Wexford Town Retail Strategy

Strategic Guidance on Retail Development In Wexford for the Period 2009—2015

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comhairle bhuirg loch garman

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Retail Planning Guidelines (RPGs) for Planning Authorities, issued by the Department of the Environment and Local Government (DoELG) in January 2001, require Local Authorities to prepare retail strategies and policies for their areas and to incorporate these where appropriate into their development plan. The retail strategy for Wexford Town and Environs is therefore prepared in tandem with the new Town and Environs Development Plan.

John Spain Associates were commissioned to prepare a retail strategy for Wexford to provide advice regarding the quantum, scale and type of retail development required within the town. Detailed consideration of the above issues was given during the preparation of the strategy document and in the formulation of policies and actions regarding future retail development in Wexford and its environs.

1.2 INTRODUCTION TO STUDY AREA

Wexford within the National Retail Hierarchy

Wexford is classified as a third tier centre in the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2005 and is the largest settlement in County Wexford.

Existing Urban Form

The town is strategically located in the south of County Wexford on the N11 and N25 National Primary Routes and along the main Dublin to Rosslare Harbour railway line. The town of Wexford is set in a coastal landscape of high natural amenity. Few towns have such an extensive coastline and waterfront area. Much of the urban area is bounded by water, including the River Slaney, its estuary and Wexford Harbour, all of which are visible from the town's environs and all of which provide a unique urban landscape for the town.

Chapter One: Introduction

The town centre has a clearly defined urban structure, based on an informal gridiron of street and lanes extending upwards from the Quay and waterfront. It is attractive to the pedestrian in both scale and use, with a small scale urban grain reflecting its medieval street pattern. The waterfront itself forms a recognisable image of Wexford and offers the potential to develop a unique attraction.

The principle shopping area is based on the central spine of Main Street which extends from Redmond Square to the north to Barrack Street to the south, and includes a network of side streets, laneways and public spaces in between. The area has a unique retail offer which is defined by a large number of specialised comparison operators combined with the presence of a number of national and international comparison shopping facilities.

Wexford as a Hub

Wexford is designated as a hub within the National Spatial Strategy in accordance with its strategic location close to Rosslare Port and on the national road and rail network. As a hub, the town has substantial capacity for development and has a variety of employment, retailing, service and administrative functions.

Wexford has a very significant sphere of influence on the development pattern in the county. The town therefore maintains a central function in acting as a catalyst generating growth into the wider Wexford Region.

1.3 THE PURPOSE OF THE RETAIL STRATEGY

The purpose of the retail strategy is to implement the objectives of the Retail Planning Guidelines. Wexford Borough Council has requested that the strategy considers in particular the following:

1. Consideration of new retail trends, best land use planning practice and changes in national policy and market shifts
2. Profile of recent retail development
3. Wexford town centre 'health check'
4. Development Opportunities-

   Review the existing retail hierarchy in the town and its environs and identify areas which are not served by retail facilities and propose areas which could benefit from neighbourhood shopping developments.

   Identification of sites which could provide opportunities to strengthen the existing retail core within the Town Centre having regard for the need to protect the town's historical core and cultural importance.
5. Identification and classification of retail types
6. Population baseline projections
7. Capacity Assessment

1.4 APPROACH

The approach taken in the formation of the retail strategy included the undertaking of baseline surveying and research. This comprised the following components:

Policy Analysis: National and local policy documents were reviewed in the context of the retail strategy with particular reference to the retail hierarchy and existing and emerging development plan policies.

Qualitative Survey: A qualitative health check survey was carried out in order to assess the current level of vitality and viability of the town. Opportunity sites for retail development and expansion were also identified.

Quantitative Analysis: Population analysis, sourcing of expenditure data, expenditure analysis, turnover analysis and overall analysis was carried out.

1.5 PREPARATION OF RETAIL STRATEGY

The qualitative and quantitative analysis and other inputs as outlined above are fundamental in the capacity assessment of the town's need for future convenience and comparison floor space. In brief, the assessment comprised the following principle elements:

- Population forecasts provided by Wexford County Council for the Wexford County Retail Hierarchy which have been updated to 2014 and 2020 to comply with the time frame of the Wexford Town Development Plan;
- Establishing convenience and comparison expenditure between 2008 and 2020;
- Establishing the extent of existing floor space and its turnover;
- Analysing the above data to determine the potential convenience and comparison spend available to support new retail floor space to 2020.

The final component of the study was to determine the retail strategy for Wexford. The factors influencing this included:

1. Retail Hierarchy
2. Population size and distribution
3. Sequential test.
4. Nature of retail provision and need – convenience, comparison and retail warehousing.
5. The shopping environment and mechanisms to enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre.
6. The need to sustain and enhance Wexford's role as a third tier centre within the context of the national retail hierarchy and prevent unnecessary leakage of expenditure to competing centres.
7. Recognition of the unique physical characteristics and attractions of Wexford and its environs and the need to ensure the strategy serves all sectors of the community in a way that is efficient, equitable and sustainable.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

Section 2 Planning Policy Context: This section considers national and local policy and provides a review of relevant economic policy in the context of the retail strategy.

Section 3 Health Check Qualitative Assessment: This section includes a health check analysis of Wexford town centre. The profile of recent and proposed developments is also assessed.

Section 4 Retail Hierarchy and Identification of Core Retail Areas: The structure and context of the town was analysed to determine the hierarchical retail structure of the town and the core retail areas. Potential development opportunities are identified in this section of the report.

Section 5: Opportunities for Future Development: Potential development opportunities are identified in this section of the report.

Section 6 Quantitative Analysis and Capacity Assessment: This section provides a broad assessment of the requirement for additional retail floor space for Wexford and its environs.

Section 7 Policies and Actions: This section includes recommendations and action initiatives to encourage the improvement of Wexford town centre.

Section 8 Criteria for Assessing Future Retail Development: This section includes recommendations and policies regarding the assessment of future planning applications for retail development.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In setting out this retail strategy, it is important to review some of the wider factors which will influence the development of Wexford. The planning policy context in place at national, regional and local level has implications for the role of the town within the county settlement strategy, its role in retail provision, and the future scale of retail provision to be encouraged in the town. This chapter will review the relevant spatial and sectoral planning policy documents which pertain to Wexford.

2.2 NATIONAL LEVEL

National Spatial Strategy

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) was published in November 2002 and provides a broad planning framework for the location of development in Ireland over the next 20 years. The key objective of the NSS is the achievement of more balanced regional development. The strategy examines the growth patterns of the various regions in the country and provides guidance on the future direction of this growth. It also identifies potential development patterns for different areas and sets out overall policies for creating the conditions necessary to influence the location of different types of development in the future.

The Strategy predicts that the population of the state will increase to between 4,391,000 persons and 5,013,000 persons in 2020 depending on economic growth. Within the South East Region there will be an increase in population from 424,000 (2002 figures) to between 440,000 and 480,000 persons. The 2006 Census results however show that population growth is already occurring at a greater rate than was envisaged in the National Spatial Strategy. The population of the State was recorded at 4,239,848 persons, an increase of 8.2% since 2002. The population of the South East Region was recorded at 460,474 persons in the official results of the 2006 Census, an increase of 8.7% over the 2002 figure. The population of the south east is therefore likely to exceed the projected 2020 population figure well in advance of that date.

The NSS sets out the future spatial structure of Ireland. Within the South East Region, the spatial structure is concentrated on the gateway city of Waterford with the twin hubs of Kilkenny and Wexford (see Figure 2.1). These centres together form a nationally strategic ‘growth triangle’. The N11 is identified as a strategic radial corridor along the east of the country, linking Wexford to Dublin and

Chapter Two: Planning Policy

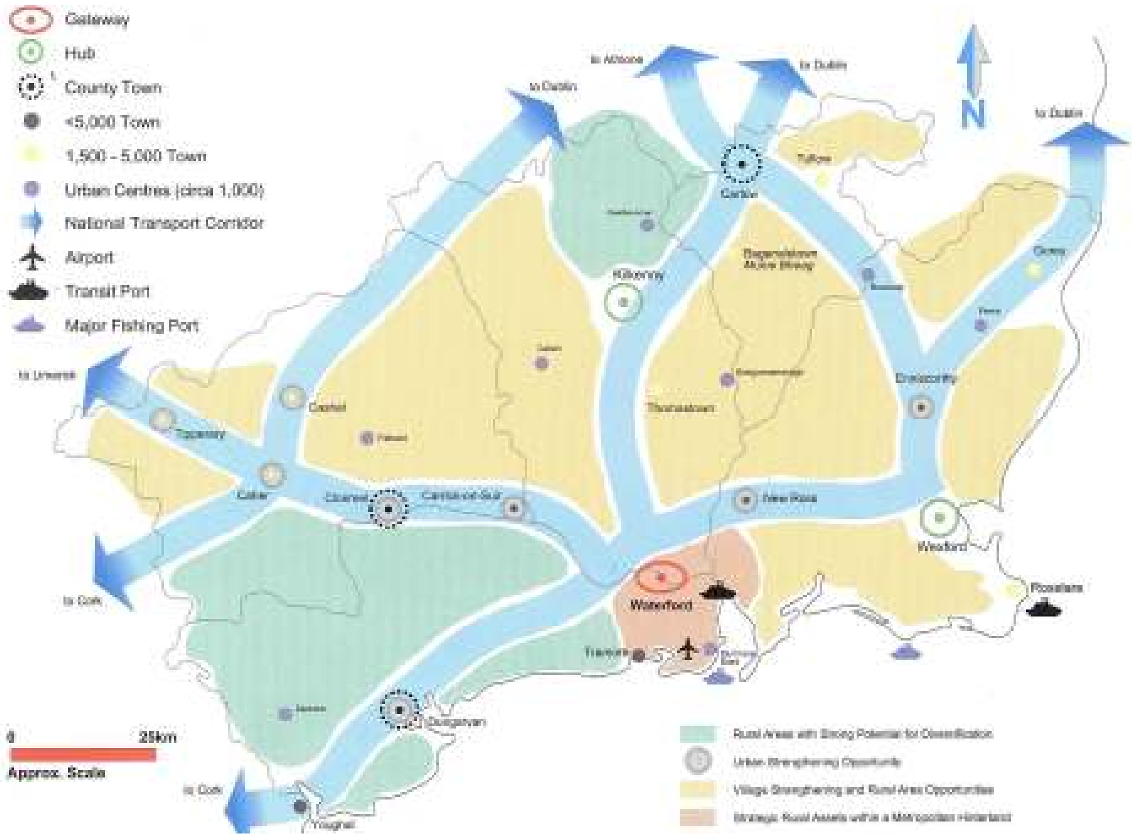


Figure 2.1: Spatial Structure for South East Region (Source: NSS)

on to Belfast via the M1. Wexford has been designated as a hub due to its strategic location in the Southeast, close to Rosslare Port and on the national road and rail networks. It is also noted that the town has substantial capacity for development and has a variety of employment, retailing, services and administrative functions. The town can contribute to creating a 'triangle of strength' with Waterford and Kilkenny. It is envisaged that this will significantly strengthen and energise the South East Region.

