



Chapter 3

Core Strategy and Housing

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Aim: To direct and facilitate appropriate and sustainable levels of growth and development throughout Carlow-Graigucullen over the period 2024-2030, with a focus on compact growth, urban regeneration, sustainable travel, and healthy placemaking, in accordance with the Core Strategies contained in the Carlow County Development Plan and the Laois County Development Plan.

The designation of Carlow-Graigucullen as a Key Town is a strategic issue for both regional policy documents and is recognition of the population, economic and employment scale of the town. These factors contribute to the town's role as a self-sustaining regional driver and its inter-regional role due to a location to the north end of the Southern Region and adjacent to the EMRA. In addition, in the regional level settlement hierarchy it is a function of Key Towns like Carlow-Graigucullen to ensure a consolidated spread of growth beyond cities.

From the preliminary results of Census 2022 the CSO settlement boundary of Carlow-Graigucullen recorded a population of 27,351 people (See Table 3.1). It is evident that the population of the joint urban area has been growing steadily since 2006.

3.1 Function, Population and Scale of Carlow-Graigucullen

The Core Strategy for County Carlow is included in Chapter 2 of the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028, and for County Laois in Chapter 2 of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027. These Core Strategies designate Carlow-Graigucullen as a Key Town in accordance with the provisions of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES') for the Southern Region and the Eastern and Midlands Region (EMRA).

Census Period	County Carlow Pop.	County Laois Pop.	Carlow-Graigucullen Joint Urban Area Pop.	Co. Carlow Population Resident in Joint Urban Area	Co. Laois Population Resident in Joint Urban Area
2006	50,339	67,059	20,724	41%	3.7%
2011	54,532	80,458	23,030	42%	5%
2016	56,932	84,697	24,272	43%	5.5%
2022	61,931	91,877	27,351	44%	5.8%

Table 3.1: Population growth and proportion of county populations residing in the joint urban area

3.2 Future Population and Housing Targets

The population and housing targets in the Core Strategies included in the Carlow County Development Plan and Laois County Development Plan were set by the National Planning Framework (NPF), the Implementation Roadmap for the NPF (July 2018), and Section 28 Guidelines ‘Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning’. The policies and objectives of these County Development Plans require that the future growth and spatial development of Carlow-Graiguecullen is in accordance with these Core Strategies.

3.2.1 Carlow Town and Environs

The Core Strategy (Table 2.7) in the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 provides a projected population increase for Carlow Town (including Carlow Environs) by 2028 of 3,107 people. The housing target to accommodate this population growth is identified as 1,330 units, 900 of which are allocated to the former Carlow Town Council area. The allocation of 900 units was arrived at following an analysis of the potential residential capacity of appropriate infill, brownfield, consolidation and strategic lands and sites in the existing built-up footprint of the former Town Council area. Overall, the total figure of 1,300 units represents an allocation of 42.8% of the projected housing target for County Carlow to Carlow Town (including Carlow Town Environs).

Applying the Core Strategy housing unit target figure of 1,330 units to the JULAP results in a projected requirement for 1,663 units to be built over the life of the Plan (See Table 3.2). As the 2024-2030 JULAP period is 2 years beyond the 2022-2028 period of the current Carlow County Development Plan, the overall unit requirement

of 1,663 units has been calculated to take account of:

- The addition of a projected allocation of 444 additional units to cover the additional 2 years. This projected allocation is based on an average per annum calculation (i.e., 1330 units / 6 years = circa 222 units per year).
- The subtraction of the estimated number of 111 units constructed since 2022.

Carlow County Council – Functional Area	Units
Core Strategy unit allocation to 2028	1,330
Plus 2-year projected unit allocation to 2030	444
Less units constructed since 2022	111
Carlow Town and Carlow Town Environs total unit target	1,663
Less Core Strategy unit allocation to former Carlow Town Council area	900
Carlow Town Environs unit target	763

Table 3.2: Housing Unit Allocation to Carlow Town and Carlow Town Environs

3.2.1.1 Carlow Town and Environs - Estimated Residential Land Capacity

As referred to in Section 3.2.1, the current Carlow County Development Plan Core Strategy has allocated 900 units to the former Town Council area, taking account of residential land capacity in the existing built-up footprint. This results in a remaining housing target for the Carlow Town Environs area of 763 units (i.e. 1,663 less 900).

