

Development Management Guidelines & Standards

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10.1 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

10.1.1 Introduction

It is the policy of Meath County Council to encourage the establishment and maintenance of sustainable residential communities within County Meath. To this end, it is an objective of the Development Plan to prepare updated Housing Estate Design Guidelines within one year of the adoption of this Development Plan. These Guidelines would address issues including, inter alia, traffic calming measures, parking, children's play areas, landscaping, open space design, provision and maintenance of active and passive recreational areas and community buildings, etc. This will be facilitated by:

- The creation and maintenance of a satisfactory residential environment which meets the needs and as far as possible, the preferences of residents and fosters the development of community.
- The integration of new housing into the natural and built environment in a manner that makes a positive contribution to the overall environment in the locality.
- The encouragement of energy efficiency both during the construction phase and during the lifetime of the development by sensitive design and layout and taking into account the topography, orientation and surrounding features of each site.
- The use of design briefs and qualitative and quantitative criteria in assessing applications for residential development.

The successful design of residential development will depend on a coherent and unambiguous design brief. In dealing with applications for residential development over 0.2 hectare (0.5 acre) or for more than 15 residential units, the Planning Authority will require the submission of a design brief as part of the application documents.

The principal functions of a design brief will be:

- To ensure that the key characteristics of the local context are taken into account from the outset.
- To establish the overall form of the development based on the density and layout of buildings and spaces.
- To indicate how the layout of roads, streets and open spaces contribute to the spatial hierarchy, as well as linking the development to the rest of the vicinity.
- To indicate how the quantitative and qualitative criteria, which inform the design have been adhered to.

Quantitative criteria refer to density, private and public open space, roads, footpaths, car parking standards and internal space standards.

Qualitative criteria refer to consideration of safety, privacy, sense of place, variety functions, convenience and aesthetics.

The design of residential development should not be based solely on compliance with quantitative standards. The creation of residential areas with a sense of place should be the priority. In the making of places, road layout and the movement of vehicles should not dictate the internal layout

of a housing scheme. The design of new residential development should provide for a network of functional and aesthetically pleasing public, semi-private and private spaces rather than merely a hierarchy of roads.

10.1.2 Residential Density

The preceding County Development Plan contained an Indicative Density Matrix which set out potential scenarios and the densities that may be considered given compliance with reasonable qualitative standards. The publication of the 'Residential Density Guidelines for Planning Authorities' by the Department of the Environment and Local Government advocates the dispensing with the prescription of maximum residential densities. The Planning Authority in assessing planning applications for residential development will have regard to the policies and objectives outlined in these Guidelines.

Meath County Council recognises the benefits of increasing the density of residential development at appropriate locations in harmony with improved public transport systems in accordance with various strategies and reports such as the 'National Spatial Strategy', the 'Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area', 'Residential Density Guidelines for Planning Authorities' and the 'Bacon Reports'. Such an approach would encourage a more sustainable form of urban development through the avoidance of excessive suburbanisation and consumption of greenfield virgin lands and ensuring a more economic use of existing infrastructure and serviced lands. A further benefit would be the reduction in the dependence on the use of the private motor car and improving accessibility to, and the attractiveness of, public transport. This policy also takes due cognisance of the fall in average household size coupled with the growth in overall population levels to promote the need for a more varied range of dwelling type and size than has been provided heretofore. The use of zoned and serviced land to its maximum will assist in achieving the objective of satisfying housing demand as will the provision of a greater proportion of dwellings more suitable to changing and smaller household sizes.

However, before these benefits may be exploited, there are several challenges that should be considered, such as:

- Raising the standard of design to ensure that in the pursuit of quantitative based housing yield, qualitative aspects of design are not weakened;
- Considering the pursuit of radical new forms of development rather than a compression of traditional housing form;
- The identification of key public transport corridors and other suitable locations where higher densities may be considered;
- Encouraging the preparation of Framework Plans to guide the integration of development to yield social and environmental benefits, and;
- Considering the pursuit of higher residential densities only in conjunction with the protection of existing urban quality and where ample engineering services are available.

The appropriate residential density in any particular location will be determined by the following:

- i) The extent to which the design and layout follows a coherent design brief resulting in a high quality residential environment;
- ii) Compliance with qualitative and quantitative criteria set out in the subsequent Sections;
- iii) The extent to which the site may, due to its size, scale and location, propose its own density

and character, having regard to the need to protect the established character and amenities of existing adjoining residential areas;

- iv) Proximity to points of access to the public transport network;
- v) Existing topographical, landscape or other features on the site, and;
- vi) The capacity of the infrastructure, including social and community facilities, to absorb the demands created by the development.

The choice as to the level of residential density appropriate to a given area cannot therefore be considered in simple arithmetic terms for all development sites as a single numerical value. Rather, the identification of a given density and the question of its appropriateness should be determined by spatial planning and architectural design criteria, determined by the context of a given site and the relationship to the overall proper planning and sustainable development of that centre.

It will be the policy of Meath County Council to actively encourage the use of acknowledged "best practice" design guides from the U.K. and Ireland and to consider the approaches in such guides as a reference point for qualitative assessment of such schemes. The Planning Authorities will promote the use of Local Area and Framework Planning based approaches for the comprehensive development of new residential areas, particularly in A2 and A4 residential zones.

POLICY

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The Planning Authority is committed to the promotion of higher densities in suitable locations in accordance with the Residential Density Guidelines for Planning Authorities. In respect of Large Growth Towns, Moderate Growth Towns and Small Growth Towns which are located on well established, existing or proposed public transport routes or nodes with additional capacity, it shall therefore be the policy of Meath County Council, subject to good design and in the absence of onerous site constraints, to facilitate residential densities in excess of 35 residential units per hectare, particularly in town centre locations. In all other instances, in the county's smaller towns and villages, maximum densities of 35 units per hectare shall be applicable, and in general densities and house types shall be compatible with established densities and housing character in the area.

10.1.3 Qualitative Criteria

- (i) Pedestrian and vehicular movement within housing areas should be convenient, safe and pleasant. Within larger housing areas, a clear hierarchy of spaces and roads should be apparent. Movement through estates should be guided by the principles of security, with opportunities for crime and anti social behaviour minimised.
- (ii) Estate design should be guided by the principle of lifetime use and recognise the role of housing areas in children's play activities and the needs of the elderly and of persons with a disability. In particular, the layout of roads, footpaths and open space, should facilitate children to move freely and safely around their neighbourhood, and to be able to play in front or within sight of their homes.
- (iii) Every effort should be made to eliminate through traffic (rat-runs); however provision should be made for public transport, pedestrian and cycle network through-routes. Long straight roads should be avoided where feasible to keep vehicular speeds to the minimum. Where long straight roads are unavoidable, provision should be made for traffic management

proposals. Where shared surfaces are proposed, vehicle design speeds should be at or near walking pace. This shall be achieved by design features such as curves, ramps, pinch points and other features where appropriate.

- (iv) In housing developments containing 15 or more units, a mix of house types and sizes should be provided. Variety in design, within a unified concept, is desirable. This may be achieved through scale and massing, roof profiles, materials and decorative details. In smaller schemes, i.e. less than 15 units, uniformity in design and finishes may be desirable and necessary.
- (v) Public open space within residential developments should be designed so as to complement the residential layout and be informally supervised by residents. They should be visually and functionally accessible to the maximum number of dwellings. The landscape design of open spaces, including the retention of existing features such as an important stand of trees, stream or rock outcrop, must be incorporated into the initial design process. Where such features are being retained, they should be situated in open space to ensure their visual setting and protection. The design and layout of the network of public open spaces should take into account, and make provision for, the need for level areas of sufficient size to accommodate informal sports activities for children. Narrow tracts of open space, which are difficult to manage, are not acceptable.
- (vi) Privacy, defined as freedom from undue observation, is an essential factor in residential layout. Privacy can be ensured by attention to the alignment of new residential buildings and their relationship to each other. Good design in housing layouts, the configuration of houses and their relationship to each other, to open spaces and roads, should aim to provide layouts with adequate private open space and screening so as to achieve freedom from observation.

10.1.4 Qualitative Standards

10.1.4.1 General

- (i) New development will be encouraged to optimise usage of orientation and natural sun lighting with single aspect housing being discouraged and multiple aspects being considered an advantage in apartment type development.
- (ii) Parking requirements will normally be of the order of one or two spaces per dwelling, depending on dwelling size, access to public transport and accessibility to town centre facilities. Curtilage parking will not necessarily be mandatory with grouped parking an option subject to ensuring a high degree of passive surveillance. Underground parking will also be an option subject to acceptable access, circulation and parking space dimension standards, provision of good ventilation and standards of personal safety. Proper provision must always be made in all layouts for access by fire appliances and refuse freighters.

