

# NEWTOWNCUNNINGHAM LOCAL AREA PLAN

2007 - 2013



## DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL



This project has been part funded through the Donegal County Council-Led Task Force under the Programme for Peace & Reconciliation 2000 - 2006 and part financed under the National Development Plan 2000 - 2006.

## **FORWARD**

This Local Area Plan was prepared by the Central Planning Unit (Department of Planning and Economic Development, Donegal County Council), in accordance with Sections 18 - 20 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 - 2006.

The project has been funded by the European Union, Programme for Peace and Reconciliation 2004 - 2006 (Peace II) and part financed by the Irish Government under the National Development Plan 2000 - 2006 through the Donegal County Council Led Task Force.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This Local Area Plan could not have been produced without the valued contribution from a number of sources. The Elected Members, public, business and community groups, landowners, all the Local Authority services, prescribed bodies, adjoining cross border authorities and various government agencies, all contributed to the production of the Plan.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS****PAGE****SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1	What Is a Local Area Plan	1
1.2	Historical Background	1-3
1.3	Planning Context	3
1.4	Spatial Strategy – Centre for Urban Strengthening	3
1.5	Linked Gateway	3-4
1.6	Public Consultation	4
1.7	Managers Report	4
1.8	Profile of Newtowncunningham	4
1.9	Material Alterations	5
1.10	Population	5
1.11	Urban Form	5-6
1.12	Environmental Parameters	6

**SECTION 2 PLAN AIM/SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

2.1	Plan Aim	7
2.2	Specific Objectives	7-8

**SECTION 3 POLICY CONTEXT SECTION**

3.1	Natural Heritage	9
3.2	Built Heritage	9
3.3	Roads and Transportation	9
3.4	Current Situation	9-10
3.5	Flooding	10-12
3.6	Water and Sewerage	12
3.7	Residential	12-13
3.8	Employment and Enterprise	13-14
3.9	Tourism	14
3.10	Education and Community Facilities	14-15
3.11	Recreation and Amenity	15

**SECTION 4 POLICIES**

4.1	Natural Heritage	16
4.2	Built Heritage	16-17
4.3	Roads and Transportation	17-18
4.4	Water and Sewerage	18-19
4.5	Residential	19-20
4.6	Employment and Enterprise	20-21
4.7	Tourism	22
4.8	Education and Community Facilities	22
4.9	Recreation and Amenity	23

**SECTION 5 DETAILED AREA POLICIES**

5.1	Town Centre Development Area	24
5.2	Objective	24-27
5.3	Land-use Zoning Objectives	27-28

**SECTION 6 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

29-30

**SECTION 7      APPENDICES**

<b>APPENDIX I</b>	Site Synopsis candidate Special Area of Conservation	31-32
<b>APPENDIX II</b>	Site Synopsis Special Protection Area	33-34

## SECTION 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 WHAT IS A LOCAL AREA PLAN?

A Local Area Plan is a statutory land-use plan consisting of a written statement and associated land use zoning map(s). It is prepared in accordance with Sections 18 - 20, of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 – 2006 and must be consistent with the objectives of the County Development Plan<sup>1</sup>.

This Local Area Plan establishes a framework for the proper planning and sustainable development of Newtowncunningham. The Plan outlines detailed policies and land-use zonings. It enables local communities to become involved in the Plan making process, offering local knowledge about life in the area and identifying solutions and opportunities for the future. It is therefore an important document, which will affect all those who live and work in Newtowncunningham and who have an interest in its development.

#### 1.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Newtowncunningham (*An Baile Nua* or *The New Town*) takes its name from John Cunningham, originally from Ayrshire, in Scotland, who was among the Puritan settlers granted lands in Donegal during the Plantation of Ulster.

Traditionally the local economy was based on agriculture with some manufacturing such as textiles and primary food processing. However changing economic trends have seen an increase in new commercial and retail activities. The N13 National Primary Road has placed Newtowncunningham conveniently along the Letterkenny – Derry Gateway Corridor. The National Spatial Strategy, Regional Planning Guidelines and County Donegal Development Plan recognise the importance of this economic corridor and accordingly Newtowncunningham has been identified as a Centre for Urban Strengthening.

While the town had suffered from years of under investment throughout the period of conflict in neighbouring Northern Ireland, recent years have witnessed significant economic revival in retail/enterprise and residential developments. Alongside the need to provide quality new housing developments, there is a need and opportunity to facilitate balanced and sustainable urban growth through the redevelopment of derelict and town centre sites, mixed use developments, investment in a new public Waste Water Treatment Plan and developer led roads

Newtowncunningham, is located beside a number of important tourist destinations, which include:

**Grianán An Aileach** - An Iron age stone fortress, built as the seat of the Kingdom of Aileach around 800 BC. It was a historic cultural and political centre during the rule of early Irish chieftains (c. 800 BC – 1,200 BC). The fort was destroyed by Murtaigh O'Brien, the king of Munster in 1101, and by 1177, the Normans controlled large areas of land once controlled by Aileach.

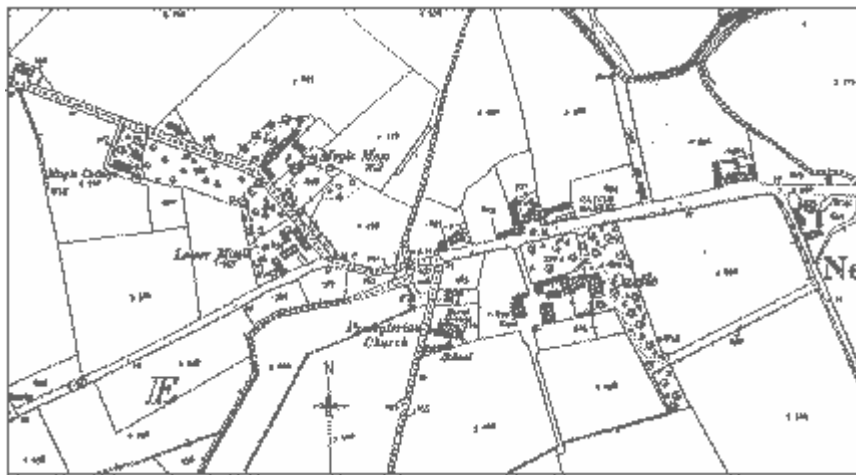
---

<sup>1</sup> County Donegal Development Plan 2006 - 2013

**Burt Castle** - The castle was built in the sixteenth century during the reign of Henry VIII. In 1587 Richard Hovenden and Henry Hovenden commanded the castle and were ordered to resist the Spanish Armada. The O'Dohertys' took refuge here after they lost Enagh Castle. In 1608 the English captured the Castle.

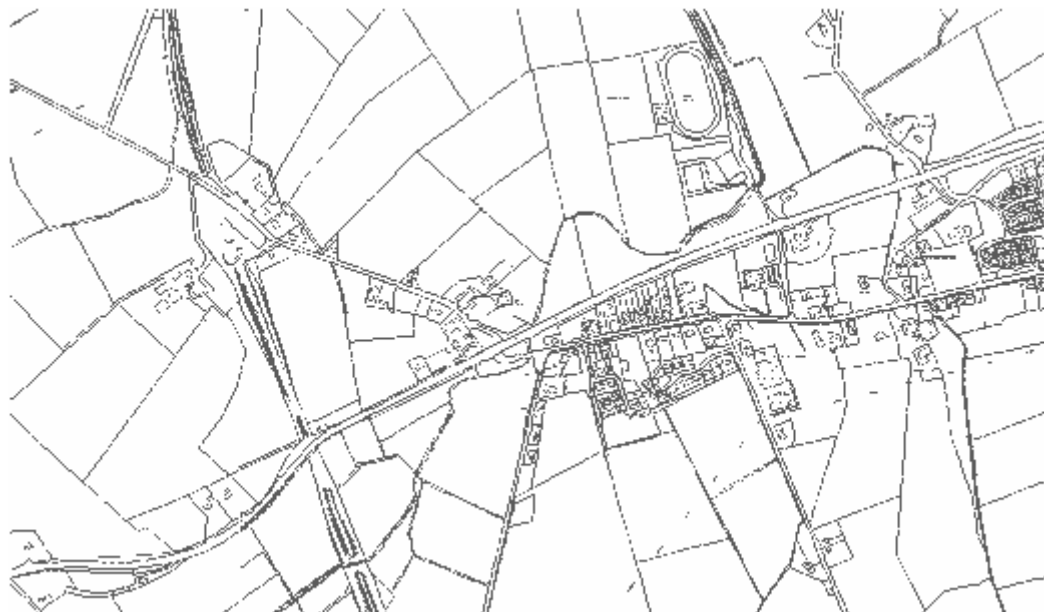
**Blanket Nook** - An important grass and wetland habitat for wintering birds, of some 9,000 m2 with some lands under agricultural use. This flat extensive area is a long narrow sea inlet, with extensive banks of mud and shingle. There is some threat to the habitats, including feeding swans, due to agricultural nutrient pollutants. The area is protected as a Special Protection Area (Lough Swilly), a Ramsar Site and as a Special Area of Conservation (See SAC Site Synopsis on Page 29).