The quantum of ‘New Residential’ zoned land in Carlow Town Environs is circa 27.53 hectares, and extant permissions exist for circa 92 units. This ‘New Residential’ zoned land can deliver an

estimated 688 units, utilising an indicative density of 25 units per hectare in accordance with Chapter 3 (Table 3.3) of the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028. It is considered that there is sufficient zoned land in the environs area to meet the housing target figure of 763 units, taking account of the combined development potential of ‘New Residential’ zoned lands with lands zoned ‘Existing/Infill Residential’ and ‘Commercial/Residential’.

3.2.2 Graiguecullen

The Core Strategy Table (Table 2.16) in the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 identifies a projected population for Graiguecullen by 2027 of 700 people, and an associated housing allocation of 280 units. This figure of 280 units represents 7% of the projected housing target for County Laois to Graiguecullen.

Applying the Core Strategy housing unit target figure of 280 units for Graiguecullen to the JULAP translates into a projected requirement for 276 units to be built over the life of the Plan (See Table 3.3). As the 2024-2030 JULAP period is 3 years beyond the 2021-2027 period of the current Laois County Development Plan, the overall unit requirement of 276 units has been calculated to take account of:

- The addition of a projected allocation of 141 additional units to cover the additional 3 years. This projected allocation is based on an average per annum calculation (i.e., 280 units / 6 years = circa 47 units per year).
- The subtraction of the estimated number of 145 units constructed since 2021

Laois County Council – Functional Area	Units
Core Strategy unit allocation to 2027	280
Plus 3-year projected unit allocation to 2030	141
Less units constructed since 2021	145
Graiguecullen total unit target	276

Table 3.3: Housing Unit Allocation to Graiguecullen

3.2.2.1 Graiguecullen - Estimated Residential Land Capacity

The quantum of ‘New Residential’ zoned land in Graiguecullen is circa 17.65 hectares, and extant permissions exist for circa 106 units. ‘New Residential’ zoned land can deliver an estimated 441 units, utilising an indicative density of 25 units per hectare in accordance with Chapter 13 (Table 13.4) of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027.

3.3 Compliance with Core Strategies

In order to align with the NPF, the RSES’ and the Core Strategies, Carlow County Council and Laois County Council will utilise all policy avenues available to ensure the optimum delivery of residential units, ensuring a focus on compact growth and providing housing within the built-up area. Provision of housing will also focus on creation of successful, well designed, and sustainable communities where new development successfully integrates with existing communities.

The quantum of land zoned ‘New Residential’ in the joint urban area has been based on applying estimated densities per hectare. It should be noted that any planning application for residential development on these lands should adhere to the *Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas*, DEHLG (2009). In addition, the density of development proposal and number of units permissible will be determined at detailed design stage based on a

full assessment of site characteristics, local conditions, design sensitivities and the overall quality of the scheme, and having regard to the development management standards in the Carlow County Development Plan and Laois County Development Plan, along with the relevant Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines.

To ensure continued compliance with the Core Strategies of both County Development Plans, it will also be necessary to monitor the number of residential units permitted and developed on an annual basis. For example, if housing density was to be significantly increased a potential surplus of zoned lands could be generated which, if developed within the lifetime of the JULAP, would result in a greater population than the Core Strategy provided for. Monitoring the number of units permitted and constructed enables a closer alignment between the Core Strategies, the population projections, development activity and all the associated necessary physical, social and community infrastructure in the joint urban area. Refer also to Section 12.2 in Chapter 12 Land Use Zoning Objectives and Implementation.

3.4 Housing

Carlow County Council and Laois County Council acknowledge the need to provide an adequate supply of quality housing to meet existing and future demand in Carlow-Graiguecullen. Housing will be required to cater for existing and changing population requirements, such as:

- Social and affordable housing;
- Renewal/upgrade and replacement of existing stock;
- Student accommodation;
- Smaller families;
- An ageing population; and,
- Accessible homes.