10.1.4.2 Houses

- (i) All houses should have an area of private open space, exclusive of car parking, to the rear of the building line. Minimum rear garden size shall conform to the recommendations of the Residential Density Guidelines for Planning Authorities,
- (ii) A minimum of 22 metres, between directly opposing windows shall be observed. Where sufficient private open space is provided and privacy is maintained, this depth may be reduced for single storey dwellings,
- (iii) Screen walls, 2.0 metres in height and constructed in accordance with I.S. 325 shall be provided where the boundaries of the house sites abut roads, pedestrian ways or open spaces, and where the areas of private open space are below the minimum standards

outlined above. The walls shall be capped and rendered or other decorative finish consistent with the design/finish of the house design.

- (iv) A minimum distance of 2.3 metres shall be provided between dwellings for the full length of the flanks in all developments of detached, semi-detached and end terrace houses. This area shall be equally divided between the dwellings so separated. Where garages are provided as single storey annexes to houses, the above separation distance may be reduced, providing a direct through access from front to rear of the dwelling is maintained.
- (v) Public open space shall be provided for in residential development at a minimum rate of 15% of total site area. In areas, which the Planning Authority have decided that a framework plan should be prepared, public open space shall be provided at a minimum rate of 15% of total site area. Where residential developments are close to existing facilities or natural amenities or where in the opinion of the Planning Authority that it would be in the interest of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, the Planning Authority may require a financial contribution towards the provision of public open space or recreational facilities in the wider area in lieu of public open space within the development.
- (vi) The use of hard landscaping elements such as paving, cobbled areas, etc. should play an increasingly important role in the design and presentation of open space concepts. Hard play areas such as all weather surfaces should also be taken into account when assessing new proposals.

10.1.4.3 Apartments

Planning applications for the development of apartments are subject to the guidelines and standards set out below.

The Planning Authority is aware that in areas of multiple occupancy developments, there are a greater number of people. This can adversely affect the amenities of the area - increased traffic generated coupled with car-parking requirements, lack of commitment to (public and private) open space maintenance (particularly when residents may not be the home owners), increased noise, nuisance and general disturbance.

The subdivision of existing dwelling houses into apartments/flats will not generally be permitted within residential estates designed and developed for single family occupancy.

- (i) Apartment development should have a high quality of building design and site layout and have due regard to the character of the adjoining streetscape or landscape. They will not normally be permitted on sites surrounded by or gaining access through family occupied suburban housing estate development. They may be acceptable within housing developments when planned or constructed as part of such development but will only be permitted where a satisfactory degree of separation from standard suburban housing, in terms of design, height and layout is achieved to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.
- (ii) The Planning Authority will have regard to the principles as outlined in the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (1999) publication on 'Residential Density – Guidelines for Planning Authorities' or any replacement guidelines in considering the density and layout of housing estates. Housing densities should be appropriate to the location of the development and have regard to pattern and scale of adjoining development.
- (iii) The maximum heights of apartment developments in residential zones or in areas with a suburban residential character will be determined on a site by site basis by the Planning Authority. A significant consideration will be the manner in which the adequacy of the site

area allows the building to be sited, such that they will not adversely interfere with the scale, amenities or visual quality of existing development. To this end, it will be necessary to have adequate open space in addition to parking space and tree screening so that a satisfactory transition from the scale of any neighbouring buildings of lower height may be achieved.

- (iv). In the case of apartment blocks, particular attention must be paid to the location of communal open space for the residents. This open space should not be unduly overshadowed by the blocks and be laid out in such a fashion to provide for ease of maintenance. Secluded sunny areas and shade should be provided by a careful choice of planting. Public open space shall be provided at a minimum provision of 15% of the total gross area of the site. Fuel and bin storage areas shall be provided.
- (v). Car parking should be broken up by planting and located where they do not obtrude onto the layout and yet provide for reasonable convenience of users. Only minor areas of car parking, primarily for visitors, will be permitted between the block and the road boundary. Car parking space will be calculated on the basis of 1.5 – 2.0 spaces per residential unit. Where development is likely to involve significant letting, an innovative car-parking layout should be proposed to accommodate increased car parking within the curtilage of the site above the standards outlined above. Visitor car parking will be calculated on the basis of 1 space per 2 apartments.
- (vi). The Planning Authority will closely monitor internal space standards. The Planning Authority will generally seek apartment units considerably larger than minimum standards set out in the Department of the Environment Standards for Residential Development in Designated Areas.

10.1.4.4 Family Flat Extensions

The creation of a family flat, generically referred to as granny flats, to be occupied by a member of the occupant family is generally acceptable, provided it is not a separate detached unit, and it is possible to provide direct access to the remainder of the house. There shall be no permanent sub division of the garden/private amenity space. The flat shall not be let or sold, other than as part of the overall property and shall revert to being part of the original house when no longer occupied by the family member. The design should ensure that the flat forms an integral part of the main dwelling unit capable of reintegration for single family use.

10.1.4.5 Extensions

In assessing an application for a house extension, the Planning Authority will have regard to the following:-

- The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (1999) publication on 'Residential Density – Guidelines for Planning Authorities' or any replacement guidelines in considering the existing site density and remaining private open space.
- High quality designs for extensions will be required that respect and integrate with the existing dwelling in terms of height, scale, materials used, finishes, window proportions etc.
- Pitched roofs will be required except on some single storey rear extensions. Flat roof extensions visible from public areas will not normally be permitted.
- Impact on amenities of adjacent residents, in terms of light and privacy. Care should be taken to ensure that the extension does not overshadow windows, yards or gardens or have windows in the flank walls which would reduce a neighbour's privacy.
- Effect on front building line - extensions will not generally be allowed to break the existing front building line. However a porch extension which does not significantly break the front

building line will normally be permitted. In terrace and semi-detached situations, extensions which significantly protrude beyond the front building line and/or along the full front of the house will not be permitted.

- In the case of a single storey extension to the side of a house, the extension should be set back at least 150mm from the front wall of the existing house to give a more satisfactory external appearance.
- In some circumstances a gap of 1m is to be retained between the extension and the neighbouring dwellings so as to prevent dwellings which were intended to be detached from becoming a terrace.
- Dormer extensions should not obscure the main features of the existing roof, i.e. should not break the ridge or eaves lines of the roof. Box dormers should be avoided.
- Front dormers should normally be set back at least three-tile courses from the eaves line and should be clad in a material matching the existing roof.
- Proposed side extensions must retain side access to the rear of the property where possible.
- Ability to provide adequate car parking within the curtilage of the dwelling house.
- On unsewered sites, where an extension increases the potential occupancy of a house, the adequacy of the sewage treatment and disposal facilities should be demonstrated by the applicant. It may be necessary with significant extensions to relocate / upgrade an existing septic tank or proprietary system and percolation area to comply with public health requirements

10.1.4.6 Conversion of Existing Houses in Existing Residential Schemes

Conversions of houses and apartments to other uses will not normally be permitted.

The conversion of part of a dwelling to a medical or dental surgery will normally be permitted where the dwelling remains as the main residence of the practitioner.

The conversion of houses to apartments in predominantly single family dwellings will not normally be permitted as such conversions would lead to a deterioration in the residential amenities of these areas. However, in the subdivision of large houses and houses on primary traffic routes in the town centre may be permitted under certain circumstances, where such factors as the extent of open space within the site boundaries, tree planting, car parking spaces, etc. would permit satisfactory conversions. Design considerations include that the internal space accords with the Department of the Environment Standards for Residential Development in Designated Areas. Individual units should be self contained with their own bathroom facilities and refuse bin storage areas and washing/drying facilities which are accessible to the occupants of that unit.

10.1.4.7 Home Based Economic Activity

Home based economic activity is defined as small scale commercial activity carried out by residents of a house which is subordinate or ancillary to the use of the dwelling as a place of residence. In dealing with applications for such developments, the Planning Authority will have regard to the following:

- The nature and extent of the work;
- The effects on the amenities of adjoining properties particularly as regards hours of operation, noise and general disturbance;
- The anticipated level of traffic generation, and;
- The generation, storage and collection of waste.

Permissions for such partial change of use will be restricted to use by the applicant and may be temporary, e.g. for a three year period, to enable the Planning Authority to monitor the impact of the development. Permission will not normally be granted for such changes of uses in apartments.

10.1.4.8 Childcare Facilities

The provision of childcare facilities is subject to the Child Care Act and the Child Care (Pre School Services) Regulations of 1996. The Planning Authority recognises the need for properly run and conveniently located childcare facilities throughout the County. It is the policy of Meath County Council to implement the Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG June 2001).