**Figure 1. Map of Newtowncunningham 1906**



Source: Ordnance Survey of Ireland

**Figure 2. Map of Newtowncunningham 2004**



Source: Ordnance Survey of Ireland

**Figure 3. Aerial Photograph of Newtowncunningham 2004**



Source: Ordnance Survey of Ireland

### **1.3 PLANNING CONTEXT**

This Plan has been prepared in accordance with National Policy Guidance such as the National Development Plan, the National Spatial Strategy, the Border Regional Planning Guidelines and the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines. In addition, the preparation of this Plan has been guided by Development Plans - Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2007 and the County Donegal Development Plan 2006 - 2012.

### **1.4 SPATIAL STRATEGY – CENTRE FOR URBAN STRENGTHENING**

Newtowncunningham has been identified as a Town of Urban Strengthening<sup>2</sup>, located along the Letterkenny/Derry Gateway Corridor (See Figure 4). It is situated within a rural context and has served as a rural agricultural hub (e.g. Donegal Creameries, Donegal Potatoes etc.). The town is surrounded by a rural hinterland, which now has a controlled basis for development (i.e. County Development Plan Policy RH4: Urban Generated Rural Housing – which effectively directs non indigenous rural development into settlements).

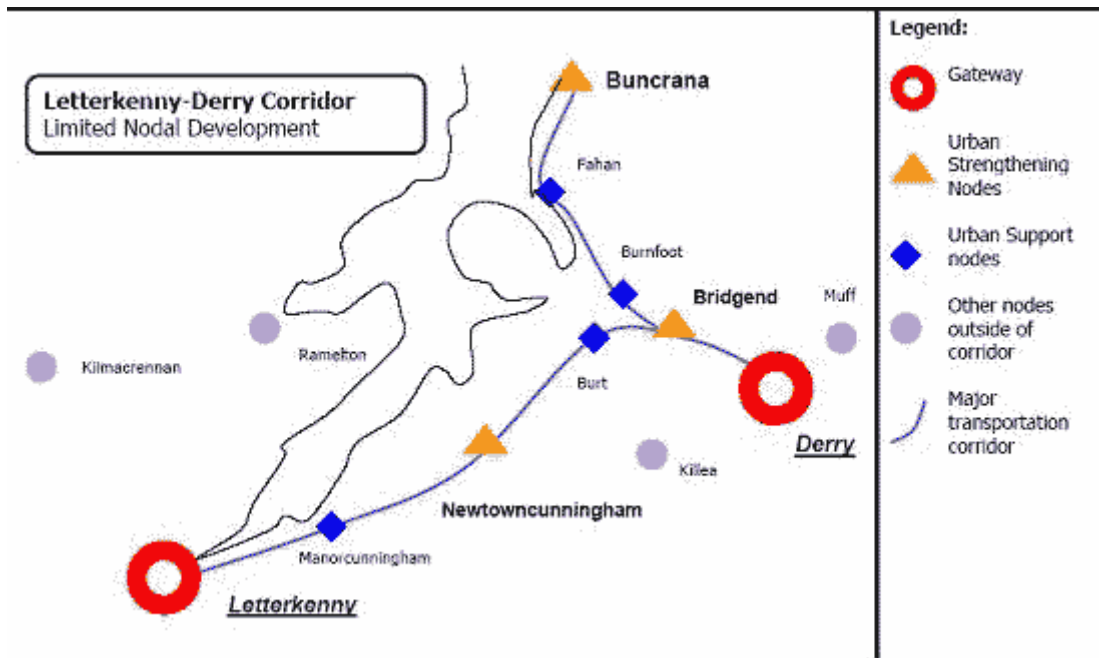
### **1.5 LINKED GATEWAY**

As a major urban node located on the linked Letterkenny/Derry Gateway corridor, Newtowncunningham is well placed to capitalise on the critical mass and has significant potential for further economic investment in the retail, commercial, residential and tourist sectors, supported by further investment in infrastructure.

**Figure 4. County Spatial Strategy – Letterkenny/Derry Linked Gateway**

---

<sup>2</sup> County Donegal Development Plan 2006 - 2012



Source: County Donegal Development Plan 2006 – 2012

## 1.6 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

A vital element of preparing the Plan was the need to engage with the local community to gauge their development interests and to identify needs, opportunities and threats/constraints. This included the distribution of information leaflets, posters, and consultations with the local community, landowners, developers, community groups and internal Council personnel. A public, drop-in consultation session was held in the Newtowncunningham Community Development Initiative offices on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2006. This was well attended and also generated a number of written submissions. The consultation period enabled a range of issues to be identified relating to the town's strategic role, zoning, roads safety and traffic, upgrading of the sewerage treatment plant, identification of town centre, community facilities, recreation and amenity, increased retail/industry and protection and enhancement of the environment. This process influenced the development of plan aims, objectives and policies.

In addition, a subsequent Drop In Event was held in the town on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2007, after the publication of the Draft Newtowncunningham Local Area Plan.

## 1.7 MANAGERS REPORT

Written submissions about the Draft Plan were invited between the dates of 6<sup>th</sup> February – 20<sup>th</sup> March 2007 (inclusive). Throughout that period, a total of 21 written submissions were received. The submissions were analysed, summarized and responded to within the Managers Report.

## 1.8 PROFILE OF NEWTOWNCUNNINGHAM

Newtowncunningham is located in East Donegal on the Southern edge of the Inishowen Peninsula, 19km from Letterkenny and 15km from Derry city. The town itself lies along the line of the old Derry to Letterkenny Road (L-2051-1) and was bypassed by the N13. Its hinterland is characterised by open farmland between Lough Swilly to the northwest and the River Foyle to the southeast.



## 1.9 MATERIAL ALTERATIONS

In addition, following the adoption of the Managers Report to the Draft Plan, a number of proposed amendments were made. These amendments constituted 'Material Alterations' and accordingly these were published for a 4 week period of public consultation between 28<sup>th</sup> June – 26<sup>th</sup> July. In total, 7 written submissions were received and a secondary Managers Report was prepared, in response to those submission received.

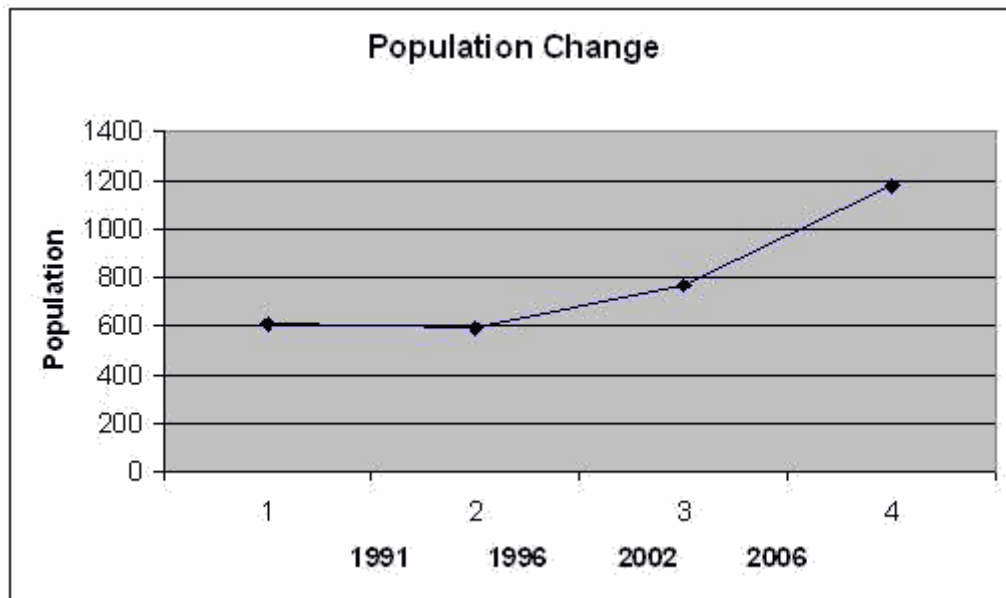
## 1.10 POPULATION

Historically Newtowncunningham has experienced relatively low levels of population increase as seen in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Newtowncunningham Population and Percentage Change 1991-2006**

1991	Percentage change 1991-1996	1996	Percentage change 1996-2002	2002	Percentage Change 2002-2006	2006
610	-2.6%	594	+11.6%	769	+47.9%	1,137

**Figure 5. Population change in Newtowncunningham between 1991 and 2006**



However, over the Census Period 1996 – 2006, Newtowncunningham experienced significant population growth at 11.6% (1.933% per annum), with an associated level of population increase of 69 persons to 663, much of which can be attributed to people from Derry who wish to live in the town and avail of lower house prices. Newtowncunningham's population is recorded as 1,137<sup>3</sup>.

