

CHAPTER 4: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

A photograph of a stone wall made of grey and brown stones. A black rectangular sign is mounted on the wall, featuring the text 'Oaktree Business Park' in a white serif font. The wall is set against a cloudy sky, with some trees and a chimney visible in the background. In the foreground, there is a concrete path and a patch of green grass.

Oaktree Business Park

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4.1 Introduction

As per the 2006 Census, 3,222 persons were recorded at work in Trim (aged 15 and over). This figure represents a 30% increase over the figure of 2,479 recorded in the 2002 Census. Employment in manufacturing accounted for 15% of the total employed, wholesale and retail approximately 13% with the construction industry accounting for 16% of employment. The next largest employment category was health and social work, which 9% of Trim respondents stated as their line of work. The above figures show in particular the importance of the manufacturing and construction sectors to the residents of the town. The two sectors combined account for approximately 31% of the total labour force. These figures should be cautiously welcomed as the construction and manufacturing industries have proven to be somewhat volatile and vulnerable to external shocks in the past. In terms of unemployment 200 persons were classified as unemployed in Trim in the 2006 Census having lost or given up their previous job. A further 43 were looking for their first job. When groups such as the retired or students are discounted, it is evident that Trim enjoys near full employment. However as previously mentioned a large quantum of this employment is in industries which have not historically offered the greatest level of job security given their dependence on the central economy for growth. It shall be the challenge for the planning authorities to attract more sustainable forms of employment to Trim over the plan period to stimulate economic growth locally and to counter existing unsustainable commuting patterns.

Over the 2002-2008 plan period Scurlockstown and Oaktree Business Parks have developed as additional sources of employment for Trim. The primary role of the planning authorities in employment creation is to ensure that sufficient serviced land is made available at suitable locations for economic activity throughout the plan period. The need to identify further lands to facilitate the employment requirements of the town's growing population will be closely monitored over the life of the Plan.

The Regional Planning Guidelines designate Trim as a moderate growth town within the primary dynamic cluster of Navan, Trim and Kells. The longer term goal of the guidelines is that such centres should build upon such dynamism and develop a self sufficient critical mass of complementary towns. The economic function of the moderate growth town will be an attractor for substantial investment. Sustainable development requires local job creation which will improve the quality of life of the residential population of Trim. Notwithstanding the success of Scurlockstown and Oaktree Business Parks, as with other centres in County Meath, employment generating development has not kept pace with the level of residential development in the town. A key issue to be tackled in Trim is the creation of a sustainable settlement in accordance with the regional planning guidelines, i.e. a balance of residential and other uses including employment generating uses.

4.2 Economic Development

The resident population in Trim is an important locally available resource in terms of furthering the economic development of the town. A survey of Meath commuters was carried out in November 2003^[1]. The results of the survey indicated that a large number of commuters (91 %) who live in Meath wish to find work in their locality and that this labour pool contains an extensive range of experience and skills making it attractive to potential employers particularly in the areas of IT and financial services. A joint initiative was set up between the Economic Development Unit of Meath County Council and the County Enterprise Board to promote investment and job creation in Meath. The Meath Skills Database was launched in December 2004. It is generated through commuters who register on the website www.workinmeath.ie. Trim accounts for approx. 10.5 % of total registrations received so far (3,753). The group registrations display the small skills sets as the full database: i.e. 21% work in the financial services/insurance; 15% work in IT/Software; predominant age is 25-35; high level of educational qualifications are held; predominant income brackets are €15k-€30k and €31K -€45.

^[1] Hidden Resources: Survey of Meath Commuters, Economic Development Unit, Meath County Council, Nov 2003

It is evident from an analysis of the Meath Skills Database (MSD) that:

- (a) People in Meath want to stop commuting.
- (b) People in Meath are highly skilled and qualified in high-knowledge/skills employment sectors.

The evidence from the Meath Skills Database has influenced the economic development policy of Meath County Council and Trim Town Council to seek investment from high skilled/knowledge-based sectors such as Financial Services, IT, Software and Administration sectors as well as from the more traditional Logistics, Distribution and Light Manufacturing sectors.

