



Comhairle Cathrach
& Contae **Luimnigh**

Limerick City
& County Council

Forbairt Gheilleagrach,
Ceanncheathrú Chorparáideach,
Cé na gCeannaithe,
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22nd March 2019

To the Cathaoirleach and each Member of the Municipal District of Newcastle West

Re: Proposal to extend the life of the Abbeyfeale Local Area Plan 2014 - 2020

A Chomhairleoir, a chara,

I enclose herewith a copy of the Chief Executive's Report on the proposal to extend the life of the Abbeyfeale Local Area Plan 2014 - 2020 for your consideration.

The Elected Members, of the Municipal District of Newcastle West at their April meeting shall consider the Chief Executive's Report and decide by resolution whether to defer the sending of a notice under Section 20(3)(a)(i) to make a new Local Area Plan and instead extend the life of the Abbeyfeale Local Area Plan 2014 - 2020 by a further 5 years.

If you have any queries on the report please contact Karen Burke, A/Senior Executive Planner, on 061-557480.

Mise le Meas,

Dr. Pat Daly,
Director of Economic Development

Abbeyfeale Local Area Plan 2014 - 2020

Chief Executive's report submitted to Elected Members in accordance with Section 19 (1)(d) and 19(1)(e) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (Amended) in relation to the deferral of making a new Local Area Plan

22nd March 2019

Forward/Strategic Planning Section,
Economic Development Directorate,
Limerick City and County Council,
Merchants Quay
Limerick



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Part 1 - Introduction

1.1 Background

The Abbeyfeale Local Area Plan 2014 – 2020 is the main public statement of planning policies and objectives for the town of Abbeyfeale. The Plan was adopted by Limerick County Council on the 20th of June 2014, and is due to expire in July 2020. There have been no amendments to the plan since its adoption.

Section 19 (1) (c) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (Amended) requires that the process of reviewing an existing LAP should commence not later than 6 years after the adoption of the previous plan. However, the Planning and Development Amendment Act 2010 introduced a new provision whereby a Planning Authority may, if considered appropriate, by resolution extend the life of an existing local area plan for a further period not exceeding 5 years.

1.2 Statutory Procedure

The Planning Authority may, if considered appropriate, by resolution, defer the sending of notices to commence the review of a local area plan. No resolution shall be passed until such time as the members of the Planning Authority notify the Chief Executive of the decision of the Authority to defer the sending or publishing of the notices, giving reasons, and having sought and obtained from the Chief Executive:

- An opinion that the LAP remains consistent with the objectives and the core strategy of the relevant Development Plan, and/or
- An opinion that the objectives of the LAP have not been substantially secured, and confirmation that the sending and publishing of the notices be deferred and the period for which they may be deferred.

The elected members may accept the recommendations of the Chief Executive, that the current Abbeyfeale LAP is consistent with the objectives of the Limerick County Development Plan 2010 – 2016 (As Extended) and its core strategy; and that the objectives of the plan have not been substantially secured within the life time of the plan. In such instance, they may then determine by resolution, that it would be appropriate to defer the process for making a new plan for an agreed time-period.

Following the making of any such decision, a public notice to this effect is required to be published in a newspaper circulating in the area of the local area plan not later than 2 weeks after the resolution is passed by members.

1.2.1 Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to set out the opinion of the Chief Executive that:

- a) The Abbeyfeale Local Area Plan(LAP) 2014 - 2020, remains consistent with the objectives and the core strategy of the Limerick County Development Plan 2010 – 2016 (As Extended);
- b) The objectives of the LAP have not been substantially secured to date; and
- c) The sending and publishing of notices to make or review the plan may be deferred and the period for which they may be deferred.

Part 2 - Compliance with the Core Strategy of Limerick County Development Plan 2010 – 2016 (As Extended)

2.1 Introduction

In accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 (Amended) a Core Strategy is required to demonstrate how the Development Plan is consistent with the National Planning Framework (which has replaced the National Spatial Strategy), Regional Planning Guidelines (which will be replaced by the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, when adopted), Government Policies and Ministerial guidelines / directives. Local Area Plans, in turn, must be consistent with the Development Plan.

The Core Strategy of the Limerick County Development Plan 2010-2016 (As Extended) outlines population targets and housing land requirements for County Limerick, which were allocated by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government at national level and distributed at regional level by the Mid-West Regional Authority. The Mid West Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) 2010-2022 have allocated a population target of an additional 32,800 people for County Limerick up to the year 2022. Based on this population target the core strategy has allocated a specific population target for each settlement.

The population target for Abbeyfeale in the Core Strategy, when the Development Plan was adopted in 2010, was for an additional 1,500 number of people on top of the existing 1,940 people identified in the 2006 Census. It was noted in the Local Area Plan, that the growth of the town was much lower than envisaged at the time that the Core Strategy was prepared. In recognition of the lower than expected growth of the town, the population target was reduced to 2,912 persons by 2022, or 972 persons in addition to the 2006 population base. This equates to a requirement, pro-rata, of 380 additional units by 2020, which with the densities proposed, including medium/low densities and low densities for serviced sites, would require at least 32.12 hectares to 2020.

2.2 Settlement Strategy, population, zoned land requirements, and capacity of existing zoned land for residential use to accommodate additional population

Abbeyfeale has been designated as a Tier 3 settlement in the settlement hierarchy of the Limerick County Development Plan 2010 – 2016 (As Extended). It is the policy of the Council to support the sustainable development of settlements in Tiers 2-6, and Objectives SS 01 – 08 apply; including Objective SS07, which requires the Council to monitor growth patterns and pace of growth in settlements and apply appropriate management measures.

Abbeyfeale has experienced only very limited population growth since 2011; at a rate even lower than the 2006 - 2011 growth, which itself represented a marked slow-down in growth compared to the spurt of growth in the 1996 - 2006 period. Refer to Table 1 below.

Table 1 - Total Population of Abbeyfeale and percentage change per census year 1991 - 2016

Year	Population	Population % change
1991	1,501	
1996	1,486	-1.00%
2002	1,683	+13.25%
2006	1,940	+15.27%
2011	2,007	+3.45%
2016	2,023	+0.80%

Source: CSO Census

The Table below is an extract from the Abbeyfeale Local Area Plan 2014 -2020, indicating the additional population, number of units, and zoned land required up to 2022, and pro-rata within the Plan period, to comply with the Core Strategy¹.

Table 2 – Population targets and Housing requirements as per the Abbeyfeale Local Area Plan 2014 -2020

Year	2006	2011	2020	2022
Total population	1,940	2,007	2,747	2,912
Additional Population			740	165
Additional housing units required			380	84
Zoned land required to accommodate additional housing units (including additional 50% headroom) - hectares			32.12	7.12

2.3 Capacity of existing zoned lands

There are 32.11 hectares zoned as new residential development and serviced sites as Phase 1 in the current LAP, with a further 10.14 hectares zoned as Phase 2 new residential development and 2.69 hectares as Phase 3 new residential development. There has been no development on any of these lands since the adoption of the 2014 Local Area Plan. There are three outstanding planning permissions for proposed residential development that together account for 2.3 hectares (see Table 3 below). This leaves 29.8 hectares of available land for Phase 1 development. There is therefore sufficient land zoned in the Abbeyfeale LAP for residential use (residential development and serviced sites) to satisfy the core strategy requirements of the Limerick County Development Plan 2010 – 2016 (As Extended).

¹ Refer to Abbeyfeale Local Area Plan 2014 – 2020, page 23

Table 3 – Residential Zoned lands required and zoned in hectares (Ha)

Land Use	Required 2020 (Ha)	Required 2022 (Ha)	Zoned Lands (Ha)			Lands developed or committed since 2014		
			Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Committed ² (Ha)	Balance 2020	Balance 2022
Residential Development area	20.72	25.30	20.74	5.78	2.69	0.11	20.63	25.19
Residential Serviced Sites	11.40	13.92	11.37	4.36	0	2.19	9.18	11.73
Total	32.12	39.22	32.11	10.14	2.69	2.3	29.81	36.92

2.4 Economic Development

The following summarises development on lands zoned in the 2014 -2020 Local Area Plan.

Enterprise and Employment

In relation to the lands zoned for Enterprise and Employment, 36.7 hectares is zoned for this purpose in Abbeyfeale. There has been only one development on these lands since the adoption of the LAP: the construction of two warehouse type units totalling 531 sq metres on foot of planning permission 16/762. In accordance with the current Mid - West Regional Planning Guidelines in relation to rural areas, suitable uses include internationally traded services, ICT and software development, small-scale workshops/enterprises in agri-business, and crafts as stated in the LAP. Having regard to the amount of undeveloped enterprise and employment zoned land, the objectives relating to economic development throughout the plan have not been secured and remain relevant to the sustainable development of the Abbeyfeale.

Town Centre, retail and commercial development and tourism

The 2014 - 2020 Local Area Plan zones 8.84 hectares as 'town centre'. The purpose of this land use zone is to protect and enhance the character of the Abbeyfeale town centre, and to provide for improved retail, residential, commercial, office cultural and other appropriate uses, whilst guiding the development of an expanded and consolidated town centre area. 14 planning permissions were granted on lands zoned town centre since the adoption of the 2014 LAP. Refer to Part 3, Table 4 below, for some of the significant planning permissions.

The Abbeyfeale LAP was prepared in accordance with 2010 'Retail Strategy for the Mid-West Region' which was incorporated into Limerick County Development Plan. The strategy

² There have been only three proposals granted planning permission for new residential development on lands zoned for new residential development since 2014. They involve in total 17 dwelling units; one of these proposals, for ten serviced sites, is at outline planning stage only (17/561); the other two, 15/652 and 18/40, are for three dwellings and four dwellings, respectively. A Part 8 was also prepared in the Town Centre to the Council for the refurbishment of one house and for the construction of three new houses.

provides guidance on the need for new retail floor space and location of floor space, in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. The central key objective arising from the Retail Strategy is to support the town centre, utilising the sequential approach in the context of the retail hierarchy, and to promote the vitality and viability of existing centres. In line with national planning guidance and appropriate sustainable development the objectives of the LAP relating the village centre, commercial development remain relevant to Abbeyfeale.

In relation to tourism, the importance of the planned Great Southern Greenway which runs north of the town along the former railway line, is recognised by special zoning. The greenway has been developed for off road cycling and walking along a continuous 40 km stretch within County Limerick from the Kerry border west of Abbeyfeale as far as Rathkeale to the north-east.

2.5 Infrastructure and Transport

Waste Water Treatment and water supply

Irish Water is the national water utility responsible for water and wastewater service. The Council remains closely involved in local provision as an agent of Irish Water in the operation and maintenance of services in its administrative area. The town's water supply comes from the existing Water Treatment Plant located to the south of the town. This plant is supplied with water from the river Feale and it remains a sufficient resource to supply the existing and predicted needs of the area. In respect of wastewater treatment, the existing Abbeyfeale Wastewater treatment plant had capacity issues in 2014, as noted in the Local Area plan, but as also noted the plant had to handle sewage sludge transported from four neighbouring villages. Currently there are planned upgrade works to this plant's processing capacity under the Activate Sludge Programme: the aim is to optimise the efficiency of the plant and not to expand its overall capacity. The design capacity remains as it was in 2014, at 2,860 persons equivalent; the loading in 2018 according to the Annual Environmental Report, was 2,440 persons equivalent; therefore, there is spare capacity of 420 population equivalent in that year. While this constitutes limited spare capacity, there is sufficient scope given the assimilation capacity of the receiving waters, to upgrade the overall capacity of treatment plant to accommodate expansion should this be required. Proposals for significant development remains subject to pre-connection discussions/agreements with Irish Water.

Transport

It is the policy of the Council to improve accessibility and the objectives of the LAP remain relevant to Abbeyfeale. The Council remains guided by national policy in relation to the transport issues.