## 1.11 URBAN FORM

Newtowncunningham lacks a coherent urban form and has evolved as a linear settlement. Much of the road frontage has already been developed by single houses, which have not served to maximise the use of land, have sterilized access into backlands, and have not aided in the development of a strong urban form.

<sup>3</sup> Census Statistics Office 2006

There is a variable building line along the roadside as well as a significant number of vacant and derelict plots. There are two main retail within the town, Kernan's supermarket/petrol station/café located along the N13 and the retail warehousing complex comprising a garden centre, special plumbing supplies, outdoor goods store and café located on the western edge of the town off the Monfad road. The All Saints Church, Cole Hill residential estate, the Donegal Creameries site and Kernan's retail centre dominate the centre of the town.

The town lacks a definable town centre. Most buildings are disjointed and often set back on considerable plot areas. This development form has not enabled the development to maximise the potential of lands available.

This Plan seeks to remedy this irregular ad hoc built form by promoting dedicated retail/commercial and other mixed uses within defined town centre areas.

## **1.12 ENVIRONMENTAL PARAMETERS**

The landscape character form in Newtowncunningham comprises a number of environmental constraints. These were considered prior to the preparation of the Draft Local Area Plan. These features include:

- Topography
- Significant trees/woodlands
- Bodies of Water

These features form an important part of the town's natural setting and environmental quality and as such shall be integrated within all development proposals. The retention of these features will form an important part of the overall spatial framework and policies of the plan.

### **TOPOGRAPHY**

The topography of the town is in general low-lying agricultural land with a gentle slope towards the southeast of the town. To the north of the town there is a considerable area of reclaimed land, known as Blanket Nook, which extends to Lough Swilly.

### **SIGNIFICANT TREES/WOODLANDS**

There are no significant areas of woodland in the immediate vicinity of the town, however there are a significant number of trees and hedgerows. These include:

- Various hedgerows/trees, which define field boundaries to the south of the town.
- Stands of trees, which define the curtilage of a number of historic properties.
- Stands of trees, which run along the sides of various riverbanks.

### **BODIES OF WATER**

There are a number of minor rivers and streams in Newtowncunningham, all eventually enter the drainage system in the Blanket Nook Polder lands. There are natural river flooding patterns occurring within the Plan area. Once identified they may require stormwater management to ensure that run-off does not contribute to flooding in or around the town.

## SECTION 2

### PLAN AIM/SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

#### 2.1 PLAN AIM

To ensure that Newtowncunningham fulfils it's potential as a strategic node and as the primary town of urban strengthening along the Letterkenny/Derry Gateway Corridor. To facilitate the further development of the town with continuous improvement of physical infrastructure in association with the release of appropriately located new lands for development.

Specifically the plan aims to achieve the following objectives:

#### 2.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- SO 1** To facilitate the creation of a vibrant sustainable quality environment and vibrant community for the entire settlement and to facilitate a successful town centre encompassing a range of integrated functions including: small and medium scale retail, community services, quality residential environments, public park/recreational areas and parking.
- SO 2** To seek the protection and enhancement of the natural and built heritage.
- SO 3** It is an objective to provide additional appropriately located lands zoned for residential development.
- SO 4** To reserve lands for a new road to facilitate future growth south of the town.
- SO 5** To protect existing routes for vehicular and pedestrians/cycle linkages.
- SO 6** The assessment of current physical infrastructure (e.g. sewage treatment, water, roads), and the upgrading or provision of infrastructure with capacity to cater for future population growth.
- SO 7** To promote and facilitate the appropriate redevelopment of derelict buildings/sites.
- SO 8** To establish a quality residential environment for both the existing inhabitants of the town and newcomers and to facilitate employment for those who wish to work in the town.
- SO 9** To protect and enhance the defined Gateway entrance to the town. (G1, G2 and G3 refers).
- SO 10** To assess the capacity of the existing culverts which cross the N13 and to facilitate the development of appropriate culverts which cater for and disperse surface waters and tidal surges.
- SO 11** To provide an underpass or bridge over the N13 road to improve pedestrian safety and to provide access to the Moyle school.

- SO 12** To facilitate the development of a new roundabout on the N13 to improve road safety and to enable traffic/pedestrians to safely cross from Newtowncunningham's Main Street to the Moyle School.
- SO 13** To facilitate the development of a new/improved Waste Water Treatment Plant and associated network. (Public Utilities/Infrastructure)
- SO 14** To facilitate the development of recreational and ancillary facilities at northern lands.
- SO 15** To recognise the Newtowncunningham to Derry (St. Johnston) Road (L-2051-1) as an Economic Growth Corridor.

## SECTION 3

### POLICY CONTEXT

#### 3.1 NATURAL HERITAGE

To the north west of the town, outside of the Plan boundary, there is a considerable area of flat reclaimed land known as 'Blanket Nook'. Much of this area has been designated as a Natural Heritage Area (NHA) whilst part of the area (around the salt lake lagoon and the shoreline of Lough Swilly) has also been designated as a candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC).<sup>4</sup>

There are also many groups of trees in the Plan area, which contribute greatly to the visual amenity of the town as well as local biodiversity. However individual trees and hedgerows are also part of the wider ecological network.

#### 3.2 BUILT HERITAGE

Although Newtowncunningham has no defined streetscape, there are a number of individual buildings, which have architectural merit. The existing urban form lacks coherence and therefore provides an opportunity for mixed-use commercial development along the main street and into backlands.

#### 3.3 ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION

It is an objective to facilitate the creation of an integrated transportation and circulation network which provides maximum permeability and safety for a range of transport modes and to provide a road network, which facilitates inter-connectivity between developments of different functions and design.

#### 3.4 CURRENT SITUATION

The transportation network in Newtowncunningham is based on a linear road structure with minor arterial roads branching off the Main Street at intervals to serve residential areas and commercial developments. A number of linkages (both pedestrian and vehicular) exist between the Main Street and the National Primary Route (N13) to the north. This road layout does not provide or indeed enable the sustainable use of backlands and in-fill development whilst encouraging car usage over more sustainable modes e.g. walking and cycling.

Currently heavy goods vehicles are using the Main Street as a through road as passing traffic. The Plan seeks to re-direct through traffic from Letterkenny/Derry back to the N13 through road infrastructure improvements.

The National Primary Road (N13) from Letterkenny to Derry represents a physical boundary and development buffer between the residential areas in the town. This corridor is a key route in the context of the joint Gateway status of the two urban areas as set out in the National Spatial Strategy. The N13 will generally act as the northern town boundary and the creation of new accesses, or indeed the

---

<sup>4</sup> (Site No: 000166, See Appendix 1')

intensification of existing accesses will not be permitted in the interests of road safety, with the single exception of the 'Proposed Link Road', as identified on the Land-Use Zoning Map

It is an objective of the Council to improve the following junctions:

- Moyle Junction - J1.
- Kernan's/ Scoil Cholmcille junction - J2.
- Adjacent to All Saints Church - J3.
- J4, J5 and J6 on the R237 east of the town.
- Entrance to Scoil Cholmcille - J7.
- To improve and widen the R237.

It is an objective of the Council to facilitate the provision of traffic calming at the junction at the Church of Ireland, north of the Colehill residential estate.

### 3.5 FLOODING

The surface water drainage system from Newtowncunningham outfalls into the Blanket Nook scheme. This scheme consists of embankments, backdrains and channels that outfall to the sea in low tide via a series of sluices.

**Objective:** It is an objective of the Council to restrict development in areas liable to flooding or developments that may give rise to flooding elsewhere and to ensure that future developments are planned and designed with appropriate consideration of flood risk.

Development should not itself be subject to an inappropriate risk of flooding nor should it cause or exacerbate such a risk at other locations.

A flood risk assessment should be undertaken:

- To determine whether any proposed development is likely to be affected by flooding and whether it will increase flood risk elsewhere and of the measures proposed to deal with these effects and risks.
- To satisfying the Planning Authority that any flood risk to the development or additional risks arising from the proposal will be successfully managed with the minimum environmental effect.

#### POLICIES

Development that is sensitive to the effects of flooding will generally not be permitted in flood prone areas, accordingly planning applications shall be assessed against Policy ESP 2 – Flood Risk Assessment and Development, as outlined in the County Donegal Plan 2006 – 2012.

**F 1** Development that may exacerbate flood risk will generally not be permitted in flood prone or marginal areas (or impact on significant elements of natural heritage such as cSAC). (Preventing such development, where flooding would result in significant hardship, financial losses or costs, will avoid increasing the existing level of risk and will protect the proposed new development from the human (stress and ill-health, for example) and financial costs of flood events. It will also eliminate or reduce expenditure on flood protection measures and compensation).