In accordance with the NSS, Wexford will remain the principal settlement in the County, and, as a Hub settlement, should provide the widest range of retail and other services in the County. However, the NSS also envisages significant growth for towns such as Enniscorthy and New Ross which are designated as towns with an 'Urban Strengthening Opportunity' and which will provide a complementary role to Wexford in the provisions of local goods and services.

The National Development Plan 2007-2013

The National Development Plan proposes investment of approximately €184 billion into five investment priorities with the aim of creating a strong and vibrant economy geared to meet the challenges of the future and which will deliver increased quality of life for all.

The key elements of the plan include:

- Overcoming structural infrastructure deficits.
- Enhancing enterprise development, investing in science, technology and business innovation, training and skills provision.
- Integrated regional development within the National Spatial Strategy framework.
- Investment in long-term environmental sustainability.
- Developing a program for social inclusion.

The NDP contains future actions for the Gateway and Hub centres and notes that in order to drive the process of strengthening the Hubs, it will be vital that national investment is partnered with local vision and leadership and the attraction of private investment.

With regards to national economic infrastructure, the key actions of the NDP include facilitating the road network and upgrading the public transport system in line with the Transport 21 programme. There will be some benefits to Wexford in this regard as outlined below.

Transport 21

The Transport 21 programme was launched in November 2005 and contains the plans for the capital investment in the national transportation system for the ten year period to 2015. The Transport 21 Programme has two separate strands: a Greater Dublin Area Programme and a National Programme. For the latter, the focus is on the national roads network, public transport network, and improved regional and local public transport. The principal objectives of the programme include:

- to create a high quality, efficient national road and rail network consistent with the objectives of the National Spatial Strategy;
- to strengthen national, regional and local public transport services;

The programme contains a number of elements influencing the transportation network in Wexford which include:

- Intercity Rolling Stock: Since 2002, Iarnród Éireann has introduced new intercity railcars and carriages for the national rail service.
- N11 National Route: The 23km Gorey bypass was completed and opened in July 2007. It is expected that the bypass will remove 10,000 vehicles from the town centre every day while significantly improving journey times between Dublin and Wexford.

The proposals under Transport 21 will serve to increase the accessibility of Wexford and its connectivity with Dublin and the main towns in the County and the South East Region.

Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland

Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland was published in 1997 with the principle aim of providing a:

"comprehensive analysis and framework which will allow sustainable development to be taken forward more systematically in Ireland."

It is noted that land use planning can contribute to sustainable development by encouraging efficiency in the use of energy, transport and natural resources through careful location of residential, commercial and industrial development, the efficient use of existing developed areas, protection and enhancement of the natural environment and ensuring that new development needs are accommodated in an environmentally sustainable and sensitive manner.

Retail development can contribute to the drive for more sustainable development through the appropriate development of new retail services, e.g. at a scale and locations which serve to reduce the need to travel, will fulfil the social requirements of the community and will represent efficient land use practice.

Retail Planning Guidelines

The Retail Planning Guidelines provide national level policy guidance in relation to retailing. The Guidelines provide clear objectives for retail policy, set out guidance in relation to specific retail formats and issue advice in relation to the location of new retail development. The Guidelines represent a plan led approach to retail development at a national level, which is then followed on by the use of county retail strategies to guide development at a localised level.

There are five principle objectives in the Guidelines:

- To ensure that all development plans include policies and proposals for retail development,
- To facilitate a healthy and competitive retail environment,
- To promote development which is easily accessible, especially by public transport, in locations which encourage multi-purpose journeys,
- To support the role of town and district centres,
- A presumption against large retail centres located close to existing or planned national roads/motorways, with limited exceptions where the development would be situated in an Integrated Area Plan area in a Gateway where there is capacity in the road network to cater for such development.

The support of town and district centres leads to the implementation of the sequential test when planning and assessing retail developments. This essentially promotes town centre sites as the first choice for new retail development. Where there are no development sites available in the town centre, the next preferable location is edge of town centre sites (i.e. approximately 300 – 400 metres from the boundary of the town centre area). Only where there are no sites, or potential sites, within a town centre or on the edge of a town centre or where satisfactory transport accessibility cannot be ensured within a reasonable period of time should out of centre sites be considered acceptable.

The Retail Planning Guidelines also provide a definition of District Centres and Local Centres/ Neighbourhood Centres.

The Guidelines state that District Centres are:

"Either a traditional or purpose built group of shops, separate from the town centre and either located within the built-up urban area or in a suburban location on the edge of an urban area, usually containing at least one food supermarket or superstore and non-retail services, such as banks, building societies and restaurants."

District Centres generally comprise of approximately 10,000 sq.m. adjacent to large towns, extending up to 20,000 sq.m. in some parts of Dublin. The provision of district centres is to be based on major growth in population or a clear proven level of existing under provision.

Neighbourhood Centres are defined as:

"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, localised catchment population"

According to the Retail Guidelines,

"Local shops located in local centres or neighbourhood centres perform an important function in urban areas. They can provide a valued service, catering particularly for the daily casual needs of nearby residents or of those passing by. Local shops encompassing both foodstores and important non-food outlets such as pharmacies have significant social and economic functions; they offer a particularly important service for those who are less mobile, especially elderly and disabled people, families with small children, and those without access to a car. For example in peripheral housing estates they may provide the only readily accessible shopping facilities. Where a planning authority can substantiate clearly the local importance of such shops in defined local centres, they should safeguard them in development plans, through appropriate land use zoning."

The Retail Planning Guidelines were first published in 1999. These guidelines were subsequently amended, with the revised Guidelines issued in January 2005. The policies of the Guidelines

have essentially remained the same, with the revision affecting policy in relation to the cap on the floorspace of retail warehouses. The 2000 Guidelines had placed a cap of 6,000 sq.m. on the floorspace of single retail warehouse units. The revised Guidelines state that this cap will not apply in areas which are the subject of Integrated Area Plans, under the Urban Renewal Act, 1998, in the Gateway centres designated in the National Spatial Strategy. As Wexford is not a designated gateway in the National Spatial Strategy, the cap of 6,000 sq.m. will continue to apply to retail warehouse units in the town.

2.3 REGIONAL LEVEL

Regional Planning Guidelines

The Regional Planning Guidelines for the South East Region were adopted by the regional authority on 24th May 2004. The Guidelines cover the period from 2004 to 2020 and aim to achieve a better spatial balance of social, economic and physical development throughout the region. The projected population for

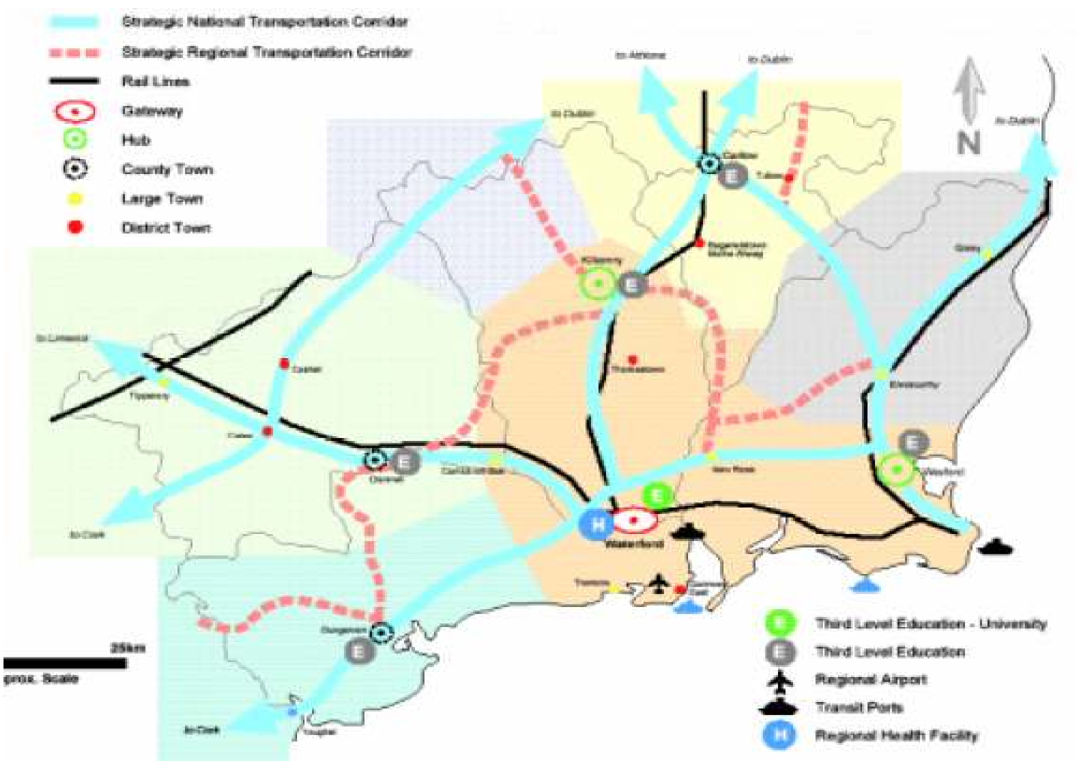


Figure 2.2: Spatial Structure for South East Region

the South East region in 2020 is 500,000 persons. This will require 72,000 additional housing units in the region, i.e. 4,555 units per annum between 2004 and 2020.

The settlement strategy for the region is based on a hierarchy of urban centres which include the Gateway, Hubs, County Towns, Large Towns and District Towns (see Figure 2.2). The role of the various urban centres in the region is outlined in Table 2.1 below. The Guidelines reiterate the supporting role of the Hubs as outlined in the National Spatial Strategy. However, it is also noted that they are strategic urban centres which reach out to wider rural areas of the region. They would therefore be required to have a high level of service provision, including retail.

The policies of the Regional Planning Guidelines serve to channel population growth and development into a hierarchy of settlements. However, they also emphasise that these centres should also

Gateway	**Waterford City**	**Strategically placed, national scale urban area, which individually and in combination will be key elements for delivering a more spatially balanced Ireland and riving development in their own regions.**
Hubs	**Kilkenny** **Wexford**	**Strategic urban centers, that support and are supported by the gateway and reach out to wider rural areas of the region that the RPGs are targeting for significant levels of growth.**
County Towns	**Carlow** **Clonmel** **Dungarvan**	**Critical elements in the structure for realising balanced regional development, acting as a focus for strengthening their own areas.**
Large Towns	**Enniscorthy** **Tramore** **New Ross** **Carrick-on-Suir** **Gorey** **Tipperary Town**	**Towns with a population in excess of 5,000 pop (that are not gateways, hubs or county towns) that the RPGs might be:** **(a) targeting for growth or** **(b) that have recently experienced high levels of population growth where the objective is that more measured growth is desirable in a manner that allows community, social and retail development to catch up with recent rapid phases of mainly residential development.**
District Towns	**Cahir** **Cashel** **Bagenalstown** **Tullow** **Dunmore East** **Thomastown**	**Towns with population between 1,500 and 5,000 that might perform an important role in driving the development of a particular spatial component of the overall region.**

Table 2.1: Function of Urban Centres in the South East Region (Source: Regional Planning Guidelines for the South East Region)

provide the necessary services to cater for this growth. In terms of retail planning, it will therefore be necessary to ensure that the appropriate level of retail development is provided which will match the role of each town and villages in the settlement hierarchy.

