

Chapter 9: Social Inclusion, Community and Cultural Development

9.1 Aim

To promote settlements and communities where people can live and work, with access to a range of quality community and cultural facilities which are a vital component in increasing social inclusion and contributing to the quality of life for all.

This chapter is prepared in the context of the following documents:

International Context

- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

National Context

- Project Ireland 2040 The National Planning Framework 2018
- Our Communities: A Framework Policy for Local and Community Development in Ireland, 2015
- National Physical Activity Plan 2018
- Realising our Rural Potential, the Governments Action Plan for Rural Development, 2017
- Our Public Libraries 2022 – Inspiring, Connecting and Empowering Communities
- Culture 2025 – A Framework Policy to 2025, DAHRRGA, 2016
- Better Outcomes, Brighter Future – The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020
- Healthy Ireland - A Framework for Improved Health and Well Being, 2013-2025
- Ready, Steady, Play! A National Play Policy, National Children’s Office, 2019
- The Provision of Schools and the Planning System: A Code of Practice for Planning Authorities, DEHLG, 2008
- Childcare Facility Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DEHLG, 2001
- Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative Survey, Department of Health, 2016
- National Positive Ageing Strategy, Department of Health, 2013
- National Strategy for Traveller and Roma Integration 2017-2021
- National Disability Authorities Strategic Plan 2019-2021

- Great Outdoors - A Guide for Accessibility 2018
- National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2018-2021
- Get Ireland Active, National Physical Activity Plan 2016
- Europe 2020 Strategy
- National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2018-2021
- World Health Organisation, Promoting Physical Activity and Active Living in Urban Areas – The Role of Local Governments 2006
- National Anti-Poverty Strategy

Regional Context

- Eastern and Midland Regional, Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019

Local Context

- Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan, 2016-2021
- Offaly Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme 2018-2022
- Age Friendly Strategy for Offaly 2018-2021
- Healthy Offaly Plan 2018-2020
- Offaly County Council and Offaly Local Development Company's Joint Playground Policy 2009-2013
- Offaly Sports Partnership Strategic Plan 2016-2020
- Offaly Culture and Creative Strategy 2018-2022
- Connecting People, Connecting Places; A Strategy for Walking and Cycling, 2015
- Offaly Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy 2015
- Offaly Heritage Plan 2017-2022
- County Offaly Arts Strategy 2018-2022
- Offaly Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018 to 2022
- Draft Offaly County Library Development Plan 2018 to 2022
- Offaly County Council Accessibility Project 2020

9.2 Context

In general, the purpose of the County Development Plan in relation to community, social and cultural development is to include appropriate policies and objectives which relate to the allocation and reservation of land, development management standards and provision of specific social, community and cultural facilities within the county.

Place is intrinsic to achieving good quality of life; the quality of our immediate environments, our ability to access services and amenities, such as education and healthcare, shops and parks. The leisure and social interactions available to us all combine to make a real difference to people lives.

The term ‘community services’ / ‘social infrastructure’ potentially covers a very broad range of infrastructure and service provision to meet the needs of Offaly’s residents. The emphasis in the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended), is placed on childcare and educational facilities, including the services such as pre-schools, Naionraí (Irish language playgroups), day-care services, crèches, preschools, Montessori schools, playgroups, childminding, after-school groups, primary, secondary and special needs schools. Other community facilities / social infrastructure includes places of worship, burial grounds, hospital, garda stations and health centres, facilities for older people and persons with disabilities, libraries and community halls.

A collaborative approach by all stakeholders i.e. state, local authority, voluntary and community groups and the private sector on the identification and provision of community facilities is required on an on-going basis to ensure that appropriate facilities are provided, when necessary. The Council plays an integral role in facilitating and supporting these identified needs.

9.3 Social Inclusion

Social inclusion ensures that all sections of the population can access high quality public services, education, amenities, employment and housing in an equal manner without discrimination and/or physical barriers. This Plan contains measures aimed at tackling poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion and its implementation will make a positive contribution to communities in the county. Social infrastructure plays an important role in developing strong and inclusive communities.

The Council will work to support the implementation of the Offaly Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) which aims to tackle poverty, social exclusion and long-term unemployment through local engagement and partnership between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies.

9.4 Voluntary and Community Groups

Offaly County Council recognises the essential contribution that voluntary groups, community groups and sporting groups make to the quality of life that residents in the county enjoy.