- F 2** Appropriately designed development, which is not sensitive to the effects of flooding, may be permissible in flood plains provided it does not reduce the flood plain area or otherwise restrict flow across floodplains (or impact on significant elements of natural heritage such as the candidate Special Areas of Conservation). (Examples of such development might include park areas, sports pitches, certain types of industry, warehousing, etc. designed to be flood resistant and/or insensitive. Such development should only be permitted provided it incorporates adequate measures to cope with the ever-existent flood risk, e.g. adequate drainage systems, safety measures, emergency response facilities and/or warning and response systems and where it is considered that flooding would not result in significant hardship/financial loss or cost).
- F 3** Development must so far as is reasonably practicable incorporate the maximum provision to reduce the rate and quantity of runoff. e.g.
- Hard surface areas (car parks, etc.) should be constructed in permeable or semi-permeable materials.
  - On site storm water ponds to store and/or attenuate additional runoff from the development should be provided.
  - Soak-aways or french drains should be provided to increase infiltration and minimise additional runoff (Such sustainable design/construction measures are desirable in most areas and essential in floodplains, areas liable to flooding, and areas where the conveyancing capacity of watercourses is marginal. In all of these cases development that reduces the rate of absorption or increases the rate of runoff increases the risk of flooding of lands and properties downstream).
- F 4** For developments adjacent to watercourses of a significant conveyance capacity any structures (including hard landscaping) must be set back from the edge of the watercourse to allow access for channel clearing/maintenance (A setback of 5m-10m is required depending on the width of the watercourse).
- F 5** Development consisting of construction of embankments, wide bridge piers, or similar structures will not normally be permitted in or across flood plains or river channels. Such structures restrict/obstruct flow and increase the risk of flooding to property and land upstream. If it is considered necessary, in exceptional cases, to permit such structures, they should be designed to minimise and/or compensate for any potential negative effects.
- F 6** All new development must be designed and constructed to meet the following minimum flood design standards:
- For Urban areas or where developments (proposed or anticipated) are involved - the 100 year flood.
  - For Rural areas or where further developments (proposed or anticipated) are not involved - the 25 year flood.
  - Along the Coast and Estuaries - the 200 year tide level.
  - Where streams open drains or other watercourses are being culverted - the minimum permissible culvert diameter is 900mm. (Access should be provided for maintenance as appropriate. The application of higher design standards may be appropriate in certain cases where the level of risk and/or uncertainty warrant it e.g. hospitals or other emergency services, main roads, chemical plants, cultural repositories etc).

- F 7** A Flood Risk Assessment and proposals for the storage or attenuation of run/off discharges (including foul drains) to ensure the development does not increase the flood risk in the relevant catchment, must accompany applications for planning permission for development of areas exceeding 1 hectare.

### **3.6 WATER AND SEWERAGE**

#### **WATER SUPPLY**

There is currently sufficient capacity in the water supply. In addition, the completion of the Lagan Water Supply Scheme will strengthen the local capacity. Continued provision of the required local distribution network is to be development led.

#### **WASTEWATER**

At present in Newtowncunningham, the existing infrastructure in relation to sewerage requires upgrading in order to facilitate continued development of the town. It is necessary to carry out improvements on the sewerage treatment plant and to improve elements of the existing sewage network.

The funding of that works will include the collection of development charges from multi-house development. The extent to which development will be allowed to proceed ahead of the necessary upgrade works will be evaluated on an ongoing basis. In that regard, the Council will work with developers to incorporate any plans for upgrading the sewerage system with that of the developer to achieve a system that has capacity for existing and future development.

### **3.7 RESIDENTIAL**

The County Development Plan identifies Newtowncunningham as an Urban Strengthening node along Letterkenny/Derry Gateway corridor, accordingly the Local Area Plan makes provision for the sustainable residential growth of the town. In recent years there has been significant growth in demand for new residential developments. Much of this growth can be attributed to commuters wishing to reside in Newtowncunningham due to its convenient location between Letterkenny and Derry and because of lower house prices. Much of the recent residential development to the east of the town is typically suburban in character, which has led to poor interconnectivity between adjoining developments. This residential growth has also had the effect of placing considerable pressure on existing physical infrastructural resources, e.g. Sewage Treatment Plant.

The County Donegal Development Plan 2006 - 2012 uses the M1F2 i.e. the medium scenario Model from the 'Regional Population Projections 2006 - 2021' (Central Statistics Office), which largely assumes a continuation of recent demographic trends, as a guide in assessing projected housing need in the County. This gives an average annual population increase of 1.2% up to 2021 for the border counties. However, if one considers the population growth rates recorded in the 2002 census for Newtowncunningham (for the period 1996-2006 as 11.6%), this gives an annual growth rate of 1.933% per annum.

Grants of planning permissions for residential units may also provide a guide to overall population development trends. However, considering full planning permission has a 5-year lifespan, the completion and occupation of residential units often lags considerably behind such permissions.



The official population of the town is 1,178 (CSO 2006). In 2006, there were 422 completed dwellings<sup>5</sup>, which equate to an approximate population of 1,182 (based on 2.8 persons per household, and assuming that all dwellings are occupied). The latest housing count in 2007 indicates a housing count of 432 units within the Plan boundary, this would represent a population of 1,209.

Based on the lands zoned for solely for residential use, there is potential for an additional 594 dwellings within the Plan area, therefore an additional 1,663 persons could be accommodated, based on the average household formation size of 2.8 persons.

From the above analysis, it can be deduced that there are adequate lands within the Plan boundary to cater for significant additional population growth if past trends continue.

**Objective:** To develop a quality residential environment within Newtowncunningham, which strikes a sustainable balance between local needs, social and affordable housing needs, infrastructural constraints and providing a good quality environment with sufficient provision of open space.

### 3.8 EMPLOYMENT AND ENTERPRISE

At present the majority of the local population are commuting to work in either Letterkenny or Derry.



The local business sector is the main provider of employment in Newtowncunningham and this needs to be supported and protected in order to maintain it and encourage new and existing business developments within the area.

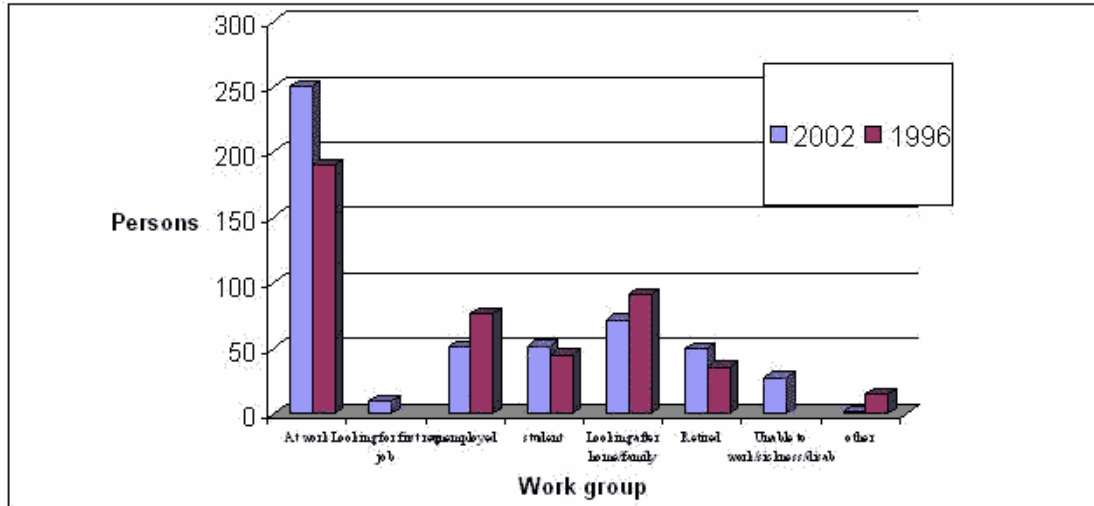
Figure 6 below indicates that 516 persons were economically active in 2002 in Newtowncunningham town as opposed to 454 in 1996.<sup>6</sup> The number of people at work in the town increased from 42% in 1996 to 48.6% in 2002 and unemployment decreased by 7.2% between 1996 and 2002.

---

<sup>5</sup> Geodirectory 2006 & 2007

<sup>6</sup> Central Statistics Office

**Figure 6. Employment change from 1996-2002 by work group**



Source: CSO 2002

Traditionally the local economy of Newtowncunningham was based on agriculture with a number of traditional local manufacturing industries such as textiles and primary food processing. However changing economic trends have seen an increase in commercial services in the area and high level of commuting from Newtowncunningham to larger urban centres.

Over one third of the total at work were employed in this sector in 1981 but this has declined overtime to a current 18.3%. A notable increase has occurred in commerce, whilst more modest increases were recorded in building construction, public administration and professional services. Overall, the three industries, which accounted for the greatest percentage of the total at work in 2002 were commerce (24.4%), manufacturing (18.3%) and professional services (14.3%).

