
4.0 DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

4.0 General

- 4.0.1 The Planning Authority is required under the Planning and Development Act 2000 to control development, ensuring that permissions granted under the Act are in accordance with the proper planning and development of the area and consistent with the policies and objectives of the plan. The Rathangan Local Area Plan is the statutory plan regulating land use, development and conservation in the town of Rathangan.

The purpose of this section of the plan is to ensure that a high standard of design, layout and function for all new development, to conserve what is good in the existing built and natural environment, and to protect the amenities of the town.

Development Control will be exercised by the Council in a positive manner, having regard to the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000, and in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the town.

Discussions with the Planning Authority prior to the submission of planning applications are useful in helping to clarify policies and issues for both the Planning Authority and developer. Any such discussions will take place without prejudice to the decision of the Planning Authority on the individual or other development proposals. Development proposals that are consistent with the provisions of the plan will not necessarily be permitted.

Development proposals may be subject to other regulations and statutes, covering fire, air and water pollution etc., as well as building regulations. Developer's attention is drawn to their obligation to cater for the needs of the disabled under Part M of the Building Regulations.

In cases where development has commenced or is being carried out without planning permission or in breach of a permission, the Council will take enforcement action. The developer is obliged to comply with all conditions attached to a planning permission and if conditions are stated to be carried out prior to the commencement of development, the developer shall comply with same.

4.1 Development Standards

4.1.1 Zoning

The Council will seek to secure the development of lands and properties in accordance with the zoning objectives set out in Section 3 of this plan.

4.1.2 Site Coverage

Site coverage standards are intended to avoid the adverse effects of over development. Site coverage is calculated by dividing the total area of ground covered by buildings by the total ground area within the site curtilage. The maximum site coverage shall be 50% for residential development and 66% for industrial, retail and commercial development. Within the Town Centre Zone, the maximum site coverage shall be 80% for all development.

A particular site coverage standard shall be acceptable only where it is consistent with other standards such as open space requirements, car parking, plot ratio, building lines and building heights, fire safety and building regulations and the amenity of adjoining dwellings.

4.1.3 Plot Ratio

The purpose of plot ratio standards is to prevent the adverse effect of over-development on the layout and amenity of buildings on the one hand and to ensure an adequate sense of enclosure and the efficient and sustainable use of serviced land on the other hand.

Plot ratio is the gross building floor area divided by the gross site area. The gross floor area is the sum of all floor space within the external walls of the buildings, excluding plant, tank rooms and car parking areas. The gross site area is all land within the curtilage of the site. Generally the maximum plot ratio standard shall be 1.0 for all development. Within the Town Centre the maximum plot ratio shall be 2.0.

4.1.4 Building Lines

Building lines in the urban environment define and contain public space. They are also intended to provide protection from the noise and fumes associated with traffic, allow for the provision of off-street car parking and allow for future road development.

Generally, in determining applications for development works the Council will seek to ensure that development is not carried out in front of established building lines or in a position where it would be in conflict with the building lines determined by the Council to be appropriate for that area.

Maintenance of the traditional street line is of particular importance in the Town Centre area. However, in specific situations, it may not be in the interests of good planning to enforce a rigid standard for building lines. Consequently, the Planning Authority, in the interests of maintaining a good townscape, will examine each application on its own merits.

4.1.5 Building Heights

A high building is defined as one which is significantly higher than neighbouring or nearby buildings. In a number of locations, particularly within the town centre, consideration may be given to developments in which an increase in building height is proposed, especially where this provides added definition to the streetscape. Where buildings front onto large expanses of open space or wide streets and roads, taller buildings help give definition to the space or road. In such situations buildings of up to four storeys may be acceptable.

The building height of proposed developments will generally be considered in terms of the extent and location of the site, its relationship to open space, the width of the road or street onto which it faces and its setting within the town.

4.1.6 Car Parking

In all developments the Planning Authority will normally require the provision of car parking spaces within or convenient to the site of the development. The provision should be based on the extent to which the development is likely to generate demand for additional parking spaces. The parking standards given in Table 4.1 shall apply.



Fig 4.1 In the interests of security car parking should be overlooked by buildings where possible

| Type of Development | Relevant Car Parking Standards |
|---|--|
| House and flats (3 bedrooms or less) | 1 car spaces per dwelling unit + 1 visitors parking space per 2 dwelling units |
| Houses (4 bedrooms or more) | 2 car spaces per dwelling unit |
| Shops (< 250 sq. m. gross) | 1 car space per 24 sq.m. of gross floorspace |
| Shops (250 - 1,000 sq. m. gross) | 1 car space per 18 sq.m. of gross floorspace |
| Large stores (> 1,000 sq. m. gross) | 1 car space per 12 sq.m. of gross floorspace |
| Banks, Financial institutions | 1 car space per 14 sq. m. of gross floor space |
| Offices (town centre) | 1 car space per 25 sq.m. of gross floorspace |
| Office Park | 1 car space per 20 sq. m. of gross floor space |
| Industry/manufacturing | 1 car space per 33 sq. m. of gross floorspace |
| Warehousing | 1 car space per 100 sq. m. of gross floorspace |
| Theatre, cinema, church, stadium | 1 car space per 3 seats |
| Hotels, guest houses (excl. function rooms) | 1 car space per bedroom |
| Lounge bars | 1 car space per 3.75 sq. m. of public floorspace |
| Restaurants | 1 car space per 4.5 sq. m. of public floorspace |
| Take-aways | 1 car space per 18 sq. m. gross floor area |
| Function-room, dance halls, clubs | 1 car space per 3 sq. m. |
| Playing fields | 15 car spaces per pitch |
| Primary Schools | 6 car space per 5 classrooms |
| Secondary Schools | 2 car spaces per classroom |
| Nursing homes | 1 car space per 2 bedrooms |
| Hospitals | 3 car spaces per 2 beds |
| Clinics and Group Medical Practices | 2 car spaces per consultant |

Table 4.1 Car Parking Standards

Note: Large or complex developments may be assessed separately with regard to the circumstances.

The Council reserves the right to alter the above requirements having regard to the circumstances of each particular development and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

In addition to car parking standards sufficient space will be required within the curtilage of the site for all service vehicles involved in the operation of the business or building. The minimum size for a car parking space shall be 2.4 x 4.8m with circulation aisles a minimum 6m wide. Loading bays shall be a minimum 3 x 6m.

Where the provision of car parking is required by this plan, such provision may be met by providing the required spaces within the development or, where the council require, by a contribution in accordance with the powers contained in the Planning and Development Act 2000. Credit will be given for existing authorised use in calculating the above standards.

4.1.7 Parking for the Disabled

In addition to the above, all developments must make provision for car parking for the disabled in accordance with the recommendations of *You Can Park Here*, published by ABLE.

4.1.8 Drainage

Developers will be required to provide efficient systems of drainage with separate surface water drains. On site attenuation of surface water may be required if, in the opinion of the Council, there is a risk of the development causing flooding or significant damage due to storm surges in existing water courses.

4.1.9 Bicycle Parking

The planning authority will require the provision of a minimum level of cycle parking facilities in association with new development and a change of use. Where the provision of cycle parking facilities are intended for use by the staff of that particular

development, stands should be located within the curtilage of the development to ensure effective security and supervision. Cycle stands for use by visitors should be located to maximise convenience to the entrance of buildings, and positioned so as to ensure safety, security and supervision.

The planning authority will also encourage the provision and enhancement of cycle parking facilities where possible at the railway station, public buildings, retail centres and leisure facilities.

Table 4.2 Bicycle Parking Standards

| Type of Development | Relevant Cycle Parking Standards |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| House and flats | 1 stand per dwelling |
| Student Residences | 1 stand per bedroom |
| Shops | 1 stand for every 200 sq.m. of gross floorspace |
| Supermarkets and large stores | 1 stand for every 200 sq.m. of gross floorspace |
| Offices | 1 stand for every 200 sq.m. of gross floorspace |
| Industry | 1 stand for every 200 sq.m. of gross floorspace |
| Warehousing | 1 stand for every 250 sq.m. of gross floorspace |
| Theatre, cinema, church, stadium | 1 stand for every 20 seats |
| Hotels, guest houses | 1 stand per 4 bedrooms |
| Lounge bars | 1 stand for every 30 sq.m. of public floorspace |
| Restaurants | 1 stand for every 30 sq.m. of public floorspace |
| Function-room, dance halls, clubs | 1 stand for every 30 sq.m. |
| Playing fields | 4 stands per pitch |
| Schools | 1 stand per 10 pupils |
| Nursing homes | 1 stand per 8 members of staff |

Note: Large complex developments may be assessed separately with regard to the circumstances.

4.1.10 Public Utilities

The Planning Authority will normally require that all wires, cables and pipes for the provision of public utility services shall be ducted underground to preserve the amenity and visual character of an area, and in the interests of public safety.

4.1.11 Environment

It is the policy of the Planning Authority to minimise the threat of air, land, water or other environmental pollution by use of the statutory powers of the local authority. The attention of developers is drawn to the requirements of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations.

4.1.12 Noise

The Council will seek to ensure that new development does not cause an unacceptable increase in the noise levels affecting surrounding properties and that new development, in turn, will not suffer from unacceptably high noise levels. Generally noise levels should not exceed 68dB (A) 1m outside the most exposed window of any residential unit.