Positives for Trim in terms of employment creation include:

- Broadband is available via the Metropolitan Area Network scheme for Trim commissioned in 2007;
- Wide presence of skilled labour as evidenced by the MSD;
- Attractive cost environment relative to urban cost levels (e.g. land costs, building costs, salary costs);
- Further evidence from the MSD suggests that commuters from adjacent counties such as Cavan, Louth and Westmeath would find it attractive to switch their employment location to Meath, and Trim would obviously be very attractive to them. Therefore it could be said that Trim could play a regional role as an employment location of choice for high skilled/knowledge based businesses who are anxious to set up a regional operation which is removed from Dublin without being in a remote/far removed location.
- Improved accessibility to Trim post M3 and the prospect of the delivery of the Dublin Outer Orbital Road (DOOR) in the longer term will assist in attracting businesses requiring a good profile in respect of access and proximity to strategic route corridors;
- The success of the Scurlockstown and Oaktree Business Parks.

Key Economic aims of the Trim Development Plan 2008-2014:

- Ensure sufficient lands are available to cater for employment generating uses;
- Consolidate and build on the success of the existing business park at Scurlockstown and Oaktree and identify suitable additional areas to accommodate employment generating uses as the need arises;
- Assist in releasing suitable lands for employment generating uses where barriers currently exist;
- Encourage environmental improvements in the town centre area which will assist in generating a 'feel good factor' in the town which will have a positive impact on potential employers/ employees locating in the town;
- Continue to improve the piped infrastructure serving the town;
- To cooperate with and facilitate subject to proper planning organisations involved in job creation, and;
- Realise the relocation of unsuitable land uses from the town centre to more appropriate and accessible locations on appropriately zoned land.

The joint councils will seek to promote the economic development of Trim in order to maximize opportunities presented by the identification of Trim as part of a primary dynamic cluster. Sufficient lands will be zoned for employment generating development throughout the Plan period. The adequacy of employment generating land supply will be closely monitored throughout the Development plan period.

The Development Plan clearly identifies the supply of land for employment generating industrial and commercial development and will generate the requisite level of job creation needed by Trim's growing population and support the growth and development of Co. Meath in general. It is important that a range of sites are identified to meet the practical needs of users and thereby

encourage diversification of the local economy and thereby ensure that it is more resistant to adverse changes in the structure of employment activity.

Employment and enterprise are provided for within a number of strategically located sites within the context of balanced development of Trim. Provision for employment and enterprise have been made to the north, northeast, south and east of the town. Scurlockstown Business Park has been a relative success over the lifetime of the previous Development plan and it is proposed to extend this industrial zone to the east to allow for future expansion if required. It is considered that adequate lands are available at Oaktree Business Park to serve future needs over the lifetime of the Plan.

Lands are identified off the Dunderry Road to provide for small and medium sized industries of a local nature (including entrepreneurial start up businesses) and will allow for the displacement of non compatible and industrial uses from the town centre and other locations.

Policies

In terms of Economic Development, it is the policy of Meath County Council and Trim Town Council:

ECON DEV POL 1: To encourage the development of Trim as a dynamic economic cluster with Navan and Kells.

ECON DEV POL 2: To support the activities of agencies involved in the promotion of employment generating opportunities in Trim including the Meath County Enterprise Board, Enterprise Ireland and the Industrial Development Agency (IDA Ireland).

ECON DEV POL 3: To encourage local/small scale offices in neighbourhood centres.

ECON DEV POL 4: Where industrial sites are developed adjacent to residential areas and community facilities, buffer zones shall be provided as well as adequate screening in the form of planting, landscaping and mounding as appropriate.

ECON DEV POL 5: To apply a flexible approach to the zoning of entrepreneurial start up business and small scale industrial and employment generating activities, where it can be demonstrated that the proposed use would have minimal impact on adjoining uses, primarily residential property.

Objectives

In terms of Economic Development, it is an objective of Meath County Council and Trim Town Council:

ECON DEV OBJ 1: To zone suitable lands to facilitate employment generation and to facilitate the development of employment creating land uses at these identified locations in accordance with the principles of proper planning.

ECON DEV OBJ 2: To provide sites for the relocation of non compatible town centre commercial uses on a site zoned for E3 Industrial Use (See Zoning Objectives Maps);

ECON DEV OBJ 3: To provide for small and medium sized industries of a local type nature to develop on a site zoned for E3 Industrial Use (See Zoning Objectives Maps).

ECON DEV OBJ 4: To protect, enhance and provide for uses of these lands for motor trade related uses and to facilitate the development of complimentary and/or compatible small and medium sized retail warehouse units, with associated motor trade, garden centres, D.I.Y, electrical, furniture and homeware uses only, subject to high quality design and finish. Retail warehousing where it is not related directly to the motor trade shall be facilitated only where it:

- Results in the removal/relocation of non-compatible town centre uses,
- No adverse impact on retailing in the town centre occurs,
- Complies with the Retail Planning Guidelines in particular with sequential testing,
- Complies with normal proper planning and sustainable development criteria.