### 3.9 TOURISM

Newtowncunningham is located along the strategic Letterkenny and Derry Gateway Corridor and is therefore an ideal location to attract investment and it resides between two large urban settlements with a critical mass to sustain a wide range of services.

In addition, Newtowncunningham resides along the transboundary Sustrans, National Cycle Network. The Inis Eoghain Cycleway 55km route connects the River Foyle in County Derry to Lough Swilly in Donegal.

The aim of this tourism project is to increase tourism activity in the area in an environmentally friendly way.

### 3.10 EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

At present there are two National schools in Newtowncunningham, Scoil Cholmcille and Moyle National School. The schools remain important services in the town.

There is a community playgroup in the town, which resides outside the town plan boundary. The groups facilities are located in the GAA complex.

Currently, Newtowncunningham is deficient in community facilities. However, the Newtowncunningham Community Development Initiative Group is a driving force in enabling community groups to operate in the town<sup>7</sup>. Its aim is to act as an overall development organisation to plan, implement and co-ordinate local and community development within the town.

There are a number of Church Halls in the town, each bringing their own cultural identity and each hosting individual events. The health centre in the town is looking to re-locate to a site adjacent to the proposed sheltered housing.

### **3.11 RECREATION AND AMENITY**

The majority of open space takes the form of small incidental spaces within housing developments, the remainder is a small play area to the back of Castle Park housing estate on the west side of the town, which only facilitates that housing estate. Significantly the town does not have a Town Park or central formal green area. Newtowncunningham has a GAA pitch North of the town.

It is considered that there is an urgent need to develop an integrated network of open/recreational spaces in appropriate locations and to manage future development so as to conserve key local environmental features.

---

<sup>7</sup> Newtowncunningham Community Development Initiative, Economic Audit and Strategic community Action Plan, August 2005, P.4.

## SECTION 4

### POLICIES

#### 4.1 NATURAL HERITAGE

- NH 1** Individual mature trees and hedgerows within the Plan area shall be protected (as far as possible consistent with a Quality Residential Development). Proposals to remove trees must be approved as part of a planning application. Such a request must demonstrate justifiable argument supporting such proposals for removal.






#### 4.2 BUILT HERITAGE

- BH 1** To promote awareness among owner/occupiers of historic buildings and all members of the general public to the importance and value of our architectural heritage.
- BH 2** All developments shall adhere to the principles established within Appendix E, Location, Siting and Design Guide, Rural and Urban, County Donegal Development Plan 2006 - 2012 and Architectural Heritage Protection, Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2004.
- BH 3** Have regard to 'Architectural Heritage Protection – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DoEHLG, 2004' for the assessment of all proposed works to or within Protected Structures, to respect the character and special interests of the structure and to use best conservation practice and procedures.
- BH 4** Require that all development proposals which affect Protected Structures (Table 1), their curtilages and or settings, adhere to Architectural Heritage Protection – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2004. In such instances, development proposals shall be referred to the County Conservation Officer.
- BH 5** Ensure that any development, modifications, alterations or extensions affecting a Protected Structure, are sited and designed appropriately and are not detrimental to the character of the structure, its setting or character.
- BH 6** Implement the annual Conservation Grant Scheme for Protected Structures, through grant aid by the DoEHLG.
- BH 7** Protect and enhance the integrity of all known and as yet unknown, archaeological monuments and their settings and all subsequent monuments/sites identified within the Plan period and also to secure the preservation (in-situ or, as a minimum, by record) of all archaeological monuments included in the Record of Monuments and of sites, features and

objects of archaeological interest generally. In such instances, development proposals shall be referred to the County Heritage Officer.

- BH 8** Encourage the retention of historic shop and pub fronts, original windows, doors, renders, roof coverings and other significant features of historic buildings whether protected or not.

**Table 1. Record of Protected Structures**

RPS No. on Map/ Reference	Name/ Address	Description/Importance	Photo (June 2007)
1/40904711	Church of All Saints – Roman Catholic/Colehill	Detached eight bay single storey modern Catholic Church with double glazing Interior. Importance Rating -Regional.	
2/40904604	All Saints – Church of Ireland */Colehill	Detached four bay, single storey Church of Ireland with tower built with polygonal chancel and lean-vestry to north c. 1910, remodelled internally, c. 1846. Importance Rating – Local.	
3/40904608	Old Rectory */Colehill  The Structure is located outside the Plan boundary (Identified for contextual purposes)	Detached three bay, two storey former rectory built 1825 with two bay extension to NW and to West (1820 – 1830). Importance Rating – Local.	

### 4.3 ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION

**RT 1** To reserve lands for the provision of vehicular/pedestrian/cycle linkages into the town centre area.

**RT 2** To protect existing and proposed vehicular routes and access points as identified on the Town Centre Map, which provide for vehicular linkages.

**RT 3** To reserve a new developer-led road south of the town to facilitate the future growth of the town and extension of the town centre. This new road will consist of a 6m carriageway, and will cater for a cycle path and pedestrian path alongside a green verge. A limited number of shared entrances will be promoted to minimise right turning movements and to safeguard the carrying

capacity of the road. No single accesses for individual houses will be permitted onto this, developer led service road.

- RT 4** Road improvements on local roads will be carried out to facilitate permeability from residential areas to the Main Street. Local roads serving the Main Street to the town will be required to provide adequate width for a cycle path alongside the pedestrian walkway. Internal access roads into the town centre will provide for on-street car parking, where there is adequate width to facilitate same.
- RT 5** New accesses (with the exception of a new road, adjacent to the former potato store from the Main Street and with direct access onto the N13) or the intensification of existing accesses will not be permitted off the N13 in the interest of road safety.
- RT 6** To provide a clear, effective and safe directional signage for road users and for access to public facilities and other attractions.
- RT 7** To facilitate the installation of pedestrian crossings in line with general road safety and good practice.
- RT 8** All developments shall provide car parking in accordance with the County Donegal Development Plan 2006-2012, Development Guidelines and Technical Standards, Appendix A. Notwithstanding the standards prescribed within the aforementioned guidelines, it is considered reasonable to promote the shared use of car parking spaces between alternate uses within the town centre.
- RT 9** To re-direct heavy goods vehicles out of the town and back onto the National Primary (N13) along the R237.

#### **4.4 WATER AND SEWERAGE**

##### **POLICIES**

In order to facilitate improvements to the sewage treatment plant, it is proposed to:

- WS 1** Ensure that the capacity and standard of the sewerage system is up-graded in order to facilitate existing development, and to enable new developments to be serviced by the proposed sewage treatment plant.

##### **N13 at Supermarket/Fuel Filling Station**



**WS 2** In the absence of appropriate services and infrastructure, the development will be deemed to be premature. In line with this policy, a long term strategy for the provision of adequate services and infrastructure within the control points located within 'Urban Generated Rural Housing' areas shall be co-ordinated by the Planning & Economic Development Directorate in conjunction with the Water, Environment and Emergency Services Directorate, the Roads and Transportation Directorate, the Housing and Building Directorate and the Community, Culture and Enterprise Directorate.

#### **4.5 RESIDENTIAL**

**The following Residential policies are essential in providing for balanced and sustainable residential growth within the town.**



#### **POLICIES**

**R 1** All residential developments shall adhere to the County Donegal Development Plan 2006 – 2012, Appendix A: Development Guidelines and Technical Standards and Appendix E: Location, Siting and Design Guide, Rural and Urban.

**R 2** A range of residential densities will be promoted throughout the town. Town centre sites will accommodate higher gross densities and shall be consistent with maintaining the character of the settlement. Lower residential densities will be considered on the peripheral lands adjacent to the Plan boundary.

Multiple housing schemes should reflect the scale, design and character of the town. Housing densities should be appropriate to the location of the development and be cognisant of any adjoining residential developments while ensuring that sustainable use is made of housing land. Higher residential densities will be permitted in brown field sites and sites within and in proximity to the town centre. Minimum densities of 40 houses per hectare will be considered in such locations. Higher densities must be accompanied by higher standards of scheme design.

In more suburban locations a mix of dwelling types, which lead to higher net densities will be considered. An average minimum net density of 20 houses per hectare on suburban/greenfield developments on sites of 0.5 Ha and over, on serviced land may be allowed. This will allow for a mixture of lower density individual site development and higher density multiple developments.

All residential developments on sites in excess of 1.0 hectare will be required to provide a variety of dwelling types, to meet the needs of different categories

of households, including the special requirements of elderly persons and persons with disabilities.

Traffic calming measures and pedestrian linkages will be required throughout all developments.

Part V agreements for the provision of social and affordable housing will be required on all lands zoned for residential use or for a mixture of residential and other uses, in accordance with the provisions of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 – 2006.