These changing population requirements generate the need for additional housing

responses. For example, student accommodation in the joint urban area has come to form an increasingly important part of the housing sector with the expansion of campus facilities at SETU.

Housing supply must also be informed by the need to create sustainable communities and neighbourhoods with a strong emphasis on quality design and placemaking, and this is reflected in the provisions of Chapters 5 and 8 of this JULAP.

3.4.1 Housing Strategies and Housing Need Demand Assessments (HNDA)

The housing need of Carlow Town and Carlow Town Environs has been evaluated in the Housing Strategy and Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA) adopted as part of the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (Refer to Chapter 3 and Appendix IV). The housing need of Graiguecullen in County Laois has been evaluated in the Housing Strategy and HNDA adopted as part of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 (Refer to Chapter 4 and Appendix 3).

The preparation of the Housing Strategies is a mandatory requirement under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), and they play a key and evidenced based role in translating NPF and RSES housing policies to the local level. The HNDAs underpin and support the Housing Strategies through the provision of long term-estimates of future housing needs and supply and are a requirement of the NPF under National Policy Objective 37 (NPO 37). Further details can be found in Chapter 3 of the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and in Chapter 4 of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027.

As identified in Sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2, this JULAP must cater for an overall housing demand of 1,663 units for Carlow Town and Carlow Town

and Environs, and 276 units for Graiguecullen in County Laois.

3.4.2 Social Housing Requirement

This JULAP will make provision for social housing within the joint urban area in accordance with the Housing Strategies and HDNAs adopted as part of the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027. During the planning application process, social housing will be provided through the application of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), and through local authority and voluntary housing developments.

Housing – Policies

It is the policy of Carlow County Council and Laois County Council to:

- HS. P1:** Ensure that housing is available in Carlow-Graiguecullen to meet the needs of all people through the delivery of an appropriate mix of housing sizes, types, and tenures in suitable locations.
- HS. P2:** Provide for existing unmet housing need as identified by the Carlow County Council and Laois County Council social housing needs assessments through the provision of social and affordable housing using a range of delivery mechanisms.
- HS. P3:** Provide social and affordable housing to meet forecasted future housing need over the period of this JULAP as identified in the HNDAs adopted as part of the Carlow County Development Plan and Laois County Development Plan. New units shall be delivered having regard to the aims and policies of the Core Strategies contained in these County Development Plans and the needs of local communities, including

the need to deliver sustainable development, compact growth, social integration and an appropriate mix of housing types and tenures. Social and affordable housing shall be delivered through a range of mechanisms including provision directly by Carlow County Council and Laois County Council, by Approved Housing Bodies, Repair and Lease Scheme, Buy and Renew and through short- and long-term leases arranged by the Councils with private landlords.

- HS.P4:** Require that an appropriate mix of housing type, tenure, density, and size is provided in all new residential areas and in appropriate brownfield/infill areas to meet the needs of the population of Carlow-Graiguecullen, including the needs of older people, people with disabilities, and including social housing, and affordable housing.
- HS. P5:** Encourage the reuse of upper floors above commercial premises in Carlow-Graiguecullen for residential accommodation, subject to compliance with proper planning and environmental criteria.
- HS. P6:** Promote measures that encourage the reuse and refurbishment for residential use of underutilised, vacant, and derelict buildings and sites within the built-up area of Carlow-Graiguecullen.

Housing – Objective

It is an objective of Carlow County Council and Laois County Council to:

- HS. O1:** Promote the provision of social housing in Carlow-Graiguecullen in accordance with the Housing Strategies/HNDAs and Housing Delivery Action Plans for Carlow County Council and for Laois County

Council, and Government Policy as outlined in 'Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland' and any future strategies.