Applications for childcare facilities in a residential area will be assessed on the basis of their impact in terms of noise, loss of residential amenity, traffic generation and general disturbance. In general, the factors to be considered in determining a planning application for a childcare facility are as follows:

- (i) Compliance with the Child Care (Pre School Services) (No 2) Regulations 2006 and Child Care (Pre School Services) (No 2) (Amendment) Regulations 2006;
- (ii) The suitability of the site and building;
- (iii) The size and nature of the facility proposed (i.e. sessional or full day care);
- (iv) The effects on the amenities of neighbouring residents;
- (v) The availability of easy access to public transport and the availability of safe and convenient arrangements for dropping off and collecting of children and for staff car parking;
- (vi) The adequacy of the local traffic circulation system and the prevailing local traffic conditions;
- (vii) The adequacy of outdoor play areas, separated from car parking and service areas;
- (viii) Ease of access for all.

Large detached properties, at/near the entrance to housing estates, with off street parking, provide the most suitable properties for conversion. Alternative sites may be considered subject to proposals adhering to proper planning criteria.

The Planning Authority will consider proposals for purpose built or converted childcare facilities within residential estates, where they are suitably located and are of a scale appropriate to the area. Where a large housing development is proposed, i.e. 75 or more dwelling units, the Planning Authority may require the designation of an appropriate house or the provision of a purpose built unit for childcare facilities and in deciding whether to do so shall have regard to the existing level of childcare provision in the area.

10.1.4.9 Parking in Front Gardens

The cumulative effect of removal of front garden walls and railings damages the appearance of suburban streets and roads. Consequently, proposals for off street parking need to be balanced against loss of amenity. Where permitted, drive-ins should:

- Not have outward opening gates;
- Have a vehicular entrance not wider than 3 metres;
- Have an area of hard standing (parking space of 2.5 m x 5 m);
- Retain the balance as garden;
- Have gates, walls and railings made good.

Where adjoining householders intend to construct drive-ins, a more efficient use of garden space can be achieved by the use of a shared vehicular entrance to serve both houses. Alterations necessary to the footpath will be carried out by Meath County Council at the applicant's expense or by the applicant at the applicant's own expense under the supervision of Meath County Council.

10.1.4.10 Height Control of Residential Development

Three storey duplex units will not be permitted in villages and graigs. The Planning Authority will generally permit three storey duplex apartments in large growth towns, moderate growth towns, small growth towns and key villages only where, it is considered that the siting, layout, design and finishes used will not negatively impact on the character and the amenity of the surrounding area.

10.2 RESIDENTIAL SITE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

10.2.1 Services

In general, applications for housing development on unserved and unzoned lands within the Development Plan boundary will be regarded as premature.

Where water and/or sewerage infrastructure is privately provided, the type and design shall be in compliance with the standards set by the Planning Authority. All sewerage systems should conform with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and public health standards. Individual and/or group schemes will be required to connect up to the public sewerage scheme when it is provided.

For guidance on services associated with residential developments, refer to Recommendations for Site Development Works for Housing Areas, by the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government (1998).

10.2.2 Art Work

Proposals for medium to large scale housing developments shall provide a monument/art feature or similar.

10.2.3 Screen Walls and Boundaries

Screen walls, 2.0 metres in height and constructed in accordance with I.S. 325 shall be provided where the boundaries of the house sites abut roads, pedestrian ways or open spaces, and where the areas of private open space are below the minimum standards outlined above. The walls shall be capped and rendered or other decorative finish consistent with the design/finish of the house.

A uniform treatment for the boundaries of individual sites shall be implemented throughout a residential development. In general front boundaries shall be defined by walls or fences at least 0.5 metres high in keeping with the house design. Open plan front gardens will only be acceptable in innovative layouts and where a high level of safety is achieved. Open plan gardens will not be allowed on main access roads.

10.2.4 Parking Provision

Car parking spaces will be calculated on the basis of one/two spaces per dwelling unit depending on dwelling size, access to public transport and local facilities. These may be provided on site

or on street. Appropriately designed on-street car parking will be encouraged so as to facilitate increases in residential densities at appropriate locations. This parking may be provided as a shared parking area or bay, which may be integrated into the overall development, or provided on-street where road widths are developed to adequate standards. In general, no more than 10-15 spaces will be provided in a shared parking cluster, in the interest of visual amenity. Within group parking areas, consideration will be given to the visibility of residents cars (from their homes if possible), convenience, and the need to soften the impact of group parking by landscaping.

In some older residential areas, small front gardens and original features such as railings are characteristic of the overall development scheme, and in such areas on site car parking in front gardens/patios may not be permitted. Proposals for off street parking need to be balanced against loss of amenity (visual and physical) and will be considered in light of traffic flows and car parking in the vicinity.

10.2.5 Names of Residential Developments

The names of residential developments and roads shall reflect local place names, particularly townlands or local names which reflect the landscape, its features, culture and/or history, within which developments are located, including names of historical persons who have some association with the area. The Planning Authority shall approve the names chosen prior to the launching of any advertising campaign for a development. Name plates should be fixed to walls and buildings where they can be clearly seen. In order to assist the public and postal authorities, all houses within housing estates or in comprehensive street developments shall be provided with numbers and/or names, which, where feasible, shall be visible from the adjoining roadway. Street nameplates should be erected on all estate roads at a location that is clearly visible to the motorist. Ideally, they should be placed at junctions to be of maximum assistance to the navigating motorist, cyclist or pedestrian.

10.2.6 Maintenance & Management

Section 34 (4)(i) of the Planning & Development Acts 2000-2006, provides for the inclusion of conditions attached to a planning permission regarding the maintenance or management of a proposed development. This includes the establishment of a management company or the appointment of a person or body or persons to carry out such management or maintenance. Provisions for estate management should be put in place in order to maintain the amenity, quality and visual quality of a development once the development is complete. Details of the management company, inclusive of the framework of the management company, must be agreed with the Local Authority prior to the commencement of development. There are a number of elements in good management practice, which should be adhered to, some of which are identified below:

- Establish a management agency, with a board, including representatives of the residents, to oversee estate management;
- Develop policies in relation to the maintenance of common areas, lighting, security, cleaning, etc.;
- Develop policies in relation to the overall appearance of the development;
- Formulate a code of conduct for all residents in relation to issues such as noise levels, parking, conduct of business from home, etc., and;
- Identify costs such as estate management and levy each household appropriately.

Meath County Council will make financial provisions for costs levied on social housing residents of a development.

10.3 RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Traditional buildings in the countryside evolved in response to their setting and function on the land. They blend sympathetically with their surroundings and do not appear incongruous in the landscape. It is essential that similar care is exercised in the siting and design of new buildings to ensure they too can integrate harmoniously with their surroundings and thereby protect the amenity and character of the countryside of County Meath. It is an objective of the Development Plan to prepare rural dwelling design and development guidelines within one year of the adoption of this Development Plan. The guidance provided in this section is to assist applicants on general design principles although it is not site specific and as such pre-application discussions are encouraged to ascertain the suitability of the dwellings design for a particular site.

The determination of whether a new building integrates into the landscape is not a test of invisibility, rather it requires an assessment of the extent to which the development of the proposed site, including necessary site works, will blend in unobtrusively with its surroundings.

The main criteria against which the degree of visual impact will be considered include;

- The location of the site within the landscape, the position of the building within the site and its relationship with surrounding buildings. This will help determine whether the development will be a prominent feature in the landscape;
- The attributes of the site and its landscape surroundings and whether these provide sufficient enclosure for the new building. This includes the existence or otherwise of natural boundaries and/or a visual backdrop, and whether there is any intervening vegetation or natural features between the site and critical views; and
- The suitability of the design of the building for the site and its locality, including its form, scale and massing.

The assessment of integration will be judged from critical views along stretches of the public road network, shared private lane-ways serving existing or approved dwellings, public rights of way and other areas of general public access and assembly, e.g. a car park.

New buildings that would read as skyline development or occupy a top of slope/ridge location or otherwise be a prominent feature in the landscape will be unacceptable.

New buildings should be sited to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by existing mature planting, hills, slopes or other natural features to provide suitable enclosure. These features can provide a visual backdrop to development and equally where located in the foreground between the site and critical views can assist integration by filtering views of the new building. A group of existing buildings, such as a farm complex may also provide an opportunity to sensitively integrate a new building provided this does not adversely impact on rural character.

Where trees provide enclosure or a backdrop to a site they should be retained and where necessary augmented by new planting with native or other species characteristic of the area. This will assist the integration of the new building and help promote biodiversity. Care should be taken to ensure that an appropriate distance is maintained between tree root systems and building foundations, so neither is compromised.

While new tree planting for integration purposes will be considered together with existing landscape features, new planting alone will not be sufficient. A building on an unacceptable site cannot be successfully integrated into the countryside by the use of landscaping. New planting will inevitably take a considerable length of time to mature and in the interim will not mitigate the impact of new development. Similarly a new building that relies on significant earth works, such as mounding or cut and fill for integration will be unacceptable.

Due to the widespread views generally available in flat landscapes or exposed hill areas, it is all the more important to ensure that new buildings integrate well with their surroundings. In such areas, poor siting and design carries with it a greater potential for adverse impact on visual amenity and rural character. Particular care is therefore required in site selection so that new buildings will integrate into these landscapes.