The Offaly Public Participation Network (PPN) which comprises community and voluntary groups from across the county, is one of the main links through which the local authority connects with the

community, voluntary and environmental sectors. It provides the opportunity to create greater synergies between local government and community development placing community development at the heart of local government. The Offaly Public Participation Network will assist the work of the Council regarding the needs of the community and the Council will actively engage with the Network when implementing the objectives of this Plan.

The Department of Rural and Community Development's CLÁR programme provides funding for small-scale infrastructural projects in rural areas that have suffered significant levels of population decline. CLÁR aims to support sustainable development in identified areas by attracting people to live and work there. The funding works in conjunction with local funding and on the basis of locally identified priorities. Offaly Council will continue to consult and work with local communities in accessing available funding for CLÁR projects.



Figure 9.1 Water Sports on the Grand Canal in Daingean

9.5 Community Facilities

The term 'community facilities' covers a variety of amenities which are responsive to and meet the needs of individual communities. The Council will seek to ensure that an appropriate range of community facilities is provided in all communities taking account of the county's young and growing older population and growth targets identified in the Core Strategy of this County Development Plan. In order to prevent the loss of community facilities, the Council will discourage their change of use to non-community uses.

9.6 Educational Services

Central Government, through the Department of Education and Skills, is responsible for the delivery of quality educational facilities and services. The Planning Authority's role in education provision is in ensuring that adequate serviceable land is available in appropriate locations to meet current and envisaged future requirements beyond the Plan period. Optimally, schools need to be located along sustainable transport corridors (i.e. walking, cycling, public transport).

9.7 Other Education/Skills Training/Third Level

A number of post second level courses are available within Offaly which provide additional education and training, further equipping candidates for the workforce, for example Offaly Local Development Company courses, Offaly Outreach Education Project, Education Training Board, Adult Education Centre and Solas. The Council will encourage groups and providers to examine mechanisms to increase the availability of all existing community educational facilities and training resources to a wider section of the population.

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-31 states that by 2031 there will be a significant increase in the number of people in the 15-24 years' age cohort which will lead to greater demand for third level education. The Council considers that Offaly has the potential to accommodate multiple campuses based on its sectoral strengths in areas such as food, energy, biodiversity, pharma and medtech, engineering and advanced manufacturing. Tullamore can provide complementary third level outreach educational facilities supporting the Midland Regional Hospital and its continued development as a Teaching/University Hospital. There also exists an opportunity to develop a centre in the county for exploring/evaluating new technologies in energy provision with Research and Development components based on the expertise available in the Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT), University of Limerick (UL) and Maynooth University nexus.

9.8 Dual Use of Community Facilities

The DoEHLG Guidelines on Childcare Facilities (2001) recommend the use of school premises to cater for after-school care and schools are encouraged to examine how they can help address the demand for such activities. The dual use of educational facilities, where it does not conflict with the delivery of the educational service (i.e. outside school hours and during school holidays) can contribute to meeting the wider needs of the community by helping to satisfy demand for a variety of activities.

Where new schools or other community facilities are proposed, opportunities will be sought to ensure that they are designed in such a way as to facilitate dual use.

9.9 Co-Working Hubs

The development of co-working hubs in the form of digital, remote working, co-working or creative spaces has the potential to stimulate local economies and offer people more flexible work options in turn reversing or reducing commuting levels from our towns and villages. The Council will support the establishment of co-working hubs as either standalone facilities themselves or ancillary to public buildings, libraries and community centres in our towns and villages as appropriate. Chapter 5 Economic Development Strategy addresses remote working and co-working hubs further.

9.10 Childcare

The National Anti-Poverty Strategy¹ states that the provision of childcare is essential to enable parents to participate in the workforce and to obtain an income that provides an acceptable standard of living for them and their children. Quality childcare can also make a significant contribution to child development in the early years of a child's life. Increasing numbers of people in the workforce and changing lifestyles has increased the demand for childcare facilities within our communities. The Council continues to have regard to national guidelines notably 'Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities' 2001. At a local level, the Offaly County Childcare Committee (inter-agency) has the following stated aims:

- To develop a co-ordinated strategy for childcare provision in the county;
- To increase the supply of childcare services and facilities;
- To support and develop local networks of providers;
- To update the baseline data provided in the National Childcare Census;
- To develop an information strategy concerning the provision of childcare in the county; and
- To establish and maintain effective links with the appropriate structures i.e. Local Area Partnerships, Health Service Executive (HSE) etc.

