

CHAPTER 4
ENTERPRISE AND
EMPLOYMENT

Chapter 4 Enterprise and Employment

Aim: To strengthen the employment and economic profile of County Carlow, building on the strategic designation of Carlow Town as a regional and inter-regional growth driver, maximising the strategic location of the town along the M9 between Dublin and Waterford City, the N80 linking to the Midlands, supported by the District Towns of Tullow and Muine Bheag together with the smaller towns and villages thereby creating more balanced and sustainable communities.

4.0 Introduction

Planning shapes the environment in which people live and work and it plays a key role in supporting the wider national economic, employment and enterprise objectives. With the establishment of the Local Enterprise Office under the Local Government Reform Act 2014, Carlow County Council has a more direct role in supporting economic development and employment opportunities by the preparation of a Local Economic and Community Plan, providing and supporting the delivery of infrastructure, implementing urban and rural economic initiatives with associated economic supports, by the zoning of appropriate lands for employment purposes and by ensuring that planning policy and objectives are supportive of business.

It is recognised that the opportunities for economic growth and investment in the immediate future are impacted arising from the Covid 19 Pandemic. Notwithstanding same, the Council's Economic Strategy aligned

with proactive planning will seek to co-ordinate investment with economic growth, making the County an attractive location for new business development. While the strategic role of Carlow Town is recognised for the future development of the County and Region it is important that enterprise development and economic growth can be facilitated throughout the County thereby seeking to achieve balanced and sustainable growth across County Carlow. The importance of rural development and the role of the rural economy in County Carlow is addressed in detail in Chapter 14.

4.1 Strategic Aims

This Development Plan sets out an economic strategy to deliver on the regional and inter-regional role for Carlow Town and to achieve greater prosperity in all areas of the County, in accordance with the following objectives:

- To promote and facilitate Carlow Town as a driver of economic growth at a regional and inter-regional level;
- To maximise the economic assets of the County including third level institutes, the strategic location of Carlow proximate to Dublin and Waterford Cities along the M9 and the Midlands along the N80, attractive towns and villages and rural areas;
- To maintain, adapt and promote sufficient employment areas in the District Towns of Tullow and Muine Bheag;
- To ensure the benefits of economic growth and prosperity are spread to all parts of the County;
- To maintain and promote a broad economic and employment base in the County;
- To encourage, support and facilitate enterprise development at

appropriate locations throughout the County;

- To encourage, support and facilitate research, technology development and innovation as well as start-up businesses with high potential;
- To deliver on the economic provisions identified in the Local Economic and Community Plan and any updates thereto; and
- To promote the rural economy by facilitating diversification, supporting appropriate rural resource-based industries with a viable and vibrant network of smaller towns and villages.

4.2 Policy Context

4.2.1 National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) sets out the planning policy approach for economic development at a national and regional level. A strong economy supported by enterprise, innovation and skills is a national strategic outcome of the NPF. It acknowledges that this will require creating places that can foster enterprise and innovation, attract investment, support opportunities to diversify with associated investment in infrastructure, including digital connectivity, and in skills and talent to support economic competitiveness and enterprise growth.

4.2.2 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region recognises the need to build a competitive, innovative and productive economy. The economic vision for the region is to enable sustainable, competitive, inclusive and resilient growth. The economic principles to achieve this vision are highlighted in Figure 4.1.

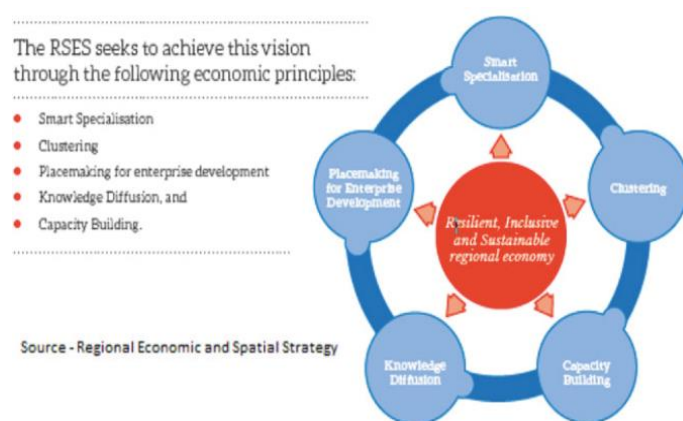


Figure 4.1 Regional Economic Principles

The RSES recognises the region’s economic drivers as the cities, their metropolitan areas, the Atlantic economic corridor, the eastern corridor, key towns and villages. Carlow as a Key Town is identified as having a regional and inter-regional economic role providing employment for the surrounding area. Towns and villages are also an important part of the economic fabric of the region with viable and vibrant towns and villages necessary to create sustainable rural communities. Diversification of the rural economy will enable opportunities afforded by tourism, leisure, recreation and renewable energy to be optimised.

4.2.3 Regional Enterprise Plan for the South East Region to 2020

The Regional Enterprise Action Plan is developed around five key strategic objectives focused on enhancing the existing environment for enterprise and activity, establishing the South-East as a ‘learning region’ and a place of choice for talent and investment, developing a regional engagement strategy that is aligned with the RSES. It highlights the critical infrastructural developments required to enhance economic potential together with developing the South-East as a region that is attractive to both domestic and international visitors with a sense of place and connected tourist amenities.

4.2.4 Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 (LECP)

The Carlow Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) outlines objectives and actions needed to promote and support economic and community development. It aims to improve the well-being of the people and economy of County Carlow through enhanced strategic planning, better targeting of resources and more meaningful impacts for local communities.

A number of high end goals are identified for economic development and include;

- Building thriving, resilient, sustainable and inclusive communities;
- Strengthening and promoting a thriving and sustainable enterprise culture;
- Maximising external investment into County Carlow;
- Ensuring access to education and skills for all members of communities;
- Optimising the tourism product and message; and
- Providing the required infrastructure for the county.

These high-end goals are to be achieved through economic, local and community focused actions. The Council will support the preparation of a new LECP for the County to ensure consistency with the RSES and the new County Development Plan and to ensure the requisite framework is in place to support a bottom-up approach to economic growth and community improvements in the County at a local level.

LECP - Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

LECP P 1: Support the review and preparation of a new Local Economic and Community Plan for Carlow to

ensure the local level framework is in place to support economic growth and community improvements.

4.2.5 InCarlow Economic Development and Business Support Strategy

The InCarlow Economic Development and Business Support Strategy was commissioned by Carlow County Council in 2020. The strategy profiles the economic structure of the County, identifies economic opportunities and proposes a range of actions to drive economic recovery and sustainable growth. It focuses on priority sectors for the County, external challenges and threats together with outlining the development and recovery plan for the County Carlow economy. The InCarlow Economic Development and Business Support Strategy has informed the preparation of this Plan.

4.2.6 Local Enterprise Development Plan (LEDP)

Under the Service Level Agreement with Enterprise Ireland, Carlow County Council must prepare a Local Enterprise Development Plan which identifies key actions to be resourced by Enterprise Ireland in partnership with Carlow County Council in the area of business development and capacity support. The County Carlow Local Enterprise Development plan will complement the County Development Plan.

InCarlow Economic Development and Business Support Strategy & LEDP– Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

EDS P 1: Support the implementation of the InCarlow Economic Development and Business Support Strategy and the LEDP through the appropriate location and distribution of lands for employment purposes together with targeted supports and the promotion

and development of healthy placemaking to support sustainable enterprise development.

4.3 Economic Profile

Key indicators from the 2016 Census provide a general employment and economic profile of County Carlow. Between 2011 and 2016, County Carlow experienced an increase in economic activity across most sectors. The County's economic profile suggests a continued reliance on more traditional economic activities, rather than the knowledge economy or high-tech industries with lower levels of employment in the public sector and government services such as transport and communications. County Carlow's economy is however, expanding and diversifying albeit at a slower pace than the national average.

4.3.1 Labour Force Participation Rate

Labour Force participation rates in County Carlow in 2016 were recorded at 59.7% (26,480), which is below the State average of 61.4%. Within the County, there are considerable variations in respect of the level of labour force participation. The areas with the highest levels of labour force participation are grouped adjacent to the main centres of employment, rather than the towns themselves. Areas with the highest levels are those that adjoin Tullow (Tullowbeg), Hacketstown (Clonmore) and Bagenalstown (Ballymoon and Agha). The lowest levels of labour force participation are in the very

south of the County and along the borders with Wexford and Kilkenny, associated in part with an older demographic and higher proportion of retired persons in these areas (Refer: A Socio-demographic Profile of Carlow 2019).

4.3.2 Labour Force Unemployment

In 2016 the total population classed as unemployed (both unemployed and looking for their first job) was 4,507 people. This represents an unemployment rate of 17% compared to a national unemployment rate of 12.9%. The spatial distribution of those unemployed varies with high levels (>25%) recorded in Hacketstown, Tinnahinch and Carrickduff and lowest levels in Palatine, Rathoe and Ballon.