10.3.1.1 Design

The form and proportions of a new building are key elements in the design and strongly influence its visual impact on the landscape. If form and proportion are wrong, then little can be done with any other features to mitigate the impact of a poor design. Where the scale, form or massing of a building would make it dominant or incongruous in the local landscape, planning permission may be refused.

The most successful rural designs are those which use the simple shapes and forms of traditional buildings. Where a return is provided, it is normally to the rear with only a porch on the front elevation. The roof is either gable or hipped depending upon the locality and chimneys are positioned along the ridgeline.

A good relationship of solid wall to openings, such as windows and doors, is extremely important in a rural setting. Windows are traditionally small and vertical in proportion. Secluded elevations screened from public view may provide opportunities for design innovation, provided the overall design and orientation are acceptable. New houses, particularly bungalows, favour larger areas of glass usually with a horizontal emphasis out of keeping with traditional design. Unusually large horizontal windows on elevations facing roads or footpaths are not acceptable and should be avoided. Picture windows, balconies and patio doors are more effectively located on the secluded elevations where shelter and personal privacy can be guaranteed, provided the overall design and orientation are acceptable.

Unequal pitched roofs reflect the traits of suburban rather than rural architecture and will normally be unacceptable. Similarly, buildings where the roof is designed to span the length, rather than the width of the structure, will normally be unacceptable.

Relative simplicity of design and discretion in the use of materials, texture and colour will greatly enhance the appearance of a building. The use of non-traditional materials such as brick, concrete and random stone-cladding tends to introduce too much diversity of colour and texture. Combinations of materials on walls, the use of feature panels and excessive ornament should be avoided.

Where appropriate, applications for buildings in the countryside should include details of proposals for site works, retention or reinstatement of boundaries, hedges and walls and details of new landscaping.

10.3.1.2 Access and Other Ancillary Works

New accesses are often a visible feature of new buildings in the countryside and on occasion can be more obtrusive than the building itself, particularly if they include ornate walls, gates and fencing.

Wherever possible access to a new building should be taken from an existing lane-way. Where a new access drive and services, such as electricity and telephone lines, are required, they should be run unobtrusively alongside existing hedgerows or wall lines and accompanied by landscaping measures. Access driveways should respect site contours and cross them gently, thus integrating the building with its entrance and site. Sweeping driveways which create a suburban emphasis and access arrangements, will not be acceptable.

While adequate visibility at the road access is necessary in the interests of road safety, access driveways surfaced in tarmacadam and with concrete kerbing can look out of place in the countryside and less formal solutions should be sought.

The traditional field pattern should be preserved and roadside and field boundary hedges and stone walls retained or reinstated following any access works. Retention or reinstatement of boundaries, hedges and walls is an important element in mitigating the impact of new development and where necessary will be controlled by condition.

10.4 SHOPPING & OFFICE DEVELOPMENT

10.4.1 General

Suburban shopping and office development is subject to control to avoid erosion of demand for town centre floorspace.

Developers should bear in mind that:

- Infill development should reflect the architectural character of its surroundings in terms of height, massing, materials and design.
- In cases where car parking is permitted, a reasonably attractive layout incorporating screening will be required.

10.4.2 Office Development

The Planning Authority will encourage over counter office development to be located in the town/village centres. The use of vacant or under utilised upper floors for office development will be encouraged by the Planning Authority. Outside of the town/village centres, applications for office development will normally only be considered within the industrial and business parks, on industrially zoned lands or on appropriately identified 'Gateway' sites. All new office developments

outside of the town/village centres will be required to provide a minimum of 10% open space. Where offices are proposed on lands zoned for industry, such development will be required to provide a minimum of 10% open space in addition to a minimum of 3m strip of landscaped open space along all roads.

10.4.3 Retail Development

Having regard to the recommendations of documents such as the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities published by the Department of Environment and Local Government (2000) and the Retail Planning Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area' produced by DTZ Piedad Consulting (2001), it is generally the objective of the Planning Authority to encourage central locations for new retailing activity and consider the needs of residential neighbourhoods in catering for local shopping needs.

10.4.4 Shopping Centres

Shopping centres must conform to the highest urban design standards. The design must ensure that the proposed centre will be integrated with, and be complementary to, the streetscape where it will be located, or in accordance with a detailed urban design framework.

It is a requirement of the Planning Authority that proposals for major retail centres such as shopping centres and food outlets are accompanied by specific measures to address the following issues:

- The scale of the proposal in relation to its planned catchment and existing floorspace provision including a Retail Impact Study on established centres;
- The ability of the proposal to be adequately serviced in relation to car parking, public transport and pedestrian and cyclist access and facilities;
- The creation, and enclosure of, good pedestrian space at an appropriate scale;
- A good mix of uses to increase activity and passive security, particularly in the evening time;
- The provision, within the overall design of the centre, of public facilities such as childcare facilities, toilets, advice centres, public telephones, etc;
- The provision and design of street furniture including public art, telephones, seats, litter bins, etc., and;
- The provision of residential uses, particularly apartments and maisonettes, as an integral part of the centre, in order to increase the evening activity and security of the centre.

The design and layout of buildings, including materials, should discourage graffiti and other forms of vandalism. Service areas should be out of sight of surrounding residential and pedestrian areas. Tree planting and landscaping must form part of the overall design of the centre, plans of which must be prepared by a fully qualified landscape architect.

In addition, the use of roll-down or external type security screens will not normally be considered in retail development generally in central areas and where the provision of screens is considered imperative, the use of perforated external and back lit screens or translucent internal screens will be considered.

10.5 OTHER COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

10.5.1 Industry, Warehousing and Business Park Developments

Industrial/Commercial development should generally be located in or adjacent to settlements where infrastructure has been provided and in line with the principles of sustainable development. Industrial and commercial developments on greenfield sites will be required to satisfy minimum requirements for design regarding location, layout, finishes, access, tree planting and landscaping, boundary treatment, water supply, drainage, and effluent disposal. In addition, sufficient space shall be reserved within the curtilage of the site for parking of all employees and visitors cars and for the loading and unloading of vehicles. It is intended that such developments should leave one-third of the site free from buildings and that adequate rear access to business premises be made. Adequately screened on-site storage shall be provided for raw materials, waste products and finished goods.

A high standard of design, finish, layout and landscaping will be required for industrial, warehousing and business park development. Comprehensive landscaping plans must be prepared by a fully qualified landscape architect and shall be submitted at application stage.

Where proposals for these type of developments would generate a large volume of HGV traffic, they shall not be located where they would encourage movement of such traffic through residential areas.

It is essential that each industrial/warehousing unit be provided with adequate space for loading and unloading goods, including fuels, in an area clear of the public road and preferably behind the building line. Approximately one third of the site must be kept free from buildings.

In the case of development for two or more industrial/warehousing buildings, a uniform design for boundary fences, roof profiles and building lines is essential. Areas between the building and the road boundary may include car parking spaces, provided an acceptable landscaping scheme is incorporated.

Industrial/warehousing/business park developments should present a pleasant aspect helped by tree planting, the careful design of signage, screening of storage space and unobtrusive loading and parking space. A variety of unit size shall be provided to cater for the differing needs of potential occupants.

There are also developing opportunities for enterprise in the areas of waste recycling and conservation. As part of the Planning Authorities commitment to sustainable development and to positively discriminate towards such type of activities, the application of development levies for this type of activity will be reviewed in individual circumstances.

The Planning Authority will require details of the nature of the proposed activities and of the means of controlling effluents, noise, light, solid waste and gaseous emissions from these activities together with ameliorative measures as part of a planning application.

In assessing an application for development, the Planning Authority will weigh the development against its impact on the environment. Applications for industrial/commercial developments will be considered having regard to the following:-

- **Zoning of area (if applicable)** - More favourable consideration will be given to development in their appropriate zones having regard to the Zoning Matrix Table.
- **Site coverage** - The maximum site coverage for industrial/commercial development on greenfield sites shall be no more than 40% coverage. Site coverage is determined by dividing the ground floor area by the gross site area
- **Sustainability Statement** - is required for all large scale industrial/commercial development above 5,000 sq. m.
- **Design of buildings/structures on site** - In existing industrial estates, new developments may be required to adhere to an overall architectural theme to ensure uniformity and co-ordination.
- **Height** - The height of buildings should be no more than necessary for the operation of the business and should take account of the land-uses, character and amenities of the area.
- **Neighbouring uses** - Location relative to adjacent land uses - if the development constitutes a 'bad neighbour' it will not be permitted.
- **Use** - Nature and scale of operations. Full details of proposed use, including industrial processes involved, any toxic materials, chemicals or solvents used should be submitted to the Planning Authority.
- **Hours of operation** - Particularly where the proposed development is located in proximity to residential areas.
- **Services** - Availability of adequate services to serve the development - water, sewerage, etc.
- **Access** - Traffic generation, access and road safety. Generally one vehicular access point will be permitted to serve the development with a minimum carriageway width of 7.5 metres with a 2 metre wide footpath to either side. Adequate turning areas must be provided within the curtilage of the site unless satisfactory alternative arrangements are agreed with the Planning Authority.
- **Parking** - Functional parking provision (car parking for staff/visitors, loading/unloading areas etc.) in accordance with Planning Authority's vehicle parking standards.
- **Storage** - All external storage including bin storage, oil tanks, etc. shall be visually screened from the public areas with adequate screening by fencing or walls of not less than 2 metres in height.
- **Fuel & Waste Storage** - Proposals for and location of safe storage on site and disposal of waste is required. A storage area of sufficient size for all recyclable materials generated from the development to the requirements of the Waste Management (Packaging) Regulations 2003 to 2006, as amended should be provided. All overground oil chemical storage tanks should be adequately bunded to protect against spillage.

