant, and prosperous Town Centres operating at the highest retail Level within the Retail Hierarchy for the County, and to further strengthen, improve and diversify the retailing performance of Tralee and Killarney within a regional context.
- KCDP 4-55** Facilitate improvements to the quantum and quality of retail offering and function in Tralee and Killarney, and ensure their sustainable development by consolidating, intensifying, and enhancing their existing core retail areas, and by directing new retail opportunities into the core retail areas identified for each.

4.4.4.1.2 Regional Towns

The Regional Towns of Ballybunion, Cahersiveen, Castleisland, Dingle/Daingean Ui Chúis, Kenmare Killorglin, Listowel and Milltown are economically vibrant and vary in terms of scale of retail provision and size of catchment. Generally, these towns have good transport links to larger towns and cities. Where the town is not close to a Key town and there is a large catchment there should be a good range of comparison shopping with a mix of uses and services. These towns should contain at least one supermarket and smaller scale comparison department store to cater for local needs.

Regional Towns

It is an objective of the Council to:

- KCDP 4-56** Facilitate appropriately scaled improvements to the quantum and quality of retail offer and function in the Regional Towns, and ensure their sustainable development by consolidating, intensifying, and enhancing their existing core retail areas, and by directing new retail opportunities into town centres.
- KCDP 4-57** Ensure that the Regional Town Centres have a retail offer that is sufficient in terms of scale, type, and range without adversely impacting on or diverting trade from the higher order retailing locations.
- KCDP 4-58** Encourage and facilitate sustainable tourism related retail developments and initiatives, of appropriate scale, in the vicinity of tourist town centres.



4.4.4.1.3 District Towns, Villages and Small Village Settlements

District Towns

Generally, these are smaller settlements which provide basic convenience shopping and comparison shopping on a limited scale. They provide typically a small supermarket / general grocery store and sub-post office. The challenge for these towns is to ensure they maintain and where possible expand the choice of convenience and comparison shopping to service their residential population.

Villages and Small Village Settlements

Villages and Small Village Settlements act as local service centres providing retailing shops which serve the immediate daily needs of their resident population and in many cases consist of a local grocery store. They have a small sphere of influence and do not compete with higher order retail locations. It would not be appropriate for these centres to undergo significant growth in retail and shopping functions given their relative inaccessibility and nature of their existing population catchments. The challenge will be to ensure that convenience shopping is maintained at an appropriate level.

This plan seeks to ensure the vitality and long-term functioning of towns and villages as it is critically important to ensure vibrant rural communities and making better places to live, work in and visit. It is imperative that development is focused in rural towns and villages to increase the viability of retail and services on the main street.

It is the policy of this Council to prioritise the sustainable development of the main towns in the County to achieve their target populations and enhance their capacity to attract new investment in employment, services, and public transport for the benefit of their own populations and that of their rural hinterlands.

District Towns, Villages and Small Village Settlements

It is an objective of the Council to:

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| KCDP 4-59 | Ensure the development of District Towns, Villages and Small Village Settlements as sustainable, vibrant, and prosperous local centres performing at a level within the Retail Hierarchy for the County to meet the retailing needs of immediate local populations and catchment populations. |
| KCDP 4-60 | Ensure that any new development in District Towns, Villages and small village Settlements respects the scale and character of the existing settlement. |

4.4.4.2 Other Types of Retail

4.4.4.2.1 Online Shopping

Online shopping has a major presence in the Irish retail market. The growth in the online shopping trend is likely to continue for the foreseeable future and retailers will need to build for greater online capacity and plan for safe customer-experience shopping.

Online Shopping

It is an objective of the Council to:

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| KCDP 4-63 | Support and promote the Kerry Local Enterprise Office in supporting all existing retail business with an on-street presence in all Core Retail Areas to establish an online sales platform. |
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4.4.4.2 Tourism Related Retail Developments

It is an objective of the Council to support niche tourism and innovative tourist enterprises to enhance the diversity and quality of local visitor experiences and to stimulate increased visitor numbers in all parts of the county. Any such proposals should not adversely impact Natura 2000 sites'.

Tourism Related Retail Developments

It is an objective of the Council to:

KCDP 4-64 Encourage and facilitate the delivery of sustainable tourism-related retail developments and initiatives, of appropriate scales, located in the vicinity of tourism attractions and amenities.

4.4.4.3 Development Management

All planning applications for all new retail developments will be assessed in accordance with the criteria set out in Volume 6 - Development Management, Standards and Guidelines.

4.4.4.3.1 Fast Food Outlets, Takeaways, Off Licences and Betting Offices.

Fast food outlets, takeaways, off licences and betting offices have the potential to cause noise, littering and can detract from the amenities of an area. Therefore, proposals for new or extended Fast Food Outlets, Takeaways, Off Licences and Betting Offices will be carefully considered, particularly in locations where a proliferation of such uses already exists.

Fast Food Outlets, Takeaways, Off Licences and Betting Offices

It is an objective of the Council to:

KCDP 4-65 Prevent an over-supply or dominance of fast-food outlets, takeaways, off licences, and betting offices in the main streets of towns and villages and shopping centres to ensure that injury is not caused to the amenities of these streets and centres through the loss of retail opportunities.

4.4.4.3.2 Edge of Centre and Out of Centre Retailing

Edge-of-centre sites are generally no more than 300-400m from the primary retail areas in the town whereas out-of-centre retail development is clearly separated from the town centre but within the urban areas identified in the Development Plan. Retail developments of this nature will be directed to town centre locations where it can be demonstrated that there will not be a negative impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre. Proposals for edge-of centre and out of centre retail developments will be assessed having regard to the considerations set out in 'Retail Planning – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012'. In the interest of protecting and enhancing the vitality and viability of town and village centres, it is not envisaged that out-of-centre retail developments will be permitted during the lifetime of this Plan.

Edge of Centre and Out of Centre Retailing

It is an objective of the Council to:

KCDP 4-66 Apply the sequential test to new retail development proposals for edge-of-centre and out of centre retail developments and to assess the impact on the existing town centre having regard to the criteria and considerations set out in 'Retail Planning – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012'.

4.4.4.3.3 Retail Warehousing and Retail Parks

Retail warehousing or a retail park comprises an agglomeration of retail warehouses grouped around a common carpark selling mainly bulky goods. In keeping with the Retail Planning Guidelines (2012) there will be a presumption against further development of out-of-town retail parks in the county.



Retail Warehousing and Retail Parks

It is an objective of the Council to:

KCDP 4-67 Limit the uses within the retail warehousing parks to those defined in the Guidelines for Planning Authorities: Retail Planning (2012), and where it can be demonstrated that there will be no negative impact on the vitality and viability of existing town centres.