4.3.3 Industry of Employment / Occupations

In 2016 Commerce and Trade was recorded as the largest single industry with 23% of Carlow residents employed in the sector, followed by Professional Services (22.1%) Other Industries (18.2%) and Manufacturing (13.4%). In terms of occupation professional, associate professional and technical occupations account for 21% of the workforce in comparison to over 27% for the State. Carlow has above average levels engaged in skilled trades including construction, engineering and manufacturing.

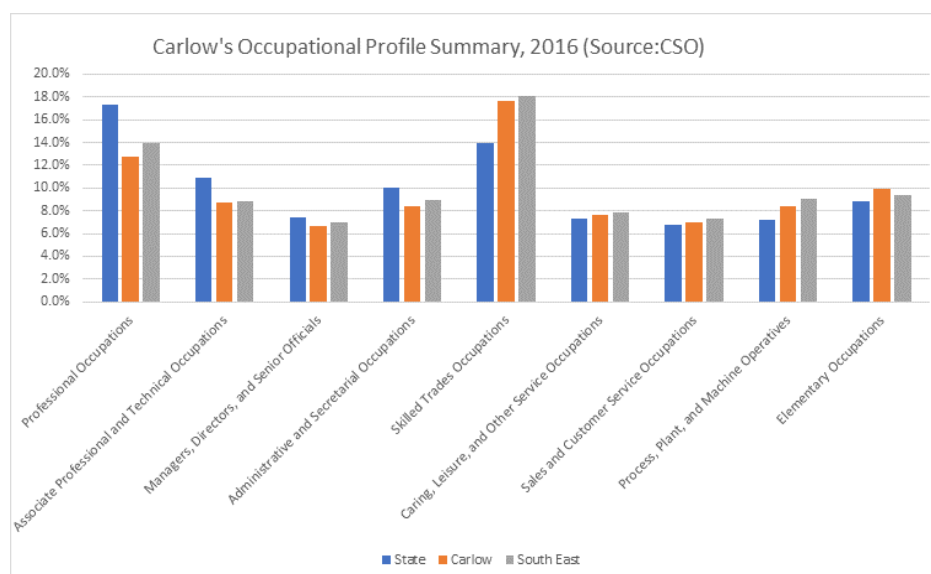


Fig. 4.2 County Carlow's Occupational Profile

4.3.4 Spatial Arrangement of Employment Profile

Significant geographical variations exist regarding the employment profile within the county. Carlow Town comprises the strategic employment base with more rural activities located elsewhere throughout the County.

Carlow Town

Carlow Town is the most significant employment location for all economic activities, with the exception of agriculture. The town's economy is driving and shaping the economic profile of much of the county, and in particular, that of the villages and rural areas that immediately adjoin it. These peri-urban and well-connected rural communities exhibit above average (relative to the rest of the County) levels of labour force participation and employment in professional services and public sector jobs. The areas close to Carlow Town are also relatively well connected to the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), and there is evidence of long-distance commuting from these areas to professional employment occupations.

While Carlow Town is the predominant driver of employment, it also recorded above average unemployment in 2016, and the town has been adversely affected by the

suburbanisation of commercial activities. Many of Carlow's workers, particularly those in higher-level occupations, opt to commute to and from the town.

North Carlow

The economic profile of North Carlow is influenced by the Greater Dublin Area. This part of the County has the highest level of long-distance commuting. The number of workers across North Carlow exceeds the number of jobs. High levels of unemployment are experienced in Hacketstown and Rathvilly. These communities also have an above average proportion of persons working in the construction sector.

East Carlow

East Carlow's economic profile is characterised by a strong agricultural sector, which is driving economic activities in food processing and transport. The agricultural sector also supports commercial and retail activities in Tullow and Hacketstown. However, those who work in both towns tend to live in the surrounding communities, rather than in the towns themselves.

Central Carlow

Across Central Carlow, manufacturing industries, almost all of which are small-scale and medium, represent a significant employment base. These are integral to the local economy, most notably in Muine Bheag / Bagenalstown and Fennagh, as well as in Carrickduff on the Wexford border. The construction sector is a significant employer in Central Carlow, notably in Myshall and Ballon.

Western Carlow

The uplands of Western Carlow – west of the M9 have a mixed economic profile.

Agriculture remains very important locally, while there is evidence of increased commuting to town-based jobs in Carlow Town and Kilkenny.

Southern Carlow

Southern parts of Carlow have the narrowest economic base. Farming is the mainstay of the economy, although farms are smaller in scale and less intensive than in the rest of the county. Agri- and rural-tourism are a factor in commerce and trade employment in South Carlow. The south of the County also has an above average proportion of workers who are employed in construction.

4.3.5 Carlow's Business Base¹

In 2018, there were a total of 2,852 active enterprises operating within County Carlow representing just over 1% of total state active enterprises. These enterprises supported 11,790 employee jobs. The trend in active enterprise since 2008 is illustrated in Fig. 4.3.

Carlow's active enterprises were severely affected by the economic crash post-2008, with the number of active enterprises across the County falling from 2,783 in 2008 – its previous peak – to 2,538 in 2014, a reduction of almost 9%. Since then, supported by active business support schemes and favorable wider economic trends, Carlow has seen the number of active enterprises rapidly increase within the County, with the number of active enterprises peaking in 2017 (2,880).

<https://www.localenterprise.ie/Carlow/Enterprise-Development/Carlow-Commuter-Study/>

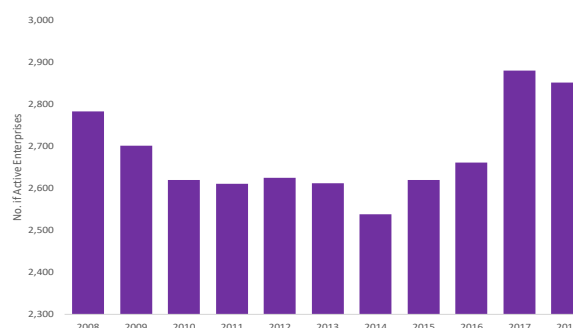


Figure 4.3: % of Total Active Enterprises by Sector, Carlow and State, 2018. (Source InCarlow Economic Development and Business Support Strategy).

The importance of manufacturing as a sector to the Carlow economy is highlighted when examining the breakdown of active enterprises by sector (see Fig. 4.4). Whilst, the majority of sectors are consistent with the state average, it should be noted that sectors such as manufacturing is much more concentrated within Carlow (4.4%) compared to the state (2.7%). Likewise, Construction and Wholesale and Retail. Whereas sectors such as Professional is of higher importance to the state compared to Carlow.

¹ . **Source:** InCarlow Economic Development and Business Support Strategy

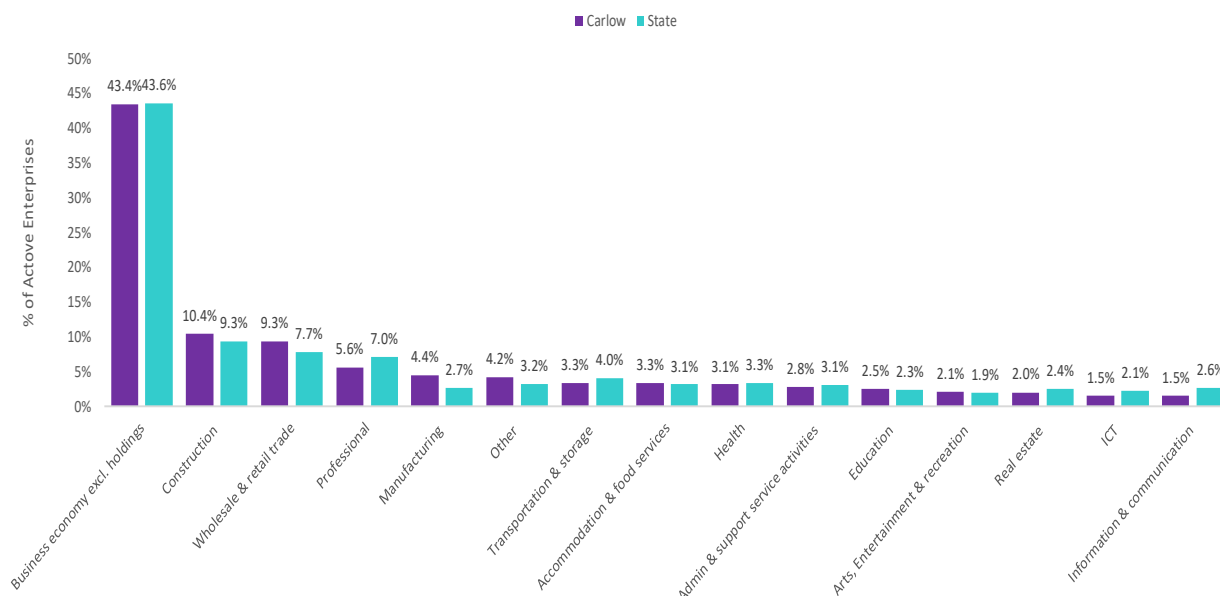


Fig 4.4. Active Enterprises by Sector (Source: InCarlow Economic Development and Business Support Strategy Note: Sectors that were less than 1% of Carlow’s Active Enterprises have been excluded from the above figure).

