

CHAPTER 2

Overall Strategy

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The overall strategy for the county provides a coherent, integrated statement of the policies and objectives that need to be implemented in order to achieve the vision of how the county is to develop in the future. This vision was derived from the public consultation phase of the preparation of this draft, consultation with the Planning and Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee, the direction of the members, the experience and views expressed through the preparation of the local area plans throughout the County and the development of the Hub Strategy incorporated into the Tralee Killarney environs plan.

2.1.2 In the formulation of policies and objectives in this plan the planning authority have had regard to the following documents:

National Development Plan 2007-2013
National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020
Sustainable Development – A Strategy for Ireland 1998
Departmental Planning Guidelines
Regional Context - South-West Regional Planning Guidelines 2004
Meitheal Chiarrai 2002-2011
Kerry Local Authorities Access for All Implementation Plan, 2008-2015
Údarás na Gaeltachta – Beartas Forbartha 2005-2015

The Council is obliged, in the performance of its functions, to have regard to government policies and guidelines (see Chapter 1), and it is within the context of these policies that local policies are developed.

2.2 National Context - National Development Plan 2007-2013 / National Spatial Strategy

2.2.1 The National Development Plan 2007 – 2013 is a blueprint for the economic and social development of the Country up until 2013. One of the principal objectives of the plan is to promote balanced regional development. This plan builds on the previous NDP which identified the need for a National Spatial Strategy, in order to promote regional development throughout the country by the identification of a number of development corridors as Gateways and Hubs in individual regions. These development corridors have been designated to act as development growth areas that will be promoted in terms of infrastructure and investment to act as economic drivers for their region.

2.2.2 The identification of development corridors is only the initial step in the process of balanced regional development. The success of the spatial strategy in its role of achieving strong and sustainable economic growth is dependent on a number of factors including the development of an area's **Potential, Critical Mass and Linkages**.

Potential is defined as *the capacity which an area possesses for development arising from its endowment of natural resources, population, labour, economic and social capital and location relative to markets*

Critical Mass is defined as *the size, concentration and characteristics of population that enable a range of facilities to be supported and which, in turn, can attract and support higher levels of economic activity.*

Linkages are *the means of moving people, goods, energy and information.*

2.2.3 The policies and objectives contained in the County Development Plan promote these concepts through facilitating improved linkages, promoting the development of critical mass and protecting and promoting the potential of the county.

2.2.4 In addition to the economic and spatial objectives, an improved quality of life is also an objective of the NDP. It is considered that proper spatial planning can contribute to an improved quality of life and it is one of the overall objectives of this plan to achieve this.

2.3 National Context - Sustainable Development – A Strategy for Ireland

2.3.1 This is the government's policy on sustainable development, how it can be implemented and how it can be integrated into the decision making process. The policies in this document with regard to the sustainability of rural housing have been modified by the publication of 'Sustainable Rural Housing – Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (April 2005).

2.3.2 Sustainable Rural Housing – Guidelines for Planning Authorities

The publication of this document in April 2005 outlined the government's policy in relation to rural housing and contains detailed direction as to how Planning Authorities should formulate policy for their area. The document redefines the concept of sustainability with regard to rural housing and, as well as removing references to the unsustainability of rural housing, contains a presumption in favour of rural housing where the applicant can demonstrate a definite need to live in a rural area.

2.4 Regional Context - South-West Regional Planning Guidelines 2004

2.4.1 The Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG's) have been developed on the basis of guidance provided through the National Spatial Strategy and a wide range of plans that exist at individual agency level throughout the region. The task of the guidelines is to provide a broad canvas to steer the sustainable growth and prosperity of the region and its people up to 2010. Among the goals outlined in the guidelines is the goal to *'promote the sustainable development of Mallow and Tralee/Killarney as vibrant hub towns - creating a critical mass in terms of population, employment and services, which will enable them to attract investment and people – thereby supporting the role of the Gateway and delivering balanced regional development within the Southwest, through energising smaller towns and rural areas within the sphere of influence'*.

Key elements of the Strategy include:

- Growth in the hubs of Mallow and Tralee Killarney must be prioritised.
- Towns close to the Gateways and Hubs should have organic employment-led growth, bolstered to a certain extent by commutes to the Gateways/Hubs. These towns should retain their own character and provide improved services and quality of life to people living within their catchments.
- Rural and peripheral areas should, at least, retain their current population levels. This goal shall be best achieved by making them more attractive places to live, by increasing service provision in towns and villages.
- A hierarchy of settlement types will be identified. Key roles will be assigned to these towns to help deliver the objectives of the guidelines.

2.5 Local Context - County Development Board Strategy

Meitheal Chiarrai

Meitheal Chiarrai is an economic, social and cultural development strategy for the development of the county over the ten-year period 2002 - 2011. The vision for Meitheal Chiarrai is outlined in a number of Statements:

An Economic Vision

Focus on the comparative strengths of the county in such areas as tourism, agriculture, food production, fisheries and small enterprise development.

A Social and Health Vision

Address the social issues in the county, the need for education and training, the recognition that the quality of lifestyle can be achieved through healthy living and the specific recognition of the needs of people in rural areas.

A Cultural Vision

Building on and preserving Kerry's cultural identity – a unique Kerry experience.

An Infrastructural Vision

Ease of access to the county for all transportation modes. Provision of an adequate information and communications technology infrastructure to overcome the peripheral location of Kerry. The development of energy sources with particular reference to alternative energy methods.

An Environmental Vision

Balanced development between urban and rural areas and the protection of the unique landscape of the county.

The strategy intends to co-ordinate all the economic, social and cultural sectors within the county in achieving the vision of the strategy.

2.6 Údarás na Gaeltachta – Beartas Forbartha 2005-2015

2.6.1 The Údarás na Gaeltachta Development Strategy 2005–2010 outlines the economic, social and cultural development policies for the Gaeltacht and contains particular policies for cultural and linguistic initiatives and language based projects.

2.7 Context Summary

It is within the context of these policy documents that the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan have been formulated. These policies are intended to facilitate development throughout the County. They are not intended to limit development but rather to regulate it in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

2.8 Strategic Issues

2.8.1 The concepts of linkages, critical mass and potential have previously been defined in Section 2.2.2. Identifying the **Potential** of an area, the barriers to development and the needs of the county in order to reach its potential, is a difficult task involving a wide spectrum of economic and cultural groups. However, work has commenced in co-ordinating these different sectors in order to develop an integrated, co-ordinated approach to achieving the potential of the county.

2.8.2 ‘**Linkage**’ is one of the key concepts outlined in the National Spatial Strategy. Due to the **peripherality** of the County the provision of linkages is all the more important. In effect the relevant linkages are in a transportation context, with good broadband connectivity in a telecommunications context.

2.8.3 In order for the County to provide the range of facilities and services desired by the population it needs to achieve and maintain a certain level of population. What is considered to be a **critical mass** of population will vary on the level of service required, so the critical mass necessary to maintain the traditional services of a small village is different to that of a larger town. It is important, however, that policies are in place to promote the critical mass necessary for each level of settlement within the settlement strategy. Promoting the growth of smaller towns and villages does not detract from the demand from the higher order services in larger towns as the population of the smaller towns will still use these higher order services such as swimming pools, hospitals etc.. Recognition of the ‘**Complementary Roles**’ of settlements and acceptance that not every settlement can have everything is critical to the development of a coherent settlement strategy. This concept applies to the larger settlement within the county such as Tralee, Killarney and Listowel, as well as to the smaller settlements throughout the County.

2.8.4 The publication of the **Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines** has required Planning Authorities to identify areas under urban pressure and develop policies to regulate development in these areas by reserving their development potential for persons from the area or having traditional links with the area. This policy is intended to limit ribbon development and urban sprawl as well as providing a more integrated, serviceable town structure.

Much of the demand for one-off rural housing actually originates from deficiencies in the supply of sites and properties in the urban areas, in terms of both availability and cost. The long term costs of living further away from shops, services, schools and leisure activities in terms of travel is often not considered. In addition to the impact on the people themselves, it also has an impact on traffic volume within the adjoining towns and villages. As more people choose to live outside settlements, this situation self perpetuates as population declines and this has a knock on effect on the overall quality and attractiveness of the built environment as well as the viability of shops and services.

2.8.5 The Planning Authority has prepared Local Area Plans for the settlements throughout the County which have identified sufficient lands for residential development and which provides a range of options for persons who wish to reside in a rural area. It is the intention of the Council to review the local area plans within the lifetime of the plan. It is the policy of the Council that the existing provisions, including land-use zoning, of the adopted Local Area Plans will remain in force pending their review.

2.8.6 Much of the growth expected for the County is dependant on inward migration. The population projections and **Critical Mass** of population necessary to lift the County to a higher economic and service provision level as envisaged cannot be achieved by the natural regeneration of its existing population. The County, therefore, needs to identify the reasons why it is better to locate there than in other competing areas throughout the Country.

2.8.7 The main factor which is readily identifiable is “**Quality of Life**”. A clean environment, good educational facilities, good health services, high quality social and cultural facilities, beaches and amenities are readily available. These assets, however, cannot be taken for granted and ongoing efforts to maintain and expand the range and quality of these facilities must be continued. Combined with improved linkages and infrastructure these qualities will constitute the strength of the County. If these strengths are to be capitalised upon they must be matched by efficient, attractive urban environments in each of the settlements.

2.8.8 Nondescript housing estates, poor urban streetscapes and poor **Urban Design** standards do nothing to attract people to live in towns and villages. Design of housing within urban areas is a key consideration, and standards need to encourage well designed housing areas, which fully integrate with the existing settlement pattern, develop neighbourhoods and provide a definite sense of place. Proactive measures, designed to develop neighbourhoods instead of housing estates, a sense of place and identity, instead of anonymous characterless streetscapes, are needed. A high level of design of the **Public Domain**, will increase the quality of the urban environment. These qualities of identity, neighbourhood, high quality public domain and increased social capital will compliment the existing qualities of the County and maximise its attractiveness as a location in which to settle.

2.8.9 Settlements generally develop in response to their natural attributes, constraints and environment. The better the attributes, the more successful the settlement and its growth. The towns and villages throughout the County have evolved on this basis. One restriction which is of particular importance is the ability to dispose of treated effluent.

Many of the settlements in the County are **dispersed rural settlements** which have little or no capacity to dispose of treated effluent. It is considered that such settlements should maintain their existing character and settlement pattern rather than be developed with an individual housing estate which uses up all the existing capacity, with no long-term prospect of future development.

Such development would alter the character of the area to an unacceptable extent and prove detrimental to the community in the long run.

2.8.10 Many areas of the County have been affected by **rural depopulation** in the past. With recent economic growth many areas have managed to halt or reverse this trend but there are a number of areas where depopulation loss persists. Policies need to be developed to promote the strengthening of settlements in these areas to act as a catalyst for reinvigorating them and creating the conditions and environment for population growth. These policies should concentrate on providing the ingredients for growth in the larger settlements initially. These larger settlements should act as the focal point for infrastructural development, population and service provision growth. Pending completion of this infrastructural provision, the smaller settlements should aim to consolidate their existing settlement pattern and maintain their intrinsic qualities and character.

2.8.11 The success of the measures outlined in this Development Plan are to a large extent dependent on population growth and employment. In particular, technological and manufacturing jobs are needed to offset loss in employment within the agricultural sectors and provide more stable employment opportunities than perhaps tourism, which is seasonal, competitive and highly sensitive to international events.

2.8.12 For the long-term growth of the County the quality of life potential available needs to be combined with **sustainable employment opportunities**. Competitive pressures from world markets are increasing, particularly with regard to labour factors. The provision of **high added-value knowledge based industry** is seen as forming a significant part in the provision of sustainable employment in the County. This concept need to be combined with nurturing existing indigenous talent to provide products which are unique to the area and capitalise on creative local talents.

2.8.13 **Tourism growth** will continue to play a major role in the future development of the County. Adaptability and quality are two factors facing this industry as affluence among the indigenous population increases and competing markets become more accessible. The development of walking as a leisure pastime is continually increasing and the majestic scenery of the County makes it ideal to capitalise on this growth area. The Development Plan contains a specific chapter on tourism which highlights its importance for the future development of the County.

2.8.14 Provision and security of **energy** supplies for the future is becoming increasingly uncertain. While there is no consensus on exact 'peak oil' production, there is no doubt that the cost of fossil fuels is set to rise significantly in the coming years with a consequent impact on production costs and competitiveness. The cost of transport will increase significantly and this will have a particular impact on more isolated rural dwellers and communities. While the impacts associated with increased fuel costs might not be felt during the period of the plan, they will certainly be felt throughout the lifetime of developments granted during the period of the plan. It is critical therefore that the plan promotes **sustainable settlement patterns** which can reduce the expected future impacts of rising energy costs.

2.8.15 Reliance on **renewable energy** will increase and it is important, for the reasons previously mentioned, as well as the employment opportunities in this sector, that residential and commercial developments are encouraged to utilise renewable sources of energy in their developments.

2.8.16 In this plan the word 'culture' is deemed to be *the socially transmitted behaviour patterns of the indigenous population of the county together with their associated intellectual and artistic activity, arts, beliefs, institutions and products*. Using this definition it is clear that Kerry has a very strong cultural identity, including its sport, literature, music and in the Gaeltacht areas its language. It is important for the identity of the county and its population that this culture be protected and promoted. This is particularly important for the **Irish Language**.

2.8.17 Resilience is the ability of a community to withstand impacts from outside its area, very often impacts beyond its control. It is desirable that the development of the county should maximize its resilience against future adverse impacts. Measures of resilience can include:

- Percentage of food grown locally
- Number of locally owned employment sources
- Commuting distance to work
- Level of renewable energy locally produced
- Sustainable local waste treatment and disposable options

2.8.18 There is a wide range of landscapes throughout the County - the flat agricultural lands of North Kerry, the beaches and rugged coastlines and the spectacular Mountain ranges of South Kerry. These landscapes are renowned throughout the world for their beauty. In addition to their environmental and amenity value, these beautiful landscapes are a major economic asset for the County. The sensitivity of these landscapes varies considerably throughout the county. Sensitivity is the ability of a landscape to absorb development without changing its character. Unspoilt mountain wilderness areas obviously have less capacity to absorb development than agricultural field systems and are therefore more sensitive. Another factor of importance in assessing landscape quality and sensitivity is its image value. This is the image that people have of a particular landscape and the value that they put on it. In many areas throughout the County landscapes have exceeded or are reaching capacity. This may be due to pressure from housing, windfarms, quarries or forestry. Protection of landscapes is done through Objectives and the zoning maps for rural areas contained in the Plan. Objectives for the preservation of the character of the landscapes are a mandatory objective under the Planning and Development Act 2000.

2.8.19 The Region also has a high-quality built environment, with a range of designated heritage towns. Marrying the built and natural environment by linking walking trails and scenic drives/routes provides an opportunity to improve the Region's visitor attractions and quality of life for local people, and to protect our built and natural heritage for future generations.

2.9 Overall Strategy

2.9.1 The principal aim of the County Development Plan is to provide for an improved quality of life for all the people in the county while regulating development in a sustainable manner. This can be achieved through the promotion of its social, cultural and employment opportunities, efficient transportation and infrastructure, sufficient housing and community facilities as well as a safe, healthy and clean environment which all contribute to a good quality of life. The County Development Plan promotes these goals.

County Kerry will develop as a place where:

- Its intrinsic qualities, including social, recreational, cultural and environmental assets, combined with high quality employment opportunities, will provide a unique location and quality of life for its residents and visitors.

- The settlements will be vibrant and distinctive communities that have individual roles and provide for the social, economic and employment needs of their residents and rural catchment. They will develop as attractive locations in which to live and work and will provide a broad range of residential options.
- The high quality of urban design, and the multi-disciplinary input required, shall be such as to create a high quality working, amenity and residential environment for the occupants of each settlement. In addition development shall serve to enhance the urban environment and make the settlement more attractive for its residents and visitors.
- Rural depopulation will be countered through the provision of a network of viable vibrant settlements providing the services necessary to sustain the rural population.
- The infrastructure, environment and the coordinated support of all agencies for the creation of employment opportunities, particularly in indigenous creative and knowledge based industries, will be a priority underpinning the future development of the County.
- The Irish language will be preserved and promoted as a living daily-use language and Gaeltacht communities will be supported in order to strengthen and expand the social networks that nourish Irish as the community language.
- The negative effects of peripherality will be minimised through the provision of adequate infrastructure and high quality communications.
- New development will contribute to the goals of sustainable development, including:
 - respecting the existing natural, built and cultural character of the County, including the open countryside,
 - making best use of existing social and physical infrastructure.
 - contributing to the provision of high quality social infrastructure within settlements.
- The resilience of the county to adverse external factors will be minimized through promotion of greater security for the quality of life of its citizens.
- The reduction of greenhouse gas emissions will be an integral part of development management and policy formulation.
- The biodiversity of the natural environment will be protected and promoted.

2.10 Overall Objectives

Objective No.	Overall Objectives
	It is an objective of the Council to:
OS 2-1	Provide an improved quality of life for all the citizens of the area by promoting the area's economic potential, protecting its natural and built environment and safeguarding its cultural heritage.
OS 2-2	Provide for the development of the area in a manner which is sustainable and protects its social, cultural, environmental and economic assets for future generations and is compliant with relevant EU and national legislation.
OS 2-3	Provide for balanced growth throughout the area by promoting the strengthening of rural communities and provide the infrastructure to facilitate job creation in these areas.
OS 2-4	Strengthen towns and villages throughout the County, improve the infrastructure provided, develop the critical mass necessary to maintain and expand the service provision within them, and make them more attractive places in which to live. In this plan, the term village is used to describe a close group of contiguous dwellings and services including shops etc. with a defined urban structure. It does not include a grouping of one-off rural housing dispersed over a townland or group of townlands.
OS 2-5	Promote the development of the Tralee Killarney Hub as a means of strengthening the economic base of the County and acting as a focus for inward investment.
OS 2-6	Ensure that the existing provisions, including land-use zoning, of the adopted Local Area Plans will remain in force pending their review during the lifetime of this Plan.
OS 2-7	Provide a high quality of design in private and public development, increasing the quality of the public realm while maintaining the character, form and settlement pattern of the villages.
OS 2-8	Provide the infrastructure and support for the development and expansion of employment opportunities, including indigenous knowledge based industries.
OS 2-9	Protect the linguistic and cultural heritage of the County and promote Irish as the living community language.
OS 2-10	Promote renewable energy measures and sustainable settlement patterns in order to promote energy conservation and sustainable communities and travel patterns in the future.

Objective No.	Overall Objectives
OS 2-11	Protect the landscape of the County as an economic asset in addition to its intrinsic beauty and amenity value.
OS 2-12	Facilitate where possible, in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development, family members on their own land.
OS 2-13	To ensure that the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions will be incorporated into development management and policy formulation in the county.
OS 2-14	To protect and promote the natural biodiversity of the County through development management and as a core principle of policy formulation.
OS 2-15	Ensure that all plans and programmes during the lifetime of this plan are screened for the requirements of Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment – The SEA Directive and the associated Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations, 2004.