- **Boundary Treatment and Landscaping** – Proposal should be accompanied by a survey of existing vegetation on the site and a suitable landscaping scheme using native species to screen the development from public areas. Existing trees and hedgerows of amenity should be retained where possible. No security fencing will be permitted forward of the front building line of any industrial or warehouse facility other than during the construction phase of the development.
- **Lighting and Noise** – Impacts resulting from lighting and noise from sites should be minimised. A detailed study may be required prior to the commencement of development in sensitive locations (e.g. adjacent dwelling houses, nursing home etc..) to outline probable impacts and mitigation measures. Noise level arising from any development should not exceed 55 Db (A) Leq, when measured at the site boundaries by daytime and should not exceed 45 Db (A) Leq at any other time. Lower noise limits may apply in areas where background noise levels are particularly low.

10.5.2 Nursing Homes

In general, these facilities should be integrated wherever possible into the established residential areas of the urban settlements, where the residents can expect reasonable access to local services.

In determining planning applications for change of use of a residential dwelling or other building to nursing/elderly care home, the following factors should be considered:

- Compliance with the standards as laid down in Statutory Instrument No. 226 of 1993 i.e. Nursing Homes (Care and Welfare) Regulations, 1993;
- The affect on the amenities of adjoining properties;
- Adequacy of off street car parking;
- Suitable private open space;
- Proximity to local services and facilities, and;
- The size and scale of the facility proposed – the scale must be appropriate to the area.

10.6 CAR PARKING STANDARDS

Land Use - Residential	Car Parking Requirement
Dwellings	2 per conventional dwelling
Flats/Apartments	1.25 per 1 & 2 bedroom unit 2 per 3 - 4 bedroom unit In all cases, 1 visitor space per 4 apartments
Hotel Accommodation (excluding bars, functions rooms, etc.)	1 per bedroom
B&B/Guesthouse	1 per bedroom
Motel Accommodation	1 per bedroom
Hostel Accommodation	1 per bedroom or 1 per 10 beds
Self-Catering Accommodation	1 per unit
Institutions	1 per employee

Land Use - Employment	
Manufacturing Industry	1 per 50 sq.m. gross floor area
Warehousing	1 per 100 sq.m. gross floor area
Offices	1 per 25 sq.m. gross floor area
Land Use - Commercial	
Shops/Shopping Centres and Retail Warehousing	1 per 20 sq.m. gross floor area
Cash and Carry	1 per 50 sq.m. gross floor area
Banks	1 per 20 sq.m. gross floor area
Restaurants	1 per 5 sq.m dining area
Bars, Lounges, Function Rooms incl. such spaces in hotels	1 per 4 sq.m. of public area
Night Club/Dance Hall	1 per 4 sq.m. of public area
Service Garages	To be determined by the Planning Authority
Retail Outlets within Service Garages	1 per 10 sq. m of net floor area
Land Use - Health and Education Facilities	
Hospitals	1 per bed
Surgeries	2 per consulting room
Nursing Homes	1 per 3 beds and one space per employee
Schools	3 per classroom
Colleges	To be determined by the Planning Authority
Land Use - Community Facilities	
Churches	1 per 4 seats
Libraries	1 per 20 sq.m. gross floor area
Cultural Buildings	To be determined by the Planning Authority
Crèches	1 per employee & dedicated set down area 1 per 5 children
Cinemas/Theatre	1 per 3 seats
Funeral Homes	1 per 5 sq. m. gross floor area
Community Centres/Halls	1 per 5 sq. m. gross floor area
Land Use - Sports Facilities	
Sport Clubs-including swimming pools tennis courts etc.	2 per court, 5 per 100 sq.m.
Golf/Pitch & Putt courses	3 per hole
Golf driving ranges	1 per 2m of base line/per trap
Bowling Alleys	5 per lane
Stadia	1 per 3 seats

Notes

1. In the case of any specific uses not listed in the above table, the Planning Authority will specify its requirements in relation to parking.
2. The above car parking standards shall be applied at the discretion of the Planning Authority in the County's rural towns and villages having regard to the availability and adequacy of on street parking, existing or proposed off street parking to serve the development and the status of the town/village within the settlement structure of Meath.

3. That the non-residential car parking standards are set down as “maxima” standards.
 - Parking facilities for mobility impaired drivers and their vehicles shall be provided at the general rate of 2 per 100 spaces, such spaces shall be proximate to the entry points of the proposed buildings.
 - The parking standards shall be proximate to the entry points of the proposed buildings.
 - The parking standards for residential development will be reviewed in town centre locations and where innovative design principles are adopted. In such cases grouped parking will be encouraged.

Loading and Unloading

In addition to the general car parking requirements, service parking spaces may be required for cars or other vehicles necessary in the operation of the business or a particular building, e.g. delivery and collection of goods. In all major developments of an industrial/commercial nature, developers will be required to provide loading and unloading facilities sufficient to meet the likely demand of such development. Off-street loading facilities shall be designed to conform to the following requirements:

Design Criteria

- Each required space shall be not less than 3.7m in width, 6m in length and 4.3 m in height exclusive of drive and manoeuvring space and located entirely on the site being served.
- Loading spaces may be enclosed within a structure and must be enclosed if located within 15m of the curtilage of the building where the use involves regular night operation.
- There shall be appropriate means of access to a street or road as well as adequate manoeuvring space.
- The maximum width of driveway openings at the street boundary shall be 6 metres and the minimum width shall be 3.7 metres.

Loading facilities shall be provided and maintained so long as the use exists which the facilities were designed to serve. They shall not be reduced in total extent after their provision and all reasonable precautions shall be taken by the owner or sponsor of particular uses to assure availability of required facilities to the delivery and pick-up vehicles that they are designed to serve.

However, the Planning Authority may modify the requirements of loading and unloading facilities in any specific case where it appears that it would be in the interest of the proper planning and sustainable development of the areas to do so.

Heavy Vehicles

The indiscriminate parking of heavy commercial vehicles or machinery in residential areas detracts greatly from the amenities of these areas. It is the intention of the Planning Authority to protect and improve residential amenities in all areas of its towns. The Planning Authority will co-operate with all other bodies that exercise control over this type of parking, to eliminate the nuisance created.

Cycle Parking

Secure cycle parking facilities shall be provided in new office, residential, retail and employment generating developments. Bicycle racks shall be provided in all cases where the Planning Authority deems bicycle parking necessary. Such facilities should be within 25 metres of a destination for short-term parking, (shops) and 50 metres for long term parking (school, college, and office). Where stands cannot be provided on site, a contribution will be required towards the provision of public cycle stands by the Local Authority at the rate of €100 per space required. The number of stands required will be a third of the number of car spaces required for the development, subject to a minimum of one stand.

All long-term (more than three hours) cycle racks shall be protected from the weather. From a security viewpoint cycle racks should not be located in out-of-the-way locations.

All cycle facilities in multi-storey car parks shall be at ground floor level and completely segregated from vehicle traffic. Cyclists should also have designated entry and exit routes at the car park.

Cycle parking facilities shall be conveniently located, secure, easy to use, adequately lit and well posted. Weather protected facilities should be considered where appropriate. In addition, parking should be placed within a populated, well-supervised area, and monitored by CCTV where possible.

10.7 PETROL SERVICE STATIONS

New petrol filling stations and refurbished existing stations will be required to have a high quality of overall design and architectural layout to ensure an attractive environment, which integrates with and complements or enhances its surroundings.

Proposals for petrol filling stations shall comply with the requirements of the Foras Forbatha document RT 181 Geometric Design Guidelines (Intersections at Grade) (1986) and the document Design Manual for Roads and Bridges National Roads Authority (2000) as well as the Dangerous Substances (Retail and Private Petroleum Stores) Regulations 1979-2006.

Ancillary retail uses may be permitted but having regard to the impact of excessively scaled retail uses on established urban retailing areas and the considerations of public and traffic safety, it will be a requirement that any retailing component shall not exceed 100 square metres of retailing area.