4.2.1 Employment Generating Framework Plans

Four of the areas which are identified in this development plan to accommodate employment generating uses are designated for the purposes of a Framework Plan. This includes the lands off the Dublin Road which are subject to the B5 land use zoning objective, lands off the Dunderry Road which are subject to the E3 land use zoning objective and lands at Newtown and Scurlockstown which are subject to the E2 zoning objectives. Chapter 3 details the requirements of the Framework Plans.

4.3 Tourism

The quality and diversity of heritage, the rural landscape and the coastal belt means that County Meath as a whole has potential to develop as a major tourist destination. Meath experienced an increase in overseas visitor numbers of 21% to 117,000 in 2005 (96,000 in 2004). This represents €34m in revenue from overseas visitors. In relation to domestic visitors, Meath is part of a larger region (East Coast and Midlands Region) which had 900,000 domestic trips in 2005.

Specifically in relation to visitor numbers, St Johns Castle is a major tourist magnet for Trim and Meath in general, with more visitors only visiting the Bru na Boinne world heritage site. Bought by the State in the early 1990's the Castle underwent renovation for a period and opened to the public with guided tours in 2000. The castle is in the care of the State and attracts approximately 60,000 visitors per year. The castle is an indispensable heritage asset which provides valuable tourism and economic dividends for the town.

Tourism benefits the local community in terms of job creation and improved facilities which are also available to locals. The Meath County tourism strategy entitled 'Ireland's Heritage Capital, Marketing Tourism in Meath, 2005-2010' identifies heritage as the County's Unique Selling Proposition (USP). Heritage was adopted into the Meath Tourism brand. Trim is designated a Heritage town and the town should be a strong attractor of tourists due to its strong heritage base. However, tourism development is not currently meeting its full potential in Trim given the quality of heritage sites in the town and its location as a gateway to South West Meath etc. As has been outlined in earlier chapters Trim has renowned heritage sites, traditional street frontages and pattern, signage, and traditional buildings which are intact and which add to the tourist product. These assets offer great starting point to significantly enhance the tourism offer in the town. Hereunto now the small but noticeable level of dereliction in the town centre, combined with the lack of a comprehensive retail offer in the town detracted from the attractiveness of the town as a tourist destination. The planning authority will seek to improve the appearance of the town centre, by carrying out environmental improvements and ensuring appropriate management over new development, in order to strengthen and improve the character of Trim. The towns retail offer should significantly improve over the plan period as planning approval was granted for a major new town centre expansion in 2007. New development in the tourism sector should respect the existing character of the town and its surroundings. This will enable tourism facilities to be provided in appropriate locations that will not have a detrimental impact on the town or its residents.

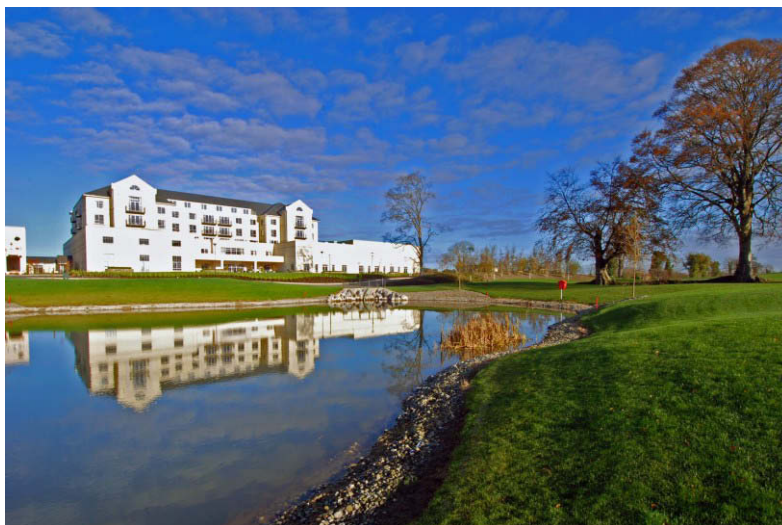


View of Trim from the Porch Field

Meath County Council and Meath Tourism commissioned a Meath Needs Analysis 2006 which compares the principal towns in Meath with similar size towns in Ireland. A comparative analysis of Trim and Naas/Clonmel/Westport is carried out in the needs analysis in the following categories: transport/access, physical infrastructure, supply of quality food and drink establishments, leisure facilities, retail; specialists high value consumer products and services, environmentally friendly tourist attractions, tourism training facilities; entertainment, culturally enriched attractions, heritage attractions, activities, festivals and town brand marketing.

Opportunities for Trim are identified and include:

- A requirement for improved and varied public transport to Navan and Dublin;
- Festival development, linking heritage and crafts;
- Playground improvements;
- Development of good quality pub food/entertainment offer;
- Improved signage for Trim on the N3 and M50, and;
- Signs on N3 should depict Trim as 'Heritage Town' to entice impulse tourism.



Knightsbrook Hotel & Golf Resort

Policies

In terms of Tourism, it is the policy of Meath County Council and Trim Town Council:

TOU POL 1: To promote the development of tourism in Trim in a sustainable manner and encourage the provision of a comprehensive range of tourism facilities, subject to location, siting and design criteria while safeguarding the protection of the built environment, including archaeological heritage, of Trim in co-operation with Meath Tourism, Failte Ireland and other relevant agencies.

TOU POL 2: To promote and encourage the development of Trim as a tourism gateway to South West Meath in co-operation with Meath Tourism, Failte Ireland and other relevant agencies.

Objectives

In terms of Tourism, it is an objective of Meath County Council and Trim Town Council:

TOU OBJ 1: To promote a tourist signage strategy for Trim in conjunction with Meath Tourism.

TOU OBJ 2: To promote the development of a heritage trail in the historic core of Trim with links to the Porchfield area in conjunction with Meath Tourism.

TOU OBJ 3: To facilitate the improvement of existing sign posted walking/cycling routes within the town and environs and where possible develop new ones.

TOU OBJ 4: To promote the development of high quality tourist accommodation and ancillary facilities, especially those facilities which provide conference and leisure facilities.

TOU OBJ 5: To encourage and promote festivals and other appropriate cultural events.

TOU OBJ 6: To encourage the removal of unsightly elements at historically sensitive locations within the town such as inappropriate advertising, poles, wires and antennae.

4.4 Retail and Commercial Development

4.4.1 Background

The Retail Planning Guidelines (2005) require that the following be included in all Development Plans:

- Confirmation of the Retail Hierarchy, the role of the centre and size of the main town centre;
- Definition of the boundaries of the core retail area;
- Broad assessment of additional floor space requirements;
- Strategic guidance on location and scale of retail development;
- Preparation of policies and action initiatives to encourage improvement of the town centre, and;
- Identification of criteria for the assessment of retail developments.

The town centre area of Trim has retained a relatively compact form. The core retail area of Trim as defined in the County Retail Strategy includes parts of Castle Street, Bridge Street, Market Street, Watergate Street and Emmet Street. The medieval street pattern has resulted in a difficulty in accommodating the requirements of modern retailing in the town. The retail mix in the town centre is quite limited when examined in comparison with similar sized towns. There is little representation of national or international multiples with the exception of a discount grocery store. There has been

limited retail investment over the 2002 plan period apart from the development of this discount store on the Athboy Road. Addressing deficiencies in the retail offer of Trim must be addressed in conjunction with the promotion of heritage and with urban environmental improvements to the town centre area. In October 2007 An Bord Pleanála upheld Trim Town Council's decision to grant planning permission for a major expansion of Trim town centre on lands just west of the existing core retail area. This development will be the single largest development of retail space in the town's history. The development should go a long way to improving the sustainability and economic vitality of the town and reduce unsustainable commuting to other retail centres further afield.