Monitor the existing and likely future need for housing the area and ensure that sufficient zoned and serviced land is made available to meet such needs.

The creation of a safe residential environment by ensuring that residential developments incorporate best practice in crime prevention through good environmental design.

Protect and enhance existing recreational and amenity facilities to accommodate modern standards, high quality design, high usability and a safe environment.

Single house proposals on lands zoned residential shall demonstrate (possibly through the use of a Masterplan) how that development will not prejudice the overall comprehensive development of the surrounding lands as multiple residential developments.

A minimum of 15% of formal open space (on all new residential developments on sites exceeding 0.75 hectares) will be required. This area should be centrally located within the development, and should not consist of small corner and/or other incidental green spaces, which invariably are never used for amenity purposes.

For developments on sites less than 0.75 hectares, the provision of a secure 'toddler' play area plus a contribution towards the development of strategically located public open space development may be considered.

A detailed landscape plan should be submitted with all proposals for residential development specifying tree species, plants and screen barriers to be used in open space. Where relevant, proposals for the preservation of existing trees or other amenity features shall be submitted, supported by a tree survey of the site.

## **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE**

- SR1** Any additional development immediately south of the Castlepark area shall be assessed via the Monfad or St. Johnston Roads/new southern access road.

## **4.6 EMPLOYMENT AND ENTERPRISE**

### **POLICIES**

It is a policy of the Council:



- E 1** To encourage the expansion of the service sector employment in the town.
- E 2** To promote Newtowncunningham as a Centre for Urban Strengthening along the Letterkenny/Derry Gateway Corridor, accordingly the Council will encourage employment and enterprise within the town.
- E 3** To improve retail choice in the town and to promote Newtowncunningham as a comparison and convenience retail location along the Letterkenny/Derry Gateway Corridor.
- E 4** To ensure that retailing is retained as a core function in the town centre and to promote and support the role of the town centre area as the dominant retailing area in the town. New retail development must have regard to the sequential approach in the Retail Planning Guidelines (Appendix D, County Donegal Development Plan 2006 – 2012).
- E 5** To require commercial proposals of sufficient scale to submit detailed plans indicating landscaping, access, screening and car parking and must be accompanied by Traffic Transport Assessment.
- E 6** To limit business and commercial developments to one freestanding advertising sign within the curtilage of that business. Lettering and signage should respect the scale of the building and streetscape.
- E 7** To ensure that all commercial and business buildings contain signage in the Irish language.
- E 8** To promote a high standard of shop front design in all new shops. Existing traditional shop fronts should be preserved where possible. New shop fronts either of traditional or modern design must respect the scale and proportioning of the existing streetscape or one, which is being created.
- E 9** To require shops fronts to respect traditional plot size, particularly where a shop extends over a number of plots, the traditional form shall be reflected in any new proposal.

## **4.7 TOURISM**

### **POLICIES**

- TOU 1** It is a policy of the Council to improve the amenity and tourist potential of the town.
- TOU 2** Proposals to harness nearby tourist attractions, such as Blanket Nook (NHA), A Grianan an Aileach and Burt Castle will be considered where appropriate within the Plan boundary.
- TOU 3** This Plan will adhere to the strategic tourism objectives provided for within the County Donegal Development Plan 2006.

## **4.8 EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

### **POLICIES**

It is a policy of the Council:

- EC 1** To reserve land adjacent to Scoil Cholmcille for the expansion of new and or existing educational facilities.
- EC 2** To support the development of new and/or existing educational, community and health facilities, to enable Newtowncunningham to grow as a self sufficient and sustainable community.



- EC 3** To promote and support the provision of childcare facilities in new and established residential areas as outlined in the policy chapter in Appendix B Childcare Strategy in the County Donegal Development Plan 2006 - 2012.
- EC 4** To facilitate and support the provision of a broad range of community facilities including the provision of a Community Resource Centre in the town and to co-operate with other agencies including the voluntary sector to improve the level and range of such facilities.

### **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

- S CF1** Provision of a Primary Care centre on lands zoned for community facilities.
- S CF2** Provision of a library facility in Town Centre Areas A - C.

## **4.9 RECREATION AND AMENITY**

### **POLICIES**

It is a policy of the Council:

- RA 1** To facilitate the provision of a public town park and children's play area, which will enhance the amenities of the town.
- RA 2** To reserve identified lands south of the town for recreational/leisure facilities.
- RA 3** To provide a civic square within the new Town Centre with a significant quantity and high quality of open/recreational space. This will act as a natural focal point for the surrounding buildings.

### **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE**

- SRA 1** Site at west entrance to the town adjacent to the new retail warehousing to be protected for passive amenity to provide for a visually pleasing entrance to the town and to protect views of the Presbyterian church on the approach to the town.
- SCF 3** Provision of a second level school with ancillary facilities.

## SECTION 5

### DETAILED AREA POLICIES

#### 5.1 TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT AREA

To date Newtowncunningham lacks an identifiable town centre or any coherent urban form resulting from development occurring in an ad-hoc and piecemeal fashion. The town centre lacks urban form where retail functions have become detached from one another. While there has been a growth in residential development, retail and professional services have not matched this growth.

Significant gaps exist between individual buildings and groups of buildings along the Main Street and there are a number of derelict and vacant plots. There is no fixed or coherent building line, which leads to poor streetscape and mitigates against a sense of place.

The Plan seeks to remedy this imbalance and the Town Centre area will extend from the creamery site on the west side of the town, northwards to Kernan's and out to the health centre on the east side of the town. The major weaknesses of this area are the lack of services and community facilities, lack of coherent character and urban form, poor accesses and linkages (road and pedestrian), poor facilities for pedestrians and cyclists and no public open space.



#### 5.2 OBJECTIVE

To facilitate the creation of a clear and vibrant town centre consisting of a range of integrated functions including: small and medium scale retail, community services, high quality residential units, parking and green space which will act as a focal point for the town's population and future growth.

All new development shall comply with the Location, Siting and Design Guide - Rural and Urban 2006. Further to this the following framework outlines general town centre objectives and specific site objectives as identified on Town Centre Map (Sites A-C) within the Town Centre.

#### POLICIES

It is a policy of the Council:

- TC 1** To facilitate the creation of a Town Centre, consisting of the following specific areas:
- A. Mixed-use Town Centre
  - B. Residential Neighbourhood Centre
  - C. Mixed-use Town Centre.

- TC 2** To ensure high quality design for new developments, which respect the existing character and enhance the streetscape. Higher buildings will only be permitted on a corner site where a building would add definition to the streetscape.
- TC 3** To ensure a high quality of design of open spaces to create vibrant civic spaces for a wide range of active and passive activities.
- TC 4** To promote infill development of vacant plots and appropriate re-development of derelict buildings along the Main Street.
- TC 5** To ensure that development demonstrates strong street frontage along the length of the Main Street in order to create a sense of enclosure.
- TC 6** To encourage a mix of uses along the Main Street including: retail, commercial and residential in order to create a vibrant town centre.
- TC 7** To provide additional car parking facilities at suitable locations convenient to the Town Centre.
- TC 8** To require new developments to make appropriate provision for adequate parking, in addition to on-street parking.
- TC 9** To protect all existing and proposed indicative accesses onto the Main Street.
- TC 10** To require new developments to respect town centre density ranges without injuring the character of the area and shall provide sufficient high quality open space and to respect the existing building line by maintaining its continuity.
- TC 11** To require development proposals to deal with connections/provisions of infrastructure such as electricity, telephone, by means of underground installation in order to avoid proliferation of unsightly wires and poles.
- TC12** New development shall respect the existing building line by maintaining its continuity.

### **Specific site objectives for sites A - C within the Town Centre**

#### **TC13 Site A**

It is a policy of the Council:

- That this site is to be re-developed to facilitate mixed-use development. Mixed-use development will include high-density employment, retailing, residential, and community facilities. The predominant use within the site shall be for retail, commercial and other usual town centre uses.
- It is proposed that this site will include the existing supermarket, which is currently the most important service in the town. This site has the potential for expansion of retail and service facilities.
- To zone land adjacent to the existing supermarket retail/commercial pending the development of an alternate access to the school in the interest of traffic safety. This entrance may be from the Main Street/link road.
- To deny any additional access onto the N13 National Road for any proposed developments or to permit development, which would serve to intensify traffic at existing access points.

- To provide a civic square with a significant element of open/recreational space. This will act as a focal point for the surrounding buildings and provide an area for social interaction.
- To construct new pedestrian links through the creamery site to access all facilities, and to create a pedestrian link from the Creamery site, across the main street to the existing supermarket.
- To construct new roads within the Creamery site to increase permeability of the site.
- Require that these lands are subject to a Masterplan to ensure proposals take cognisance of the policy. Masterplan proposals shall demonstrate that excellence is achieved in terms of design, mix of uses, frontage, open space, landscaping, safety, amenity and coherence and that the most efficient use of space is promoted. Proposals shall fully accord with Appendix A and Appendix E of the County Development Plan 2006 – 2012.