2.4 LOCAL LEVEL

Wexford County Development Plan

The Retail Strategy for County Wexford was prepared in the context of the Wexford County Development Plan 2007-2013 adopted on the 30th of April 2007.

The 2007-2013 Wexford County Development Plan notes that the county has experienced substantial population growth in recent years, with the population increasing by 12.9% from 2002 to 2006. The increase in population largely occurred as a result of inward migration to the county. This growth was principally concentrated in eastern and south-eastern areas of the county, along the national road network, in coastal areas and in proximity to the main towns, particularly Wexford, Gorey, Enniscorthy and New Ross. The trends in population growth indicate that overspill has occurred from Dublin to Wexford.

The retail policies for the Wexford Town will need to have due regard to the functional role of the town as outlined in the proposed settlement structure for the county and ensure that the provision of retail development in line with its role as the Primary Growth Area is provided.

Wexford Town & Environs Development Plan

This strategy has been prepared in the context of the review and preparation of the Wexford Town & Environs Development Plan for the period 2008 – 2014.

2.5 CONCLUSION

The planning policy context for Wexford envisages a growth in the population and services in the town. Further retail provision should be developed in line with this to ensure that the retail facilities are sufficient in quantity and are well located to meet the future requirements.

The economic evidence suggests that County Wexford is lagging behind the remainder of the South East Region in terms of employment levels and economic growth. Notwithstanding this, recent estimates from the CSO outline how the county has experienced the highest growth rate in the region since 2002. It would appear that there is potential for further investment and growth in Wexford in order to reinforce its role as a hub town within the South East Region. The designation of Wexford as a Hub within the National Spatial Strategy should further increase the potential of the County leading to a further increase in investment and consequent population growth.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section of the retail strategy provides a detailed health check assessment of Wexford Town. It also provides an overview of the existing retail profile of the town.

3.2 CONDUCTING A HEALTH CHECK ASSESSMENT

Annex II of the Retail Planning Guidelines sets out the matters that should be taken into account when determining the vitality and viability of town centres. A health check assessment is an integral part of the retail strategy, analysing the strengths and weaknesses of a town centre. It is based on a qualitative analysis of factors such as the range and quality of activities in the centre, its mix of uses, its accessibility to people living in the area, and its general amenity, appearance and safety. This assessment for Wexford was carried out within the main town centre.

The Retail Planning Guidelines provide a comprehensive checklist of information to be included in a health check assessment. It is stated in the guidelines that a healthy town centre, that is one which is both vital and viable, balances a number of qualities including;

Attractions- These underpin a town and comprise the range and diversity of shopping and other activities which draw in customers and visitors.

Accessibility- Successful centres need to be both accessible to the surrounding catchment area via a good road network and public transport facilities, and to encompass good local linkages between car parks, public transport stops and the various attractions within the centres.

Amenity- A healthy town centre should be a pleasant place to be in. It should be attractive in terms of environmental quality and urban design; it should be safe and have a distinctive identity and image.

Action- To function effectively as a viable commercial centre, things need to happen. Development and improvement projects should be implemented efficiently; there should be regular and effective cleaning and maintenance and there should be coordinated town centre management initiatives to promote the continued improvement of the centre.

In addition to the above factors the guidelines also recommend a number of other indicators that can be used to determine the vitality and viability of existing town centres. However some of the information set out in the guidelines is not available for centres outside of the main metropolitan areas, for example - shopping rents; pattern of movement in retail rents within primary shopping areas.

In order to determine the vitality and viability of Wexford town centre the following indicators were utilised:

Attractions
Accessibility
Environmental quality/amenity
Diversity of Uses
Multiple Representation
Mall Developments
Other Retailers
Suitability of existing floorspace
Recent developments

3.3 WEXFORD TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK ASSESSMENT

Attractions

Wexford Town is the administrative, retail and business capital of County Wexford and is identified as a third tier settlement within the context of the Retail Planning Guidelines 2005. The town is set in a coastal landscape of high natural amenity. Few towns have such an extensive coastline and waterfront area and this serves as one of the principal attractions to the town centre.

The town is an example of a Viking settlement which later expanded and developed as a port under the Anglo-Normans. The surviving medieval ruins of the town include a substantial stretch of the town wall including a gatehouse and three towers.

Wexford town centre has a well defined structure which is focused on a central spine in the form of the Main Street with a series of radial lanes and side streets linking down to the waterfront and upwards to High Street and the ecclesiastic quarter based around St Peter's Church. Main Street itself is divided into North Main Street and South Main Street and links a number of small public spaces such as Cornmarket and The Bullring. The Quays, which would traditionally have acted as the main commercial area of the town, have now become somewhat disconnected from the main retail area, however, the area has the potential to cater for a broader scale of retail activity with large serviceable site divisions, enabling it to become a service edge to the dense structure of the town centre.

The town centre supports a wide range of retail and service outlets in a linear development along Main Street and the historic harbour area. Traditionally this area has been occupied by a range of independent retailers but more recent developments have seen a

Figure 3.1: Enhanced pedestrian links and public spaces

number of national/international retailers establish themselves within the town. The independent specialist retailers have had the effect of acting as a back up to the multiples as well as adding to the diversity of the retail offer of the town. These niche type units provide a unique retail offer and assist in attracting event shoppers and tourists to the town.

The profile of Wexford will improve considerably with the completion of the Wexford Opera House on High Street. The new facility, currently under construction, will be strategically located within the main commercial centre of the town and will form a significant cultural anchor for the area and for Wexford in general.

Accessibility

Wexford town centre has benefited from the existence of the town's bypass; however, there still remains a significant problem of traffic congestion and car parking in Wexford Town, particularly along the Quays. Main Street, particularly, the northern end, has benefited from a programme of works undertaken by the Borough Council to develop the street as a pedestrian zone. However, in other areas of the town there is little room for pedestrians and there are limited pedestrian crossing facilities.

The railway station is well located in the centre of the town on Redmond Square. The service provides links to Dublin and Rosslare. Bus Éireann also provides frequent services from Wexford to Dublin and Waterford.

Wexford is relatively well served by car parking facilities although the town centre would seem to be dominated to a certain degree by surface car parking. There are three car parks including a multi-storey located along the Quays adjacent to Henrietta Street, Anne Street and Common Quay Street. Other car parks are located at Redmond Square, Abbey Street, Allen Street and Bridge Street and comprise poor quality surface car parking, often located in backland areas. Access to and from these car parks is constrained by the narrow width of the surrounding streets and laneways, often resulting in significant conflict with pedestrian traffic. The town centre would benefit significantly from a more considered car parking strategy.

Environmental Quality/ Amenity

Wexford has an attractive streetscape. However, the environmental quality of the town centre has somewhat eroded in recent years by insensitive alterations to many historic buildings in the town centre, most notably by the widespread replacement of traditional window types by discordant uPVC framed windows or similar. Nonetheless, the town centre has retained much of its original form along Main Street and is attractive to the pedestrian in both scale and use with a series of high quality public spaces such as Cornmarket Street and the Bull Ring. Recent works by the Borough Council to improve the public domain in parts of the town centre have added greatly to the overall attractiveness of the main shopping area.

Main Street does have some spare capacity for infill development especially along its southern end and in the larger sites of under utilised lands between the Main Street and the Waterfront. In particular a number of backland areas remain underutilised. Overall vacancy rates in the town centre are low.

Vacancy rates on South Main Street are generally higher than those on North Main Street. However, the 2002 Wexford and Environs Development Plan outlines how incentives under the Urban Renewal Schemes have been used to encourage investment in Wexford, particularly on the northern end of Main Street. The Development Plan proposed to support the south end by facilitating the creation of a strong corresponding node of activity accessible through the radial collector routes terminating and strengthening the end of the Main Street as a retail spine.

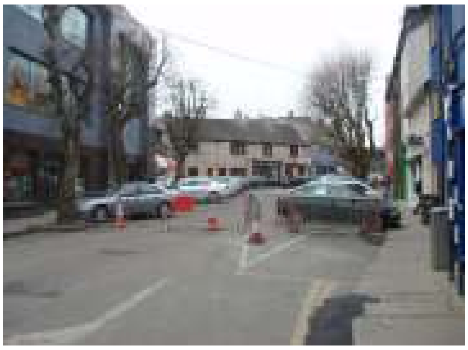
The majority of shop fronts in the town centre are well presented and a small number of important traditional fascia have been preserved, although these are under continuous threat. Modern shop fronts are generally respectful of the traditional idiom. However, as with many Irish towns, the quality of the streetscapes has suffered from the increasing use of uPVC/aluminium windows in the upper floors of Georgian and Victorian properties and the loss of many traditional shop fronts. While some good examples of timber sliding sash windows remain, there is a need for a proactive

approach to retain these and reinstate timber sash windows where they have been lost.

The town centre has traditionally suffered from a relatively poor quality public realm and the aesthetic quality of Main Street has been further impinged by the presence of extensive haphazard overhead wiring and a lack of a coherent urban design vision for the street. While this situation is gradually being addressed by a range of public domain improvements currently being undertaken by the Borough Council, to date only a limited section of Main Street has benefited from an upgrade in paving. Most of Main Street suffers from poor quality paving with the requirements of vehicles dominant over those of pedestrians. It is noted however, that the section of North Main Street adjacent to Shaw's Department Store which has recently been upgraded, sets a standard that needs to be continued and improved upon throughout the town centre. Even here however an extensive mesh of overhead wiring remains and detracts from the aesthetic quality of the street

Litter bins are provided throughout the town and there did not appear to be a significant problem with litter at the time of the survey.

The waterfront has benefited from significant investment and upgrading, although the Quays still suffers from their role as a traffic artery, while higher than normal vacancy levels here point to a poor retail environment. Linkages from the Quays to Main Street remain underused, particularly from potentially set piece public spaces such as The Crescent. Generally, the traditional retail core would benefit from improved pedestrian linkages with the extended town centre area which would enhance the overall character and accessibility of the town. This will again involve investment in public realm improvement. The full pedestrianisation of South Main Street should be implemented as a priority.



Diversity of Uses

Wexford town centre accommodates a diverse range of uses which enhances its role as the commercial centre of the County. These include a wide variety of pubs, restaurants and cafes along Main Street and the Quays and a number of high quality hotels. There are also a large number and variety of independent boutiques, financial institutions and service providers. Other facilities in the town include the Cineplex Cinema and a conveniently located railway station on Redmond Square. The imminent opening of the Wexford Opera House will also provide the town centre with a valuable, high profile cultural anchor.

Multiple Representations

Many national retail chains are located in Wexford, with the majority of these located along Main Street. The comparison sector includes Penney's, Shaw's, Dunnes Stores and Heaton's, while the representation of international multiples remains limited. At present it includes Benetton, Adams, and Boots. The convenience sector of the town is primarily dominated by national/international multiples such as Dunnes Store, Tesco and SuperValu and is complemented by small scale butchers, grocers and local supermarkets. Retail representation in Wexford will be strengthened considerably with the opening of the recently permitted Trinity Wharf development.

Mall Developments

There are two main mall developments in Wexford: Lowey's Shopping Mall in the town centre which was originally a large furniture outlet, and Redmond Square, one of the largest retail developments in Wexford which is anchored by Dunnes Stores. 36% of the floorspace in this development is dedicated to convenience goods and 28% to comparison goods. The shopping mall includes 220 free parking spaces. The recently permitted Trinity Wharf Scheme will also greatly increase the quantum of retail floorspace in the town.

Other Retailing

Outside of the town centre there are a number of significant retail developments. These include a newly developed Tesco store on Distillery Road and a developing Retail Park to the east of the main town centre at Clonard. The convenience retail offer within the town has also been improved in recent years with the development of a number discount foodstores at various locations.

There are also a number of examples of forecourt retailing, most notably Boggan's on Newtown Road, while a neighbourhood centre at St Aidan's includes a supermarket, pharmacy, a laundrette and licensed premises.

3.4 SUITABILITY OF EXSITING FLOORSPACE

The retail profile of the town is defined by a variety of independent retail outlets which are complemented by national and international multiples along Main Street and the Quays. The independent stores play a key role in contributing to the town's unique retail sector. The town is therefore considered suitable in terms of the range and quality of retail floorspace it has to offer.

However, a future area of concern arises in relation to the integration of larger national and international multiples into the town core. In general these units require a large surface area to accommodate larger retailing formats and this can place pressure on the fine urban grain of traditional town centres. While the integration of these units has been successfully catered for in areas such as South Main Street, in some instances, given the confined nature of the town centre and the lack of sites large enough to accommodate the requirements of the multiples, it is not considered the most suitable location to cater for this development.

This issue could be addressed by the development of larger retail units at the edge of the traditional town centre, leaving the town centre to accommodate future specialised retail uses complemented by extensive environmental improvement works. The provision of large-scale modern shopping facilities in the neighbouring vicinity of the traditional town centre will serve to benefit both large scale and independent retailing due to the increase of linked trips. The recently permitted Trinity Wharf scheme sets a precedent for this type of development along the Quays.

3.5 RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In recent years significant retail development within and adjacent to the town has included a Tesco foodstore on Distillery Road and an Aldi Discount Foodstore on Trinity Street. Collectively these developments have extended the traditional retail core southwards and established two significant international multiples in the town centre. The recently permitted Trinity Wharf Scheme will also greatly increase the quantum of retail floorspace within the town, further strengthening the overall vitality of the southern end of the town centre. The implications of these schemes are examined in more detail in Chapter 5 of the retail strategy.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Wexford as the county town is considered vibrant, with a range of independent, national and international operators. The town has a good range of retail and service facilities. One notable feature is the number of independent retailers, particularly in the comparison sector. This is complemented by a number of well known multiples and national chains. The town centre has much potential to build upon the areas traditional charm and create an attractive area for craft, gift and other specialists and independent shops, including restaurants. However, the town is somewhat unbalanced in terms of concentration of retailing activities. The primary focus of retailing is focused on North Main Street.

The quality of the public realm and physical environment of the traditional town centre would benefit from a continuation of improvement works and further investment. There are a number of sites in the traditional town centre which have the capacity to provide appropriate opportunities for delivering modern retailing formats. These are examined in more detail in Chapter 5 of the retail strategy.

In addition the traditional town centre would benefit from better and more integrated pedestrian linkages with the extended town centre area which would enhance the character and accessibility of the town. The future pedestrianisation of South Main Street should be progressed further. In particular it is necessary to strengthen pedestrian links between the Quays and Main Street to avoid severance of these core areas.

The health check assessment indicates that Wexford is trading well. There is little dereliction in the town centre, and recent developments in the town, such as the Tesco, and the recently permitted Trinity Wharf scheme demonstrate investment confidence in the town. It can be concluded that Wexford has a healthy, vibrant and vital town centre.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The principle of a hierarchy of retail centres informs the consideration of zoning for retail developments in development plans and is an essential component of a retail strategy. This section of the retail strategy provides a confirmation of the town retail hierarchy and defines the core shopping area of the town centre.

The national retail hierarchy is set out in the Retail Planning Guidelines. It reflects both the settlement structure of the State and low residential densities in rural areas.

The guidelines identify four tiers of shopping provision within the national hierarchy. They also recognise that the four classifications are indicative and the functions provided by each tier overlap in some respects. Below Dublin, there are no clearly defined cut-off points between levels of the hierarchy.

The First Tier

Metropolitan Dublin, which contains a little over a quarter of the total population, accounts for 41 per cent of all comparison turnover and 31 per cent of convenience turnover. As well as providing the broadest range of comparison goods shopping, it supplies retail functions of a specialist nature not found elsewhere in State.

The Second Tier

Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford account between them for a further 19 per cent of comparison turnover and 15 per cent of convenience turnover. These centres provide a range of high-order comparison shopping which is largely unmatched elsewhere.

The Third Tier

A third tier of towns cannot be precisely defined but include Athlone, Carlow, Castlebar, Clonmel, Drogheda, Dundalk, Ennis, Kilkenny, Letterkenny, Monaghan, Mullingar, Newbridge, Portlaoise, Sligo, Tralee, Tullamore and **Wexford**. These centres are now attaining functions previously found only in higher order centres.

The density of third tier centres is related to overall population density. It is highest in the east and south-east and falls off towards the west and north. The last named centres are of particular importance in less densely populated areas of the State, where they provide urban anchors for a rural economy which is undergoing rapid change.

The Fourth Tier

The fourth tier of the hierarchy comprises a large number of towns in the 1,500 to 5,000 population category. These towns provide basic convenience shopping either in small supermarkets or convenience shops and in some cases, lower order comparison shopping such as hardware, pharmaceutical products and clothes. Beyond these tiers, shopping at the local level is provided by corner shops in suburban areas and village stores, post-offices and shops attached to petrol filling stations.

The hierarchy defined in the guidelines essentially reflects the current situation across the country. The degree of complexity required to formulate retail strategies in the various areas of the State varies considerably.

4.2 THE ROLE OF THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN IN DEFINING THE RETAIL HIERARCHY

It is an objective of the Retail Planning Guidelines not to inhibit growth and competition. The retail strategy should ensure that policies and proposals are consistent with the Retail Planning Guidelines but it should also be forward looking in assessing the town within the national hierarchy both now and in the future. Note: it is important to state that the guidelines are for floor areas to sustain the viability of a Town or County and they are not to be interpreted so as to limit competition or to prevent the provision of new or modern shop spaces.

Development plans should set out the hierarchy of centres and a strategy for the location of retail developments. In particular, the guidelines state that development plans should indicate a range of centres, from city centre through to town centre, district centre to local centres and village centre where investment in new retail and other development will be promoted, and existing provision enhanced.

4.3 THE EXISTING RETAIL HIERARCHY OF WEXFORD

Wexford Town is designated as a third tier retail centre in the national retail hierarchy as set out in the Retail Planning Guidelines.

The retail hierarchy for Wexford is respectively:

- Town Centre
- District Centres
- Neighbourhood Centres
- Local Shop

Town Centre

The Retail Planning Guidelines define a 'Town Centre' as follows:

"Town Centre: the term town centre is used to cover city, town and district centres which fulfil a function as a focus for both the community and public transport. It excludes retail parks, local centres and small parades of shops of purely local significance."

Wexford has a well defined retail core based primarily around a central spine formed by Main Street with secondary activity along the many lanes and side streets radiating from Main Street. Main Street itself is divided into North and South and the street links together a number of definable civic spaces such as Redmond Square, Cornmarket, the Bullring and The Crescent.

The main focus of the development strategy for the town will be to encourage and facilitate the diversification in the town's retail profile and offer to address the overall lack of large national and international comparison units within the principle shopping area. This can be done principally by identifying areas suitable for targeted investment in order to provide for a greater range of retail formats with the town. It is also important that linkages within the town centre are fully exploited, and in particular that linkages between Main Street and the waterfront are further developed and maximized.

District Centres

District Centres are defined in the Retail Planning Guidelines as:

"Either a traditional or purpose built group of shops, separate from the town centre and either located within the built-up urban area or

in a suburban location on the edge of the urban area, usually containing at least one food supermarket or superstore and non-retail services, such as banks building societies and restaurants."

The retail strategy recognises the need to ensure that local needs, primarily convenience shopping and local services, are met in an equitable, efficient and sustainable manner in major existing or new residential areas. There are currently no defined district centres with the Borough area. However, it is envisaged that there is potential to develop a district centre over the time frame of this retail strategy. The Council envisage that this district centre could be accommodated within the Ballynage area of the town where planning permission has recently been granted for 748 no residential units and a neighbourhood shopping centre to include a shopping centre and (1636 sq.m. gross floor area) and 6 no. lock up retail units. It is anticipated that this development has the potential to be upgraded to a district centre over the lifetime of the strategy to serve residential growth in the surrounding areas.

Neighbourhood Centres

Neighbourhood Centres are identified in the Retail Planning Guidelines as:

"Small groups of shops, typically comprising a newsagents, small supermarket/general store, sub-post office and other small shops of a local nature serving a small, localised catchment population."
Presently there are a number of neighbourhood centres within the environs of Wexford Town. It is envisaged that as the population of Wexford grows, the town may experience an increasing demand for additional neighbourhood centre facilities. To achieve this, and to be consistent with the Retail Planning Guidelines (as amended), there is a need to provide new neighbourhood centres within existing and emerging major residential areas.

For the purposes of this strategy, neighbourhood centres shall comprise small groups of shops, typically to include a newsagent, small supermarket/general grocery store/discount foodstore, sub-post office and other small shops of a local nature serving a small, localised catchment population. In parallel, the emphasis for the town centre will be to meet the middle and higher order comparison needs of the town and its catchment area.

Local Shops

This level of the retail hierarchy includes small local shops serving residential estates, shops attached to petrol filling stations, post offices and small villages which serve a local catchment area. There are numerous small retail outlets outside of the town centre which serve this retail function.

4.4 DEFINITION OF THE CORE RETAIL AREAS

The core retail area of Wexford is identified in Figure 4.1. In determining the core areas, the following was considered:

- The definition and policies of the development plan;
- The objectives of the retail strategy to maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres.

Figure 4.1 outlines the primary and secondary retail core of the town centre and areas where policies for the protection of the retail function should be applied. The principal shopping area of the town is centred on Main Street and the series of side streets and laneways that radiate from the street. Main Street itself is divided into North and South Main Street. This area can be said to comprise the primary retail core.

The retail core extends westward from Main Street to the Quays and eastward to encompass High Street. To the north the retail core extends to Redmond Square and 1798 Street while to the south the area around Trinity Street, and the adjacent Trinity Wharf will emerge as a significant extension of the retail core during the life of the plan. A further area of retail development has taken place along Distillery Road, with the recent development of a Tesco. This defines the south-western limit of the main retail area. The secondary shopping frontages identified in Figure 4.1 are currently occupied by a wide range of functions such as professional services, retail, restaurants, bars, offices etc.

Core shopping areas are normally characterised by a mix of factors including prime retail units, low vacancies, a predominance of multiples and well-established family run stores, few non retail uses and high pedestrian foot flow. It is recognised that such core areas may expand to the immediately adjacent areas over the life time of this Strategy. Retail development should be directed into the town centre in order to:

Primary Retail Core

Secondary Retail Core

Figure 4: Definition of the Core Retail Area

- ensure a vital and viable town centre,
- encourage regeneration of areas with scope for improvement
- increase the environmental attractiveness of the town centre
- achieve the quantum and quality of retailers necessary to minimise spending outflow
- meet the criteria for sustainable development

The following section of this retail strategy identifies key opportunity sites within the town centre which will act as the focus for future growth and expansion of the core retail area over the lifetime of the strategy.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This section of the Retail Strategy assesses new major retail developments which have been permitted in Wexford and discusses the implications of these developments for the future retail role and function of the town. It also identifies key opportunity sites which are considered appropriate for future retail development.

5.2 RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In recent years significant retail development within the town has included the development of a Tesco foodstore on Distillery Road and an Aldi discount foodstore on Trinity Street. Collectively these developments have served to expand the traditional retail core southwards and established two significant international multiples in or close to the town centre. The recently permitted Trinity Wharf scheme will also greatly increase the quantum of retail floorspace within the town further strengthening the southern end of the town centre.

The 2007 Wexford County Retail Strategy identifies the need for significant additional floorspace for high order national and international comparison retailers in the short term in Wexford to ensure that the retail floorspace needs of the county are met and to counterbalance improved retail offers in Dublin, Waterford and Carlow.

The Strategy recommends that, this issue could be addressed by the development of larger retail units outside of the traditional primary retail core leaving the town centre to accommodate more specialised retail uses. The strategy acknowledges that proposals for the Trinity Wharf development set a precedent for this type of development along the Quays.

The Trinity Wharf scheme represents a significant move in terms of scale and provision of facilities from the existing character of the centre of Wexford. The site has a waterfront location, adjacent to, but not in the historic town centre. The development will include a large retail mall (GFA 31,490 sq.m.) to include 3 anchor units, a crèche, community hall, office block and cinema. The development also includes the provision of a hotel and apartment blocks to the north of the site. The site accommodates large scale development without having an undue impact on the historical character of the town core. The development, when complete, will provide a strong attraction to bolster the town centre as it seeks to compete with the larger centres in the Greater Dublin Area.

It will become more important to continue the work to improve the environmental quality of the existing shopping areas and to forge linkages along Trinity Street and Main Street. Part of this work has commenced with the pedestrianisation of the Main Street.

5.3 TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Town Centre Development Opportunities

The compact nature of Wexford Town Centre is one of its positive attributes. It is important that the town maintains its compact nature to ensure that shoppers do not have to make several trips in their vehicles to reach shops that are considered beyond walking distance. Expansion should therefore focus on existing derelict and underutilised sites within the retail core of the town. A number of potential development sites are examined below.

Former Tesco Site – The Crescent

The recent development of a new Tesco foodstore on Distillery Road leaves a significant and prominent site available on The Crescent. The Crescent forms a unique and distinct urban streetscape in Wexford, and while it contains a number of fine civic buildings, would benefit considerably from redevelopment and further integration into the primary retail core based around Main Street.

Coleman Doyle Site

The Coleman Doyle site currently comprise a large furniture retail warehouse, which has recently been expanded, and a substantial adjoining surface carpark which is bounded by elements of the original Town Walls. The site has a prominent street frontage to South Main Street. Generally, bulky goods retailers, such as Coleman Doyle, are better suited to retail parks where larger floorplates and improved parking can be more easily accommodated. This site represents an important link between the main retail area and a developing retail area to Distillery Road, as well as the historical ecclesiastical quarter around St Peter's.

Backlands

As with many Irish towns, the historic core of Wexford is characterised by traditional narrow plots with significant backland areas which would traditionally have functioned as gardens or yards. In the case of Wexford many of these areas have developed in recent years to accommodate surface carparking. The Backlands still perform as valuable pedestrian links between Main Street and the Quays and are also used informally for markets and other events. However, with the continued upgrading of the pedestrian environment along Main Street and adjoining public spaces such as The Bullring, significant potential exists for these areas to be redeveloped in the context of a more considered parking strategy for the town centre, to provide new shopping areas and public spaces and to improve permeability within the town centre and encourage further development of the Quays.

Extension of the Southern Core of the Town Centre - Trinity Street

The development of the Tesco on Distillery Road and the recently permitted Trinity Wharf Scheme have served to extend the core retail area of Wexford to the south. Collectively these developments have set a precedent for the expansion and growth of this area of the town. The retail strategy recommends that the retail profile of this area is further strengthened and extended in order to facilitate the organic expansion of the town centre. In particular, Trinity Street has the potential to accommodate large scale development without having an undue impact on the historical character of the town core.

This broad thoroughfare currently includes an Aldi discount foodstore and a number of bulky retail units. There is no public access to the waterfront at present and existing buildings turn their back on the waterfront. The streets width and proximity to Trinity Wharf and the southern retail core make it suitable to provide a natural extension to the town centre, while also positively addressing the waterfront.

Extension of the Northern Core of the Town Centre - Train Station Lands

These lands have the potential to provide for a counterpoint to future retail development at the southern end of the retail core, particularly at Trinity Wharf, and to develop as a new urban quarter. The area includes an area from Redmond Square, including the Cineplex and associated parade of shops, the current surface car parking to the north of these properties and an adjacent area of brownfield disused railway lands on the opposite site of the rail line. While future development proposals for this area will need to consider an appropriate design response to the rail line, the potential exists to create a significant retail and mixed use development at this location.

The adjacent car parking area, serving the Dunnes Stores and Redmond Mall, also represents a valuable and inefficiently used site which should be considered for future development. Given its strategic location at the entrance to the northern part of the primary retail core, a multi storey carpark would be considered as an appropriate element of any future development allowing existing surface carparks in the town to be released for other uses.

5.4 DISTRICT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The expansion of Wexford Town to the N25 ring road and the growth of residential development in the town, in line with its status as a hub, require the provision of distinct district centres to serve growing residential areas. Within the period of this strategy it is envisaged that a district centre will be developed at Ballynage, Laurstown, opposite Clonard village.

Significant retail development has already taken place at Clonard with the opening of the Clonard Retail Park on New Line Road and a Lidl discount foodstore on Clonard Avenue. Planning permission has recently been granted for the development of a neighbourhood centre as part of a residential development to include 748 residential units at this location. This illustrates the area's suitability for medium density residential development. Further development of retailing at this area will be required to serve the needs of surrounding areas and it is envisaged that the permitted neighbourhood centre has the potential to grow into a district centre over the lifetime of this retail strategy.

However, new comparison floorspace in this area should be limited in scale and nature to ensure that these centres do not undermine the needed investment in significant new comparison floorspace in the town centre, a floorspace cap of 2,000 sq.m. should be imposed on comparison floorspace in this area.

Wexford environs are presently served by a number of neighbourhood centres and these should be allowed to grow organically in line with surrounding residential growth. In particular it is an objective of the Council to develop a neighbourhood centre in the Carricklawn area of the town in line with future development. Increased residential development, the location of a number of important uses such as Wexford General Hospital, the new County Council offices and the new government offices for the Department for the Environment, Heritage & Local Government at Carricklawn, and good transport links point to this area as an appropriate location for a district centre. Provision for other future neighbourhood centres should be made in areas subject to large scale residential development.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The challenge for Wexford over the period of this strategy will be to adapt to meet the requirements of a changing retail environment. In particular the town will be required to expand its existing retail offer to reflect its status as a designated hub accommodating national and international multiples and larger store formats, and to protect and enhance its traditional retail core to retain its role as a destination shopping area. In addition, the town will need to provide for increased demand, particularly convenience demand, in the growing residential areas to the north and west of the town centre.

A number of areas can be clearly identified to the north and south of the primary retail core, including the Train Station Lands at Redmond Road to the north of the town centre and Trinity Street to the south of the town centre. These areas have the capacity to develop as retail anchors for the primary retail core, accommodating larger store formats and leisure uses, such as cinemas. The development of the northern end of the town centre will act as a counterpoint to the south of the town centre. The traditional town core will act as a central spine linking these two areas.

Within the traditional retail area, focused on Main Street, the priority should be to protect and develop a unique comparison shopping destination, complemented by restaurants, cafes and new cultural uses such as the Wexford Opera House. Further investment in the public domain is required to provide an improved pedestrian environment and encourage permeability through the whole area. The expansion of the primary retail core towards the Quays should be facilitated through the redevelopment of underutilised backland sites as well as targeted investment in strategic sites along Commercial Quay and The Crescent. The provision of large scale modern shopping malls in the neighbouring vicinity of the town core will serve to benefit both types of retailing due to the increase in linked trips.

Beyond the traditional town centre, retailing should be expanded in line with residential growth. It is envisaged that there is potential for the development of a district centre across from Clonard Village at Laurstown to serve the developing communities in the surrounding areas. Elsewhere existing neighbourhood centres should be allowed to develop organically while new centres should be identified in the context of significant residential developments.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section we carry out an assessment of the likely capacity in quantitative terms for additional retail floor space in Wexford for the study period. This section reviews and updates the floorspace capacity assessment presented in the 2007 Wexford County Retail Strategy.

In the Wexford Town Retail Strategy, to be consistent with the new Town Development Plan, we cover the period from 2008-2014 and 2014 to 2020. In respect of looking beyond 2020, this enables a longer term look at retail planning and potential in the town to be taken, which is consistent with the Wexford County Retail Strategy the South Eastern Regional Planning Guidelines and the National Spatial Strategy.

Future floorspace requirements for the Wexford area are calculated as a portion of the overall floorspace requirements for the County. The quantitative assessment contained in the Wexford County Retail Strategy is therefore updated below and portion of the floorspace requirements in the County Strategy is allocated to Wexford. The quantum of floorspace allocated to the town is based on population projections and the size of the retail catchment area.

The base year for the purposes of this capacity assessment is 2005, the latest year for which comprehensive floorspace data is available. This is also the year for which the most up to date retail expenditure figures are available from the Annual Service Inquiry.

It should be noted that a quantitative retail impact appraisal of this nature can only provide a broad brush indication of the likely floorspace quantum's that need to be achieved in the town. It involves making forecasts for the future population expenditure, turnover and other factors. A number of inputs have to be estimated. As the study is based on a number of assumptions, it can only provide a broad indication of anticipated capacity.

Nonetheless, the quantitative study can give a useful overview of the position. Furthermore, it should be noted that the figures set out in this section are not intended to be prescriptive thresholds. Rather they are the minimum floorspace targets that need to be achieved in order to ensure the retail role and function of Wexford continues to be reinforced and strengthened. They should not be treated as upper limits. There should be no upper limit provided retail development accords with the requirements of the retail strategy.

6.2 WEXFORD COUNTY QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

6.2.1 THE APPROACH

The approach taken is a step by step capacity assessment including the following steps:

1. Estimate the population at base and design year;
2. Estimate of expenditure per capita on convenience, comparison and bulky household goods at the base year and design year;
3. Estimate of total available expenditure in the base year and design year for residents of Wexford with adjustments to allow for inflows and outflows based on the household survey and business survey;
4. Estimate the likely increase in expenditure available for provision of additional floorspace, making allowances for existing planning permissions, increased efficiency of existing retail floorspace and changes in the proportion of expenditure on other forms of retailing such as internet or mail order;
5. Estimate the likely average turnover of new floor space in convenience, comparison and bulky household goods;
6. Estimate the capacity for additional floorspace in the county.

6.2.2 POPULATION

The 2002 Census of Population carried out by the Central Statistics Office states that the population of County Wexford was 116,596 persons. This figure increased to 131,615 in 2006. This represents an increase of 12.9% in the 4 year intercensal period. 71% of this increase is due to inward migration.

In order to be consistent with the Wexford County Development Plan Wexford County Council have provided us with population projections for the County up to 2016. These projections are based on both a high and low growth scenario. Scenario 1, the high growth scenario, envisages a continuation of the current level of inward migration into the county while Scenario 2, the low growth scenario, assumes 50% of the current migration levels. The following population forecasts are given for the county for the high and low growth scenarios. These figures have been updated for the Wexford Town Retail Strategy in order to correspond with the timeframe of the Wexford Town Development Plan 2008-2014.

Table 6.1: Scenario 1 High Growth Population Projections for Co. Wexford

2006	2008	2014	2020
131,615	140,445	170,651	207,535

Source: Wexford County Council, Projections Update from the 2007 Wexford County Retail Strategy

Table 6.2: Scenario 2 Low Growth Population Projections for Co. Wexford

2006	2008	2014	2020
131,615	139,902	168,025	201,803

Source: Wexford County Council, Projections Update from the 2007 Wexford County Retail Strategy

6.2.3 EXPENDITURE PER CAPITA

The Retail Planning Guidelines Study examines three principal sources of data on retail planning expenditure in Ireland. These are the Annual Services Inquiry, the National Income and Expenditure Accounts and the Household Budget Survey. The survey concludes that the most reliable data source for established baseline expenditure is the Annual Services Inquiry. The most recent Annual Service Inquiry is the 2005 Annual Services Inquiry which was published in 2007. This source is therefore used for the purposes of this capacity assessment.

Some adjustments to the data set out in Table 1 of the Services Inquiry are also necessary in order to ensure that goods are correctly categorised between comparison and convenience.

Firstly, it is estimated that approximately 10% of retail sales in non specialised stores is in department stores and other comparison goods. The remaining 90% is categorised as convenience sales. This is in line with the conclusions of the Tym/ Blackwell study commissioned as part of the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities.

Secondly, the Retail Planning Guidelines Study provides that the category “other retailing in specialised stores” should be taken as comparison expenditure, with the exception of a small element of forecourt sales. We have made an allowance for this. We have also utilised the 10% adjustment for department stores and comparison goods.

For the purposes of this study expenditure on pharmaceutical goods and medical articles have been omitted from the comparison expenditure estimate as many medical or pharmaceutical products that would not constitute either convenience or comparison goods by normal definition.

6.2.4 EXPENDITURE ESTIMATES

Based on the 2005 Annual Service Inquiry and the Consumer Price Index, we have estimated that the total expenditure per capita in 2005 on convenience goods was €3,375.

For convenience goods we have assumed a high and low growth rate of 2% and 1% respectively for the period 2008 to 2020. This is based on the assessment of growth rates set out in the Retail Sales Index (CSO) and adjusted to allow for population increases. The estimate of convenience expenditure per capita in 2008 is therefore estimated at €3,477 for low growth and €3,582 for high growth.

The last Household Budget Survey (2001) for which there are breakdowns on a regional basis, show that convenience expenditure per household in the south east region was equivalent to the national average. We have no reason to assume that this position has changed. National figures for convenience expenditure are therefore used for the purposes of this capacity assessment.

The figure for convenience goods expenditure is also projected forward to 2020. Again a high growth rate of 2% per annum was used which gave a total of €4,033 per capita in 2014. Expenditure on convenience goods will amount to €4,542 per capita in 2020 at the growth rate of 2%. The low figure is based on a more conservative 1% increase in expenditure per capita per annum. This gives a figure of €3,691 by 2014 and €3,918 by 2020.

Comparison goods expenditure has also been calculated based on the Annual Service 2005 and the Consumer Price Index. This gives a per capita expenditure figure of €2,926 in 2005 prices.

We have made an adjustment however for Wexford to allow for lower expenditure per capita on comparison goods. A CSO publication on regional per capita income (2001) outlines Wexford's per capita income at approximately 85.2% of the national average. For the purposes of this study we have assumed that expenditure on comparison goods in Wexford is approximately 90% of the national average. This equates to a figure of €2,633 in 2005.

Expenditure growth on comparison goods has been substantially higher than expenditure growth on convenience goods. This is because most household's requirements in respect of convenience products have been largely satisfied and most additional expenditure has gone into products such as clothing, footwear, household goods, electrical goods, carpets, furniture and so on. Exceptionally high levels of growth in comparison goods sales were experienced in the late 1990's up to 2001. Growth figures have also been strong in the most recent years. Based on the Retail Sales Index we have estimated that expenditure on these categories of goods increased at a rate of 8% per annum for the period 1997 to 2002.

It is clear that expenditure growth is now somewhat lower than in the recent past. We have therefore used a more conservative long term average for projecting forward and we have assumed a high scenario growth rate of 7% per annum per capita and a low growth rate scenario of 5% per annum per capita for comparison goods.

Based on the high growth rate of 7% per annum we estimate that the expenditure per capita in comparison goods will reach €4,841 in 2014 and €7,266 by 2020.

Based on the low growth rate scenario of 5% per annum per capita by 2014 the expenditure on comparison goods per capita will be €4,085 in 2014 rising to €5,475 by 2020 (2005 prices).

Table 6.3: Expenditure per Capita

Year	Convenience	Comparison	Total
2005	€3,375	€2,633	€6,008
2008	€3,477-€3,582	€3,038-€3,226	€6,526-€6,808
2014	€3,691-€4,033	€4,085-€4,841	€7,776-€8,875
2020	€3,918-€4,542	€5,475-€7,266	€9,393-€11,808

Price Year 2005

6.2.5 TOTAL AVAILABLE EXPENDITURE

The total available expenditure is set out in Table 6.4. This is calculated by multiplying the population by the expenditure per capita for each category for each year.

In 2008 we estimate the total available for convenience expenditure is between €488m and €503m assuming the high growth scenario for convenience goods and between €428m and €453m for comparison goods. By 2014 comparison expenditure will exceed convenience under the high growth scenario by a significant margin. We estimate there will be between €630m and €688m of comparison expenditure in the county compared to between €697m and €826m convenience expenditure.

This trend is reflected under Scenario 2, the low growth Scenario. By 2014 it is estimated that expenditure on convenience goods will be between €620m and €678m, and between €686m and €813m on comparison goods. The projections for 2020 are somewhat conjectural. However, having regard to the assumptions set out above we estimate that by 2020 convenience expenditure will be between €812m and €941m and comparison expenditure in 2020 will be between €1,135m and €1,506m under the high growth scenario. Under the low growth Scenario it is estimated that convenience expenditure will be between €790m to €916m and comparison expenditure will be between €1,104m and €1,466m.

Table 6.4: Scenario 1: Total Available Expenditure

Year	Convenience	Comparison	Total
	€ Million	€ Million	€ Million
2008	€488 - €503	€428 - €453	€916- €956
2014	€630 - €688	€697- €826	€1,327 - €1,514
2020	€812 - €942	€1,135 - €1,506	€1,948 - €2,448

Source: Tables 6.1 and 6.3. 2005 prices

Table 6.5: Scenario 2: Total Available Expenditure

Year	Convenience	Comparison	Total
	€ Million	€ Million	€ Million
2008	€486 - €501	€426 - €451	€912 - €952
2014	€620 - €678	€686 - €813	€1,307 - €1,491
2020	€791 - €917	€1,105 - €1,466	€1,896 - €2,383

Source: Tables 6.2 and 6.3. 2005 prices

It is necessary to adjust total available expenditure to allow for inflows and outflows for the county. In other words, to allow for people living outside Wexford County who shop in Wexford Town or Gorey or elsewhere in the county and to allow for the expenditure generated by the population of the county which goes to centres outside Wexford.

A figure of 10% is used to accommodate for inflow of expenditure into the county for comparison goods expenditure and 10% for convenience goods expenditure. This figure is to take into account tourist expenditure and holiday home owners.

The 2005 Wexford County Retail Strategy highlighted that the findings of the shopping survey commissioned as part of the Strategy outlined that there is approximately 2% leakage of convenience expenditure and 10% leakage of comparison expenditure. These leakage figures are assumed for the purposes of this capacity assessment. The relevant figures are outlined on Tables 6.6 and 6.7 and the overall increase in expenditure is summarised in Tables 6.8 and 6.9 .

Table 6.6: Scenario 1: Total Available Expenditure Allowing for Inflow and Outflows and Adjusted for Increase in Turnover of Existing Floor Space

Year	Convenience	Comparison	Total
	€ Million	€ Million	€ Million
2008	€526 - €542	€424 - €449	€950 - €991
2014	€679 - €742	€690 - €818	€1,369 - €1,560
2020	€876 - €1,015	€1,124 - €1,491	€2,000 - €2,507

2005 prices

Table 6.7: Scenario 2: Total Available Expenditure Allowing for Inflow and Outflows and Adjusted for Increase in Turnover of Existing Floor Space

Year	Convenience	Comparison	Total
	€ Million	€ Million	€ Million
2008	€524 - €540	€422 - €447	€947 - €987
2014	€669 - €731	€679 - €805	€1,348 - €1,536
2020	€852- €988	€1,093 - €1,451	€1,946 - €2,440

Table 6.8: Scenario 1: Increase in Expenditure

Year	Convenience	Comparison	Total
	€ Million	€ Million	€ Million
2008-2014	€153 - €200	€266 - €369	€419 - €569
2014-2020	€197 - €273	€434 - €674	€630 - €947

2005 prices

Table 6.9: Scenario 2: Increase in Expenditure

Year	Convenience	Comparison	Total
	€ Million	€ Million	€ Million
2006-2011	€144 - €190	€257 - €359	€402 - €549
2011-2016	€184 - €258	€414 - €646	€598 - €904

2005 prices

6.2.6 TURNOVER AND FLOOR SPACE CAPACITY

It is possible to derive the existing average turnover rate per sq metre of existing floor space by dividing the total available expenditure by the floor space in each category. However, complications arise in respect of the comparison category as very different levels of turnover will apply to town centre comparison goods such as clothing and footwear and smaller household durables than would apply to bulky household goods sold in retail warehouses. Having regard to the Household Budget Survey and experience elsewhere in this respect it is estimated that approximately 20% of expenditure will be accounted for by bulky household goods in retail warehouse type premises.

In accordance with the 2007 Wexford County Retail Strategy we have applied an average turnover per sq.m. for all floorspace in County Wexford for 2006 for convenience goods of €10,000 per sq.m., €4,500 for comparison goods and €2,400 for bulky goods. These figures have been adjusted to grow at a rate of 1% per annum to allow for efficiency gains by retailers. The figures are based on published retail industry data and have regard to the average turnover per sq.m. calculations established in the Retail Planning Guidelines Study 1999 (Tym and Blackwell). They reflect the average turnover levels retailers will require to sustain a healthy level of activity. They do not count in the high levels of overtrading that have existed in many areas in recent years.

These figures show the average turnover per sq metre of existing floor space overall in the county. They disguise significant differences in turnover for different shops. In general, multiple branches of national and international multiple shops are located within purpose built shopping centres or other prime locations. Prime town centre shop units will have substantially higher turnover per sq metre than shops which are less well located or situated in older inefficient premises and are operated as independents. In particular, it is likely that smaller units and units outside the main town have substantially lower turnover per sq. metre then these averages whilst the largest supermarket operators have substantially higher turnover rates per sq. metre.

Table 6.10: Floorspace Requirements Scenario 1

Year	Convenience	Comparison	Bulky	Total
	sq.m.	sq.m.	sq.m.	sq.m.
2014 Low	62,708	113,311	53,114	229,133
2014 High	68,522	134,283	62,945	265,750
2020 Low	76,195	173,812	81,474	331,481
2020 High	88,329	230,673	108,128	427,131

Table 6.11: Floorspace Requirements Scenario 2

Year	Convenience	Comparison	Bulky	Total
	sq.m.	sq.m.	sq.m.	sq.m.
2014 Low	61,743	111,567	52,297	225,608
2014 High	67,468	132,217	61,977	261,662
2020 Low	74,155	169,160	79,294	322,608
2020 High	85,965	224,499	105,234	415,697

In order to calculate the quantity of future retail floorspace required for the county, the existing provision of retail floorspace should be subtracted from the totals outlined in Tables 6.10 and 6.11 above. The 2005 Wexford County Retail Strategy outline the existing convenience floorspace was 43,319 sq.m. and comparison floorspace was 84,184 sq.m for the county. It is assumed that approximately 20% of the comparison floorspace is occupied by bulky goods floorspace. Based on these floorspace figures, table 6.12 and 6.13 below outline the additional floorspace capacity for convenience, comparison and bulky floorspace in the county.

Table 6.12: Scenario 1: Additional Floorspace Capacity in County Wexford

Year	Convenience	Comparison	Bulky	Total
	sq. m.	sq. m.	sq.m.	sq. m.
2014	19,389-25,203	45,936-66,936	36,277-46,108	101,630-138,247
2020	32,876-45,010	106,465-163,326	64,638-91,291	203,978-299,628

Table 6.13: Scenario 2: Additional Floorspace Capacity in County Wexford

Year	**Convenience**	**Comparison**	**Bulky**	**Total**
	sq. m.	sq. m.	sq. m.	sq. m.
2014	18,424-24,149	44,220-64,870	35,460-45,140	98,105-134,159
2020	30,836-42,646	101,812-157,151	62,457-88,379	195,105-288,194

It can be seen from Scenario 1 Table 6.12 that the capacity for additional convenience floor space by 2014 ranges from approximately 19,389 sq. metres to 25,203 sq. metres and for comparison goods between 45,963 sq.m. and 66,936 sq.m . For bulky comparison goods in the form of retail warehousing, there is scope for between 36,277 sq.m and 46,108 sq. metres of additional floor space.

Figures for 2020 under the high growth scenario outline how there is capacity for between 32,876 to 45,010 sq.m. for convenience expenditure and 106,465 and 163,326 sq.m. for comparison expenditure. Additional floorspace capacity for bulky goods is between 64,638 and 91,291 sq.m.

The low growth scenario outlined in Table 6.13 highlights how the capacity for additional convenience floor space by 2014 ranges from approximately 18,424 sq.m. to 24,149 sq.m. The equivalent demand for comparison floorspace is between 44,220 and 64,870. For bulky comparison goods in the form of retail warehousing, there is scope for between 35,460 sq.m and 45,140 sq.m of additional floor space.

The 2020 projections under the low growth scenario outline how there is capacity for between 30,836 and 42,646 sq.m. for additional convenience floorspace, 101,812 and 157,151 sq.m for comparison floorspace and between 62,457 and 88,397 for bulky warehouse floorspace.

6.3 FUTURE RETAIL FLOORSPACE REQUIREMENTS FOR WEXFORD TOWN

The future floorspace requirements for Wexford are obtained by dividing the floorspace figures for the entire County by the population of the retail catchment area of Wexford. The 2006 Preliminary Census Results outlined an overall population of 131,615 for County Wexford. Wexford County Council have provided a breakdown of the county population between the four main urban centres in County Wexford (Gorey, Enniscorthy, Wexford Town, New Ross). This breakdown indicated a population of 43,646 for the Wexford catchment area. This represents 34% of the overall population of County Wexford. An additional portion of comparison and bulky goods floorspace has also been allocated to Wexford town to account for the levels of inflow of expenditure to the town from other towns such as Enniscorthy, Gorey and New Ross in accordance with its role as the primary retail centre within the county and its hub status. In this context 40% of comparison retail floorspace expenditure has been allocated from Enniscorthy, 20% has been allocated from Gorey and 30% of expenditure has been allocated from New Ross. The additional floorspace requirements for Wexford are outlined in Tables 6.14 and 6.15 over.

Table 6.14: Scenario 1: Additional Floorspace Requirements Wexford

Year	Convenience	Comparison	Bulky	Total
	sq. m.	sq. m.	sq.m.	sq. m.
2014	6,592-8,569	24,820-36145	19,590-24,898	51,002-69,613
2020	11,178-15,304	57,491-88,196	34,904-49,297	103,573-152,797

Table 6.15: Scenario 2: Additional Floorspace Requirements Wexford

Year	Convenience	Comparison	Bulky	Total
	sq. m.	sq. m.	sq. m.	sq. m.
2014	6,264-8,211	23,879-35,030	19,149-24,376	49,292-67,616
2020	10,484-14,500	54,979-84,862	33,727-47,734	101,624-147,096

It should be noted that the floorspace figures outlined in Tables 6.14 and 6.15 above are based on the floorspace figures outlined in the 2005 Wexford County Retail Strategy. However, a substantial amount of retail floorspace has been permitted in Wexford since this period. This includes approximately 9,000 sq.m. of convenience floorspace from developments such as Tesco on Distillery Road, the permitted Lidl in Whitehill Industrial Estate, Aldi in Clonard and the convenience floorspace within the recently permitted Trinity Wharf scheme. A substantial proportion of comparison floorspace has also been permitted in Wexford since 2005. Most notably, the Trinity Wharf scheme includes the provision of approximately 18,000 sq.m. of net comparison retail floorspace.

The floorspace capacity figures outlined in Tables 6.14 and 6.15 above should not be considered as upper limits, merely as indicative of the scale of new floorspace required to meet the needs of existing and future population and expenditure in the town. Additional new floorspace may be proposed and this could replace some existing outdated or poorly located retail floorspace. These figures should be seen as minimum rather than maximums. The key consideration is the location of new floorspace. The quantum only becomes a critical consideration where new convenience and comparison floorspace is proposed outside of the defined retail core of the town and the issue of likely impact on the town centre as a whole arises.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This section of the retail strategy sets out key policies and actions to accommodate the future growth of the retail profile of Wexford Town.

7.2 KEY PRINCIPLES

The location and scale of new retail development must have regard to the planning context for the County and in particular the Retail Planning Guidelines, the County Development Plan and the Town Development Plan.

A key principle in the provision of future retail floorspace is the need to reinforce the existing retail hierarchy of the County, and in particular existing town and village centres. It is particularly important that the principle urban centre of Wexford town centre continues to develop its retail function to meet the shopping needs of its residents and to ensure a healthy and competitive retail environment. It is equally important that the secondary retail areas of the town retain and reinforce their retailing role and that the existing provision of retail development in these centres is maintained and enhanced in the interests of sustainability.

The retail profile of the town will need to expand to serve the projected population increases for the town and also to cement its role as a designated hub. Wexford has a well established commercial core and is the most important retail centre in the County. The challenge for the future is that the town should be developed as a retail centre of regional significance in the South East to reflect Wexford's status as a hub under the National Spatial Strategy.

In terms of future zoning, the principal location for future retail development will be concentrated in town centre locations. Consideration to the potential impact of large scale retail development outside of the town centre and its impact on the traditional town centre should be taken cognisance of.

The central aim of this retail strategy is to protect the traditional town core of Wexford town centre while also encouraging the future growth and expansion of the retail profile of the town.

The 2007 Wexford County Retail Strategy also found that a main issue in the town was the lack of linkages between the retail core and the waterfront, which the strategy suggested could be exploited more fully as a retail frontage thereby creating a more cosmopolitan atmosphere. Furthermore, the confined and historic nature of the traditional town core, while forming the basis of an attractive and unique retailing environment, presented difficulties in accommodating modern retail formats, particularly those of the larger multiples.

The key issues for Wexford Town over the period of this strategy include:

- Addressing leakage of retail expenditure from the town by providing the means to strengthen the range and quality of its retail offer in line with its status as a hub;
- Encouraging and facilitating the diversification in the town's retail profile and offer to address the overall lack of large national and international comparison units with the retail core;
- Protect the vitality and viability of the traditional town centre and enhance its status as a destination shopping area;
- Further enhance linkages between the retail core and the waterfront and put in place measures to address vacancies along the Quays;
- Ensure the continued primacy of the town centre in the face of increased competition from out of centre retail parks and emerging district centres.

This section of the retail strategy sets out key policies and actions which aim to address these key issues.

7.3 DISTRIBUTION AND FLOORSPACE REQUIREMENTS

A capacity assessment has been undertaken in the previous section of this study. This is based on a number of forecasts and assumptions which may be subject to change.

It is assumed that additional comparison retail floorspace should be provided where possible within the existing town centre of Wexford. A number of potential opportunity sites suitable for town centre development have been identified for the principal town centre in Chapter 5. Convenience retail floorspace should be met in the existing town centre and designated district and neighbourhood centres.

Provision is also made for the development of convenience floorspace which may be appropriate in district and neighbourhood centres to serve existing and planned areas of residential expansion. Additional bulky household goods floorspace should be met either in purpose built retail warehouse parks where possible. Conditions should be imposed in such developments clearly restricting the sale of goods to bulky household items.

7.4 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FOR TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS

This section will summarise the general appropriate policies and actions to encourage the improvement of Wexford town centre.

General Measures to Promote Town Centre Improvements

Detailed below are a number of general policies and objectives that should be implemented to encourage and foster retail development in Wexford. Whilst it is acknowledged that the development of retail facilities is largely dependant on market demand and retailer requirements, it is envisaged that the following general policies will help promote the town centre as a vibrant and attractive area thus encouraging its continued growth and development for retail, retail service, professional service and other complementary land uses.

Overall, Wexford is considered as a healthy town centre with significant opportunities for retail expansion. The town centre follows a historic street layout, which provides for an attractive and unique shopping environment. It is a busy and vibrant town with retailing centred along Main Street and the many streets and lanes which radiate from it. Main Street itself links a number of attractive public spaces from Redmond Square to Cornmarket, to the Bullring.

Notwithstanding this the town would benefit from the following environmental enhancements and upgrading.

Shop Front Design Guidelines

Design guidelines for shop frontages and upper floors of buildings should be prepared and advice given to property owners and retailers on urban design. This should include the retention of existing traditional shop fronts and timber sash windows in upper floors.

Public Domain Improvement Works

Further investment in the public domain is required to provide an improved pedestrian environment and encourage permeability through the whole area, and encourage further expansion of the primary retail core towards the Quays. The aesthetic quality of the town centre is impinged by overhead wiring. These overhead wires should be relocated underground,.

Backlands Development

The fine urban grain and traditional narrow plot sizes of Wexford town centre provide limited opportunities for large retail traders to enter the traditional retail core of the town. However there are a number of sites in the town centre area which have the capacity to provide appropriate opportunities for accommodating large retail developments. In particular the redevelopment of underutilised backland sites should be considered to provide new shopping areas and public spaces and to improve permeability within the town centre and encourage further development of the Quay. In addition targeted investment in strategic sites along Commercial Quay and The Crescent is required to address the vacancies and dereliction in this area.

Living Over the Shop Initiative

Limited use is made of the upper floors of retail units and this imposes a negative impact on the streetscape. An initiative should be taken to encourage “living over the shop” in the town centre to enhance its overall vibrancy.

Pedestrian Facilities

The refurbishment/upgrading of a number of laneways and associated archways would greatly enhance the vitality and attractiveness of the town’s retail core by improving the shopping environment and encouraging greater pedestrian permeability. Pedestrian facilities and connections should be enhanced to encourage greater pedestrian movement within the town’s retail core. In particular, it is necessary to strengthen pedestrian links between the Quays and Main Street to avoid severance of these core areas.

Business Improvements District Schemes

A feasibility study regarding the development of town centre management initiatives for the town in association with the Chambers of Commerce should be considered. This may include the setting up of a town centre management committee and one or more 'BIDS' or Business Improvement Districts.

BID schemes originated in Canada in 1971 and are now in operation in many cities and towns throughout the world. It is estimated that there are now more than 400 BID type schemes in operation in Canada and USA. European countries are also becoming involved in these schemes, including Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Holland and Portugal and the UK.

Research on the operation of such schemes in the US identified that they have significant positive impacts on the economic vitality and viability of cities and towns. BIDS provide a whole new impetus for businesses to work with their respective local authorities and local residents, allowing for innovation and acumen to benefit everyone in an area.

The Local Government Act 2006 provides a statutory basis for the establishment of Business Improvement District Schemes within the functional areas of Local Authorities. In a Business Improvements District Scheme, a group of businesses are empowered, where a majority of those businesses agree, to raise a special contribution from all the businesses in the defined area to pay for the carrying out of complementary local services and improvements, within that defined area. The boundary of, and the range of local improvements to be carried out in the defined area of, a Business Improvements District Scheme are set out in a detailed business plan which is developed by the business community in association with the local authority.

It is anticipated that it will be entirely a matter for the business community to develop a BID Plan and to decide on the level and type of works, services or projects that are desirable and the type of financial investment they will make. However, once the business community has determined that it wants a BIDS and achieves a positive plebiscite of all businesses in an area, the BID will be mandatory on all businesses in the BID. The ethos of BIDS is that it would provide services in an area that would add to, and not substitute for, those services already provided by the local authority.

The BIDs approach will provide the opportunity to lever in private sector funding for the improvements and their subsequent management in addition to sources of local authority funding.

Special Contribution Scheme

Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 deal specifically with the issue of Development Contribution Schemes. A development contribution scheme should be put in place for individual development proposals to contribute directly to public realm improvements in the general interface between private and public ownership in the vicinity of a proposed development. Investigations should be carried out regarding the possibility of developing such a supplementary scheme for specific works which enable town centre management and environmental improvements which specifically enhance the vitality and quality of the town centre. It should be noted that funding for public realm improvements which can be generated by development levies will be related to the quantum of new development permitted.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The principal aim of this chapter is to provide policy recommendations regarding the assessment of future planning applications for retail development.

8.2 CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING FUTURE RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

All applications for significant retail development should be assessed against a range of criteria. These criteria are set out below. It should be noted that it is not appropriate to assess all applications for new retail development against all the criteria, particularly developments which are clearly in accordance with the strategy set out in Section 6 and small scale developments (less than 1,000 sq. metres –net area.)

It is recommended that retail impact statements should not necessarily be required for developments less than 1,000 sq. metres – net sales area, unless it is considered that they would have a material impact on the vitality and viability of an existing retail centre. Nor should retail impact statements be required for retail developments that are located within identified retail centres in a development plan including town centres, district centres and neighbourhood centres and are in accordance with Development Plan policy.

The Sequential Test

It is stated in the Retail Planning Guidelines:

"The preferred new location for new retail development where practicable and viable is within a town centre (or district or major village centre). Where it is not possible to provide the form and scale of development that is required on a site within the town centre then consolidation can be given to a site on the edge of the town centre so as to encourage the possibility of one journey serving several purposes. An edge of centre site, for the purposes of these guidelines, is taken to be one which is within an easy and convenient walking distance from the primary shopping core of a town centre. The distance considered to be convenient will vary according to local circumstances but typically is unlikely to be much more than 300 – 400 metres from the edge of the prime shopping area, and less in smaller settlements.

Having assessed the size, availability, accessibility and feasibility of developing both sites and premises, firstly within a town centre and secondly on the edge of a town centre, alternative out of centre sites should be considered only where it can be demonstrated that there are no town centre or edge of centre sites which are suitable, viable and available. This is commonly known as the sequential approach to the location of retail development."

Where an application for a large retail development (in excess of 1,000 sq. metres – net area) outside of the town centre, the applicant should demonstrate that all town centre options have been assessed and evaluated and that flexibility has been adopted by the retailer in regard to the retail format. The exception to the approach is retail warehouse development that are restricted to the sale of bulky household goods, as it is identified in the Retail Planning Guidelines that such developments are better suited to peripheral locations on the edge of a town centre.

In addition to the sequential test, the Retail Planning Guidelines recommend that the applicant should address the following criteria:

- Support the long term strategy for town centres as established in the development plan and not materially diminish the prospect of attracting private sector investment into one or more town centres.
- Cause an adverse impact on one of more town centres, either singularly or cumulatively with recent development or other outstanding planning permissions, sufficient to undermine the quality of the centre or its role in the economic and social life of the community.
- Diminish the range of activities and services that a town centre can support.
- Cause and increase in the number of vacant properties in the primary retail area that is likely to persist in the long term.
- Ensure a high standard of access both by public transport, foot, private car so that the proposal is easily accessible by all sections of society.
- Link effectively with an existing town centre so that there is likely to be commercial synergy.

Other criteria that should be considered in the assessment of significant applications include:

- That there is a quantitative and qualitative need for the development. Need however should not be a consideration for town centre located development.
- The contribution of the development towards the improvement of the town centre in terms of urban design.
- The contribution of the development towards site or area regeneration.
- The role of the development in improving the competitiveness of the town against other competing centres.
- Compliance with development plan policies and objectives.
- The development is easily accessed by the elderly and disabled/ mobility impaired.

8.3 CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING PARTICULAR TYPES OF DEVELOPMENT

This section sets out the criteria for assessing planning applications for different types of retail development.

Convenience Food Shopping

Where practicable new convenience retail development should be located within the town centre or within a designated district or neighbourhood centre serving a large residential community. Accessibility is the key to the success of such developments and such proposals should be accessible by all modes of transport particularly pedestrians and public transport. As large convenience shops attract customers carrying out large weekly shopping, it is important that such development should also be served by adequate car parking. Out of centre sites for this type of retail development require careful assessment, subject to the sequential test assessment and their potential impact on nearby centres. The maximum size of the convenience element of supermarkets is 3,000 square metres net sales as defined in the Retail Planning Guidelines.

Discount Food Stores

Discount food stores typically have a floor area of approximately 1,500-2,000 sq metres gross and are served by a surface car park with approximately 80 – 100 spaces. The preferable location for such development is again in the town centre or designated district centre or neighbourhood centre. The potential role that discount food stores have in anchoring small centres or neighbourhood centres is recognised in the Retail Planning Guidelines and thus it is appropriate to permit such development within neighbourhood centres. Such developments are also often suited to brownfield industrial sites located in proximity to residential areas.

Important criteria in assessing applications for a discount food store include impact of the development on the urban design character of the town and accessibility, particularly by car.

District Centres

As Wexford town continues to growth in population terms there is increasing demand for the development of district centres to cater for both newly developing and existing residential estates. It is envisaged that this demand will be addressed over the time span of this retail strategy. District Shopping Centres can play an important role in the County retail offer, especially in the convenience provision within the county. The development of such centres should be only be developed in areas where large scale residential expansion is envisaged/proposed.

District shopping centres play an important role in the Towns overall retail offer, especially in the provision of convenience goods. In general, it is advised in the Retail Planning Guidelines that the development of such centres should be only happen in areas where large scale residential expansion is envisaged / proposed. It is envisaged that a district centre will be development opposite Clonard Village at Laurstown over the lifetime of this retail strategy.

Retail Warehouse Parks

It is recognised in the Retail Planning Guidelines that in general retail warehouses do not fit easily into town centres given their size requirements and the need for good car parking facilities. It is therefore appropriate to group these facilities into planned retail parks on the edge of the town centre if such sites area available or in an out of centre site, if the applicant can demonstrate that there are no suitable edge of centre sites available. Criteria for assessing retail warehouse applications include scale and design of the development, appropriate vehicular access and the quantitative need for such development.

As stated in the Retail Planning Guidelines, individual retail units should not be less than 700 sq metres and not more than 6,000 sq metres in size. These figures are gross floor area, including storage and garden centres. In respect of retail warehouse developments outside town centres, it is essential that the range of goods sold is restricted by planning condition to bulky household items such as DIY products, carpets, furniture, and electrical goods. Failure to do so may have a negative impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre area.

Factory Outlet Centres

It is stated in the Retail Planning Guidelines that the success of these centres depends on drawing customers and visitors from a wide catchment area, including tourists, and there may be implications for existing tourist centres and established town centres, even those some distance from the proposals. Criteria for assessing such development should therefore focus on whether such a development is located in a strategic enough location to capture expenditure from a very wide catchment area. Such a development must be within easy reach of Dublin and in the interest of sustainability, preferably be located adjacent to or even within an existing town centre. Again, as such facilities are primarily geared towards the car borne customer, vehicular accessibility and adequate car parking are key factors.

Retail Warehouse Clubs

Retail Warehouse Clubs as stated in the Retail Planning Guidelines share many of the characteristics of large retail outlets and therefore should be treated as any other large retail development. Such development should therefore be located within or on the edge of existing town centres and there should be a demonstrable need for its development both qualitatively and quantitatively. Particular consideration should be given to the design of such developments as often they have a retail warehouse type format and thus may be inappropriate within the traditional town centre. As such facilities are geared towards bulky shopping such facilities must also be served by adequate car parking.

Local Shops and Petrol Filling Stations

Local shops play an important role in providing for daily top up shopping. They are also often easily accessible to the elderly and disabled. The development of such local shops should be encouraged in growing residential areas around Wexford. Such developments should be easily accessible to all sections of society.

Local shops attached to petrol filling stations are a growing sector of the retail market. Such facilities do play an important role, particularly in serving some of the more isolated rural communities. However, care should be given to the development of such facilities on the edge of town centres as they may have a negative impact on established convenience outlets within the town centre. As stated in the Retail Planning Guidelines, the size of such retail units should not exceed 100 sq metres.