Offaly County Council's role in relation to childcare facilities is in implementing national guidelines and local policies and in encouraging and supporting adequate measures which are consistent with the size and scale of development proposals.

9.11 Play Facilities for Children

The Council recognises the need to maximise opportunities for play facilities for children both within the natural and built environment. The Council has adopted a joint playground policy with Offaly Local Development Committee (OLDC), 'Joint Playground Policy 2009-2013' as extended. It is based on a partnership approach between the Council, OLDC and local communities.

¹ This may be updated if and when the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2018-2021 is adopted.



Figure 9.2 Lloyd Town Park and Playground Tullamore

9.12 Youth

The Council recognises the role of Comhairle Na nÓg, and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), in giving children and young people the opportunity to be involved in the development of local services and policies. It is recognised that a multi-agency approach is necessary in meeting the needs of the youth within the county. Such needs include recreational opportunities, including both formal and informal activities i.e. ‘youth cafes’, sports facilities and casual areas where young people can engage with each other.

9.13 People with Disabilities

Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.²

For persons with mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, it is important to ensure facilities such as quiet rooms and sensory gardens are incorporated into development proposals where appropriate and that the needs of this group are taken into consideration in the selection of building materials.

For people with mobility impairments, ensuring level/ramped access to buildings, dished kerbs and the provision of appropriate parking and toilet facilities are important. For people with visual impairments, tactile paving that can be felt underfoot and audible signals at pedestrian crossings are necessary.

² UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 1.

The Irish Wheelchair Association and Sport Ireland’s ‘Great Outdoors - A Guide for Accessibility’ (2018) provides guidance on accessible design to make specific outdoor environments more available and accessible for people with a disability including trails/greenways, public parks / playgrounds and the built environment in the great outdoors.



Figure 9.3 Quiet Room

9.14 Older People

Offaly County Council recognises that the county has an ageing population. In 2016, Offaly had a slightly higher than average proportion of older adults with 13.6% of the population in the county aged 65 or over compared to the national average of 13.4%. The Planning Authority supports the ‘Offaly Age Friendly County Strategy 2018-2021.

In this Strategy, the Offaly Age Friendly Alliance sets out the goals and priorities for 2018-2021 and describes how it aims to help Offaly to become a great county within which to grow old. The Strategy focuses on the following eight high level strategic goals to bring about a positive and enabling environment for Offaly’s ageing population:

- Theme One:** Outdoors Spaces and Buildings
- Theme Two:** Housing
- Theme Three:** Social Participation
- Theme Four:** Transport
- Theme Five:** Respect and Social Inclusion
- Theme Six:** Civic Participation and Employment
- Theme Seven:** Communication and Information
- Theme Eight:** Community Support and Health Services



Figure 9.4 Birr Castle Gardens

9.15 Universal Design

One of the Strategic Priorities of the National Disability Authority Strategic Plan 2019-2021 is to continue to build awareness and adoption of the concept of Universal Design, maximizing independence and participation for all. The Council will promote Universal Design and Lifetime Housing in all new developments. This type of housing allows for the future adaption of units as needs present throughout the life cycle of the occupier/owner. It is a proactive step in addressing the housing needs of people with a disability, older people and the diversity of the family unit as well as increasing the value and sustainability of buildings in the long-term. The provision of housing for older people allows for the option of downsizing, thereby releasing larger houses to the market to meet the needs of young families. The Council will support the provision of appropriate housing accommodation for people with disabilities and older people. Such facilities should be integrated wherever possible into established areas in towns and villages, where residents can avail of reasonable access to local services by walking.

9.16 Sport / Recreation / Open Space

Offaly Sports Partnership is an inter-agency group which is a sub structure of Offaly County Council, hosted by the Council and core funded by the Irish Sports Council. Its remit involves the achievement

of sustained local increases in participation levels in sport, physical activity and active living in Offaly in line with the national participation objectives of the Irish Sports Council. The Planning Authority has a role in protecting existing sport / recreation and open space areas and ensuring that adequate land is zoned for development to accommodate sporting and recreational facilities, both active and passive.



Figure 9.5 Start line of running event in O'Connell Square, Edenderry where significant public realm works were carried out in 2017 under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

9.17 Health and Well Being

The Midland Regional Hospital Tullamore (MRHT) is the largest hospital in the midlands, serving a population within Offaly, Laois, Longford and Westmeath in addition to increasing numbers from surrounding counties. The MRHT provides acute care hospital services including a 24-hour emergency department, a trauma centre and it is the regional centre for Orthopaedics, Otolaryngology, Oncology, Haematology, Nephrology and Rheumatology.

The places in which we live, work and play can affect both our physical and mental well-being. Communities that are designed in a way that supports physical activity encourage residents to make healthy choices and live healthier lives.

The provision of public health care services for County Offaly is the responsibility of the Health Service Executive (HSE). The HSE is rebalancing its approach with a shift from secondary care to primary care provision. The primary care model has a stronger emphasis on working with communities and individuals to improve their health and well-being. Building on the national 'Health Strategy Quality and Fairness – A Health System for You', the primary care model aims to ensure everyone has ready access to a broad spectrum of care services through a local primary care team. Primary Care Centres are emerging in the county in recent years and will continue to be facilitated on suitably zoned lands where appropriate, to allow communities access to multidisciplinary health care in easily accessible

locations throughout the county. The Council considers that medical practices should be provided for within town, village, or neighbourhood centres, preferably in purpose built premises and in locations which should have minimal impact on residential amenity.



Figure 9.6 Midland Regional Hospital Tullamore

9.18 Libraries

County Offaly's public library service provides an increasingly important community, information, cultural and outreach facility role within the county. Its county headquarters is situated in Tullamore and there are 8 branches in total throughout the county, namely: Tullamore, Birr, Edenderry, Clara, Banagher, Daingean, Ferbane and Kilcormac, a number of which are open libraries which allow self-service access to the libraries outside normal working hours. The Council will support the provision of library facilities across the county as resources allow.

Offaly County Council is committed to the provision of a new purpose built modern community library and arts space at JKL Street Edenderry. The provision of a new library in Edenderry outlined as a key action in the Draft County Library Development Plan 2018-22 can tie in with the recent regeneration of O'Connell Square to bring vibrancy to the area allowing it to become a key location for both community and businesses alike.



Figure 9.7 Birr Library, Exterior and Interior

9.19 County Archives

Offaly History has built an archives building at Axis Business Park, Tullamore to house the documentary heritage of County Offaly. In an agreement with Offaly County Council, the archives building houses the local government and privately donated archives which were previously held in Tullamore Library. It also holds the manuscript archives collected by Offaly History.

9.20 Offaly Local Development Company

Offaly Local Development Company (OLDC) is a partnership of agencies and groups representing the community, statutory and private sectors. It is managed by Pobal on behalf of the Government and funded by a number of Government departments and agencies to deliver a variety of programmes and supports to people, communities and businesses in County Offaly.

The Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) aims to tackle poverty and social exclusion through partnership and constructive engagement between Government and its agencies and people in disadvantaged communities. Many of OLDC's initiatives form part of the LCDP.

The council will continue to support OLDC in achieving its objectives, in particular in identifying locations where resources are to be deployed.

9.21 Arts, Culture and Language

Arts and cultural facilities not only contribute to the artistic, social and general quality of life of communities, they are also significant contributors to the economy of the County by attracting visitors, investment and job creation.

The importance of arts, culture and language is recognised in Culture 2025 – A Framework Policy to 2025 which sets out a framework committing to increasing resources for arts and heritage, supporting Irish culture on the world stage and improving funding structures for investment in national and local services.

In addition, the Government's Creative Ireland Programme from 2017 to 2022, places creativity at the centre of public policy, aiming to improve access to cultural and creative activity in every county across the country.

The vision is pursued through the Five-Pillars of the Creative Ireland Programme:

- Pillar 1: Enabling the Creative Potential of Every Child
- Pillar 2: Enabling Creativity in Every Community
- Pillar 3: Investing in our Creative and Cultural Infrastructure
- Pillar 4: The Creative Industries: Ireland as a Centre of Excellence in Media Production
- Pillar 5: Unifying our Global Reputation Participation and access are central to the vision.

Local authorities have a crucial role in the overall local delivery of the entire Creative Ireland programme. Offaly's Culture Team has the mandate to lead on Pillar 2, Enabling the Creativity in Every Community. However, the Council's role is not exclusive to Pillar 2 and the Council will collaborate with communities, groups and agencies to assist with developing and delivering the four other pillars.

Offaly County Council has adopted and published a Culture and Creative Strategy 2018 to 2022, which shares the vision of the Creative Ireland programme that every person living in Ireland will have the opportunity to fully realise his or her creative potential.

The Offaly Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018 to 2022 also brings coherence and promotes collaboration between the individual culture based strategies; the Offaly Heritage Plan, the Offaly Arts Plan and the Offaly Libraries Plan, all of which relate to the Offaly Local Economic and Community Development Plan, 2016-2021.

The Council acknowledges the importance of arts and cultural infrastructure to the county and that the renovation of Tullamore Community Arts Centre will be a valuable contribution for the people of Tullamore and surrounds. The Council also acknowledges the contribution of Birr Theatre and Arts Centre and Public Access Arts in Edenderry and will support same, where appropriate.

The Council acknowledges the significance of utilising the Percent for Art Scheme as a means to create unique and meaningful artistic interventions within towns and communities.

Although County Offaly does not have a Gaeltacht area, the Council is cognisant of the importance of promoting Gaelige, the Irish language and that initiatives be supported to aid in this. Furthermore, the Council recognises the need for access to social supports in terms of language, education and employment for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

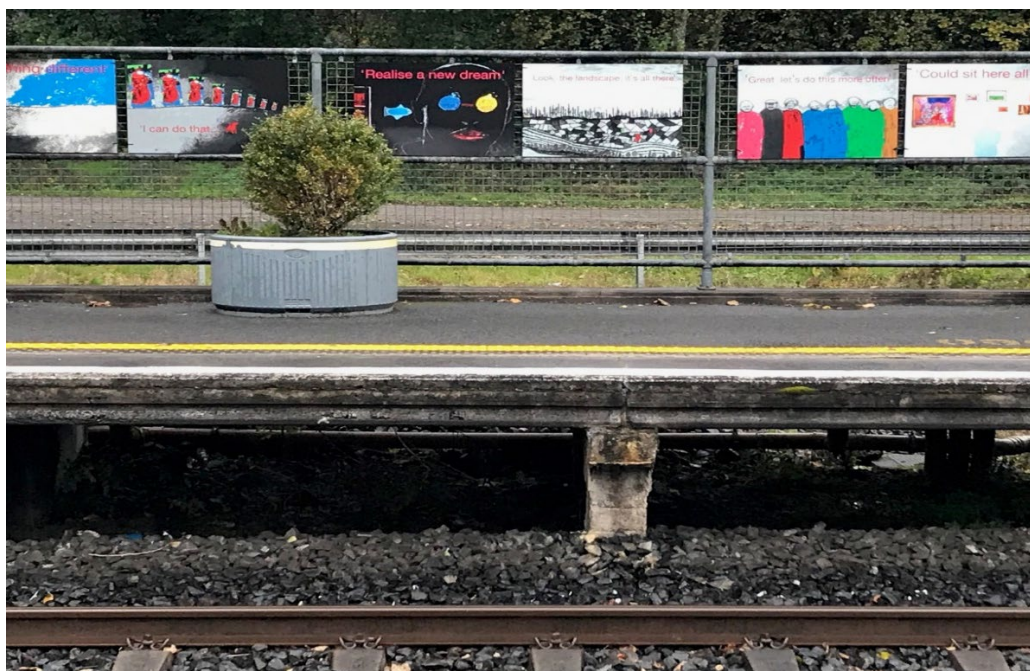


Figure 9.8 Public Art at an Offaly train station



Figure 9.9 Singing Performance during Culture Night held at Áras an Chontae

9.22 Places of Worship and Burial Grounds / Crematoriums

The Council recognises the valuable contribution that places of worship have in a community context and will endeavour to accommodate and facilitate their provision and/or extension, where appropriate.

The Council has a responsibility for the provision of burial grounds including as necessary, the acquisition of lands and the undertaking of any necessary works on these lands. The Offaly County Council Burial Ground Byelaws 2015 outlines the use, protection and management of cemeteries provided by and under the control of Offaly County Council in this regard.

The Planning Authority has a role in ensuring that adequate land is reserved to accommodate such a use in accordance with future needs within the county. A number of these burial grounds may need to be extended and/or new sites identified over the period of this Plan (2021-2027). The use of crematoriums has increased significantly in recent years but there is currently no such facility serving County Offaly. In recognition of the multi-cultural population of the county and the changing trends in end-of-life service, the Council will support the development of crematorium in the county, where appropriate.

9.23 Fire and Rescue Services

The role of Offaly County Fire and Rescue Service is to prevent the occurrence of fire and to protect life and property throughout the county. There are presently five stations in the county in Birr, Clara, Edenderry, Ferbane and Tullamore. The Council will continue to support the provision of a modern and effective fire service for the county.



Figure 9.10 Offaly Fire Services

9.24 Other Traditional Local Services

Other traditional local services such as small shops, post offices and licensed premises provide an important role for the communities of the smaller settlements in particular villages throughout the county. The challenge to maintain local services in our towns and villages is recognised.

9.25 New Residential Developments

All proposals for large scale residential developments must consider existing or future community facilities. Sustainable neighbourhoods require a range of community facilities. The Council will seek to ensure that facilities for social and cultural use, such as resource centres, are available within the community. Such facilities play an important role in helping to create a vibrant community and thereby contribute to the quality of life of the residents in the area and are vital to their wellbeing. This requirement will ensure that new residential areas in the county will have access to local community facilities. Refer to Chapter 13 Development Management Standards.

9.26 Naming of New Developments

Place names are part of our cultural heritage and the Council actively seeks to ensure that this rich heritage is protected and enhanced through the naming of new residential and amenity developments.

Naming of streets and residential developments shall reflect the old local place names in Irish and local people of note, heritage, language or topographical features as appropriate.

The use of the Irish language is strongly encouraged. However, mixing Irish and English in one name is not considered appropriate. When choosing an Irish name, for example which may describe a geographic feature in the locality, the grammar and spelling of each word must be correct.

In order to ensure the above and to avoid confusion and duplication, the naming of developments will require the prior agreement of the Planning Authority. Proposed names shall be submitted to the Planning Authority and agreed prior to launching any advertising campaign for the development.

9.27 Social Inclusion, Community and Cultural Development Policies

General

SICCDP-01 It is Council policy to assist, where feasible, in the provision and extension of social, community and cultural facilities and amenities within the county in a low carbon climate resilient and environmentally sustainable manner to serve individual communities throughout the county.

SICCDP-02 It is Council policy to identify and facilitate the development of suitable sites for community facilities within the county, particularly in newly developing areas. These sites should be easily accessible (walking and cycling) and promote the use of public transport.

SICCDP-03 It is Council policy to support the implementation of the Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan in collaboration with the Local and Economic Development Committee to reduce the number of people in or at risk of social exclusion.

SICCDP-04 It is Council policy that proposals for new developments will have regard to the Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009) in relation to sustainable neighbourhoods to provide new facilities (including play facilities) for community use. Proposals should be in suitable locations and be compatible with adjoining developments. Such proposals will be subject to other policies of the Development Plan, in particular those concerning open space provision. Further, it is Council policy to encourage the provision of multi-functional buildings, which are adaptable to accommodating a range of community facilities, where appropriate. (This is particularly apparent in the case of new housing estates, whereby a crèche facility can be designed to be re-developed in subsequent years, if required, for an alternative community facility). Further, it is Council policy that the multi-use of public spaces will be encouraged.

SICCDP-05 It is Council policy to facilitate the co-location and shared use by community groups of community facilities, amenities and schools and to ensure communities are active during the day and into the evening, to use land more efficiently and to facilitate opportunities for further inclusion of community participation.

SICCDP-06 It is Council policy to facilitate a more diverse and socially inclusive society that targets equality of opportunity and a better quality of life for all citizens, through improved integration and greater accessibility in the delivery of sustainable communities and the provision of associated services.

SICCDP-07 It is Council policy to support 'Offaly County Council Accessibility Project 2020, (and any updated editions) and any key recommendations in relation to the physical environment.

Childcare

SICCDP-08 It is Council policy to encourage the provision of childcare facilities in residential areas, employment areas, retail centres and other areas as appropriate, when development proposals are put forward for consideration.

SICCDP-09 It is Council policy to encourage the provision of childcare facilities as an integral part of proposals for new residential developments. The Planning Authority will have regard to the DEHLG's Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2001 (as may be updated) in relation to the provision of childcare facilities.

SICCDP-10 It is Council policy to assist the County Childcare Committee in identifying priority areas within the county for the provision of childcare facilities.

Older People and People with Disabilities

SICCDP-11 It is Council policy to support 'the Offaly Age Friendly County Programme 2018-2021' as implemented by the Offaly Age Friendly Alliance (and any updated editions) and any key actions in relation to the physical environment.

SICCDP-12 It is Council policy that residential care homes for older people, retirement homes, nursing homes, independent living units, assisted living units, retirement villages and sheltered accommodation are located within defined settlement boundaries and are appropriate in scale to the size of the settlement. The provision of these accommodation types within the open countryside is considered only in such cases where it is clearly demonstrated that due to the nature of the services to be provided, the open countryside is necessary and that no suitable alternative sites are available within a nearby settlement.

SICCDP-13 It is Council policy to ensure that all buildings, public open spaces, recreational and amenity areas are accessible for people with disabilities, having regard to;

- Part M of the Building Regulations and the requirement for Disability Access Certificates (DACs)
- Buildings for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach (National Disability Authority, 2012);
- Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas: Guidelines for Planning Authorities and its companion document Urban Design Manual (DEHLG, 2009); and
- Great Outdoors - A Guide for Accessibility (2018)

SICCDP-14 It is Council policy to cater for all levels of disability, through the appropriate mitigation of the built environment for example, through the selection of building materials; the provision of quiet rooms and sensory gardens where appropriate; and in the design of pedestrian facilities for the visually impaired.

SICCDP-15 It is Council Policy to promote Universal Design and well-designed lifetime adaptable and age friendly housing in accordance with best practice and the policies and principles contained in Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach (National Disability Authority, 2012) and Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Area: Guidelines for Planning Authorities and its companion document Urban Design Manual (DEHLG, 2009) and particularly in infill and brownfield developments walkable to existing services and facilities.

SICCDP-16 It is Council policy to ensure that new social infrastructure developments are accessible and inclusive for a range of users by adopting a universal design approach and provide for an age friendly society in which people of all ages can live full active, valued and healthy lives.

Young People and Children

SICCDP-17 It is Council policy to consider the needs of children and young people, including those with disabilities and additional needs, in the provision of indoor and outdoor recreational facilities.

Open Space / Amenity Facilities

SICCDP-18 It is Council policy to preserve the land use of existing public and private recreation areas, including sports clubs, built leisure facilities and open space areas. In exceptional circumstances, a change of use may be sought, but must demonstrate that alternative recreational provisions are provided in a suitable location. Further, it is Council policy to identify, where possible and appropriate, sites for possible future extensions of public open space areas and amenities within settlement plans.

SICCDP-19 It is Council policy to encourage and facilitate the provision of community and recreational infrastructure as an integral component of proposed new residential schemes and in particular, the provision of playgrounds for children.

SICCDP-20 It is Council policy to support the development of dedicated youth spaces in towns and villages and the development of multi-function spaces in Sráids and the open countryside.

Education Facilities

SICCDP-21 It is Council policy to liaise with and to facilitate the Department of Education and Skills in the provision of education facilities, as appropriate. This includes the identification and reservation of sufficient land to meet the need for expansion of existing schools and/or provision of new schools in accordance with the county's settlement hierarchy, requirements of individual settlements, their catchment area and the requirements of the relevant education authority, in accordance with 'The Provision of Schools and the Planning System, A Code of Practice for Planning Authorities', the Department of Education and Science, and the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2008).

SICCDP-22 It is Council policy to ensure that no significant residential developments proceed without an assessment of existing school capacity or the provision of new school's facilities in tandem with the development.

SICCDP-23 It is Council policy to give careful consideration to the appropriateness and location of fast food outlets in the vicinity of schools and, where considered appropriate, to restrict the opening of

new fast food/takeaway outlets in close proximity to schools so as to protect the health and wellbeing of school-going children.

Co-Working Hubs

SICCDP–24 It is Council policy to support and facilitate the establishment of co-working/ remote working hubs and creative hubs as either standalone facilities themselves or ancillary to public buildings, libraries and community centres or in towns and village centres as appropriate.

Libraries

SICCDP–25 It is Council policy to implement the Offaly County Library Development Plan 2010-2014 (as extended) and any subsequent Library Development Plans.

SICCDP–26 It is Council policy to ensure that the County Library Service is strongly positioned to support: the knowledge society, social inclusion, e-Government, life-long learning initiatives, local studies and archive services, children’s services, services to rural communities, the housebound and older people.

SICCDP–27 It is Council policy to support the refurbishment and upgrade of the libraries at Banagher, Daingean, Ferbane and Kilcormac, in accordance with the Offaly County Council, Library Development Plan.

Arts, Culture and Language

SICCDP–28 It is Council policy to implement the Creative Ireland Programme 2017-22, Council’s Arts Strategy 2018-2022 and the Offaly Culture and Creative Strategy 2018-2021.

SICCDP–29 It is Council policy to maximise the per cent for art scheme for Offaly in relation to its major capital projects which provides opportunities for artists of all disciplines to create work for the public realm. Public capital projects, for example: housing developments, roads, water and waste water treatment schemes, as well as hospitals, schools and libraries, have a percentage of the total capital costs allocated for the creation of a work of art. It is Council policy to reflect a commitment to, and recognition of, the diversities of the scheme in line with national guidelines.

SICCDP–30 It is Council policy to support initiatives at promoting Gaeilge, the Irish language, and the need for access to social supports in terms of language, education and employment for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

Health and Wellbeing

SICCDP-31 It is Council policy to promote the improvement of health and wellbeing services throughout the county, in particular to encourage the integration of health and wellbeing services and facilities with new and existing community facilities, where feasible.

SICCDP-32 It is Council policy to look favourably upon the development of primary care centre, clinics and facilities for the specific needs of an ageing population, in accessible locations, particularly town centres, which comprise / provide access to a range of healthcare services including general practitioners, nurses / midwives, health care assistants, home help assistants, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, social workers and administrative personnel, as appropriate. The provision of individual healthcare facilities will also be considered, as appropriate.

SICCDP-33 It is Council policy to support the Health Service Executive and other statutory and voluntary agencies in the provision of appropriate healthcare facilities including the development of both the system of hospital care and the provision of community-based primary care facilities.

SICCDP-34 It is Council policy to ensure the integration of safe and convenient alternatives to the car into the design of our communities by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments and integrating physical activity facilities for all ages.

SICCDP-35 It is Council policy to support the key priorities of the Healthy Offaly Plan 2018-2020 (as updated in the future) to promote health and well-being.

SICCDP-36 It is Council policy to support the designation of the Midland Regional Hospital Tullamore as a major trauma centre, its continued development as a 'teaching' hospital and the potential of a 'regional' hospice at this location.

Burial Grounds/Crematoriums

SICCDP-37 It is Council policy to protect the cultural heritage of historical burial grounds within the county and to encourage their management and maintenance in accordance with conservation principles.

SICCDP-38 It is Council policy to facilitate the development of new or extended burial grounds and crematoria by the zoning of land at suitable locations and providing local authority burial grounds subject to appropriate safeguards with regard to environmental, noise and traffic impacts.

SICCDP-39 It is Council policy to consider handing Council graveyards back to communities to allow them to be cared for by the community, as appropriate.

SICCDP-40 It is Council policy to implement the provisions of the Offaly County Council Byelaws 2015 in relation to the use, protection and management of cemeteries provided by and under the control of Offaly County Council.

Places of Worship

SICCDP-41 It is Council policy to support and facilitate the development of places of worship and multi-faith facilities at appropriate locations, such as town and village centres.

Traditional Local Services

SICCDP-42 It is Council policy to support and encourage traditional local services such as small shops, post offices, and licensed premises, acknowledging their important role in communities and smaller settlements, particularly villages and Sráids throughout the county.

9.28 Social Inclusion, Community and Cultural Developments

Education

SICCDO-01 It is an objective of the Council that the provision of new educational facilities are located within existing settlements and thereby out-of-town locations are considered only in exceptional circumstances.

Open Spaces / Amenity

SICCDO-02 It is an objective of the Council to develop open spaces throughout the county which will encourage a range of recreational and amenity activities that will cater for both active and passive needs.

Play Facilities

SICCDO-03 It is an objective of the Council to develop a partnership approach in funding and developing children's play opportunities throughout the county, in accordance with '*Ready Steady Play*,' A National Play Policy and Offaly County Council and Offaly Local Development Committee, Joint Playground Policy 2009-2013' as extended and any subsequent policies.

Library Facilities

SICCDO-04 It is an objective of the Council to support the refurbishment of libraries at Banagher, Daingean, Ferbane and Kilcormac, in accordance with the Offaly County Library Development Plan, as resources allow.

SICCDO-05 It is an objective of the Council to develop a new purpose built modern community library and arts space at JKL Street Edenderry.

Fire and Rescue Services

SICCDO-06 It is an objective of the Council to support the provision of a modern and effective fire and rescue services for the county.