#### **TC14 Site B**

It is a policy of the Council:

- To facilitate the creation of a residential neighbourhood centre.
- It is proposed that undeveloped residential zoned lands to the rear of the future Neighbourhood Centre will be accessed from the southern side of the proposed Neighbourhood Centre and these will remain for residential use.
- Residential and office uses will be promoted over commercial and community uses.
- To facilitate local shopping facilities (particularly convenience goods) in the residential neighbourhood.
- To require the provision of new pedestrian links throughout the site along with new roads to increase permeability through the site.
- Require that these lands are subject to a Masterplan to ensure proposals take cognisance of the policy. Masterplan proposals shall demonstrate that excellence is achieved in terms of design, mix of uses, frontage, open space, landscaping, safety, amenity and coherence and that the most efficient use of space is promoted. Proposals shall fully accord with Appendix A and Appendix E of the County Development Plan 2006 – 2012.

#### **TC15 Site C**

It is a policy of the Council:

- That this site is to be re-developed to facilitate mixed-use development. Mixed-use development will include high-density employment, retailing, residential, and community facilities. The predominant use within the site shall be for retail, commercial and other usual town centre uses.
- To provide for a town centre park. It is envisaged that this would cater for both recreational facilities but also provide space for the hosting of civic and community events.
- To construct new pedestrian links throughout the site along with new roads to increase permeability through the site.
- Require that these lands are subject to a Masterplan to ensure proposals take cognisance of the policy. Masterplan proposals shall demonstrate that excellence is achieved in terms of design, mix of uses, frontage, open space, landscaping, safety, amenity and coherence and that the most efficient use of space is promoted. Proposals shall fully accord with Appendix A and Appendix E of the County Development Plan 2006 – 2012.

The benefits of mixed-use developments include:

- More convenient access to facilities
- Travel-to work congestion is minimised
- Greater opportunities for social interaction
- Socially diverse communities
- More efficient use of space and buildings

### **5.3 LAND-USE ZONING OBJECTIVES**

#### **RESIDENTIAL**

To reserve these lands, primarily for residential use.

#### **COMMUNITY/EDUCATION**

To reserve these lands solely for community, health, educational (and their ancillary) uses. The Community/Education zoning on the Monfad road site shall also provide for social/sheltered housing development.

#### **EMPLOYMENT/COMMERCIAL/SALE OF BULKY GOODS**

To reserve these lands solely for light industrial, sale of bulky goods, manufacturing and office based developments.

#### **TOWN CENTRE (SITES A, B & C)**

The Town Centre will remain the commercial centre of the town consisting of a wide variety of retail, business, service, cultural, entertainment and residential uses, of a suitable scale and character and sympathetic to those adjacent uses.

#### **OPPORTUNITY SITE 1**

The site is located within a generally mixed-use town centre area. Development associated with quality publically accessible open space is considered an appropriate solution for these lands.

#### **OPPORTUNITY SITE 2**

This is a prime site for re-development to form part of the proposed Neighbourhood Centre, as there is no established building line and the majority of the site is greenfield, with the exception of two community facilities.

A local/neighbourhood centre is defined as follows, 'Small groups of shops typically comprising a newsagent, small supermarket/general grocery store, sub-post office and other small shops of a local nature serving a small local, localised catchment population.'<sup>8</sup>

The proposed Neighbourhood Centre will be designed for ease of walking to reinforce community and discourage car use.

#### **OPPORTUNITY SITES (3, 4 & 5)**

Three sites have been identified as Opportunity Sites (Numbers 3, 4 & 5) on the Ballyhaskey approach road east of the town. These sites are very important in terms of key access and will serve as focal points on the approach into the town. Any proposals on these sites will be reserved for high quality development, which provides for a strong frontage to create a clear and attractive entrance to the town.

---

<sup>8</sup> Retail Planning Guidelines, County Donegal Development Plan 2006 – 2012, Appendix D.

### **RECREATIONAL/AMENITY & LEISURE**

To reserve these lands for recreational/amenity and leisure use, including ancillary infrastructure.

### **ROAD ALIGNMENTS**

To protect these proposed new road alignments and key access points.

### **RETAIL/COMMERCIAL**

To reserve these lands solely for retail, business, service and light industrial use.

### **VIEWS/PROSPECTS**

To protect important views and prospects.

### **SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION (SAC) (NATURA 2000)**

The Habitats Directive requires Ireland to propose relevant areas for designation as Special Areas of Conservation for the conservation of listed habitats and species, and to maintain their favourable conservation status. Part IV of the Regulations requires local authorities in respect of development requiring planning permission to ensure that an appropriate assessment of the implications of a proposed development within an SAC be undertaken. All sites receive protection from date of advertisement. N.B. These areas are also prone to flooding (See Appendix I for Site Synopsis).

### **SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA (SPA) (NATURA 2000)**

The Birds Directive requires that special measures be taken to conserve the habitats of listed species in order to ensure their own survival and reproduction in their area of distribution. Ireland is obliged to "take appropriate steps to avoid pollution or deterioration of habitats or any disturbances affecting the birds". Only activities which do not have significant effects on birds are acceptable in SPA's. The Birds Directive also requires the avoidance of pollution or deterioration of habitats generally outside specially protected sites (See Appendix II for Site Synopsis).

### **NATURAL HERITAGE AREA (NHA)**

NHA's are areas of national ecological importance. The ecological interest which underlies proposed NHA's is taken into account in decisions on planning applications or State grants for development that would affect this interest.

### **REDEVELOPMENT AREA**

Redevelopment sites are areas of the town, which have suffered vacancy, dereliction and general under-utilisation of lands. In this instance, an established building line can be identified and this needs to be maintained. This policy encourages the consolidation of the area through redevelopment of these lands. Uses that will be permitted shall be of town centre in nature comprising a mix of retail, commercial, office with a subservient component of recreational and leisure activities including restaurants.

### **ESTABLISHED USE**

Areas where a principal use has been established. The building line is slightly set back from the road and should be maintained where it can be demonstrated that through innovative design that positive enhancement of the town and streetscape will result. Localised mixed-use infill development that is compatible with adjacent uses shall be encouraged.



## SECTION 6

### ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

In accordance with article 19 (4) (a) of the Planning & Development Acts 2000 – 2006, Local Area Plans shall contain information on the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the Plan (See Table 1).

The preparation of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a systematic process for evaluating the environmental consequences of proposed policy, plan or programme initiatives in order to ensure that they are fully included and appropriately addressed at the earliest stage of decision making on par with economic and social considerations. SEA is not mandatory for Local Area Plans with a population of less than 10,000 persons. Notwithstanding this, it is a requirement to screen all proposed Plans and programmes to consider whether they require SEA. A 'Screening Report' was prepared and issued to the prescribed authorities. Donegal County Council recommended that SEA was not merited for the preparation of this Local Area Plan. The prescribed authorities did not have any comments to make.

The following Table 1 represents an appraisal of the likely significant impacts upon the environment of the implementation of the policies in the Plan. It must be clearly recognised that the following brief assessments, simply have regard to the perceived positive and adverse environmental impacts, associated with the policies.

An assessment of the economic and social consequences of these policies has not been considered in this section. However, both of these factors remain very important material considerations and are generally the two primary factors, which drive development proposals.

**Table 1. Likely Significant Impact on the Environment of the implementing the policies of the Plan.**

Positive ☺                      Negligible □                      Negative ●                      Not Applicable                      N/A

Policy Ref.	Policy	Landscape Conservation	Cultural and Built Heritage	Energy Efficiency	Sustainable Transport	Reduction of Waster/ Pollution	Natural Resources
4.1	Natural Heritage	☺	☺	☺	N/A	☺	☺
4.2	Built Heritage	☺	☺	☺	N/A	☺	☺
4.3	Roads & Transportation	□	□	☺	☺	☺	●
4.4	Flooding	☺	☺	☺	N/A	☺	☺
4.5	Water & Sewerage	□	□	☺	☺	☺	□
4.6	Residential	□	□	☺	☺	□	□
4.7	Employment & Enterprise	□	□	□	□	□	□

4.8	Tourism	☺	☺	☐	☺	☐	N/A
4.9	Education & Community	☺	☺	☺	☺	☐	☐
4.10	Recreation and Amenity	☺	☺	☐	☺	☐	N/A
5.1	Town Centre Development Area	☺	☺	☺	☺	☐	☐

## SECTION 7

### APPENDIX 1

#### Candidate SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION

##### Site Synopsis

###### LOUGH SWILLY (Site Code 002287) <sup>9</sup>

SITE CODE: 002287 This large site, situated in the northern part of Co. Donegal, comprises the inner part of Lough Swilly. It extends from below Letterkenny to just north of Buncrana. Lough Swilly is a long sea-lough, cutting through a variety of metamorphic rocks on the west side of Inishowen.