As is the case regionally and nationally, small enterprises (with up to 10 employees) account for the vast majority (>91%) of all enterprises in County Carlow. These firms provide almost half (47.4%) of all jobs in the County. There are 35 Medium sized enterprises (50 to 249 engaged) that employ 34% of all persons engaged in Carlow.

4.3.6 Carlow’s Outbound Commuters

Given the proximity to the Greater Dublin Area, there is significant commuting from parts of County Carlow. The Council recognises the opportunities afforded to the County by seeking to address the high levels of outbound commuting (6,290 -28.9% of Carlow resident workers commuted to employment positions outside of the County in 2016) particularly to Dublin and Kilkenny on a daily basis. Of those who commute out of Carlow for work 60% are aged between 25 to

45 years². 60.9% of commuters have a third-level qualification.

Carlow’s Outbound Commuters - Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

CM P1: Seek to address the rate of outbound commuting in Carlow through the provision of increased sustainable employment opportunities in Carlow, together with the provision of co-working facilities, digital hubs and e-working centres at appropriate locations throughout the County to attract new businesses and / or to function as outreach hubs supporting improved quality of life and community engagement.

² Of those who commute to destinations outside of Carlow, the largest proportion goes to County Kilkenny (5.8%), followed by Kildare (4.9%), Wicklow (3.6%) and Dublin City (3.1%). Although Kilkenny is the single most significant destination, when the figures for the four Dublin local authorities (Fingal, South

Dublin, Dublin City and Dún-Laoghaire-Rathdown) are combined, there is more external commuters travelling into County Dublin (6.8%) than County Kilkenny.

4.4 Enterprise and Employment Strategy

The strategy for enterprise and employment seeks to increase opportunities for access to high quality, sustainable employment for residents while seeking to enhance the attractiveness of the County as a high-quality place to live, work and visit.

The enterprise and employment strategy is based around a number of key themes including appropriate locations for economic development, promotion of priority sectors, education and skills, placemaking, profile and property solutions.

Carlow County Council will work in collaboration with other agencies and stakeholders to actively promote and encourage economic development and enterprise development in the County.

Enterprise and Employment Strategy - Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

ES P1: Work in partnership with Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, adjoining local authorities, the Regional Assembly and all other relevant agencies to proactively pursue sustainable enterprise and economic development in line with the vision of Carlow County Council together with policies and objectives set out in national, regional and local strategies.

4.4.1 Locations for Economic Development

Appropriate locations for economic development will be guided by the Council's Settlement Hierarchy which focuses on a sustainable pattern of population growth with an emphasis on quality of life together with a strengthening of the urban cores of principal settlements within the County.

Land use zonings for employment generating uses have been identified in the town plans

contained within Chapter 15 of this Plan. As part of the review process of further statutory plans during the life of the County Development Plan, additional employment zonings maybe identified for example as part of the Carlow Town Joint Urban Area Plan together with the District Towns of Tullow and Muine Bheag as appropriate.

Continued infrastructural investment is critical for sustaining economic development activity. It is essential therefore that infrastructure providers, such as Irish Water, Irish Rail, the National Transport Authority, Transport Infrastructure Ireland and electricity and broadband providers, support Carlow County Council's vision for economic development through their service provision thereby contributing positively to a competitive economic environment in the County.

Locations for Economic Development – Policies

It is a policy of the Council to:

ED P1: Maximise the efficiency of zoned lands by advocating for and facilitating the provision, upgrade or refurbishment of necessary infrastructure to support economic development.

ED P2: Protect land zoned for employment-generating uses from inappropriate development that would negate future economic activity.

Locations for Economic Development – Objective

It is an objective of the Council to:

ED O1: Ensure that an adequate supply of land is zoned and located within the development boundary of settlements to support economic development and employment generating uses, at a scale

appropriate to the size and role of the settlement as per the Settlement Hierarchy.

ED O2: Facilitate innovation in rural economic development and enterprise through diversification of the rural economy together with the promotion of sustainable rural towns and villages as the key component of delivering viable rural communities. (Refer also to Chapter 14 Rural Development).

ED O3: Facilitate innovation and development through the development of business park and enterprise hub solutions which are positioned to complement and support the enterprise eco-systems in the County.

4.4.1.1 Carlow Town Economic Development

Carlow Town is the principal centre of economic activity in County Carlow and one of the larger Key Towns in the Southern Region. It has many economic attributes such as its third level education provision and other educational institutes, proximity to Dublin, the River Barrow, tourism, retail services and cultural facilities. It has a role as a major employment, retail and services centre. Development of Carlow Town as a regional and inter-regional growth driver will require a significant increase in job opportunities to sustain the existing and growing population.

It is a specific objective of the RSES (RPO 14) to strengthen and support the role of Carlow Town as a self-sustaining regional and inter-regional economic driver. Key industries in Carlow Town are outlined in Table 4.1.

Industry Sectors in Carlow Town	
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	1%
Building and construction	5%
Manufacturing industries	11%
Commerce and trade	24%
Transport and communications	6%
Public administration	5%
Professional services	23%
Other	25%

Table 4.1 Industry Sectors in Carlow Town (Census 2016)

The Council will seek to support growth and expansion of existing and new employment generating uses, the reuse of brownfield sites, the promotion of the town centre through key interventions and by addressing vacancy /dereliction and use of underutilised lands within the town centre.

Carlow Town Economic Development - Policies

It is the policy of the Council to:

ED P3: Maximise the economic potential of Carlow by building on its locational advantage along the M9 and N80 and promoting and marketing the Key Town of Carlow for significant economic investment.

ED P4: Promote Carlow Town as a regional and inter regional economic growth centre, through the expansion of existing enterprise ecosystems and support the provision of physical infrastructure and zoned lands to realise the delivery of strategic employment lands in central accessible locations.

ED P5: Promote clustering and spin off sectors arising from the existence of a number of multinational corporations within Carlow Town.

ED P6: Support the diversification of the construction and manufacturing industries with a focus on expanding and attracting an increasing number

of businesses operating in the field of building innovation and in the area of construction material development and manufacture, particularly in the context of sustainable development and nearly zero energy buildings.

ED P7: Seek to encourage the re-use of disused buildings and brownfield lands for new employment generating enterprises. Strategic scale employment regeneration sites which will be supported include the former Braun factory site and the former Sugar factory site which have the scale and potential to facilitate significant employment generators for the South-East Region.

ED P8: Seek to ensure the town centre becomes an attractive destination and driver of commerce and innovation through the implementation of *Project Carlow 2040 A Vision for Regeneration*.

ED P9: Address vacancy/dereliction and underutilisation of property within Carlow Town by supporting an appropriate mix of alternative uses such as business start-ups, offices, workspace, residential uses etc subject to proper planning and environmental considerations.

ED P10: Support the development of an economic quarter and transport interchange on underutilised lands around the railway station subject to proper planning and environmental considerations.

Carlow Town Economic Development - Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

ED O4: Provide as part of the Joint Urban Area Plan, the development of Carlow Town as a self-sustaining attractive, vibrant and accessible regional and interregional economic driver, to secure continued investment to support increased employment provision and expansion.

ED O5: Seek to secure the implementation of *Project Carlow 2040 A Vision for Regeneration* through the development of strategic sites to drive the economic, social and physical development of Carlow Town as an investment location and place to live.

4.4.1.2 District Towns

Tullow and Muine Bheag (Bagenalstown) are designated District Towns, operating as strong employment bases for the towns and surrounding hinterland areas.

Tullow

Tullow located on the River Slaney is the second largest urban centre in County Carlow. It experienced rapid growth in a short period, with much of the recent development taking place on the periphery of the town. The town has a mixture of uses, including residential, employment, retail, schools, banks, a post office, a credit union, a library, civic centre and other community and commercial uses. Tullow has a strong agricultural hinterland which defines the outer characteristics and predominant land use outside of the town.

In 2016, Tullow recorded a jobs to resident workers ratio of 0.703. Industry sectors in Tullow are indicated in Table 4.2.

Industry Sectors in Tullow	
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	8%
Building and construction	5%
Manufacturing industries	17%
Commerce and trade	24%

Transport and communications	4%
Public administration	5%
Professional services	16%
Other	21%

Table 4.2 Industry Sectors in Tullow (Census 2016)

There are a range of professions and qualification types exhibited by the local population and this will influence the catchment for potential business in the area. There is a strong agri-industrial focus in the hinterland outside the town centre, alongside a clear strength in commerce and trade occupations overall.

The success of the town centre will be particularly important to ensuring job security for the local population. The large number of people working within commerce and trade industries in Tullow will be in part supported by jobs in the town centre. The manufacturing presence on the hinterland of the centre also provides an extended customer catchment area, which should be recognised in the retail offering of the town centre.

Significant undeveloped lands exist on the edge of the settlement for enterprise and employment purposes. Promotion of employment opportunities throughout Tullow will be a key objective over the period of this Plan.

Tullow - Policies

It is the policy of the Council to:

ED P11: Seek to encourage investment and support the role of Tullow as an important district employment hub within the County, to enhance the provision of local infrastructure and amenities and improved sustainable transport links to surrounding settlements.

ED P12: Maximise the opportunities offered by existing businesses, and to utilise it as a platform to attract new small and medium enterprises to the town.

ED P13: Support development of the tourism industry and maximise direct and indirect opportunities afforded by existing assets, the River Slaney and built heritage characteristics.

Tullow - Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

ED O6: Prepare an economic development spatial strategy for Tullow as part of the Local Area Plan Review to ensure that the town can fulfil its economic role in the future development of the County.

ED O7: Support the regeneration of the core areas of the town through sustainable targeted measures that address vacancy, encourage economic development and deliver sustainable reuse and regeneration outcomes.

ED O8: Support and seek the implementation of the *Town and Village Key Project Plan for Tullow (2018)* which seeks to integrate physical, economic, social and environmental renewal measures in order to deliver maximum economic benefit for the population of Tullow.

Muine Bheag / Royal Oak

Muine Bheag is the third largest urban centre in the County and serves a large agricultural hinterland. It has a strong employment base. The River Barrow runs to the north and west of the town and to the east of Royal Oak village and provides significant opportunities for tourist development.

In 2016, Muine Bheag jobs to resident workers ratio was the strongest of all urban centres in County Carlow at 1.466. Industry sectors in the town are outlined in Table 4.3.

Industry Sectors in Muine Bheag	
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	2%
Building and construction	3%
Manufacturing industries	20%
Commerce and trade	25%
Transport and communications	6%
Public administration	6%
Professional services	19%
Other	19%

Table 4.3 Industry Sectors in Muine Bheag (Census 2016)

Commerce and trade followed by manufacturing and professional services comprise the most important industries to the town. While employment levels are strong the traditional town centre experiences significant vacancy level which are impacting on the vitality and vibrancy of the town.

Lands zoned for employment related purposes within Muine Bheag are largely developed and / or committed for employment related purposes. Further lands are therefore likely to be required for employment purposes over the period of this Plan.

Muine Bheag - Policies

It is the policy of the Council to:

ED P14: Seek to encourage investment and support the role of Muine Bheag / Royal Oak as an important employment hub within the County, to enhance the provision of local

infrastructure and amenities and improved sustainable transport links to surrounding settlements.

ED P15: Maximise the opportunities offered by the existing strong employment base within Muine Bheag and to utilise it as a platform to attract new small and medium enterprises to the town.

ED P16: Support development of the tourism industry and maximise direct and indirect opportunities afforded by the River Barrow, built heritage characteristics and significant beverage industries located within the town.

Muine Bheag - Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

ED O9: Prepare an economic development spatial strategy for Muine Bheag / Royal Oak as part of the Local Area Plan Review to ensure that the town can fulfil its economic role in the future development of the County.

ED O10: Support the regeneration of the core areas of the town through sustainable targeted measures that address vacancy, encourage economic development and deliver sustainable reuse and regeneration outcomes.

ED O11: Support and seek the implementation of the *Town and Village Key Project Plan for Muine Bheag (2018)* which seeks to integrate physical, economic, social and environmental renewal measures in order to deliver maximum economic benefit for the population of Muine Bheag.

4.4.1.3 Small Towns, and Villages

Carlow’s small towns and villages are vital to sustaining the County’s wider rural hinterland, providing sustainable rural employment, including local services provision, commercial enterprises, indigenous industry and micro-enterprises. Promoting sustainable rural towns and villages is a key component of delivering viable rural communities. The Council will seek to encourage investment in Small Towns and Villages by identifying and establishing new economic roles and functions and enhancement of the public realm, local infrastructure and amenities. Promoting commensurate population and employment growth in the settlements is necessary for settlements to become more economically self-sustaining. Chapter 14 Rural Development outlines detailed policies and objectives to support the continued role of small towns and villages and the rural countryside in the economic development of the County.

4.4.2 Priority Sectors for County Carlow

From a sectoral perspective the Plan aims to support and facilitate the economic development of the County across a broad range of sectors while acknowledging, in particular priority sectors identified in *The InCarlow Economic Development and Business Support Strategy for County Carlow*. The Strategy identifies a range of sectors which demonstrate competitiveness and opportunity within County Carlow. Some of the sectors are recognised as having potential due to their relative size and clusters which have already been developed, while others are competitive due to their significant growth potential and links to wider sectors. It is acknowledged that considerable opportunities exist for job creation and economic growth in areas such as green tech and new technology developments.

Addressing the impacts of climate change and global warming can drive innovation and stimulate economic growth.

	Sector
Focus and Step Change	Financial Services ICT Engineering Technology Firms Tourism
Sustain and Grow	Agri-Tourism Pharma Transportation
Monitor and Intervene	Retail (Town Regeneration) Green Energy

Table 4.4 Priority sectors for County Carlow.

Priority Sectors for County Carlow – Policies

It is the policy of the Council to:

- PS P1: Facilitate the development of enterprises including those related to the identified sectors of growth at appropriate locations and facilitate the provision of infrastructure and facilitates that will enable clustering and specialisation in the County.
- PS P2: Identify and pursue opportunities for enterprise growth, innovation and diversity within the priority sectors, including the potential of enterprise ecosystems in sectors identified in the Regional Enterprise Plans (REPs) and their successors.
- PS P3: Promote the development of Small and Medium Enterprises within County Carlow and to encourage and facilitate start-up businesses with high growth potential including the development of low carbon and green tech businesses and industries throughout the County.

Priority Sectors for County Carlow – Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

PS O1: Facilitate through the support offered by the LEO and the Council's Economic Unit, new business formation, growth and industrial re-organisation.

PS O2: Maintain and leverage existing enterprise ecosystems to support enterprise development.

4.4.3 Education and Skills

The availability of an educated and highly skilled labour force is critical for economic success and the development of high quality education infrastructure is a key enabling component. County Carlow exhibits a higher level of educational disadvantage than the State as a whole. The proportion of the population, in County Carlow, with a third level qualification as recorded in 2016 stands at 28% (State average 35.7%). County Carlow does however, have a higher proportion of persons who have completed an apprenticeship and/or who have acquired a technical qualification (17.2%) than is the case across the state (14.7%) and regionally (16.4%). This is linked to the strong engineering clusters located in Carlow and the need to satisfy the skills needs of existing established firms within the County.

IT Carlow is a driver for the skills base of the population. It plays an important role in the South East and the Mid-East / Greater Dublin Area, in the provision of internationally recognised higher education and research opportunities and in the development of enterprise and industry. In 2018, graduate numbers for IT Carlow stood at over 3,200. Educational fields of graduates included Health and Welfare (27%), Business, Administration and Law (25%), Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction (11%), Services (10%), Arts and Humanities (7%)

Education (6%), ICT (5%) and Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics (3%).

The educational activities of IT Carlow are complemented by various campus-based specialist centres and campus companies which provide a comprehensive range of infrastructure, business support services and specialised resources for start-up companies.

The Institute has a track record of academic and industrial impact in thematic areas including;

- Bioenvironmental technologies (EnviroCORE)
- Product design and innovation (DesignCORE)
- Interactive applications software and networks (GameCORE)
- Health sciences (HealthCORE)
- Engineering (EngCORE)

IT Carlow continues to maintain and develop its linkages at all levels with Commercial Enterprises, Industries, Statutory Bodies, State Agencies and International Organisations in order to create economic development through technology transfer and education.

Carlow County Council recognises the strategic role of IT Carlow to the County and supports the transition of IT Carlow and IT Waterford in the establishment of the Technological University of the South East (TUSE) which is critical for the optimum social and economic development of the region.

Carlow College St. Patricks, a second third level institute in the County also provides a range of courses in humanities and social studies and has a strategic collaborative partnership with Trinity College Dublin. Carlow County Council supports the expansion of Carlow College St. Patricks within Carlow Town and recognises it as a key enabler in the regeneration of Carlow Town Centre.

Carlow Institute of Further Education in the County also provides important training and skills for students of all ages and is often a stepping stone to third level education.

Education and Skills- Policies

It is the policy of the Council to:

- ES P1: Support and facilitate the development and further expansion of IT Carlow, its links with industry and its transition with IT Waterford to the Technological University of the South East which is critical for the optimum social and economic development of the region.
- ES P2: Support and facilitate development and expansion of Carlow College St. Patrick's together with the implementation of the public realm enhancements, improved accessibility, new uses and public spaces detailed in the Carlow College Intervention site within the *Project Carlow 2040, A Vision for Regeneration*.
- ES P3: Work in conjunction with Further and Higher Education Institutions in the creation and fostering of enterprise through research, innovation and development activities. The Council will support the development of sites where high-tech and high potential start-ups can thrive, in conjunction with the IT Carlow / TUSE to create collaborative and innovative growth.
- ES P4: Work with employers and education providers in identifying specific opportunities for educational programmes which serve the needs of existing employers, attract new employers and provide up-skilling including apprenticeship and third level facilities and development opportunities.

