

Courtown and Riverchapel Local Area Plan 2015

**Report of the Chief Executive on the Extension of the
duration of the Courtown and Riverchapel Local Area Plan
2015**

**Prepared pursuant to Section 19(1)(e)(ii) of the Planning
and Development Act 2000 (as amended)**

Jan, 2020

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Courtown and Riverchapel Local Area Plan 2015 (hereon referred to as the LAP) is the main public statement of planning policies and objectives for the villages of Courtown and Riverchapel. The LAP was adopted by Wexford County Council on the 2nd February 2015 and is used to guide the assessment of all development proposals in the plan area.

The LAP has a lifetime of six years and would be due to expire on the 2nd February 2021. The Planning Authority may decide to make a new LAP, amend or revoke the existing LAP before then. The first act of making, amending or revoking of any LAP is the issuing/publishing of notices under Section 20(3)(a)(i) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).

Section 19(1) (d) Of Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) allows for a planning authority, as they consider appropriate, by resolution to defer the issuing/publishing of said notices for a further period not exceeding five years, thereby effectively prolonging the duration of the LAP.

The resolution must be made not more than five years after the making of the previous LAP. The Courtown and Riverchapel LAP was made by the Members of Wexford County Council on the 2nd February 2015 and therefore such a resolution must be passed before the **1st February 2020**.

1.2 Process

Where the Planning Authority considers that it would be appropriate by resolution to defer the sending of the notices, the Members of the Planning Authority shall:

- (i) Notify the Chief Executive of the decision of the Authority to defer the sending and publishing of the notices, giving the reason therefor, and

- (ii) Seek and obtain from the Chief Executive:
- a) an opinion that the LAP remains consistent with the objectives and core strategy of the relevant development plan,
 - b) an opinion that the objectives of the LAP have not been substantially secured, and
 - c) confirmation that the sending and publishing of the notices may be deferred and the period for which they may be deferred

Having received the report of the Chief Executive, the Members may determine that it would be appropriate to defer to the sending of the notices for an agreed time giving reasons therefor.

1.3 Purpose of this Report

This report examines whether it would be appropriate to defer commencement of the review of the existing LAP. This will require an examination of:

- a) whether the LAP remains consistent with the objectives and Core Strategy of the current Wexford County Development Plan 2013-2019 (hereon referred to as the Plan), and
- b) whether the objectives of the LAP have or have not been substantially secured .

This report is laid out as follows:

- (1) an analysis of the content of the existing LAP vis-à-vis the Core Strategy of the Plan with regard to the following:
 - Settlement Strategy and associated Settlement Hierarchy
 - Population allocation and residential zoning
 - Service infrastructure
 - Retail Strategy
- (2) an analysis of the policies and objectives of the LAP to determine if they are consistent with the Plan, and
- (3) an analysis of whether or not the objectives of the LAP have been substantially secured.

2.0 Consistency with the Wexford County Development Plan 2013-2019

2.1 Core Strategy in the Wexford County Development Plan 2013-2019

The purpose of the Core Strategy is to present a medium to long term evidence-based strategy for the spatial development of the county. It must show that the development objectives in the Plan, are consistent as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) (as replaced by National Planning Framework) and Regional Planning Guidelines for the South-East Region 2010-2022 (SERPGs) (as replaced by Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region).

The Core Strategy sets out the Settlement Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy for the county. It defines the role of the settlements and aims to further develop the county's strong network of settlements to support the balanced development of the county's urban and rural areas.

The Core Strategy allocates population targets to the towns, villages and rural areas in the hierarchy and details the quantum of zoned land required to accommodate the population targets.

2.1.1 Courtown and Riverchapel and the Wexford County Development Plan's Core Strategy

The Development Strategy for Courtown and Riverchapel as set out in the LAP is that Courtown and Riverchapel will experience a modest increase in population growth which will help sustain existing services and increase the demand and feasibility to provide other important services in the plan area. The LAP also envisages that Courtown and Riverchapel will further develop its economic development potential and maximize its tourism role; both of which will be done in harmony with its permanent settlement role. The LAP focuses on the provision of additional infrastructure, services and community facilities to serve the existing and future population and visitors to the area. The principles of sustainable development

enshrine the strategy, with a strong emphasis on the protection on the area's natural heritage and environment.

The Settlement Hierarchy set out in the Core Strategy of the County Development Plan designates Courtown and Riverchapel as a District Town based on its inclusion in the SERPGs and size. The Strategy outlines that these villages have established populations with the potential to support additional growth which should seek to consolidate the existing settlements. These towns also provide important resources for their rural hinterlands, they perform important retail, residential, service and amenity functions for the local community, especially the rural hinterland.

It is noted in the Core Strategy that Courtown experienced high levels of population growth in the last census period, but without the necessary supporting services, thus the development approach is to consolidate growth within the town in line with its settlement role and in a phased manner as set out in objectives SS17 and SS18 and to support the development of physical and social infrastructure. Objective SS19 of the Core Strategy also sets an objective to prepare a Local Area Plan for Courtown and Riverchapel.

Population Allocation and Land Use Zoning

The Core Strategy of the County Development Plan identifies a population allocation of 355 for Courtown from 2011-2019. This was based on a planned growth rate above the estimated 2011 population for the settlement¹. The estimate proved to be higher than the 'actual' Census 2011 figure for Courtown and Riverchapel LAP. However, in order to ensure consistency with the Core Strategy, the same population growth rate was applied to this 'actual' figure. The population target for the LAP area to 2020 is 3,233 which represents an increase of 227 persons during the lifetime of the plan. Taking into account the number of vacant housing units and extant planning permissions at time of plan and likely take up in order to facilitate this growth an additional 1.8 ha of undeveloped residential land was zoned accordingly.

¹ Estimates were prepared for CDP as 2011 Census was not available.

The 2016 Census population for Courtown and Riverchapel Settlement which extends slightly beyond the boundaries of the plan area was recorded at 3,591 persons. This exceeds the target above and the 1.8ha of residential land zoned in the plan area remains undeveloped. This is considered adequate for the current lifetime of the LAP and the possible extended lifetime.

It is thus considered that the Courtown and Riverchapel LAP remains consistent with the Core Strategy of the current County Development Plan.

Further it is the objective of the Council to encourage new residential development in accordance with the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy and subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria including the availability of adequate wastewater treatment capacity and the development management standards in Chapter 18.

Service Infrastructure

The Courtown Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) was upgraded 2014. The LAP states that the upgraded wastewater treatment plant in Courtown is designed for 35,000 P.E. with 20,000 P.E allocated to Gorey and 15,000 P.E allocated to Courtown. A new Water Treatment Plant (WTP) and water storage reservoir has commenced at Ballyminaun Hill to the south of Gorey town. These upgrades and installations ensure a sufficient supply of water and waste water infrastructure to serve new development in the plan area.

Retail Strategy

The Core Strategy outlines that District towns perform important retail functions for the local community and rural hinterlands. The County Wexford Retail Strategy 2013-2019, designates Courtown and Riverchapel as a level 3 retail centre which has a crucial role in serving the surrounding areas. The Strategy promotes Courtown and Riverchapel as a prime, quality tourist destination. It acknowledges that there is a need to extend the range of retail services. The LAP therefore encourages the protection and enhancement of existing retail service and the development of new retail opportunities within the village centres. The appropriate use of vacant

properties in the village centres is also encouraged to promote viability and vitality. The policies and objectives in the LAP are consistent with this designated role as set out in policies ED04 (maintain and foster role as a local retail and service centre) and ED05 (appropriate expansion).

2.1.2 Courtown and Riverchapel and the objectives of the Wexford County Development Plan 2013 - 2019

The policies and objectives in the LAP have been cross-referenced with the objectives in the Plan. The policies and objectives are substantially consistent with those of the Plan. It should be noted that if there is a policy/objective which is not consistent, the objective in the Plan takes precedence as it is the 'parent' plan.

Having regard to the foregoing, it is considered that the Courtown and Riverchapel LAP remains consistent with the objectives and Core Strategy of the Wexford County Development Plan 2013-2019.

3.0 Assessment of whether the Objectives in the Courtown and Riverchapel Local Area Plan have been secured

3.1 Securing of Policies and Objectives in the Local Area Plan

The policies and objectives in the LAP are set out under a number of separate sections ranging from Population and Socio-Economic Profile, Physical Functions and Character of the Area, Tourism and Economic Activity to Access and Movement and Infrastructure and Coastal Protection. While discussed separately all the sections are inter-related and the securing of the policies and objectives under one section is likely to be dependent on another section.

The securing of many of the policies and objectives in the LAP are for the most part linked to new development proposals in the plan area, for example, policies and objectives relating to housing, employment and economic activity, infill development, retail and commercial and amenity and recreational open space.

To date, and largely due to the current economic conditions, there have been limited development proposals or development activity in the plan area. Since the LAP was made planning applications granted planning permission have been limited to;

- Change of use of crèche and retail units to residential at Yellow Lane Business Park;
- Various one-off housing developments and minor extensions and infill developments to existing housing estates; and
- An extension to one caravan park consisting of proposed 82 no bays.

As such, the lack of significant planning applications has delayed the implementation and securing of the LAP's policies and objectives.

Whilst many of the policies and objectives of the LAP are yet to be secured significant progress has been made in improving access and movement throughout Courtown and Riverchapel with new and additional accessible footpaths, pedestrian linkages and community facilities and amenities which include; Pirates Cove to Riverchapel footpath, Gorey to Courtown footpath, proposals for seafront redevelopment and public realm works.

Also as outlined in 2.1.1, with the commencement of a new water treatment plant and water storage reservoir and recent upgrades to wastewater treatment plant infrastructure a sufficient supply of infrastructure to serve new development in the plan area is ensured.

Given the position of this settlement in the Settlement Hierarchy and its associated role in the Settlement Strategy and continued anticipated growth and economic recovery should allow for the securing of the LAP's policies and objectives during the extended lifetime of the Plan.

4.0 Conclusion

4.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this report, it is concluded that:

- the provisions of the Courtown and Riverchapel Local Area Plan 2015 are substantially consistent with the objectives and Core Strategy of the Wexford County Development Plan 2013-2019,
- the objectives of the LAP have not been substantially secured, and
- accordingly, it is appropriate to defer the sending of the notices under Section 20(3)(a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) for a period of five years.

4.2 Next Stage

Having regard to the above, the Members may decide by resolution that it would be appropriate to defer the sending of the notices to review the LAP for an agreed time period.

The Members must notify the Chief Executive of the decision to defer the sending of the notices giving the reasons therefore. Notification of the resolution must also be published in the local newspapers not later than 2 weeks after the resolution is passed, placed on the Authority's website and made available for inspection by members of the public during office hours of the Planning Authority.