The site is estuarine in character, with shallow water and intertidal sand and mud flats being the dominant habitats. The main rivers flowing into the site are the Swilly, Lennan and Crana. At low tide, extensive sand and mud flats are exposed, especially at the mouths of the Swilly and Lennan rivers. Bivalves and polychaete worms are well represented in the macro-invertebrate fauna, with species such as Cockles (*Cerastoderma edule*), Mussels (*Mytilus edulis*), Baltic Tellin (*Macoma balthica*), Ragworm (*Nereis diversicolor*) and Sand Mason (*Lanice conchilega*) being common. Cord-grass (*Spartina anglica*) is well established on parts of the intertidal flats. The shoreline above the flats varies from bedrock shore to shingle or cobbles, and here is found a scattering of salt tolerant plants such as Scurvygrass (*Cochlearia officinalis*), Sea Milkwort (*Glaux maritima*) and Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*).

Salt marshes are well represented in the inner sheltered areas of the site, with good examples in the Ramelton area. The marshes are the Atlantic salt meadow type and are characterised by such species as Thrift (*Armeria maritima*), Sea Milkwort (*Glaux maritima*), Sea Aster (*Aster tripolium*), Sea Arrowgrass (*Triglochin maritima*) and Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*).

Lakes which are lagoonal in character occur at Inch and Blanket Nook. Inch Lough is a good example of a large, shallow lagoon with very low salinity in most of the lagoon. Less information is available for Blanket Nook, but it is of a higher salinity and adds to the richness of the habitat within the site as a whole. The vegetation in Inch is diverse and typically lagoonal, with well developed charophyte communities, including a large population of *Chara canescens* (a Red Data Book species). It also supports Horned Pondweed (*Zannichellia palustris*) and a mixed Pondweed/Tassleweed Community (*Potamogeton pectinatus*/*Ruppia maritima*). The green alga *Chaetomorpha linum* occurs at Blanket Nook. The aquatic fauna at Inch is rich and diverse and includes a range of lagoonal specialists and species that are apparently rare. These include *Lekanesphaera hookeri*, *Palaemonetes varians*, *Conopeum seurati*, *Sigara stagnalis*, *S. concinna*, *Jaera nordmanni*, *Neomysis integer* and *Cordyllophora caspia*. Less information is available on the aquatic fauna at Blanket Nook, though several lagoonal specialists have been recorded, including *Jaera ischiosetosa*, which appears to be a rare species in Ireland. Inch Lough is regarded as of significant conservation value for ectonal Coleoptera, with several species indicative of well-developed shoreline habitats including two that are apparently rare: *Bembidion bipunctatum*, a halotolerant shore species, and

---

<sup>9</sup> Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

*Bembidion aeneum*, a stenotopic halobiont species. Although artificial in origin, the lagoon habitat in this site is one of the largest and best examples of a shallow, low salinity lagoon habitat in the country.

Two woodlands occur adjacent to the north-western shore of Lough Swilly. These are Rathmullen and Carradoan Woods, the former being a Nature Reserve. They are dominated by Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) and Birch (*Betula pubescens*), but many other species are present including exotics such as Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and Willows (*Salix* spp.) occur in the wetter parts. An area of wet heath, dominated by Ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), occurs on the hill above Carradoran Wood. These woodlands display a generally intact structure and support a range of breeding birds, including Woodcock.

A further area of woodland, scrub and heath occurs above the north-east shore at Crockacashel and at Porthaw. Oak/Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) scrub is frequent and there is a well developed ground flora with species such as Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), Lady's fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*) and Broad Buckler Fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*). The heath vegetation includes Ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), Common Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*) and Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*). In the wetter areas, Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*) occur.

The site supports a population of Otter, a species listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive.

Lough Swilly is an important site for waterfowl in autumn and winter. The shallow waters provide suitable habitat for grebes and diving duck, while the intertidal flats are used by an excellent diversity of wildfowl and waders. At high tide, the duck and wader species roost on the salt marshes and shorelines, with some species moving to the adjacent pasture and arable fields. In the three winters 1994/95 to 1996/97, 16 species occurred in nationally important numbers as follows (figures are average maximum counts for the 3 winters): Great Crested Grebe (274), Shelduck (646), Wigeon (1,673), Teal (1,381), Mallard (1,155), Shoveler (58), Scaup (143), Goldeneye (169), Red-breasted Merganser (103), Coot (335), Oystercatcher (1,459), Knot (327), Dunlin (7,995), Curlew (1,716), Redshank (1,080) and Greenshank (30). Other species which occur in regionally or locally important numbers, and at times may exceed the threshold for national importance, include Brent Goose, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Lapwing, Ringed Plover, Grey Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit and Turnstone. The site is also an important area for the Great Northern Diver and the rare Slavonian Grebe.

The adjacent pasture and arable polders at Inch, Big Isle and Blanket Nook support internationally important populations of Whooper Swans, Greenland White-fronted Geese and Greylag Geese. Inch Lough is an important roosting area for these birds and at times they utilise other parts of Lough Swilly for roosting.

This site is of conservation importance as it contains good examples of at least four habitats listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive (estuaries, lagoons, Atlantic salt meadows, old oak woods) and supports a population of Otter. In addition, it is of high ornithological importance for wintering waterfowl, with 16 species occurring regularly in numbers of national importance, plus 3 species occurring within the site and on adjacent polders in numbers of international importance.

## APPENDIX II

### SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA

#### Site Synopsis

#### LOUGH SWILLY (Site Code: 004075)

This site, situated in the northern part of Co. Donegal, comprises the inner part of Lough Swilly, a long inlet of the sea that cuts through a variety of metamorphic rocks on the west side of the Inishowen Peninsula. The Lough Swilly SPA extends from just below Letterkenny north to Rathmullan and, except in the area between Farsetmore and Blanket Nook on the southern side of Lough Swilly, the site is bounded by the High Water Mark; its seaward boundary is the Low Water Mark.

Between Farsetmore and Blanket Nook a series of improved pasture and arable fields of importance to geese and swans are included. The site includes sections of the estuaries of the River Swilly, the River Leannan and the Isle Burn and the predominant habitat is a series of extensive sand and mud flats which are exposed at low tide – both estuaries and sand/mud flats are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Other habitats represented on the site are salt marshes, lakes which are lagoonal in character (at Blanket Nook), rivers and streams, sand and shingle beaches, lowland wet, dry and improved grasslands, arable land, drainage ditches, reedbeds and scrub. The adjacent Inch Lough and Levels are included in a separate SPA.

Lough Swilly is an important site for waterfowl in Autumn and Winter. The shallow waters provide suitable habitat for grebes and diving duck, while the intertidal flats are used by an excellent diversity of wildfowl and waders. At high tide, the duck and wader species roost on the salt marshes and shorelines, with some species moving to the adjacent pasture and arable fields. In the three winters 1994/95 to 1996/97, 16 species occurred in nationally important numbers as follows (figures are average maximum counts for the three winters); Great Crested Grebe (274), Shelduck (646), Wigeon (1,673), Teal (1,381), Mallard (1,155), Shoveler (58), Scaup (143), Goldeneye (169), Redshank (1,080) and Greencastle (30). Other species which occur in regionally or locally important numbers, and at times may exceed the for national importance, include Brent Goose, Pochard, Tufted Duck., Lapwing, Ringed Plover, Grey Plover, Bar Tailed Godwit (a species that is listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive) and Turnstone. The site is also an important area for the Great Northern Diver and the rare Slavonian Grebe, both Birds Directive Annex I species. Golden Plover, a species that is listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive, used the site regularly during winter (4 year mean of winter maximum 1994/95 – 1997/98 was 1,001 individuals).

Lough Swilly supports internationally important numbers of Greenland White-fronted geese (5 year mean of maximum 1995/96 – 1999/00 for the Lough Swilly flock was 970 individuals), Whoppers Swans (5 year mean of winter maximum 1995/96 – 1999/00 was 1,135 individuals, the largest population of the Country) and Greylag Geese (5 year mean of winter maximum 1995/96 – 1999/00 was 2,020 individuals – this figure includes both migratory birds of the Icelenic population as well as an estimated 750 – 1,000 feral birds). The numbers of Greylag Geese using the site has continued to increase in recent years. The main areas of the site used by these species are at Big Isle, Farsetmore, Blanket Nook and Ballylawn. The Inch Levels are used by the same flocks of geese and swans – this area included in a separate Special Protection Area. Both Greenland White-fronted Goose and Whooper Swan are listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive.

This site is major ornithological importance for wintering waterfowl, with 16 species occurring regularly in numbers of national importance and 3 species occurring within the site in numbers of international importance. The site is regularly used by in excess of 20,000 waterfowl and thus qualifies as of international importance. This site is used by several species that are listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive.