



***Review of the Wexford Town and
Environs Development Plan
2009-2015***

***and the preparation of a new
Development Plan for the area***

Issues Paper

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Wexford Borough Council
comhairle bhuirg loch garman

Wexford County Council
comhairle chontae loch garman



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What is a Development Plan?

The Wexford Town and Environs Development Plan 2015-2021 will be a Joint Plan made by Wexford Borough Council and Wexford County Council. It will set out the Councils' policies and objectives for the proper planning and sustainable development of the town and environs area for this six year period. The Plan will aim to develop and improve in a sustainable manner the economic, social, cultural and environmental well-being of the plan area. It will seek to balance the needs for new development, expansion and growth with robust objectives for the conservation and protection of the natural and built environment while ensuring a high quality of life for the town's residents.

The Plan Preparation Process

The Development Plan process follows a strict 99 week time-frame which commences with a notice in the newspaper announcing the review of the Town Development Plan and the preparation of the new Plan.

Table 1 Plan Preparation Process

Stage	Week	Process
Stage 1	1-8	Initial public consultation and display of Issues Paper.
Stage 2	8-16	Manager prepares a report on the submissions and observations received and recommends polices to be included in the Draft Plan.
Stage 3	16-26	The Members issue directions regarding the preparation of the Draft Plan.
Stage 4	26-38	Preparation of Pre-Draft Development Plan.
Stage 5	38-46	Members consider the Pre-Draft and make the Draft Plan.
Stage 6	46-48	Prepare the Draft Plan for public consultation.
Stage 7	48-58	Public consultations on Draft Plan.

Stage	Week	Process
Stage 8	58-70	Manager prepares a report on the submissions and observations received on the Draft Plan.
Stage 9	70-82	Members consider the Manager's Report and may make proposed amendments to the Draft Plan **
Stage 10	82-85	Prepare the proposed amendments for public display.
Stage 11	85-89	Public consultation on the proposed amendments.
Stage 12	89-93	Manager prepares a report on the submissions and observations received on the proposed amendments
Stage 13	93-99	Members consider the Manager's Report and make the Plan with or without the proposed amendments.

There is provision for the Manager to order an additional period to carry out an Appropriate Assessment or Strategic Environmental Assessment of material alterations to the Draft Plan

We want to hear your views

As can be seen from Table 1, this is the first of three formal public consultation periods. As the Plan will be a key document for influencing how Wexford Town and Environs should develop between 2015-2021, and indeed beyond this period, it is important that all individuals, groups and businesses who have an interest in the town, how it should develop and what should happen in it, have their views heard.

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How to make a submission or observation

Submissions and observations can be made in writing between **Monday, 18th February 2013 and 4.30pm on Friday, 19th April 2013**. Submissions or observations marked 'Wexford Town and Environs Development Plan' should be submitted to one of the following:

- Forward Planning Section, Wexford County Council, Carricklawn, Wexford
- Planning Section, Wexford Borough Council, Spawell Road, Wexford
- By e-mail to forwardplanning@wexfordcoco.ie

If making a submission or observation, please state if the views expressed are personal or are being made on behalf of an organisation. If views of an organisation are being submitted, it should be made clear which organisation is being represented. Submissions and observations may be made available to the public.

It should be noted that when carrying out the review of the existing Plan, the Planning Authorities intend to review the zoning of the area of the Development Plan. However, **requests or proposals for zoning of particular land for any purpose shall not be considered at this stage.**

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The Bigger Picture

The Plan sits in a hierarchy of plans and has to comply, in so far as possible, with the higher level plans.



The spatial planning role of Wexford Town has been largely defined by the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) and the Regional Planning Guidelines for the South-East Region 2010-2022 (RPGs). The NSS designates Wexford Town as a Hub; the role of which is support Waterford City which is the designated Gateway for the South-East region.

The town was chosen for this role as it is strategically located close to Rosslare Europort and is on the national road and railway networks. The town has substantial capacity for development and has various employment, retailing, services and administrative functions. The NSS indicates that the town has an important spatial role in establishing a 'triangle of strength' in the South-East region. This will lead to growth by providing a large and skilled population base, substantial capacity for additional residential and employment related functions and an important transport network.

There is also a range of Ministerial Guidelines (known as Section 28 Guidelines) which the Plan must have regard to. These include guidelines on flood risk management, developing sustainable residential communities, childcare facilities, architectural heritage and the provision of schools.

The Plan must also comply with a range of environmental legislation including the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC), the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) and the associated legislation which transposed these directives into Irish law.

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Population and Housing

Population

The population of Wexford Town was 20,072 persons in 2011; increasing by 1,909 persons between 2006 and 2011. All age groups experienced an increase with the exception of the 15-24 year age group. This group experienced a 9.7% decrease, which is a sign of the times with younger people leaving the county for work and/or travel and education. The town's population is ageing with significant increases in the 45-64 and 65+ age groups. The age profile of a town places varying demands on public service provision including childcare, education facilities and healthcare. The Plan must respond to the changing profile of the town's population by ensuring that there are sufficient facilities and services for all groups.

Wexford Town Population Change 2006-2011

Age Group	2006	2011	Change 2006-2011	% Change
0-14	3,476	3,825	+349	+10%
15-24	2,578	2,328	-250	-9.7%
25-44	5,881	6,352	+471	+8%
45-64	3,927	4,684	+757	+19%
65+	2,301	2,883	+582	+25%
Total	18,163	20,072	+1,909	+10%

Wexford Town % of population in each age group compared to the State average

Age Group	No. of persons	% of town's population	State Average (%)
0-14	3,825	19.1%	21.3
15-24	2,328	11.6%	12.6
25-44	6,352	31.6%	31.6
45-64	4,684	23.3%	22.7
65+	2,883	14.4%	11.7
Total	20,072		

Population Targets

The RPGs has set population targets for the town so that it can achieve the critical mass necessary to fulfil its role as a Hub. The targets are **23,500 persons in 2016** and **26,700 in 2022**. The Plan will need to facilitate this population growth by ensuring that there is sufficient zoned land to provide additional housing units and that the town provides the economic activity levels and an attractive environment where people will want to come to live.

The Planning and Development Act 2010 requires that the amount of land zoned for residential use is aligned with the population targets. This equates to 180ha of land using average density assumptions, which will result in an excess of approximately 217ha of residentially zoned land. This issue needs to be addressed in the Plan having regard to the development of the town as a Hub.

Housing

All households should have access to good quality housing, appropriate to their household circumstances and in their particular community of choice.

The type and form of housing available in the town needs to be aligned with the requirements of the population. The average household size in County Wexford decreased from 2.85 persons in 2006 to 2.7 persons in 2011. It is considered that this trend of decreasing household size is set to continue. The Plan will therefore respond and ensure a range of house types that can accommodate various household sizes.

The Plan must also ensure that new housing meets the needs of all sectors of society, in particular groups who have specific housing needs such as the elderly and people with disabilities.

Issues for you to consider:

- The age profile of the town is changing? How should we respond to this? What additional services are required and where?
- How and where should future housing developments be accommodated?
- Do you think the quality and range of house types currently available is sufficient to serve the needs of the town's residents?
- What is the best way to address the issue of excess residential zoned land?
- How can new housing be successfully integrated into existing communities?

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Economy, Enterprise and Employment

There are a wide of range of business and commercial uses throughout the town of local, national and international origin. Industrial development is primarily located in Ardavan, Whitemill Industrial Estate, Kerlogue Business Park and Sinnottstown Lane. Commercial businesses are divided between the town centre and the previously mentioned areas.

The town is also a service base for local and central government with Wexford Borough Council, Wexford County Council, Wexford General Hospital and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government within the plan area and all of which are significant employers for the town and county as a whole.

However, as we are all too well aware, the economic climate remains challenging. Addressing the level of unemployment in the Wexford area is also a serious challenge. The Council must response to this by encouraging and facilitating the creation of jobs. Planning will play a key role by facilitating and supporting the growth of existing businesses, meeting the needs of employers and employees and promoting the creation of quality working environments which will attract new types of business to the town.

The RPGs indicate that Wexford Town should be developing business and technology parks, county enterprise parks, industrial estates and third and fourth level education facilities in order to fulfil its role as a Hub. The town has attracted a number of global companies and has many indigenous businesses. This shows that the town is already an attractive place to do business. However, the Plan needs to continue to ensure that the town enhances its attractiveness to new businesses and harnesses opportunities from new types of development such as green technology, e-commerce, digital/social media and working from home.

Issues for you to consider.....

- How and where can the development and growth of indigenous/local businesses be facilitated?
- Where should new business and industrial parks be located?
- How can the town attract more inward investment?
- What new businesses should we be attracting to the town? Where will new employment opportunities arise?
- What are the town's strengths for attracting economic development? What needs to be improved?
- How can the town harness opportunities from new types of development such as green technology, e-commerce, digital/social media and working from home?
- How the Plan adopt a flexible approach to facilitate new economic developments?

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Tourism

Wexford Town is a very popular tourist destination and offers much to the visitor in terms of tourist attractions, high quality accommodation, restaurants, pubs and cafés. Tourism is an invaluable economic asset for the town and county as a whole and it has the potential to provide many benefits. The Council are keenly aware of this and will ensure that the Plan focuses significantly on this sector and supports, in so far as possible, new tourism development in the town.

Arts and Culture

A distinctive cultural identity can contribute to a sense of place and enhance an area as a place to live and work. It can also boost the local tourism industry in terms of attracting visitors and spending. The Plan will provide a policy framework to promote the development of the arts and culture.

Issues for you to consider

- How can we attract more domestic and overseas visitors to the town?
- What can the Plan do to support and develop tourism?
- Does the town need more tourist facilities? If so, what type and where should they be located?
- How can the Plan support the arts and culture sector?

Retail

The retail sector is hugely important for the town's residents, visitors and businesses and it also creates demand for local suppliers and provides local employment. The retail policies in the Plan must have regard to the 'Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities' produced by the Department of Heritage and Local Government (2012).

Wexford Town has a variety of retailing formats. There is a mix of independent retailers and national multiples which contribute to the diversity of the retail offer. The independent stores play a key role in contributing to the town's unique retail sector. Bulky comparison retailers are provided for in the retail and business parks at Drinagh and Clonard.

Wexford Town is considered vibrant, with a range of independent, national and international operators. The town has a good range of retail and service facilities and has the potential to build upon its traditional charm and create an attractive area for craft, gift and other specialists and independent shops, including restaurants.

A challenge of the Plan will be to reduce the leakage of retail spend to other counties whilst maintaining the essential retail service. The Plan will aim to facilitate growth in the sector whilst also aiming to retain existing units and encourage redevelopment of vacant units.

Issues for you to consider

- Are you satisfied with the variety of shops in the town centre? If not, what do you think we can do to offer more choice? What type of shops would you like?
- How can we protect the viability of local shops in the town centre while encouraging new forms of retailing?
- What retail services should be provided in the neighbourhood centres? Is there a local shop within walking distance of where you live?
- Should out-of-town retailing be permitted? If so, where and should restrictions apply? If not, why not?

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The Town Centre

The town centre is home to variety of uses from retail, commercial, cultural to office and tourist features and accommodation. Wexford Town Centre has a well defined structure and an attractive streetscape. The majority of shop fronts are well presented with a mix of both contemporary and traditional style fascias, which complements the streetscape. The town centre is attractive to the pedestrian in both scale and use with a series of high quality public spaces such as the Bull Ring, Selskar Square, Redmond Square, the Quayfront and the pedestrianised North and South Main Streets.

Improvements to the town centre are ongoing. In recent times, the road paving on the Quays and the lower end of South Main Street have been resurfaced and works have taken place on extending the pedestrianised area along the Main Street. Extensive works have also taken place improving the accessibility of the town.

There are a number of buildings throughout the town centre which are vacant. The Plan will promote innovative ideas such as the initiative undertaken by Wexford Borough Council on the vacant Dunnes Stores site. It occupies a prime retail location and the window area is now used as a community display area. This initiative was carried out in cooperation with Dunnes Stores. It removes the vacant appearance from the building, thereby enhancing the streetscape.

Issues for you to consider

- What do you think of the town centre? Are there more improvements that we could carry out to improve its attractiveness and accessibility?
- What are the attractions of the town centre?
- Are there undeveloped sites in the town centres? If so, where and what they could be developed for?
- What environmental improvements could be carried out around the town, for example, planting, seating and signage?

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Conservation and Heritage

The town has wealth of architectural and archaeological heritage. It is important that the town retains its built heritage and that the architectural and historic character of the town and the quality of its townscape is protected. Its protection is important for many reasons including the town's history and identity and the invaluable economic benefits as it attracts many visitors to the town each year.

The town's architectural heritage can be protected through the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA). The current RPS has 303 structures included on it. There are 7 designated ACAs in the existing plan area.

The town's archaeological heritage includes a diverse range of structures, constructions, groups of buildings, developed sites, all recorded monuments together with their context and setting, situated on both land and underwater. As the town's archaeological remains are a finite, non-renewable resource which is vulnerable to partial or total destruction, there is an onus on the Council to preserve and protect it.

Issues for you to consider....

- How can the Plan increase awareness, understanding and access to the heritage of the town?
- Are there structures that you consider should be added to or removed from the Record of Protect Structures?
- Are the Architectural Conservation Areas in the existing plan adequate to protect these areas or should they be revised? How can these areas be managed and enhanced?
- How can the Plan encourage the re-use of redundant or derelict buildings?

Urban Design

Urban design is concerned with the relationships of buildings to one another and to the spaces around them. It is not simply about the physical structure but is also concerned with integration, permeability, connectivity and creating a sense of place and belonging.

The quality of the built environment and the public realm can affect the quality of life and health of residents of an area. The public realm includes publicly owned streets, footpaths, rights-of-ways, parks and other publicly accessible open spaces, and public and civic buildings and facilities. A good quality public realm will have socio-economic, environmental and cultural benefits, for example, enhanced pedestrian access to the town centre could increase vitality and vibrancy and will health benefits by encouraging and facilitating people to walk rather than drive.

Issues for you to consider.....

- Do you think the town has an attractive public realm? What improvements, if any, could be made to it?
- What kind of guidance should the Plan contain in respect of building design?
- How can the Plan ensure that the design, layout and density of development is appropriate to its location?
- How can we develop public spaces for a variety of uses including events, markets, entertainment and relaxation?

Transportation

How we get around our town, how we go to work and school are all important considerations for the Plan. The Plan will promote the principles of Smarter Travel which is about reducing the overall need to travel, which in turn results in a better quality of life for all. This can be done in a number of ways such as reducing the number and length of car journeys through better land use planning; improving public transport links and promoting cycle and pedestrian facilities.

Issues for you to consider

- How can sustainable forms of travel around the town be encouraged?
- How can we encourage greater use of public transport?
- How can we achieve greater linkages and permeability between existing and proposed housing areas?
- How can the Plan ensure that design, layout and density of development is appropriate to its location?
- How can we enhance the safety of pedestrians and cyclists?
- Are the car-parking standards in the existing plan adequate?

Infrastructure, Energy and Waste

The town will continue to require high quality infrastructure which enhances quality of life and furthers economic development. This infrastructure will need to be provided in a manner which maximises financial resources and protects the best of our natural and built environments.

The delivery of a high quality telecommunications network, in particular broadband, will greatly improve the attractiveness of the town as a location for employment as it will allow greater productivity, efficiency and reliability and lower IT costs.

The Plan will contain objectives to improve energy efficiency. The availability of reliable and affordable energy supplies will be a key factor in economic development and its efficient use is important for economic and environmental reasons. The Plan will promote the extension of the gas network to the town.

While the private sector are now responsible for waste collection in the town, the Plan will include objectives to facilitate the efficient, safe and environmentally sensitive management and disposal of waste, maximise recycling and to minimise waste generation.

Issues for you to consider.....

- How should we promote the development and use of renewable energy
- How can alternative forms of energy be promoted and developed in the town?
- Are there enough recycling facilities in the town? If not, where should more be provided?
- Where should antennae and masts be located?

Conservation and Heritage

Wexford Town has a rich and diverse natural heritage some of which is protected by European and national legislation. Wexford Harbour and Slob is a designated SPA (protection of rare and threatened bird species). The Slaney River Valley cSAC also covers a large area in the harbour. Wexford Harbour is also a proposed Natural Heritage Area. The Raven and the Wildfowl reserve are designated Nature Reserves which are protected under Ministerial order and are also Ramsar sites. Wexford Harbour Inner and Outer are designated waters for shellfish.

Hedgerows, riparian zones, trees and wetlands are all important for bio-diversity, providing habitats for many species and functioning as wildlife corridors for animals, birds, bats, insects and other species to move through. It is therefore important that these be protected and enhanced. The concept of Green Infrastructure is growing in importance. It is an interconnected network of green spaces that conserves natural ecosystems and provides benefits to humans as well. It includes rivers, floodplains, wetlands, woodlands, farmlands, parks and open spaces, gardens and allotments.

The Plan is also required to address the issue of climate change and how the town can adapt to the impacts. Flood risk management is also an important issue that must be addressed and the Plan must ensure that new development is not at risk from, or give rise, to flooding.

Issues for you to consider.....

- What natural heritage areas and features in the town should be protected?
- Are there areas in the town where biodiversity could be enhanced?
- How can the town adapt to the impacts of climate change?
- Where are the town's existing green infrastructure resources, how should they be managed and where can new green infrastructure be provided?
- What areas of the town are at risk of flooding? What flood prevention measures should be implemented?

Recreation, Open Space and Public

Wexford Town benefits from a range of existing recreational facilities and open spaces such as the Quays, Redmond Park, Ferrybank leisure centre and Wexford Park (GAA). The Plan will aim to ensure that there is adequate land for recreation and open space at convenient and safe locations and will encourage the sharing of facilities by different groups. This is more important than ever given the reduced financial resources available to the Councils and community groups.

The Plan is required to identify and map Public Rights of Way. Can you help us identify any?

Issues for you to consider.....

- Are there enough quality play areas, open spaces and recreational facilities in the town?
- What new sports and recreational facilities would benefit the town?
- Where do people run and walk in the town? Could new walkways be provided? If so, where?
- Are the current standards for public open space provision associated with new residential development appropriate
- Are there any Public Rights of Ways in the town?

Community Facilities and Social Inclusion

The provision of high quality community facilities is important for the residents of the town and overall quality of life. These facilities include schools, libraries, childcare facilities, community centres, health centre, facilities for the elderly, and people with disabilities. While the Councils have a direct role in providing some of these facilities, they must also ensure that there is sufficient and appropriately located land zoned for community facilities.

Issues for you to consider.....

- What are the additional educational needs for the town? Where should new schools, if required, be located?
- What type of community facilities and local services are needed in existing and new residential communities? What facilities would you like to see in your area?
- How can community facilities be funded and delivered in this current economic climate?
- Where should nursing homes and residential care homes be located?
- Are there enough childcare facilities in the town?
- Are there adequate and accessible health care centres, centres for the elderly and people with disabilities in the town?
- Are the needs of different cultural, ethnic, youth, elderly and persons with disabilities groups being adequately meet?

Have your say!

Wexford Borough Council and Wexford County Council encourage all interested individuals, groups and businesses to get involved in the review of the Town and Environs Development Plan. The new Plan will shape the future of our town not just for next six years but for many more years to come.

This document provides an overview of the type of issues which will be covered in the Plan. However, we have not decided how each of these issues should be dealt with and we would like your views.

Please get involved and have your say in the way our town should develop.

Your Town

Your Plan

Your Future

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