The Local Authority prepared an application (Part 8) for a traffic management scheme for the town centre, (reference number 17/8019), which was approved by the Council subject to amendments in May 2018. This involves modified lane widths along the Main Street for a distance of circa 500 metres, traffic signals at two junctions, controlled pedestrian crossings, new coach set downs and the development of a one-way vehicular direct link from the Main street to the existing car park south of the Main Street at Grove Crescent. The latter involves the acquisition and demolition of a building. All these changes are associated with extensive public realm improvements.

Flooding

The Local Authority is committed to managing flood risk in accordance with the principles set out in ministerial guidelines "The Planning System and Flood Risk Management, Nov 2009", and OPW data and advice as stated in the County Development Plan. The Local Authority will continue to apply a precautionary approach based on the CFRAM maps, finalised in 2017, which are the most up to date flood data available for the Unit of Management to which Abbeyfeale belongs. These maps were consulted to assess the existing zoned land in terms of potential risk of flooding. These maps indicate that the total area zoned for new development, which may be at risk of flooding is limited, in particular following the updating of zoning in the 2014 Local Area Plan.

2.6 Community and Recreation

The town is served by two primary schools and one post primary school, the latter of which, Scoil Íde agus Iosef, was opened in 2011 to replace three post primary schools previously in the town. The number of pupils provisionally recorded as being enrolled in the primary schools in 2018 - 2019 is 246 according to the latest available school lists in the Department of Education: this represents a slight increase over the 220 noted in the Local Area Plan. The number of pupils enrolled in Scoil Íde agus Iosef is 707 in 2018 - 2019 according to the Department of Education, compared to 750 in 2013 - 2014. The town was served by four pre-schools/after schools childcare services in 2014 and this remains the case.

There have been no significant physical development of education or amenity facilities since 2014. Different community groups benefit from small grants for their on-going work from the Community Development Fund. It should also be noted that Abbeyfeale has been selected as one of the three locations in the city and county for the Age-Friendly Initiative that commenced in 2016. In respect of health facilities, one significant development is that of a new health clinic in the town centre (See Table 5 below).

2.7 Environment and heritage

The Abbeyfeale LAP 2014 was subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The LAP incorporated appropriate land use zoning, policies and objectives to ensure the implementation of the LAP will not result in significant effects on the environment in accordance with the SEA Directive and Regulations and in compliance with the associated objectives of the Limerick County Development Plan 2010-2016 (As Extended). Given the lack of development since the adoption of the LAP it is considered that the extension of duration of the LAP will not result in significant effects on the environment in accordance with the SEA Directive and Regulations and remains in compliance with the objectives of the Limerick County Development Plan 2010- 2016 (As Extended).

There are 62 Protected Structures within the LAP boundary and an Architectural Conservation Area in the town centre. There have been no additions or removals of Protected Structures within the LAP boundary since the adoption of the LAP. Prior to the adoption of the Abbeyfeale LAP, the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) was established under the Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1999. Its purpose is to identify, record, and evaluate the post-1700 architectural heritage of Ireland, uniformly and consistently as an aid in the protection

and conservation of the built heritage. The NIAH provides the basis for the recommendations of the Minister³ to the planning authorities for the inclusion of particular structures in their Record of Protected Structures (RPS). There are 25 structures located within the Abbeyfeale LAP boundary on the NIAH list⁴, all of these are in the list of Protected Structures.

There are 2 Recorded Monuments located in Abbeyfeale: these are the church and graveyard at the town square on the site of the original Cistercian foundation, which gave the town its name. The list of the Record of Monuments and Places is maintained and updated by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland. There have been no new Recorded Monuments within the boundary since the adoption of the 2014 LAP.

The objectives of the 2014 - 2020 LAP for environment and built heritage remain applicable to Abbeyfeale.

2.8 Urban design, derelict and vacant sites

The Abbeyfeale LAP provides guidance to assist prospective applicants to address aspects of planning and design that the planning authority will be taking into account when assessing applications for future development. 4 opportunity sites were identified in the town as opportunity sites and preliminary design briefs were outlined in the LAP. Since the adoption of the LAP there has been no progression in developing these lands.

In 2014, there were seven derelict sites, all are now longer consider derelict: however the number of sites entered in the Derelict Sites Register under the Derelict Sites Act 1990 surpasses that number: there are now ten sites either under consideration for inclusion in the derelict sites register or already registered. Five sites are on the derelict sites register, all of these are in Colbert Terrace: two of these sites are in the process of being compulsorily acquired, two are being acquired as part of the Council's Buy and Renew scheme and the last has been purchased by a developer and is due for refurbishment.

Limerick City and County Council established a Vacant Sites Register in 2017 as required by the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015. The purpose of the register is to identify vacant sites subject to a levy if the site remains idle according the provisions of the Act. The Council is required to review the register across the City and County. At present no sites have in Abbeyfeale been identified for inclusion in the Vacant Sites Register.

The 2014 LAP highlighted vacancy as an issue, it was noted in the Local Area Plan that according to the 2011 Census records there were 245 vacant dwelling units in the town, which represented 23% of the total housing stock: the equivalent figure in 2016 is 227 out of 1,081 units, a marginal improvement, representing 21% of the total. While it should be noted that 29 of these were either holiday homes or temporarily absent, two categories that were introduced in the 2016 Census, the 'permanent' vacancy rate, at 18% remains very high. These vacancies do not count unfinished buildings: there is one unfinished housing scheme in Abbeyfeale, listed in the Unfinished Estates register.

³ Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

⁴ Refer to www.buildingsofireland.ie

In terms of commercial vacancy, the vacancy rate, ie the proportion that vacant commercial units are of all commercial units, is also high, at 18%, according to the latest geodirectory figures (46 addresses out of 261 total recorded for Abbeyfeale are listed as 'Vacant').

Part 3 - General overview of planning applications for development in the area since the adoption of the LAP

The following is a brief summary of notable planning applications in the LAP area since 2014.

Table 5 Significant planning applications granted since the adoption of the 2014 - 2020 LAP on lands zoned town centre, residential and open space

Land use zoning	Planning Ref:	Description	Status (Commenced?)
Town centre	14/225	Change of Use from former commercial/residential building to medical centre (103m ²) The Square	
	17/321	Change of Use of retail area to restaurant/café (160m ²) Main Street	
	18/8013 (Part 8)	3 number dwelling units, Colbert Terrace and refurbishment of one dwelling	N/C
Residential Serviced sites	17/561	Outline PP for 10 serviced sites, 1.73 hectares	
	18/40	Planning Permission for 4 houses, 0.46 ha	N/C
Residential Development Area	15/652	Planning Permission for 3 houses. 0.1067 hectare	N/C
Mixed Use	16/247	New storage shed, extension to shop: net floor area of retail 99 m ² ; deli area including seating 182m ² ; and off licence 21 m ² .	C
Enterprise and Employment	16/762	2 commercial units, new entrance and service road. Gross floor space 531 m ²	C
	18/53	Change of Use from furniture showroom to tool and plant hire and repair premises	
	15/387	Internal alterations (Kostal)	

Part 4 - Conclusion and Recommendation

Having regard to the lack of development since 2014 there are a considerable number of policies and objectives that remain relevant and yet have not been secured.

In summary, it is the opinion of the Chief Executive that:

- The Abbeyfeale Local Area Plan 2014-2020, is consistent with the objectives and core strategy of the Limerick County Development Plan 2010 – 2016 (As Extended).
- The objectives of the Abbeyfeale Local Area Plan have not been substantially secured.
- The sending and publishing of notices to review the existing LAP may be deferred for a period of 5 years. Therefore, the lifespan of the Abbeyfeale Local Area Plan 2014 - 2020 should be extended for a further five years.

Accordingly, it is recommended that the following resolution be approved by the Council:

'Having considered the Chief Executive's report, the Planning Authority resolves to extend the life of the Abbeyfeale Local Area Plan 2014 - 2020, by a further 5 years, from today's date, in accordance with the provisions of Section 19 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, which provides for the extension of the valid life of a Local Area Plan.



Dr. Pat Daly,
Director Economic Development