In assessing individual planning applications for new or refurbishment to existing petrol service stations, the following standards shall apply, where appropriate:

10.7.1 Design & Layout

- A minimum frontage of 30 metres shall be provided inside a 60 km/h speed limit zone and this frontage must be kept clear of any structure (apart from boundary fence) for a depth of not less than 4.5 metres from the roadside boundary of the site.
- Every new petrol filling station must be laid out in such a manner that vehicles are re-fuelled, and can wait to be re-fuelled, clear of the adjoining roadway. The means of access should be designed to give best visibility.

- The layout of new or redeveloped petrol filling stations shall permit safe access for delivery tankers (cab plus trailer) up to 15.25 metres in length, and an adequate off road area shall be provided for parking these vehicles safely without obstructing access to pumps while fuel is being delivered to petrol filling stations.
- The scale of buildings contained in a petrol filling station shall be related to the scale, character and form of adjoining structures to ensure an attractive development that integrates with and complements its surroundings.
- Car washing and vacuuming facilities are to be sited so as not to interfere with residential amenities or other adjoining sensitive land uses.
- Landscaping, including trees or shrub planting and suitable screening, shall be required to protect the amenities of the surrounding area and enhance the appearance of the development. A comprehensive landscaping scheme shall be prepared by a fully qualified landscape architect and submitted as part of the planning application.
- The surface of the forecourt shall be graded, surfaced with bitumen macadam or other suitable material and drained to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority. A petrol interceptor trap shall be fitted to the surface water drainage system. Provision shall be made for the storage and removal of refuse and waste material.

10.7.2 Location

- Such facilities will generally be required to locate within the 60 km/h and 50 km/h speed limit areas and they shall not be permitted where the amenities of nearby properties will be affected and or obstruction of traffic flows would arise.
- Petrol service stations will not generally be permitted adjoining residential areas, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that no significant damage to residential amenities will occur by reason of factors such as noise, visual obtrusion, safety considerations or fumes and smells. Hours of operation will be limited in residential areas.

10.7.3 Advertisements

- Standard corporate designing will have to be modified as required by local circumstances.
- Signs should be limited in number and design and located so as to generally form part of the buildings or other structures on the site.
- The placing of signs of any description on footpaths, grass verges or any part of a public roadway will not be permitted. No advertisements or other structures whether temporary or permanent shall be placed on the forecourt which would interfere with the sight lines of motorists entering/egressing the site.
- A proliferation of illuminated and non-illuminated signs, flags and bunting will not be permitted as this leads to clutter and detracts from the visual amenities of the area.

10.7.4 Lighting

Forecourt lighting including canopy lighting should be limited to that which is necessary for the safe operation of a petrol filling station. The use of high level and powerful lighting should be avoided where possible and should not interfere with the amenities of adjoining premises or cause glare, hazard or confusion to public road users. All external lighting shall be cowled and diverted away from the public roadway to prevent a traffic hazard.

10.8 ADVERTISING

The Planning Authority recognise the role of well located and sympathetically designed advertising, whether attached to a building or free standing, to contribute to the character and vitality of commercial areas, particularly at night. However, whether by design, scale, location, proliferation or ancillary issues such as manner of lighting, advertising has the capacity to seriously injure the visual qualities of an area and on occasion, pose a hazard to motorists through distraction.

The Planning Authority will seek the removal of such advertisements and permit only advertisements which are used sensitively and sympathetically and which enhance the appearance and vitality of an area.

It will be an objective of the Planning Authority to limit advertising to commercial areas where it is already a feature and within such areas, the following considerations will arise:

- The size and scale of signs should not conflict with existing structures in the vicinity.
- Large scale commercial advertisement structures are not acceptable on or near buildings of architectural or historical importance, in parks, Architectural Conservation Areas and in areas of high amenity.
- Signs will not be permitted if they compete with road signs or otherwise endanger traffic safety.
- Free standing signs will generally be resisted.
- Signs should not interfere with windows or other façade features or project above the skyline.

An advertisement is an accepted part of commercial shopping activity, and as such it can normally be allowed in commercial centres. Control shall be exercised to prevent an impression of clutter in any location. The number of signs attached to a building in such areas should be limited and no sign should be excessively obtrusive or out of scale with the building façade. The design should be simple and related to features of the building such as fenestration, cornices, string courses, etc. Ideally, the sign should be an integral part of the elevational design of the building. As with shop-front design, the Planning Authority will require commercial interests, especially chain outlets, to restrain the use of their corporate image advertising where these are considered to be too dominant.

10.8.1 Advertising Hoardings

Advertising hoardings, including tri-vision and three-dimensional signs, inappropriately located can constitute one of the most obtrusive elements of all forms of outdoor advertisement. They rely for their impact on size, scale and location and are thus usually detrimental to the character of the area in which they are situated and in some cases contribute to a traffic hazard. However, they can help to screen derelict or obsolete sites awaiting re-development, in certain circumstances.

- Outdoor advertising shall not be permitted on proposed or existing protected structures or within the vicinity of such, in such a way as to detract from the visual quality of their setting.
- In all other cases, regard to the visual impact of a proposed advertising hoarding and potential of traffic hazard arising from same will be imperative.
- The scale of display panels must be related to the scale of the buildings and streets in which

they are located.

- Where illuminated hoardings are proposed, their effect on the streetscape during the hours of darkness and on the amenities of the area will be considered.
- Display panels may form part of the visual screening around building sites or sites awaiting re-development. In such cases, temporary permissions will be considered where appropriately sized panels form an integral part of an overall boundary treatment and do not comprise more than half of the total surface area of such treatment.
- As a general rule, planning permissions for outdoor advertising will be limited to a maximum of three years in the first instance, to enable the position to be reviewed by the Planning Authority in light of changing circumstances at the end of that period.
- The number and scale of hoardings in the vicinity of the site will be a material consideration.

10.8.2 Fingerpost Signage

The erection of fingerpost signs may require a licence or planning permission from the Planning Authority and should comply with the following:

- Directional signs for major tourist attractions and community purposes will be considered but product advertising will not be permitted.
- Signs must have a standard size and colour and where permitted will be provided by the licensee but will be erected by the Local Authority.
- Signs which interfere with the Local Authority's directional signs or which contribute to visual clutter will not be permitted.

10.8.3 Bus Shelters as Advertising Shelters

In considering applications for bus shelters, the Planning Authority will have regard to the particular circumstances of each case, such as location, scale and type of advertising proposed and the effect on the amenities of the area and the streetscape. Care must be taken with the location of shelters and attached advertising panels so that the public footpath, road traffic signs, pedestrian and wheelchair access and vehicular entrances are not obstructed.

As priority is intended to be given to public transport, the desirability of adequate provision of bus shelters is not in question. However, poorly designed shelters, with excessive amount of advertising can have a very unfavourable visual impact. Care must be taken with the location of shelters so that the public footpath, pedestrian and vehicular entrances are not obstructed.

10.8.4 Illumination

If external illumination is proposed, documentation shall be provided that clearly shows that the blight or glare from such illumination will not adversely affect pedestrian and vehicular traffic or adjacent properties. The design of external lighting shall minimise the incidence of light spillage or pollution into the surrounding environment.

10.8.5 Illuminated Signs

Illuminated signs in appropriate locations can provide both information and colour in the townscape after dark. The following guidelines will apply:

- The type of illuminated signs, internally or externally illuminated individual letter/neon tubes,

should be determined by consideration of the design of the building and its location.

- The design of an illuminated sign should be sympathetic to the building on which it is to be displayed. It should not obscure architectural features such as cornices and window openings in the area. On new buildings, they should be part of the integral design.
- The daytime appearance when unlit will be considered.
- Sky lines i.e. signs, which project in any part above the level of a building parapet or obtrude on the skylines, are regarded as objectionable in principle and will not be permitted.
- Neon tubular strip lighting is generally not acceptable.
- The number of illuminated signs in the area.

10.9 COMMERCIAL SITE DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

No maximum density or site coverage is specified in this Development Plan. Each application will be considered on its merits. In town centre locations, in order to encourage and facilitate the development of a compact business district, and to achieve desirable massing and heights of buildings, a plot ratio and site coverage of 1.5 and 70% respectively will generally be the norm. Moreover, for a development to be acceptable, it must not be prejudicial to the amenities of adjoining properties and must show appropriate provision for access, parking, storage and space for off loading and air circulation.

Developers should bear in mind that:

- Infill development should reflect the architectural character of its surroundings in terms of height, massing, materials and design.
- In cases where surface car parking is permitted, a reasonably attractive layout incorporating landscaping and/or screening will be required.

Covered bicycle parking provision will be required, where appropriate, to facilitate visitors and employees. Where bicycle parking is provided for employees, adequate ancillary facilities, to include showers and locker storage space, shall be provided.

It is not intended to place undue restriction on individual innovative design possibilities and the Planning Authority will endeavour to accommodate same, where it is appropriate.

10.10 TELECOMMUNICATIONS

An efficient telecommunications system is important in the development of the economy. However, in considering location requirements, the Planning Authority will take the following factors outlined in the Department of the Environment and Local Government's Planning Guidelines for Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures (1996):

- Telecommunication installations will not be favoured in residential areas, on land on where development may be restricted or prevented for amenity reasons or in parts of the town centre which are architecturally important.
- Nor will they be favoured unless it is clear that the developer has made reasonable efforts to share with other existing users or proposed sites in the vicinity of the proposed mast.

Telecommunications antennae should be located so as to minimise any negative visual intrusion on the surrounding area, especially on landscapes or streetscapes of a sensitive nature. The preferred location for telecommunication antennae is in industrial estates or areas zoned for industrial use or in areas already developed for utilities.

If the proposal is contrary to the above, the Planning Authority will need to be satisfied that the installation is of strategic importance if permission is to be granted.

The use of tall buildings or other existing structures is always preferable to the construction of an independent antennae support structure. Support structures should be kept to the minimum height consistent with effective operation and should be monopole (or poles) rather than latticed or square structure, unless such structures have a clear and/or simple design or alternatively where it is judged by the Planning Authority to incorporate high sculptural design quality. Sharing of installations (antennae support structures) will be encouraged where it is deemed to lead to a reduction in the visual impact on the landscape or townscape. All applicants must satisfy the Planning Authority that a reasonable effort to share the installations has been made. Where it is not possible to share a support structure, the applicant should, where possible, share a site or site adjacent, so that the antennae may be clustered.

As part of a planning application for antennae, operators will be required to furnish a statement of compliance with the International Radiation Protection Association (IRPA) Guidelines or the equivalent European Pre-Standard 50166-2 which has been conditioned by the licensing arrangements with the Department of Communications Energy and Natural Resources and to furnish evidence that an installation of the type proposed complies with the above guidelines.

10.11 ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

It is the policy of Meath County Council to ensure that archaeological material is not disturbed so that an opportunity will be given to investigate and record any material of archaeological value that may be found on sites or to protect them in-situ.

Where archaeology is likely to be encountered or impacted upon by a proposed development, developers will be advised of their obligations under the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994. Developments that impact on the archaeology of the County will be treated as follows:

- Within the zone of archaeological potential, archaeological remains will be investigated, recorded and/or preserved.
- Outside the zone of archaeological potential, where in the opinion of the Planning Authority, developments involve major ground disturbances; conditions relating to archaeology may be applied.
- The Local Authority will require that archaeological investigations be undertaken by a licensed archaeologist prior to the commencement of development.
- The developer will be liable for the cost of archaeological investigations.
- The Local Authority may require the developer to submit a report, prepared by a suitably qualified archaeologist, on the archaeological implications of the proposed development. The Planning Authority may impose conditions requiring:

- Professional archaeological supervision of site excavations.
 - Funding by the applicant for archaeological monitoring, testing and/or assessment.
 - Preservation of all or part of any archaeological remains.
- Conditions may be imposed which modify the development in order to facilitate archaeological investigation or preservation.
 - Developers will be encouraged to supply an archaeological assessment and method statement outlining construction procedures as part of their planning application.

10.11.1 Zones of Archaeological Potential

It is the policy of the Planning Authority to ensure that all planning applications for new development, refurbishment and restoration works within identified Zones of Archaeological Potential and within close proximity to individual Recorded Monuments or Sites, are submitted to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG). On receipt, the DoEHLG shall provide advice and recommendations regarding treatment of archaeology as an integral part of the development process. The planning decision made by the Planning Authority will have due regard to the recommendations made by the DoEHLG.

Under the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994, it is necessary for the owner and/or occupier of a monument or place, which has been recorded by the DoEHLG to give notice in writing to the DoEHLG of their proposal to carry out work within the vicinity of these sites. The proposed works shall not commence for a period of two months after having given this written notice, unless authorised within this period by the DoEHLG.

The applicant may be formally requested, as part of the request for further information or as a planning condition attached to the grant of permission, to have a report prepared by an archaeologist on the archaeological implications, if any, of the proposed development. The archaeologist shall be employed by the applicant/developer. These archaeological reports shall be submitted to the Planning Authority, the National Museum and the DoEHLG as appropriate, for their consideration prior to the making of the planning decision in the case of requested additional information, and prior to the commencement of site preparation and/or construction works in the case of archaeological reports requested as a condition attached to the grant of planning permission.

10.12 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

10.12.1 Schools

Sites required for a primary school shall comply with the requirements of the Department of Education and Science publication General Design Guidelines for Schools (Primary and Post Primary) (August 2007). Provision must be made within the site for adequate car parking for staff (at a rate of 3 per classroom), bus parking, pick-up/drop off areas, informal hard surface play area, and areas for organised sport activities. The Area Offices in association with the school authorities will endeavour to provide pedestrian crossings, road markings and footpath provision where required.

Provision should be made in secondary schools for all forms of organised sporting facilities and for car parking at a rate of 3 spaces per classroom.

10.12.2 People with Disabilities

All new buildings which provide for public access must conform with the design guidelines set out in Building for Everyone (NDA 2002) and the Technical Document – Part M of the Building Regulations, 2000. In particular, reasonable provision should be made to enable people with disabilities and mobility impaired persons to have safe and independent access to a building and to those parts of the building to which it is appropriate to have access to and are usable by people with disabilities or mobility impairments. It is also a requirement that new dwellings are visitable and accessible by people with disabilities or mobility impairments and ensures that houses are designed as ‘Lifetime Homes’ for an ageing population. The main features of these requirements include:

- The provision of a level gently sloped or ramp approach access to the dwelling from the entrance point to the site or from a suitable parking spot.
- A level access at one entry point to the dwelling.
- Front door and living room door wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair.
- Circulation space for wheel chair at entry storey.
- Ground floor toilet located so as to be usable by wheelchair users and other people with disabilities or mobility impairment.

Where sanitary conveniences are provided in public buildings, reasonable provision shall be made for people with disabilities and the mobility impaired. In the case of community centres and buildings which are commonly used by people with disabilities, the mobility impaired or the elderly for social activities, the Planning Authority will require at least one WC compartment in the building be usable by wheelchair users.

Access considerations will be spread to the public realm with the position of street furniture, dished footpaths at junctions, tactile paving surfaces, pedestrian crossings and other elements being assessed on an ongoing manner. Car parking provision shall be provided for people with disabilities and mobility impaired in all car-parking developments and should be located in the most convenient locations for ease of use. The minimum criteria for such parking provisions are detailed in Building for Everyone (2002), published by the Disability Authority (2002).

10.13 SITE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

10.13.1 Building Height Control

A high building is a building that is significantly higher than neighbouring or surrounding development. The following considerations will be taken into account in deciding an application for a high building:

- The degree of overshadowing and consequent loss of light caused to surrounding property.
- The degree of overlooking, (particularly of residential property) and consequent loss of privacy to surrounding premises.
- The extent to which there is a disruption of the scale of an existing streetscape.
- The extent to which the building detracts from structures or spaces of architectural or historic importance or special visual quality.
- The extent to which the building detracts from important landmarks.

- Any attractive views from significant vantage points that would be obscured by the building.
- The degree of obtrusion of the building on the skyline.
- The scale of the building in relation to surrounding open space, together with the effect of the building on the quality of the space.
- The area of the site, and whether it is large enough to provide a visual transition from the scale of surrounding development.
- Whether the purpose or civic importance of the building would justify its prominence.

Where, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, a location for a high building is acceptable under the above criteria, a high standard of design and finish will be required, commensurate with the location and civic importance of the site. Where a high building is likely to lead to a concentration of pedestrians seeking access to the public street, the design of the building must ensure the safety and convenience of pedestrians and other road users.

10.13.2 Building Lines

In considering the proper planning and sustainable development of its area when dealing with applications to carry out development, the Planning Authority will normally seek to ensure that development is not carried out in front of established lines, or in a position which would be in conflict with a building line which may be determined, where the proper planning and sustainable development would show such to be desirable.

In deciding where a building line should be located, the form of development to which it is related will be considered. Where drive in space for a car is required in residential areas in front of a house, an absolute minimum building line of 7 metres is necessary. In particular cases, reduction in the building line may be permitted where such reduction is part of the overall design for the area and constitutes a desirable design feature and does not constitute a traffic hazard. Such cases will be decided on their merits.

Where located along roads of traffic importance, increased building lines may be determined to provide for greater amenity and safety of road users and residents. On existing roads, building lines may be required for future road widening. In such cases, building lines will be required to allow for future road requirements.

10.13.3 Proportioning

Structures shall have a vertical emphasis. Where a proposed structure is excessively wide, it should be broken into a number of vertical units by the use of detailing and structural elements.

10.14 AGRICULTURE

10.14.1 Agricultural Buildings & Structures

The design, scale, siting and layout of agricultural buildings should respect, and where possible, enhance the rural environment.

In visually sensitive areas, the Council will seek to group together and site buildings in an appropriate manner, and require the use of harmonious external materials to minimise obtrusion on the landscape. The use of dark coloured cladding, notably dark browns, greys, greens and reds are most suitable for farm buildings, and roof areas should be darker than walls.

10.14.2 Piggery Developments

New piggery developments exceeding 3,000 pig units (1 sow litter = 10 p.u, 1 pig = 1 p.u.) shall preferably be sited a minimum distance of 5 km from existing population centres exceeding 200 persons. The following shall be taken into consideration:

- (a) Where considered warranted by the Sanitary Authority, a treatment plant shall be provided for piggery developments;
- (b) The developer shall have all lands available for spreading in their ownership;
- (c) Management controls for slurry spreading shall have regard to:
 1. Spreading rates based on assessment of lands concerned;
 2. Storage tank capacities with at least 6 months winter storage;
 3. Time of spread;
 4. Distance from water-courses, with a minimum distance of 30 m in all cases, and;
 5. Distance from houses and public buildings, with a minimum distance of 100m except with the consent of the owner.
- (d) Band spreading or soil injection of all slurries shall be a prerequisite for all piggery developments. Slurry spreading by splash plates shall not be permitted. The use of odour masking agents when slurry spreading shall be required in appropriate developments;
- (e) Where other than the public water supply is being utilised as the source of water supply, the applicant shall satisfy the Planning Authority as to adequacy of source;

Where an application for an intensive piggery development is made the following will generally be the council's requirements:

1. Prior scoping with the developer of a comprehensive E.I.S. covering all relevant impacts both physical and socio-economic, and;
2. Acceptance of the E.I.S. only on the basis of proper treatment of all impacts on a multidisciplinary basis and inclusion of technological mitigating measures, where appropriate.

10.14.3 Pollution Control

The Council will require that agricultural developments comply with the Department of Agriculture's 'Guidelines on Control of Pollution and Farmyard Wastes', 1985, and as they may be amended.

The Council will exercise its powers under the Planning Acts and under the Water Pollution Act to ensure that agricultural development will not cause pollution to watercourses. All new and existing agricultural developments will be required to ensure that all effluent, including yard run-off, is collected and stored within the confines of the development.

When assessing the adequacy of effluent handling facilities the following will be considered to be soiled waste:

1. Slurry;
2. Soiled water run-off;
3. Milk washings;
4. Silage effluent, and;
5. Dungstead.

10.14.4 Rural Environment Protection Scheme

The introduction of the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPs) is considered a very positive development by the Council. Among the objectives of REP's is the maintenance of sustainable agriculture systems which conserve water, soils and genetic resources. The main components are as follows:

1. "Minimum use" policy towards chemical inputs;
2. Establishment of equilibrium between input and absorption of nutrients in soils and plants;
3. Active management of various natural habitats to retain diversity of flora and fauna;
4. Maintenance and improvement of the quality of surface and ground waters, and;
5. Preservation of vernacular farm buildings.

It is the policy of the Planning Authority to support the objectives of the REPs system in its evaluation of agricultural proposals. This is particularly crucial in the context of input control to public and private water supply sources.

10.15 EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY

10.15.1 General

The Council recognises the importance of extractive industry in the economic life of the County, and importance as a valuable source of employment in parts of the County.

It is an objective of the Council to ensure that extractive developments do not adversely affect the environmental, tourism, local communities, residential qualities and/or any adjoining existing land uses in the area. In particular, the Council will seek to protect areas of geological or geomorphological interest, groundwater and important aquifers, important archaeological features and Natural Heritage Areas from inappropriate development.

The Council will facilitate the exploitation of the County's natural resources where there is a proven need for a certain mineral/aggregate.

Control will be exercised over the types of development taking place in areas containing proven or potential extractive deposits in the interests of proper planning and sustainable development.

In such areas, only development compatible with mining or quarrying activities will be permitted in areas being or likely to be used for these purposes.

In appropriate circumstances the Council shall seek the safeguarding of deposits of minerals from permanent development that would prevent or hinder their subsequent extraction.

Transportation of minerals on public roads must be done in such a manner as not to cause nuisance to other road users. Such extractive operations should have good access to the National and/or Regional road network. A contribution towards the improvement of public roads serving a proposed and/or existing extractive development which are considered to be inadequate in width, alignment or structure to carry the size and weight of loads proposed as are necessary to safely accommodate such traffic, will be required by the Council as a condition of any permission granted. Where improvements cannot be achieved the proposal will be refused.

It is an objective of the Council to ensure that all worked-out pits be rehabilitated to suitable land uses and screened appropriately as part of an aftercare programme. To this end, bonds or levies and a comprehensive restoration/rehabilitation and landscaping plan will be required by the Council as a condition of any permission granted to ensure satisfactory reinstatement on completion of extraction.

The need for a full Environmental Impact Assessment shall be investigated by the Applicant/ Developer's legal advisors with direct consultation with the Planning Authority.

10.15.2 Duration

Permissions will normally be granted for a temporary period, usually for five years, allowing a development's impact to be assessed.

10.15.3 Rehabilitation

All extractive sites shall be subject to rehabilitation and landscaping programmes in phase with the extraction.

10.15.4 Bonding

Operators will be required to submit bonds, to secure proper rehabilitation of extraction sites. The past record of the operator will be taken into account.

10.16 FORESTRY

The Council recognises the economic and recreational potential of forestry. Forestry as a land use and its ancillary development will be encouraged in suitable areas subject to such development not interfering with significant views or prospects or being unduly obtrusive in the landscape.

The Council will co-operate with the Forest Service in promoting greater recreational use of state forests in the County. In cases where forestry development is likely to adversely affect public roads, charges will be levied on developers to defray the improvement/maintenance costs of such roads.

In order to avoid acidification of our soils and water courses from coniferous plantations and to promote bio-diversity in so far as it is possible, the Council will actively promote the planting of deciduous trees.

Given the need to restructure agricultural practises the Council will assist the development of forestry particularly deciduous forestry as an alternative agricultural land use.

The Council will endeavour to protect residential amenities of rural dwellers by the establishment of an appropriate area free from afforestation. The Council will endeavour to ensure that linear felling of trees is not encouraged in exposed or scenic areas.

10.17 WIND ENERGY

The Council is committed to assisting in the development of alternative energy sources for environmental as well as energy policy reasons. Regard will be had to guidelines in dealing with wind energy proposals in so far as they impact on the proper planning and development of the area, as detailed in 'Wind Energy Development – Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (DOEHLG, 2006), and any subsequent publication. Regard will also be had to the 'European Best Practise Guidelines for Wind Energy Development', (European Wind Energy Association). Guidelines are also published by the Irish Wind Energy Association (1997), NGO's (Irish Peatland Conservation Council, Bridwatch Ireland, Earthwatch, An Taisce, Irish Wildlife Trust and Mountaineering Council of Ireland, 1996) and Friends of the Earth (1997).

It is the policy of the Council to facilitate the development of the natural resources and renewable energy potential of the County to envelope the prime objectives of:

- A framework for Local Agenda 21 (Part 2. Management of Natural Resources);
- The National commitments of the Earth Summit 1992, and future commitments at Kyoto, Earth Summit, Dec. 1997;
- National and EU targets for renewable energy generation (30% of total electricity capacity by renewable resources by the year 2020), (Government white paper on energy).

Any proposals for the development of wind power will need to be supported by both a technical and an environmental statement prepared to an acceptable standard. In this regard applicant's applying for wind energy development are advised to consult with the Planning Authority before detailed proposals are drawn up. Consultations should also be held with the appropriate bodies, such as Department of Transport, Energy and Communications, The Irish Energy Centre and the ESB.

In addition, potential applicants are advised to consult with the Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht, Forestry Service, Irish Aviation Authority and other appropriate statutory and non-statutory bodies in areas which may require special protection. In general the Council will encourage wind energy in so far as such developments would not have an adverse affect on residential amenities, views or prospects, Special Areas of Conservation, NHAs, SPAs, Protected Structures, aircraft flight paths, by reason of noise or visual impact.

The following conditions will apply where Wind Farms are permitted:

- (a) Blades must rotate in the same direction.
- (b) Layout should be compact.
- (c) Skylining should be avoided.
- (d) Three-bladed machines should be deployed.
- (e) Solid towers should be used.
- (f) Towers and blades should be finished in matt grey colour.
- (g) All grid connection within the site to be underground.
- (h) This may also be a requirement further afield in certain circumstances.
- (i) No fencing to be permitted on any part of the site.
- (j) Access roads to be unsurfaced.
- (k) Structures must be decommissioned at the life expiry of the farm and the site reinstated.