- ES P5: Support and encourage both IT Carlow and Carlow College to work directly with local construction and manufacturing industries to identify emerging technologies and areas of innovation and provide courses and research focused specifically in this field as well as the growth areas of biotechnologies, ICT, mechanics, data analytics and smart materials.

Education and Skills- Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

- ES O1: Seek to address the skills shortage challenges through improvements in lifelong learning and through the LEO and the Council's Economic Development Unit through mentoring, learning, education and training initiatives.
- ES O2: Support the work undertaken by the Education and Training Board in relation to courses provided under SOLAS and the establishment of Community Training Centres, Local Training Initiatives and Specialist Training Provision in the County.
- ES O3: Foster entrepreneurship by supporting new start-up companies and supporting the identification of suitable sites to enable businesses establish in accordance with proper planning and environmental considerations.

4.4.4 Placemaking and Sustainable Design

Placemaking seeks to ensure that geographical locations are attractive places to live, learn and work thereby resulting in a high quality of life. The Council recognises the importance of attractive, healthy and sustainable communities as a key contributing factor in delivering economic success and attracting foreign and domestic investment. Placemaking has become increasingly important for enterprise development and is

instrumental in ensuring the County captures sufficient human capital and talent.

The Council will actively pursue place making initiatives, public realm improvements, regeneration of urban areas, reuse of vacant properties, together with protection and enhancement of built and natural heritage features as key components in placemaking which will support enterprise development. The regeneration of Carlow Town is a strategic priority for the Council over the period of this Plan. *Project Carlow 2040 A Vision for Regeneration* will guide the long-term development of Carlow Town by re-purposing the town centre and re-establishing a definable town core. Place making activities will seek to improve the town as a business, employment, residential and high-quality urban environment.

New development and refurbishment / extension of existing employment uses shall seek to ensure the creation of attractive, enterprise development friendly, well designed high-quality places that can support a diverse enterprise base mix with integrated communities thereby facilitating a high quality of life and wellbeing.

Placemaking and Sustainable Design – Policies

It is the policy of the Council to:

- PM P1: Encourage the development of attractive, accessible and healthy working environments that enhance the quality and character of an area.
- PM P2: Ensure that the design of employment – generating development, regardless of location is of a high-quality, inclusive and accessible.
- PM P3: Encourage mixed use settlement forms and sustainable centres, in which employment, residency, education and local services / amenities are in close proximity to each other.

PM P4: Support the development of industries that create and employ green technologies and encourage the uptake of measures to facilitate the transition towards a low carbon economy and circular economy.

Placemaking and Sustainable Design – Objectives

- PM O1: Realise the full potential of the County by providing for places that are attractive for business investment and for people to live and work.
- PM O2: Encourage local partnership, town team or community organisations to develop and implement local economic initiatives which enhance towns and villages.
- PM O3: Support investment in energy efficiency of public buildings and implement energy efficiency across Council buildings and activities to reach the new target of 30% energy efficiency improvements for the public sector by 2030.
- PM O4: Encourage energy efficiency and use of renewable energy in new developments and to seek to incorporate energy sustainability into the planning of new and existing employment areas.

4.4.5 Profile

Carlow County Council through the LEO and Economic Development Unit together with strategic partners will seek to raise the profile of County Carlow. Investment marketing will be facilitated through the inCarlow Brand Activities and Destination Tourism Marketing via Carlow Tourism and Ireland's Ancient East Brand.

The Council will continue to market and profile the County and seek to develop a business environment where like-minded people can collaborate, network and co-work

with access to experienced mentors, which will stimulate entrepreneurship.

Profile – Policies

It is the policy of the Council to:

- PF P1: Raise the profile of the County as a competitive, forward thinking and flexible place to do business.
- PF P2: Facilitate and enhance the collective offering of Carlow as an attractive place to live, work and invest in, while promoting available key quality of life factors, including life-work balance, strong education structures, amenity and leisure attractions combined with economic opportunity.

4.4.6 Property

A key objective of statutory land use planning is to ensure sufficient serviced lands are zoned for employment purposes. Chapter 15 contains land use zoning objectives for a number of settlements throughout the County. Remaining settlements will be reviewed as part of other Local Area Plans over the lifetime of this Plan.

Research indicates that County Carlow would benefit from a variety of property solutions for scale up companies and developing companies. State intervention in respect of the commercial opportunities is therefore essential. The Council is actively seeking to address these issues by implementing a variety of measures including the use of Council assets and land banks, direct purchase, build and lease, the development of serviced sites in industrial / employment sites / parks and joint ventures with the private sector. Repurposing and adaptation of existing vacant and underutilised buildings to provide property solutions will be a key objective of the Council.

Property – Policies

It is the policy of the Council to:

- PT P1: Audit and monitor the quantum and quality of zoned and serviced land and through a variation of this Plan or in the preparation / amendment of Local Area Plan(s) as deemed appropriate.
- PT P2: Protect land zoned for economic development, industry and employment related uses from inappropriate development that would undermine future economic activity or the sustainable development of such areas.
- PT P3: Support the regeneration and revitalisation of existing business parks and industrial estates within towns and promote the regeneration of obsolete and / or under-utilised buildings and lands that could yield economic benefits, with appropriate uses, subject to proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
- PT P4: Support the development of small-scale ancillary services in large industrial and business parks where they do not detract from the vitality and viability of the town centre.

Property - Objective

It is an objective of the Council to:

- PT O1: Support investment (subject to resources) in property solutions that will directly facilitate the creation of new jobs, contribute to the vitality and viability of the area and / or contribution to regeneration by addressing dereliction, under-utilisation of buildings / sites, and / or the re-purposing of buildings, thereby ensuring the efficient use of land /property.
- PT O2: Support the development of specific projects in Tullow and Muine Bheag/

Bagenalstown to ensure geographical spread of employment and innovation opportunities.

4.5 Retail

The retail sector is a major employer both nationally and locally and also supports indirect employment in sectors such as logistics and distribution.

The retail industry is in the midst of a massive transformation driven by consumers use and retailer's adoption of digital technologies, improvements in the experience and the need for new solutions for 'bricks and mortar' retail. Much of the change in retailing has been accelerated by the Covid-19 Pandemic. The move from traditional retailing methods to more dynamic processes is reflected in the Carlow Retail Strategy (Appendix V) which seeks to capture and guide a viable future for retailing in Carlow. The Strategy recognises the importance of placemaking and that the viability of retail stores in the future will be heavily reliant on being located in quality urban settings with an experience which attracts customers.

4.6 Policy Context

The policy context in relation to retail is derived from guidance documents at a national and regional level including the National Planning Framework, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and the Retail Planning Guidelines.

4.6.1 National Planning Framework

The NPF provides the overarching policy and planning structure for the social, economic and cultural growth of the Country. The ambition of the NPF is to create a single vision, a shared set of goals for every community across the Country. These goals are expressed as National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) and their delivery is at the core of the NPF. Of note in undertaking the Retail Strategy are the NSOs which seek to achieve compact growth, enhancing regional

accessibility, achieving a strong economy together with enhancing amenity and heritage.

National Policy Objectives (NPO) of relevance to retail include the following:

- NPO 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.
- NPO 5** Develop cities and towns of sufficient scale and quality to compete internationally and to be drivers of national and regional growth, investment and prosperity.
- NPO 6** Regenerate and rejuvenate cities, towns and villages of all types and scale as environmental assets, that can accommodate changing roles and functions, increased residential population and employment activity and enhanced levels of amenity and design quality, in order to sustainably influence and support their surrounding area.
- NPO 10b** Regional and Local Authorities to identify and quantify locations for strategic employment development, where suitable, in urban and rural areas generally.
- NPO 11** In meeting urban development requirements, there will be a presumption in favour of development that can encourage more people and generate more jobs and activity within existing cities, towns and villages, subject to development meeting appropriate planning standards and achieving targeted growth.

4.6.2 Retail Planning: Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2012 (RPGs)

The Retail Guidelines were adopted in 2012 and offer consistent retail policy objectives, recommendations on specific retail formats, and provide advice on the location of new retail development. Their purpose is to ensure that the planning system continues to play a key role in fostering consumer-friendly

competition in the retail sector, in line with proper planning and sustainable growth.

Five key national policy objectives are outlined in the Guidelines as follows;

1. Ensuring that retail development is planned;
2. Promoting city/town centre vitality through a sequential approach to development;
3. Securing competitiveness in the retail sector by actively enabling good quality development proposals to come forward in suitable locations;
4. Facilitating a shift towards increased access to retailing by public transport, cycling and walking in accordance with the Smarter Travel strategy; and
5. Delivering quality urban design outcomes.(Retail Design Manual).

Under the national hierarchy set out in the Retail Guidelines Carlow is a Tier 3 sub-regional town. The Guidelines state that such centres “perform important sub-regional retailing functions including major national retailing chains”. The Guidelines also include detailed guidance on the content and role of development plans, requiring that development plans must set out specific evidence-based strategies and priorities in relation to retailing.

The Carlow Retail Strategy has been prepared in compliance with the Retail Planning Guidelines and is included in Appendix V.

The RPGs are accompanied by a Retail Design Manual that sets out evidence-based quality principles to ensure that future planning for the retail sector focuses on building attractive, quality places. One of the major messages of the Guidance is that in retail growth, a high standard of design will make a major contribution to achieving quality in the built environment. The Manual recommend that in

their forward planning policies and their application, planning authorities should encourage high expectations of design.

4.6.3 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern region recognises the role of retail as a catalyst for the renewal of city, town and village centres. It supports investment in placemaking and developing the public domain to support attractive and liveable urban centres that sustain retail development and the wider local economy. The value of the tourism sector is also recognised, with retail facilities adding to the tourist attraction increasing footfall and enhancing vibrancy.

In response to changing patterns of activity, including online shopping, the RSES for the Southern Region champions innovation in the retail sector and promotes frameworks to assist conventional retailers in the transition to experiential, technology-led retail models. RPO 55 of the RSES supports the complete implementation of the Retail Planning Guidelines to ensure that urban and village centres are based on retail growth through the application of a sequential retail development strategy. Development plans and local area plans must be informed by collaborative or multi-authority retail initiatives in urban areas reaching through local authority boundaries.

4.7 County Carlow Retail Strategy

The County Carlow Retail Strategy (Appendix V) has been undertaken at an unprecedented time, when the Country is under a national lockdown due to the Covid -19 pandemic. Based on preceding qualitative and quantitative analysis and other assessments conducted as part of the Retail Strategy, the strategy establishes capacity, a vision, policies and actions for retailing in County Carlow, in line with the requirements of the Retail Planning Guidelines. The Retail Strategy considers the future options and potential for retail growth in Carlow and provides policies to support the delivery of a unique and distinctive retail offer for the key urban centres in the County.

4.7.1 County Carlow Retail Hierarchy

The Carlow Retail Strategy provides a retail hierarchy for County Carlow having regard to the Retail Guidelines and the following criteria:

- Current strategic guidance at a national, regional and county level
- The need to protect and enhance the importance of Carlow Town as the principal urban centre and retail destination in the County
- The need to protect the important more localised functions of the town centres in the County such as Tullow and Muine Bheag
- The distribution of future retail floorspace in line with the Core Strategy, settlement hierarchy and future distribution of population growth within the County
- The promotion and facilitation of sustainable forms of transport by locating future retailing in centres that are served by public transport, where possible and practicable
- The need to facilitate competitiveness and innovation in the retail industry.

Level Type of Centre	Scale and Function
Level 1 County Town Centre Carlow Town	<p>Carlow Town remains the first tier in the retail hierarchy, being the principal urban centre in the County. In accordance with this role and function, the Town exhibits a number of higher order retail, service and specialist functions not found elsewhere in the County.</p> <p>Carlow Town has a good range and choice of convenience and comparison shopping as well as cultural and entertainment facilities. The Town not only performs an important retail function for the entire County but beyond into Counties Laois, Kildare, Kilkenny and Wicklow.</p> <p>Carlow Town Centre should continue to be the prime focus for future retail development and in particular the development of high order comparison retail floorspace should be located here. All types of retail floorspace are considered to be appropriate within Carlow Town as a Level 1 Centre, specifically comparison floorspace that is centrally located.</p>
Level 2 Sub County Town Centres Tullow Muine Bheag	<p>Sub County Town Centres of Tullow and Muine Bheag (Bagenalstown) continue to provide an important service role in support of Carlow Town as well as the villages throughout the County. They provide a good range of convenience offer and a modest comparison offer and are generally characterised by a large convenience / comparison anchor, a range of mid to low order comparison outlets, local retail services, ancillary specialist convenience outlets, community and social facilities.</p> <p>Both Tullow and Muine Bheag (Bagenalstown) are integral to the settlement structure of the County and they act as important service centres for their immediate and hinterland populations.</p> <p>Retail expansion in these settlements should be in line with their planned population growth and should be focussed on the consolidation of existing retail cores and providing further key retail development in order to deliver enhanced choice and competition for consumers. It remains an objective to provide a greater diversity and range of retail uses in these Towns.</p>
Level 3 Small Towns Hacketstown Rathvilly Ballon Borris Leighlinbridge Carrickduff Tinnahinch	<p>Level 3 small towns generally have a more limited retail role and function than those towns in Level 2. Retail representation is often limited to primarily convenience and service provision with very limited comparison offer, if any.</p> <p>As with the Sub County Town Centres, retail expansion in these Small Towns should be in line with their planned population growth. Development within these Towns should continue to be encouraged to locate within the core retail areas in order to strengthen and consolidate the retail role and function of these centres.</p>
Level 4 All other Villages / Settlements	<p>Level 4 of the retail hierarchy consists of all smaller settlements/nodes which will normally exist to serve localised residential areas. These accommodate small shops associated with petrol filling stations or post offices.</p> <p>Level 4 centres function to provide important day to day shopping, top up shopping and retail service requirements. Such retail facilities provide a valuable local and walk in role and function to the local communities that they serve. Their role should continue to be supported.</p>

Table 4.5 Carlow Retail Hierarchy

4.7.2 Identification of Core Retail Areas and Opportunity Sites

In accordance with the guidance set out within the Retail Planning Guidelines, the Carlow Retail Strategy identifies Core Retail Areas and opportunity sites for Level 1 and Level 2 centres.

4.7.3 Floorspace Requirements and Strategic Guidance on the Distribution of Floorspace

The floorspace potential for convenience and non-bulky comparison up to 2028 and distribution between the individual centres is identified in Table 4.6. The figures set out are a guide for the scale of new floorspace required to meet the needs of existing and future population of the County. A number of potential opportunity sites for the development of convenience and comparison retailing in Carlow Town, Tullow and Muine Bheag are identified in Appendix 1 of the Retail Strategy (Appendix V)

	Convenience	Non-Bulky Comparison
Net Future Floorspace	9,152	16,298
Area	Net Floorspace	Net Floorspace
Carlow Town	3,882	13,458
Remainder of County	4,941	2,375

Table 4.6 Future Floor Space Requirements

The lack of capacity for bulky comparison floorspace has been identified in the Retail Strategy. Additional floorspace has not been allocated for bulky comparison goods. However, this should not preclude bulky comparison floorspace (i.e. retail warehousing) in instances where it can be demonstrated that there will be a contribution to town centre vitality and

viability due to its location, quality, accessibility and retail offer. There are some issues with respect to the existing bulky comparison floorspace in terms of quality and location. Therefore, there will be opportunities to transition this floorspace to other non-retail uses over time and this will begin to address the capacity issue and support the case for more conforming bulky comparison floorspace at appropriate locations.

4.7.4 Criteria for Assessment of Retail Development

The County Carlow Retail Strategy and Chapter 16 Development Management outline a list of criteria against which applications for significant retail development should be assessed. These comprise:

- (i) The Sequential Test
- (ii) Retail Impact Statements
- (iii) Quality in Design
- (iv) Traffic and Transport Assessments.

While it is acknowledged that it may not be viable for all applications for new retail development to comply with all criteria, national level policy guidance as well as the detailed guidance set out in Section 7 of the County Carlow Retail Strategy should be complied with in all instances. Table 4.7 outlines criteria for the assessment of particular types of retail development.

Criteria for Accessing Particular Types of Retail
<p>(1) Convenience Food Shopping</p> <p>New convenience retail development should be located in accordance with the sequential test as outlined in The Retail Planning Guidelines. The Retail Guidelines state that large convenience goods stores should be located in city or town centres or in district centres or on the edge of these centres and be of a size which accords with the general floorspace requirements set out in the development plan / retail strategy to support and add variety and vitality to existing shopping areas and also to facilitate access by public transport for shoppers. However, the Retail Planning Guidelines acknowledge that in certain limited circumstances it may not be possible to bring forward suitable sites in or on the edge of a city or town centre because of the site requirements of large convenience goods stores, heritage constraints in historic towns, or because the road network does not have the capacity to accommodate additional traffic and service vehicles. In these cases, the sequential approach should be used to find the most preferable sites. Notwithstanding this out of centre sites for this type of retail development require careful assessment in terms of their potential impact on the Town Centre and nearby centres. Accessibility is a key consideration for such developments and in keeping with sustainable development principles, proposals should be accessible by all modes of transport including pedestrians and public transport. Given the nature of convenience shopping, where customers generally carry out large weekly shopping, it is, however, important that an adequate level of car parking is provided. In line with the retail caps set out in the Retail Planning Guidelines, a convenience retail floorspace cap of 3,000 sq.m net applies in County Carlow. This cap applies to both new retail stores and extensions to existing stores which will result in an aggregate increase in the net retail floorspace of the convenience element of such retail stores. In mixed comparison/convenience retailing stores there is no cap on the amount of non-grocery or comparison space. Such proposals for large mixed convenience/comparison stores should clearly delineate the floorspace to be attributed to the convenience and comparison elements. A detailed assessment of the comparison element of such proposals should be undertaken including a full quantitative assessment of the potential impact of that element on existing comparison goods stores within the catchment area. In areas planned for residential expansion, the development of a neighbourhood centre anchored by a convenience supermarket, with a floor area not exceeding 1,200 sq.m net, is prudent. Small scale convenience stores may also be appropriate in large industrial /employment zones where they anchor a neighbourhood centre serving the daily shopping needs of workers and employees.</p>
<p>(2) District Centres / Shopping Centres</p> <p>According to the Retail Planning Guidelines: <i>“The role of a district centre is to provide a range of retail and non-retail service functions (e.g. banks, post office, local offices, restaurants, public houses, community and cultural facilities for the community at a level consistent with the function of that centre in the core strategy. They should not serve as a retail destination in their own right sufficient to adversely impact on the city/town centre to which they are subservient.”</i> There are two designated District Centres in Carlow Town the Sleaty District Centre at the Sleaty Graigue Retail Park, Graiguecullen anchored by Dunnes Stores and the Sandhills District Centre at Hacketstown Road anchored by Supervalu. Given the requirement for compact growth in line with the NPF, and also the development potential of the Town Centre intervention areas identified in <i>Project Carlow 2040: A Vision for Regeneration</i>, this Retail Strategy is not making provision for any additional district scale retail centres in the County over the plan period. The role and further growth of existing District Centres should be carefully managed to ensure that they retain their role as primarily destinations for the day to day shopping needs of a local catchment in line with their definition within the Retail Planning Guidelines. Such Centres must not be allowed evolve into a retail destination in their own right as this would impact the vitality and viability of the Town Centre.</p>
<p>(3) Retail Warehouse Parks</p> <p>In accordance with the provisions of the Retail Planning Guidelines there should be a presumption against the further development of out of town retail parks and a preference for sites in or adjacent to town centres to ensure the potential for linked trips and commercial synergy. In line with the guidance of the Retail Planning Guidelines and having regard to the existing retail warehouse provision, particularly in Carlow Town and Muine Bheag, there will be a presumption against further retail warehouse developments over the lifetime of this Strategy. The exception to this would be where new retail warehousing would have a demonstrable positive impact on the vitality and viability of the Town Centre due to its location within the Town Centre and/or adjacent to the core retail area. In such a</p>

Criteria for Accessing Particular Types of Retail

situation the proposal will be assessed by the Planning Authority on its own merits in line with the provisions of the Retail Planning Guidelines. There will also be a presumption against the development of bulky household floorspace in industrial/business parks. Applications for change of use of existing light industrial/business park units to retail warehouse use will be discouraged by the Council and such development directed to appropriate designated areas. For clarity Carlow County Council will adhere to the provisions of the Retail Planning Guidelines and apply the following caps in relation to retail warehousing (gross floorspace quoted including storage and garden centres):

- Individual retail units should not be less than 700m²
- Individual retail units shall not be more than 6,000m² in size (gross floorspace incl. storage and garden centres).

The range of goods sold from such retail warehouse units shall be restricted by planning condition to bulky goods as those defined within Annex 1 of the Retail Planning Guidelines. While it is acknowledged that there are ancillary items associated with an otherwise bulky good offer, the Council will impose a cap of 20% of the total net retail floorspace of the relevant retail unit to such ancillary products in line with the Retail Planning Guidelines. Such space is to be clearly delineated on the planning application drawings to facilitate future monitoring and enforcement. Compliance that the goods being sold are consistent with the definition of non-portable bulky goods in order to promote and protect the vitality and viability of town centres will be closely monitored and enforcement action taken where retailing is non-compliant.

(4) District Centres/Shopping Centres

The Retail Planning Guidelines define outlet centres as “groups of stores retailing end-of-season or discounted items at discounted prices and are typically located in out of centre locations”. The Guidelines state that the success of these centres depends on drawing customers and visitors from a wide catchment area, including tourists, and there may be implications for existing tourist centres and established town centres, even those some distance from the proposals.

Criteria for assessing such development should focus on whether it is located in a strategic location to capture expenditure from a very wide catchment area. It must also be demonstrated that the products sold will not be in competition with those currently on sale in typical town centre locations. The potential for such schemes to act as direct competition for town centres in the County Carlow area will need careful evaluation in each case.

Such development schemes should preferably be located within or immediately adjacent to the town centre in order to allow for the delivery of commercial synergies with the urban area, thus raising the profile of the centre and enhancing aggregate turnover on retail goods and leisure activities, resulting in economic benefits for the overall area.

Having regard to the scale of catchment and the proximity of the Kildare Tourist Outlet Village, it is not anticipated that there is a demand for such centres in Carlow over the lifetime of this Strategy.

(5) Factory Shops

Factory shops, usually located as part of or adjacent to the production facility, should be restricted by way of condition to the sale of products produced by associated factory in line with the Retail Planning Guidelines. The exception to this would be where such outlets are within the core retail area of the centre in which it is located. Proposals for individual factory shops may be appropriate, provided the scale of the shop is appropriate to its location and raises no issues in relation to the vitality and viability of nearby urban centres.

(6) Local Shops and Petrol Filling Stations

Local shops play an important role in providing for the day-to-day shopping needs of residents and those passing by. Primarily convenience outlets, local shops are a readily accessible service for basic goods, often for the less mobile members of the community. The development of such local shops should be encouraged in large residential areas around the principal towns in the County. Such developments should be designed to a high standard and be easily accessible to all members of society. Local shops at petrol filling stations is an area that has experienced significant growth in recent years. However, such shops, if of a certain scale, can attract additional custom and potentially impact the Town Centre.

Criteria for Accessing Particular Types of Retail
The Retail Planning Guidelines state that the size of retail units associated with petrol filling stations should not exceed 100 sq. metres. Where permission is sought for a shop associated with a filling station with floorspace in excess of 100 sq. metres, the sequential approach to retail development shall apply
(7) Retailing in Small Towns, Villages and Local Centres
Small towns, villages and local centres in urban areas play an important role in the retail hierarchy of County Carlow, providing valuable day to day retail facilities and services to their communities. Development in such villages and small towns should be focussed in the core village/town centre area and complement existing retail provision. Such development in urban areas should be located to ensure maximum accessibility for the local communities they serve, particularly by foot. The key objective is to provide and retain a range of retail facilities and services to serve the day to day needs of the local centre/village/small town's catchment area. Such retail development should be at a scale that is appropriate to the role of the relevant town or village as defined in the County retail hierarchy.
(8) Retailing in Rural Areas
Retailing in the rural areas of County Carlow area should be directed towards existing settlements, with development in the countryside restricted. It is recognised, however, that there may be exceptional circumstances where the development of certain types of retail units in rural areas could be acceptable including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A retail unit which is ancillary to activities arising from farm diversification. • A retail unit designed to serve a tourist or recreational facility, ancillary to the main use. • A retail unit attached to a craft workshop. • A small-scale retail unit (not in excess of 100 sq. metres gross) designed to serve a dispersed rural community. Such proposals will be assessed on a case by case basis on their merits in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
(9) Casual Trading
Casual trading, including farmers markets, can make a valuable contribution to the local economy and contribute to the vitality and viability of a retail centre. Such activities should be properly regulated as per the provisions of the Casual Trading Act 1995 and consideration should be given to the quality of offer of such casual trading.

Table 4.7 Criteria for Assessing Particular Types of Retail

4.7.5 Lower Order Retailing / Commercial Uses

In assessing applications for lower order retail / commercial uses including Betting Offices, Fast Food Take Aways, Amusement Arcades, Casinos and Vaping Shops, the following considerations will be taken into account:

- The need to safeguard the vitality and viability of the defined core retail area and to maintain a suitable mix of retail uses;
- The proliferation of such existing facilities in the area;
- The effect on the amenities in the area arising from noise, hours of operation and litter; and

- The overall design including treatment of shop front advertising and window display.

4.8 Retail Policies

It is the policy of the Council to:

- RT P1: Facilitate a competitive and healthy retail environment by ensuring that future growth in retail floorspace responds to the identified retail hierarchy for the County.
- RT P2: Support and reinforce the role and function of the core retail areas through the application of the sequential approach in the consideration of retail proposals in line with the provisions of the Retail

- Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2012.
- RT P3: Promote and encourage Town Centre development that is designed so as to promote and support ‘placemaking’.
- RT P4: Promote the enhancement of retail floorspace, primarily comparison goods, and town centre functions in Carlow Town to sustain its competitiveness and importance as the only Level 1 Centre within the County Retail Hierarchy.
- RT P5: Maintain and enhance the competitiveness of Carlow’s main towns (Carlow Tullow and Muine Bheag) by facilitating the development of additional retail floorspace where such development will deliver improvements to the retail offering of the County.
- RTP 6: Facilitate and encourage the preservation, enhancement and adaptation of the retail function of designated smaller town centres and villages around the County.
- RTP 7: Embrace and encourage the emerging trend of community orientated shopping by supporting the vitality and viability of existing centres within County Carlow and their development as multifunctional places that provide a variety of uses to meet the needs of the community they serve.
- RTP 8: Ensure that applications for new retail development shall accord with the retail policies of the Development Plan and are assessed in accordance with the provisions of the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2012.
- RT P9: Prohibit significant new retail development that due to its scale and / or location would negatively impact, either individually or cumulatively, on the vitality and viability of existing town centres.
- RTP 10: Work with local industries in the promotion of specialist and small-scale tourist related retail outlets which will increase the potential to benefit from existing assets and attract event shoppers and tourists to the County.
- RT P11: Encourage reductions in floorspace vacancy within Town Centres including the identification of alternative uses for existing vacant floorspace where appropriate.
- RT P12: Ensure that Town Centre stakeholders including retailers fully utilise all available ICT infrastructure to re-imagine the retail core experience, enhance its attractiveness and embrace technological advances.
- RT P13: Put ‘place’ as a priority for town centres to create a memorable experience that goes beyond traditional shopping and seeks to combine elements of public realm, retail mix and curated events to create distinct experiences.

4.9 Retail County Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

- RT O 1: Facilitate the promotion and development of key Town Centre opportunity sites, specifically those identified in this Strategy.
- RT O2: Introduce measures to improve the accessibility of Town Centres including those that prioritise pedestrians and cyclists and where

feasible separate pedestrian and cycle traffic from vehicular traffic.

- RTO 3: Promote the revitalisation of vacant and derelict properties/shop units including alternative or short-term measures to improve their visual appearance.
- RTO 4: Encourage infill development and the redevelopment of derelict and obsolete sites.
- RTO 5: Promote ongoing environmental improvements and measures to enhance the public realm.
- RTO 6: Prevent over-development of non-retail uses / lower order commercial uses that would detract from the vitality and viability of core retail areas, such as fast food takeaways and betting offices. Considerations as outlined in Section 4.7.5 will apply to such development proposals.
- RTO 7: Promote activities that enliven the Town Centre and improve the mix of uses within it including festivals, events and street markets in each town.
- RTO 8: Ensure that applicants for significant new retail development undertake a thorough assessment of the quality and suitability of existing and available floorspace in the County in the context of their proposals.
- RTO 9: Encourage the active use of the upper floors of retail and commercial premises in the Town Centre, including the 'living over the shop' initiative.

4.10 Carlow Town Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

- CT 01: Support the core retail area as the primary focus and preferred location for new retail development. Within this area there is a need to reinstate the role and function of the traditional retail core of the Town which is centred on Tullow Street, Dublin Street, Potato Market and the future Barrack Street link.
- CT 02: Prioritise central opportunity sites for retail development, including those identified in Project Carlow 2040: A Vision for Regeneration.
- CT 03: Support opportunities for the enhancement of pedestrian permeability of the retail core in line with the recommendations of the walking strategy contained in Project Carlow 2040: A Vision for Regeneration, including improvements to the width and condition of existing footpaths, the implementation of safe crossings that reflect pedestrian desire lines and proposals to upgrade junction arrangements to reduce delays to pedestrians.
- CT 04: Support opportunities to improve cycle infrastructure and accessibility to the retail core should be considered in line with the recommendations of the cycling strategy contained in Project Carlow 2040: A Vision for Regeneration, specifically the creation of an ambient environment in the Town Centre favourable to cycling on street (through reduced traffic speeds and volumes) and the delivery of a series of green routes within the Town.
- CT 05: Seek implementation of the proposals contained in Project Carlow 2040: A Vision for Regeneration should be

prioritised with particular focus on improvements to health and wellbeing through the built environment, placemaking, public realm improvements, sustainability, accessibility, heritage, natural assets such as the River Barrow and intervention areas.

- CT O6: Support and facilitate further public realm upgrades within the Town Centre, particularly along Dublin Street which would benefit from enhanced landscaping and pavement improvements. The provision of street furniture such as benches, and the delivery of the 30km/hr zone will enhance the experience, safety and comfort of pedestrians living in, studying, working and visiting Carlow Town.
- CT O7: In line with Project Carlow 2040: A Vision for Regeneration and the stated aim to meet much of the future demand for travel by sustainable modes, it is not envisaged that additional public parking will be required in the Town Centre. Future parking tariff rates for both short and long stay users will be reviewed in tandem with the fare prices for the urban bus service as per the guidance of Project Carlow 2040; A Vision for Regeneration.
- CT O8: Support the provision and delivery of on-street and off-street electric vehicle (EV) recharging facilities with an appropriate mix of rapid charging facilities in line with the Development Plan Parking Standards in line with the recommendations of Project Carlow 2040: A Vision for Regeneration.
- CT O9: Support the multifunctional role of Carlow Town Centre including the

provision of uses such as cafes, recreational and leisure facilities, restaurants and other complementary uses that not only meet the needs of existing and future residents, but which also make the Town Centre attractive to visitors and tourists alike

4.11 Tullow Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

- TT O1: Support the core retail area as the primary focus and preferred location for new retail development. Within this area additional retail, particularly comparison retail, will be encouraged. Uses that do not reinforce the vitality and viability of the Town Centre will be discouraged.
- TT O2: Prioritise central opportunity sites, as set out in this Retail Strategy for development.
- TT O3: Promote the utilisation of Market Square as a multifunctional space including its use for local farmers market and other community/civic functions.
- TT O4: Seek and encourage improvements to pedestrian infrastructure and pedestrian priority, specifically the enhancement of the pedestrian environment within Market Square.
- TT O5: Promote opportunities to improve cycle infrastructure and accessibility to the retail core. Cycle infrastructure should be considered in the delivery of new developments within the wider Town area and these should integrate with the Town Centre infrastructure.
- TT O6: Encourage public realm upgrades within the Town Centre, particularly in Market Square, which would

benefit from enhanced hard and soft landscaping, pavement improvements, street furniture and lighting.

TT O7: Adopt a car parking management strategy for the Town Centre that reduces the presence of on-street car parking in favour of off-street car parking, including the promotion of backland parking areas.

TT O8: Encourage the provision of on-street and off-street electric vehicle (EV) recharging facilities should be delivered in line with the Development Plan Parking Standards.

TT O9: Support the ever-growing importance of the multifunctional role of Town Centres including the provision of uses such as cafes, recreational and leisure facilities, restaurants and other complementary uses that not only meet the needs of existing and future residents, but which also make the Town Centre attractive to visitors and tourists alike.

TT O10: Encourage and facilitate local niche industries, such as The Chocolate Garden of Ireland, to develop a presence in the Town Centre to contribute to and benefit from existing assets and attract event shoppers and tourists to the Town.

4.12 Muine Bheag Objectives

MB O1: The core retail area should form the primary focus and preferred location for new retail development. Within this area additional retail, particularly comparison retail, as well as other complimentary uses such as cafes, recreational and leisure facilities and restaurants will be encouraged to reinforce the multifunctional role of the Town Centre.

MB O2: Central opportunity sites, as set out in this Retail Strategy, will be prioritised for development.

MB O3: Encourage the utilisation of Market Square as a multifunctional space including its use for local farmers market and other community/civic functions. Improvements to the public realm of the Square, including paving and hard landscaping that is consistent with the architectural heritage of the Town Centre should be promoted.

MB O4: Improvements to pedestrian infrastructure and pedestrian priority within the Town Centre should be encouraged, including enhanced pedestrian crossing facilities. New, as well as improved pedestrian linkages to the River Barrow are to be investigated and encouraged.

MB O5: Opportunities to improve cycle infrastructure and accessibility to the retail core should be promoted. Cycle infrastructure should be considered in the delivery of new developments within the wider Town area and these should integrate with the Town Centre infrastructure.

MB O6: Public realm improvements should be encouraged within the Town Centre,

including enhanced hard and soft landscaping, pavement improvements, street furniture and lighting, particularly the key connecting routes to the quays including Singletons Lane and Barrow Lane would benefit from urban realm improvements.

MB O7: Promote the enhancement of the public realm along the River Barrow, including appropriate hard and soft landscaping that integrates with and is legible as part of the public realm of the Town Centre.

MB O8: Enhanced signage between the Town Centre and the River Barrow should be promoted and encouraged.

MB O9: Adopt a car parking management strategy for the Town Centre that reduces the presence of on-street car parking in favour of off-street car parking, including the promotion of backland parking areas. The feasibility of relocating car parking from Market Square elsewhere should be investigated.

MB O10: The provision of on-street and off-street electric vehicle (EV) recharging facilities should be delivered in line with the Development Plan Parking Standards.

MB O11: Encourage and facilitate local niche industries, such as O'Hara's Brewery and Walsh's Whiskey Distillery, to develop a presence in the Town Centre to contribute to and benefit from existing assets and attract event shoppers and tourists to the Town.