3.4.3 Specific Needs Housing

There are a number of groups with specific design and planning needs including older people, people with disabilities, the travelling community, and the homeless/emergency accommodation. This JULAP, along with the overarching County Development Plans for County Carlow and County Laois, places an emphasis on providing for these groups and on universal access and design. The mix and design of new housing for specific needs in Carlow-Graiguecullen will be influenced by a range of factors including:

- Consideration of the nature of the existing housing stock and existing social mix in the area;
- Desirability of providing for mixed communities;
- Provision of a range of new housing types and tenures;
- The need to provide a choice of new housing types, suitable and adaptable for all age groups and abilities; and,
- The need to cater for groups with specific housing needs.

Specific Housing Needs – Policies

It is the policy of Carlow County Council and Laois County Council to:

- HS. P7:** Support the provision of single storey units in residential schemes in Carlow-Graiguecullen that would provide older persons with the option of downsizing if desired.
- HS. P8:** Support independent and/or assisted living, respite, and residential care facilities for those with a disability in

appropriate locations in Carlow-Graiguecullen, including provision for live-in care where required, when designing adapted housing units.

HS. P9: Require development to be in accordance with the Principles of Universal Design and the National Disability Authority's publication 'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach', and to have regard to the Government's 'National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021'.

HS. P10: Work with relevant agencies and voluntary groups to support the provision of accommodation for the homeless and for those in need of emergency accommodation and crisis facilities in Carlow-Graiguecullen.

3.4.4 Student Accommodation

This JULAP recognises that the provision of appropriate student accommodation for SETU and for Carlow College St. Patrick's will enable Carlow-Graiguecullen to continue to develop as a regional centre for education and research. Purpose built student accommodation is generally of a higher density with a range of ancillary facilities appropriate for student living. Student accommodation should be located convenient to the educational facility by foot, bicycle, or public transport and generally, either within the college campus or appropriately zoned and located lands within the joint urban area. Applications for purpose-built student accommodation in Carlow Town and Carlow Town Environs shall comply with the Development Management Standards in Chapter 16 of the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (Section 16.8.15). Student accommodation proposals in Graiguecullen County Laois may also be considered on their merits, taking account of Chapter 13 of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 (Section

13.2), and subject to compliance with proper planning and environmental considerations.

Student Accommodation – Policy

It is the policy of Carlow County Council and Laois County Council to:

SA. P1: Facilitate provision of high-quality purpose built and professionally managed student accommodation in Carlow-Graiguecullen. Purpose built student accommodation should be provided on campus or in suitable locations which have convenient access to the colleges (particularly by foot, bicycle, or public transport) in a manner compatible with surrounding residential and environmental amenities.

3.5 Delivering Compact Growth

Delivering compact growth is an overriding objective of the National Planning Framework (NPF), and of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES') for the Southern Region and the Eastern and Midlands Region. As required under Objective 3(c) of the NPF at least 30% of all new housing units must be delivered within the existing urban footprint of Carlow Town i.e., former Town Council area. In satisfying this target for compact growth, an analysis of appropriate brownfield and infill sites with potential capacity to deliver new homes was carried out for the town to inform the completion and adoption of the Core Strategy (Table 2.7) in the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028. The Core Strategy estimates that 100% of all new housing units in the former town council area can be accommodated on brownfield/infill lands. In underpinning this support for compact growth in the Core Strategy, the policies, objectives, and related provisions of this JULAP support:

- **Active Land Management:** Including the key role of the Town Centre First Policy, Town Regeneration Officers, Croí Cónaithe (Towns), Vacant Homes Officer, and the Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT).
- **Project Carlow 2040 – A Vision for Regeneration:** Including vision, guiding principles, regeneration action plan, and six intervention areas.
- **Settlement Consolidation Sites and Regeneration Sites:** Including their potential to deliver wider regeneration benefits to the town centre and significant housing provision.
- **Densities/Increased Heights:** Including potential to deliver indicative densities of >35 units per hectare and increased heights at appropriate locations in the Town Centre subject to compliance with proper planning and environmental considerations.

Refer to Chapter 5 Urban Design and Regeneration in this JULAP for further details, and to Chapters 3, 12, and 16 of the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 as applying to Carlow Town.

Compliance with Core Strategies – Policies

It is the policy of Carlow County Council and Laois County Councils to:

- CS. P1:** Deliver compact and sustainable growth in Carlow-Graiguecullen with at least 30% of new homes delivered within the existing built-up footprint and to promote a town centre first approach through the development of strategic brownfield and infill sites.
- CS. P2:** Support the continued growth and sustainable development of Carlow-Graiguecullen, including its role as a regional and interregional growth driver,

and to fulfil its role as a Key Town with a focus on sustainable development, quality of life and economic investment.

CS. P3: Encourage and support urban regeneration in Carlow-Graiguecullen, and in Carlow Town through the implementation and delivery of the objectives of Project Carlow 2040 – A Vision for Regeneration and pursue suitable funding mechanisms as they arise to bring forward the realisation of the Strategy.

Compliance with Core Strategies – Objectives

It an objective of Carlow County Council and Laois County Council to:

CS. O1: Implement all land use planning policy objectives, and standards in a manner which takes account of and is consistent with the Core Strategies in the Carlow County Development Plan and Laois County Development Plan, in order that development over the period of this JULAP shall strengthen the role of Carlow-Graiguecullen as a Key Town and deliver compact growth and sustainable development.

CS. O2: Monitor the scale, type, tenure, and location of constructed and permitted development in Carlow-Graiguecullen during the lifetime of this JULAP and apply appropriate development management standards to development proposals to ensure compliance with the Core Strategies in the Carlow County Development Plan and Laois County Development Plan, to achieve the delivery of strategic plan-led and co-ordinated development within the joint urban area.

CS. O3: Support and facilitate the delivery of the necessary physical and social infrastructure to support all residential development.

CS. O4: Focus new enterprise development into lands identified for Enterprise and Employment, Industry, and Warehousing uses.

CS. O5: Prioritise the development of town centre lands as the commercial core for the joint urban area with a mix of uses to ensure the vibrant and balanced development of the town centre.

CS.O6: Support the transition of Carlow-Graiguecullen to a low-carbon and climate resilient urban area through the promotion of sustainable development patterns, sustainable and active travel, and sustainable energy use, in accordance with the NPF, the RSES' for the Southern Region and Eastern and Midlands Region, and the National Climate Action Plan.

CS. O7: Support and facilitate development on zoned lands and consolidation sites in Carlow-Graiguecullen based on the policies, objectives and related provisions of the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 as appropriate.

CS. O8: Promote and support the role of active land management measures in the redevelopment of buildings and land in Carlow-Graiguecullen in need of regeneration, including the use of statutory powers available through the Derelicts Sites Act, Housing Act, Urban Regeneration and Housing Act, and Residential Zoned Land Tax, together with the role of the Town Centre First

Policy, Town Regeneration Officers, Croí Cónaithe (Towns), and Vacant Homes Officer.

development within the identified settlement.

3.7 A Tiered Approach to Land Zoning

The NPF requires this JULAP to adopt a tiered approach to land use zoning to ensure a co-ordination of proposed 'New Residential' land use zonings for undeveloped lands with existing and planned infrastructure and services. In accordance with this requirement an Infrastructure Assessment (IA) has been prepared alongside this JULAP to assess the suitability of lands for future development. The IA, included as Appendix V, has been carried out utilising a standardised Tier 1 and Tier 2 methodology termed in the NPF as a Tiered Approach to Zoning (TAZ)¹. The TAZ can be summarised as follows:

- **Tier 1 - Serviced Zoned Land:** Comprises zoned lands that can accommodate new development as they can connect to existing services and there is service capacity available. The NPF states that these lands will generally be positioned within the existing built-up footprint of a settlement or be contiguous to existing development lands and will be within the footprint of or spatially sequential within the identified settlement.
- **Tier 2 - Serviced Zoned Land:** Comprises zoned lands that are not currently sufficiently serviced to support new development but have the potential to become serviced during the lifetime of the development plan. The NPF states that these lands may be positioned within the existing built-up footprint of a settlement or be contiguous to existing development lands or Tier 1 zoned lands, where required to fulfil the spatially sequential approach to the location of new

¹ National Policy Objectives 72a-c and Appendix 3 in the NPF