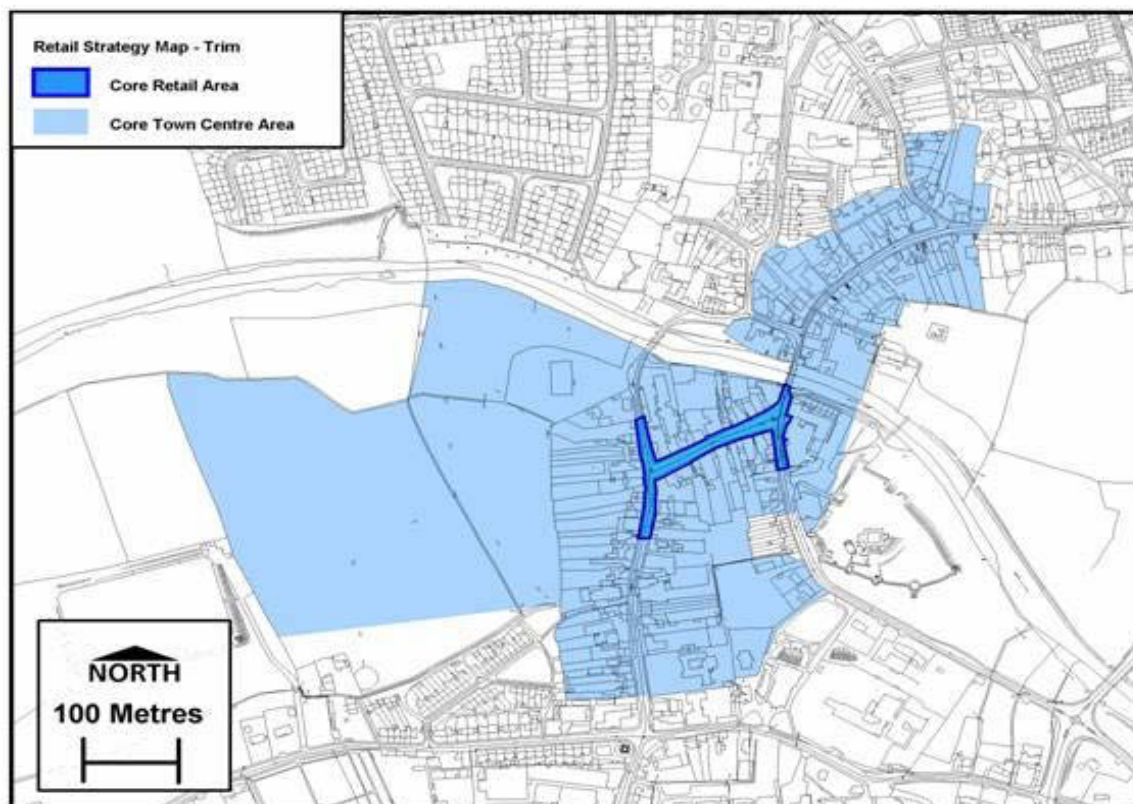


Figure 6; Trim Core Retail Area

4.4.2 Meath County Retail Strategy 2003

The Meath County Retail Strategy, 2003 was prepared in accordance with the retail planning guidelines, 2000. These guidelines assisted planning authorities in their assessment of retail planning applications and the formulation of retail policy in development/local area plans until they were revised in 2005. The objective of the guidelines is to ensure that the optimum location for new retail development is established which is accessible to all sections of society and is of a scale which allows the continued prosperity of traditional town centres and existing retail centres.

Trim is designated as a Level 3 sub-county town centre in the Greater Dublin Area retail hierarchy and this is confirmed in the Meath County Retail Hierarchy. Policy RS3 of the strategy states that it is the policy of the planning authority to promote and encourage major enhancement and expansion of town centre functions to sustain the competitiveness and importance of Trim as a Sub County Town Centre and also to ensure that its unique heritage becomes integral to the offer and attraction of the town. The County Retail Strategy identifies the existing retail profile of this Sub County Town Centre as predominantly a comparison centre with a good number of quality outlets. However, a comparative study with centres of equivalent size and importance in other counties reveals that there is an under provision of retail floor space in Trim. The town is thus underperforming in the Greater Dublin Area against other centres at the same level in the hierarchy. The County Retail Strategy recommends that a town of Trim's status should be more self sustaining to serve its existing and projected catchment populations higher order shopping needs. The approved town centre

expansion should address some of these issues. The strategy identifies that additional convenience floor space is required if the Sub County Town Centres including Trim are to play an enhanced sub regional/county role in the shopping patterns of the County and address existing convenience leakage. The County Retail Strategy advocates that the designated Sub County Town Centres need larger format supermarket floor space that better serves main food shopping needs. The priority must be to secure new convenience floor space within Trim town centre to enable consolidation and improvement of the range and offer of the town. Over the period of the County Retail Strategy it is advocated that Trim further develops its role and importance as a Sub-County Centre in the shopping patterns of its catchment area. The strategy also notes that there is also a need to better harness Trim's heritage and tourism offer to the benefit of the town and its attraction.

Amongst actions identified for Trim, the County Retail Strategy advocates the following:

- The need to examine the emerging needs of existing and expanding residential areas specifically with regards to convenience shopping and ensure that the correct land use zonings are in place;
- Progress should be pursued as a priority on all road proposals required to untap the potential and attraction of sites within Trim town centre;
- An examination of the mechanisms to assist the delivery of key town centre sites. This should include marketing strategies, the potential of Public Private Partnerships and direct market testing of developers and operators, and;
- The preparation of strategies that embrace heritage, signage, linkages and interpretation.

4.4.3 Trim Retail Evaluation, 2006/07

To inform the preparation of this Development Plan, the planning authorities undertook a general analysis of retail trends and conditions in Trim. The key issues identified in the Trim Retail Evaluation can be summarized as follows:

- Limited existing retail floor space;
- Lack of multi-national investment, and;
- Traffic congestion.

Notwithstanding the approved town centre expansion, there remains considerable scope for further retail development at appropriate locations in the Trim environs to serve the needs of the expanding resident population and its surrounding rural hinterland. The fact that to date there has been limited investment in Trim has contributed to the retention of the historic street pattern and traditional shopfronts remaining intact which is a positive the town can build on. Redressing the historical town centre's decline and improving the retail offer should only take place in the context of building on the towns' character and uniqueness provided by its history. Redressing deficiencies in retail should address the following:

- Provide strong linkage between the town centre and new development;
- Invest in the public realm and promotion of the town's unique heritage;
- Identification of lands specifically for retail warehousing.

Policies

In terms of Retail, it is the policy of Meath County Council and Trim Town Council:

RET DEV POL 1: To protect and enhance the vitality of Trim Town Centre and promote this area as the main commercial core where an appropriate mix of commercial, retail, recreational, civic, cultural and residential uses are provided.

RET DEV POL 2: To promote the continued development of the town centre in a manner which provides permeability between the existing town centre and designated expansion areas.

RET DEV POL 3: To encourage and support the enhancement of the retail offer of Trim while respecting the unique heritage value of the town.

RET DEV POL 4: To encourage and support proposals for the re-use and regeneration of derelict land and vacant properties in the town centre with due cognisance to the sequential approach.

RET DEV POL 5: To support proposals for new retail and other mixed use development in the town centre where the proposal:

- Is compliant with the sequential approach to retailing;
- Is well located, convenient, attractive and has safe pedestrian linkages;
- Provides or is in close proximity to adequate parking (including cycle parking);
- Provides adequate facilities for the recycling of waste packaging generated by the proposal, including a bring centre where required;
- Has negligible impact on existing urban residents;
- Has due regard to the unique heritage value of Trim.

Objectives

In terms of Retail, it is an objective of Meath County Council and Trim Town Council:

RET DEV OBJ 1: To investigate the preparation of heritage and interpretation strategies that embrace signage, linkages and interpretation.

RET DEV OBJ 2: To examine alternative options for the provision of car parking other than surface car-parking and to ensure provision is made for cycle parking in major retail developments.

RET DEV OBJ 3: To seek the removal of inappropriate and unauthorised advertising signs, sandwich boards, satellite dishes and shop front shutters from buildings within the town centre.

RET DEV OBJ 4: To seek the removal of all unauthorised advertising/satellite dishes from the approach roads and central area streets in order to improve the appearance of Trim.

RET DEV OBJ 5: To initiate enforcement proceedings where an unauthorised use or unauthorised development occurs.

4.4.4 Retail Warehousing/ Retail Warehouse Parks

Trim currently does not have any retail warehousing parks. Retail warehousing trades in bulky goods^[2] such as carpets, furniture, electrical goods, garden products and DIY items. The Retail Planning Guidelines, 2005 recognises that retail warehousing development cannot be readily accommodated within town centres due to their size and servicing requirements and the need for good car parking. The County Retail Strategy, 2003 recognises that the needs of the expanding residential areas of Trim and the retail warehousing needs of Trim cannot be accommodated in the town centre. Retail warehousing at appropriate locations to serve the future needs of Trim and its hinterland will be encouraged subject to proper planning.

Retail warehousing should be restricted to truly 'bulky goods' and conform to set size thresholds set out in this Development Plan, otherwise it can have a damaging material impact on the commercial viability of the Trim Town Centre. In order to reduce the adverse impact of car traffic, it is considered appropriate to group retail warehousing on a single site to facilitate multiple shopping

^[2] As defined by the Retail Planning Guidelines, 2005

trips using a shared or communal surface car park. A site, 17.55ha in area, has been identified off the Dublin Road, as suitable for retail warehousing in order to provide choice and limit monopolies. It will be a requirement of the Planning Authority that a framework Plan be prepared for the development of these lands (See Chapter Three).

Policies

In terms of Retail Warehousing, it is the policy of Meath County Council and Trim Town Council:

RET DEV POL 6: To encourage the provision of retail warehousing at appropriate locations and appropriate scale having regard to the 'Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area' and the 'County Meath Retail Strategy',

RET DEV POL 7: To restrict retail warehouse development solely to the sale of 'bulky comparison goods'.

Objectives

In terms of Retail Warehousing, it is an objective of Meath County Council and Trim Town Council:

RET DEV OBJ 6: To ensure that sufficient lands are identified to meet the needs for retail warehousing floor space in Trim.

4.4.5 Local Shopping Facilities

Trim has developed in a relatively compact form, there are however residential areas on the periphery which require local shopping facilities. These facilities could take the form of a local/corner shop or a neighbourhood centre. Shops in neighbourhood centres perform a key function locally providing services including convenience shopping, video/DVD rental, laundry, hairdresser, takeaways etc. The aim of providing such shopping facilities locally serve catchment areas within approximately 800 metres is to reduce the necessity to travel by car to the town centre to avail of basic services and thereby ensure reduced traffic congestion and improved sustainability.

Objectives

In terms of Local Shopping Facilities, it is the policy of Meath County Council and Trim Town Council:

RET DEV OBJ 7: To identify within major residential areas, locations for neighbourhood and district centres to enable convenience needs to be better met locally and therefore reduce the need to travel; to the town centre for basic convenience requirements.

4.4.6 Petrol Filling Stations

Petrol filling stations are a growing sector in retail in Ireland as the retail offer of some forecourt shops have expanded extensively in the recent past. Ministerial retail guidance indicates that the retail use of a site as a petrol filling station, depending on the scale of such convenience store, can adversely impact on traditional retail outlets such as local corner shops. The Retail Planning Guidelines state that the size of a shop associated with any petrol filling station should take account of the following factors:

- Large stores tend to attract additional custom which can lead to additional car borne trips primarily for shopping purposes;
- Large numbers of parked cars in station forecourts can cause disruption and queuing for those simply wishing to use the petrol pumps, and;
- The preferred location for retailing is in town centres, not isolated sites outside these preferred locations (sequential approach/test).

Notwithstanding the above, a shop of up to 100m² (net) retail floorspace is considered acceptable when associated with a petrol filling station. Above this threshold, the sequential test approach will be applied. Guidelines on specific requirements for Petrol Filling Station proposals are set out in Development Management Guidelines section of this development plan. Such developments are also subject to the provision of the Dangerous Substances (Retail and Private Petroleum Stores) Regulations 1979 to 2006, as may be amended.

Objective

In terms of Petrol Filling Stations, it is an objective of Meath County Council and Trim Town Council:

RET DEV OBJ 8: To facilitate the re-location of the existing Texaco garage on Haggard St street to a more appropriate site zoned for such use.

4.4.7 Discount Food Stores



Existing Discount Foodstore off the Athboy Road

Discount food stores of up to 1,500 sq. m. gross have a potential role in extending the choice of retailing, particularly for certain sectors of the community. Their customer catchment and retail offer is different to the mainstream superstores and supermarkets and their trade draw will be different. They provide a specialised form of predominantly convenience shopping. Discount food stores can effectively anchor smaller centres or local neighbourhood centres as well as complementing existing convenience shopping in established Level 3 centres. Proposals for such developments will be considered in relation to the provisions of the plan concerning the design, layout and impact of retail developments. Applications for discount food stores must demonstrate that they will not have a significant negative impact on the commercial draw of the town centre.

Policy

In terms of Discount Food Stores, it is the policy of Meath County Council and Trim Town Council:

RET DEV POL 8: To facilitate the provision of discount food stores in suitable locations subject to the appropriate protection of the vitality and viability of the town centre and the need to confine their use to the sale of largely convenience goods.

RET DEV POL 9: To ensure that the design of discount food stores is of high quality which respects the heritage value and visual integrity of Trim.

4.4.8 Fast Food Outlets/Takeaways

'Take-aways' can generate noise, odour and litter, and can cause disturbance to nearby residents, particularly late at night. The following factors will be taken into account in the assessment of development proposals for fast food/takeaway outlets:

- The need to retain, protect and strengthen the retail and general variety and multi-use function of the area;
- The adequacy of existing facilities for the sale of hot food consumption off the premises in the locality;
- The cumulative effect of the proposed development on the amenities in the area, and;
- The effect of the proposed development on the existing mix of land uses and activities in the area.

Policy

In terms of Fast Food Outlets/Takeaways, it is the policy of Meath County Council and Trim Town Council that:

RET DEV POL 10: Take away outlets will generally be facilitated in the historic core of Trim subject to the following:

- The design contributes in a positive manner to the heritage status of the town;
- Shop front, signage and lighting contribute in a positive manner to the heritage status of the town, and;
- Proposal for 'take away' food as part of a sit down restaurant will be considered against the likely impact on local amenity, litter generation and noise. Opening hours of these premises shall be strictly controlled.

4.4.9 Access and Facilities in Shopping Centres

Access requirements for people with disabilities must be incorporated into the design of shops used by the general public. The criteria necessary for people with disabilities is set out in the Building Regulations 1997 to 2006, Part M, and the National Disability Authority document 'Building for Everyone.'

The latter document states;

"If we believe in building for everyone, then it is unacceptable that a woman should suffer disadvantage because she is pregnant, a child because of being small or older people simply because they are elderly. It is equally unacceptable that people should be disadvantaged because of their impaired sight, hearing or mobility. It is particularly unacceptable when the disadvantage suffered is the result of carelessness or thoughtlessness, and is entirely avoidable."

Policy

In terms of Access and Facilities in Shopping Centres, it is the policy of Meath County Council and Trim Town Council:

RET DEV POL 11: To require adequate provision to be made in new shopping developments for the following;

- Access and facilities for people with disabilities including car-parking spaces;
- Secure parking for cyclists, and;
- Support facilities for shoppers in general and for people with children in particular, with regard to the provision of toilets and other facilities including baby changing / feeding and crèche facilities.

Policy

In terms of Non Retail Uses, it is the policy of Meath County Council and Trim Town Council:

RET DEV POL 12: To strengthen the shopping function of Trim, non-retail uses at ground floor within the town centre will be discouraged in order to protect the vitality and viability of the primary retail area.

4.4.10 Assessment of Retail Development

Every applicant must demonstrate that any retail proposal complies with the policy direction of the Development Plan. All applications for significant retail developments should be assessed against a range of criteria. The County Retail Strategy identifies significant as 1000 sq.m. gross floor area for convenience development and 2000 sq.m. gross of comparison development. This criteria will include:

- Testing the proposal against the sequential approach;
- The potential impact on Trim town centre;
- The ability of the proposal to deliver linkages to the town centre;
- The baseline data and capacity impact assessment is fit for the purpose and is transparent;
- That there is a demonstrated need for the development;
- The relationship of the proposal to any development plan allocation;
- Contribution to the existing town centre;
- Contribution to site/ area regeneration;
- Quality of access by all modes of transport;
- Role in improving competitiveness of the county;
- Extent to which it may be necessary to consider imposition of restrictions on range of goods permitted for sale, and;
- Any other development plan allocation.

In order to protect the retail viability of Trim Town Centre and to maintain the visual character of its streets it is necessary to control the amount of non-retail floorspace at ground level.

4.5 Advertising

Inappropriate advertising signage can detract from a streetscape. The heritage town status of Trim and the ACAs within the town centre necessitates strong policy direction in the development plan for the control of advertising signage.

Policy

In terms of Advertising, it is the policy of Meath County Council and Trim Town Council:

ADV POL 1: To encourage the use of quality advertising signage which compliments the heritage status of Trim. There will be a presumption against the use of plastic illuminated signage.

Objective

In terms of Advertising, it is an objective of Meath County Council and Trim Town Council:

ADV OBJ 1: To develop an advertising signage strategy for Trim.

4.5.1 Shopfronts

Shopfronts make a major contribution to the visual amenities of a town and many have strong heritage value which should be preserved. New shopfront design must respect the scale and proportions of the streetscape by maintaining the existing grain of development along the street and respecting the appropriate plot width. Generally, individually mounted lettering or hand painted lettering is required. Letter design should be simple and legible. If shop lights are used, the arms should be short and the hoods of the lights treated to match with the background. The choice of materials should compliment the character of the building and integrate with the overall visual unity of the street scheme. Timber window frames are appropriate in traditional context and also work well when combined with stone. External roller shutters will not normally be permitted with the town centre and will normally only be considered in industrial type settings.

Policies

In terms of Shop Fronts, it is the policy of Meath County Council and Trim Town Council:

SHOP FR POL 1: The following policies shall apply in relation to shopfronts;

- To encourage the use of hand-painted fascia lettering and logos in a style and colour that harmonises with the shop and helps portray its use, and;
- To encourage the use of roller shutters located behind the line of glazing of shopfronts.

4.6 Derelict and Obsolete Land and Buildings

The planning authorities will examine joint public/private commercial ventures that facilitate the development or refurbishment of derelict or obsolete sites, including the use of the Derelict Sites Act, 1990 as amended by the Planning and Development Act 2000.

In terms of Derelict and Obsolete Land and Buildings, it is the policy of Meath County Council and Trim Town Council:

DER POL 1: To implement the provisions of the Derelict Sites Act, 1990 (as amended) and regulations made thereunder to prevent or remove injury to amenity arising from dereliction.

DER POL 2: To identify and secure the redevelopment of obsolete areas, including areas of backland, derelict sites and incidental open spaces.