4.1.13 Access for Disabled Persons

The Planning Authority will require that the layout and design of a proposed development gives consideration to the needs of the disabled. Building designs and site layouts shall allow full access to the building for all disabled persons, whether employees, residents or the visiting public.

4.1.14 Access to Land

It is the policy of the Planning Authority to ensure that no development takes place that will prejudice the provision of vehicular and pedestrian access to undeveloped zoned lands.

4.2 Residential Design Standards

4.2.1 Residential Density

The Department of the Environment and Local Government recently published *Residential Density Guidelines for Planning Authorities*, which identifies that increased residential density has the following benefits.

- more economic use of existing infrastructure and serviced land;
- a reduced need for the development of green field sites, urban sprawl and ribbon development;
- reduced need for investment in new infrastructure;
- better access to existing services and facilities; and
- more sustainable commuting patterns.

The guidelines identifies the Development Plan as a method of recognising the importance of achieving higher residential densities in appropriate areas such as brownfield sites, sites in proximity to town centres and public transport nodes, in the interest of providing a more sustainable residential development pattern. The Council will regulate residential density as appropriate, in accordance with these guidelines.

However, it is also recognised that over-development of sites can have an adverse effect on the amenity of adjoining properties and areas, can give rise to significant levels of traffic and has implications for the provision of private open space. The Council recognise that a high quality of design and layout and a good quality living environment, including the availability of proper shopping, transport and leisure infrastructure, are essential if increased residential densities are to be acceptable.

Subject to the over-riding density control for each zoning objective, the indicative densities for various types of residential development are identified in the following table. These standards may be altered in the light of planning advice and guidance from the Department of the Environment and Local Government and revised legislation.

Where the Planning Authority grants permission for higher density developments, the Council reserves the right to request developers to contribute towards the cost of providing larger areas of open space and/or recreational facilities elsewhere in the town. A proportion of the development may also be required to be made available for social and/or affordable housing.

Table 4.3 Indicative Residential Densities per acre

| | Maximum residential density per acre |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 2 storey buildings of apartments ⁶ | 20 dwelling units |
| 3 storey buildings of apartments/duplexes ⁷ | 26 dwelling units |
| Terraced housing and maisonettes | 10 dwelling units |
| Semi-detached Housing | 8 dwelling units |
| detached housing | 6 dwelling units |

4.2.2 Design of Layouts

Layouts for residential development should be designed to create a strong sense of identity for residential areas.

Where land is being developed for housing the following considerations will be taken into account in the assessment of the proposal:

⁶ Generally apartments are only acceptable within the town centre zone

⁷ For the purpose of this plan a house and a maisonette is defined as a dwelling with its own external access while an apartment, flat or duplex is a dwelling accessed from an internal lobby or hallway.

- The need for land to be used economically;
- The capacity of the infrastructure to cater for the design population;
- The adequacy of present and future community facilities;
- Appropriate density (minimum or maximum);
- Adequate privacy for individual houses, flats etc.;
- The safety of proposed layouts and the capacity of existing roads to absorb future development;
- Adequate provision for car parking, open space, landscaping and planting; and
- Integration with existing development and the preservation of features on site.

While residential estates may be laid out in the traditional manner of roads, cul-de-sacs, footpaths and verges, the Council will welcome more innovative layouts. Well designed cluster layouts can create attractive environments at higher residential densities.

The Council encourages a mix of residence sizes and layouts. Apartments, maisonettes, terraced housing, detached and semi-detached housing can be combined to create interesting and innovative layouts while at the same time ensuring the most efficient use is made of the land available.

Three storey apartment or maisonette development may give a more appropriate scale fronting on to large open spaces or wide distributor roads, while more intimate spaces can be created with traditional two storey houses developed in clusters to the rear. Generally however apartments, or retail developments with apartments above, should be located in the town centre zone.

Terraced housing can create a stronger sense of enclosure than semi-detached or detached houses. The judicious siting of single aspect housing, where the private open space to the front of the house is minimal, can reduce the apparent width of the roadway, again helping to define and enclose a semi-private space and acting as a traffic calming measure.

Housing schemes designed in accordance with An Foras Forbatha's 'Streets for Living' (1976), Places, Streets and Movement (DETR, London, 1998) the 'Essex' and 'Cheshire' design guides (published by the eponymous English County Councils) shall be particularly encouraged. The Planning Authority will give advice to estate designers and builders and may permit a higher density where 'courtyard' or 'precinct' type layouts are proposed.

Proposals for large residential developments (75 units or more) should be presented in the context of a local area plan where access for residents to public transport, schools and child-care facilities, shops and recreational facilities are all clearly indicated. The proposed management and on-going maintenance of public open space within the scheme should also be included.

Developer's attention is drawn to the recommended standards of the *Childcare Facilities; Consultation Draft of Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (and as subsequently amended) issued by the Department of Environment and Local Government, to which the planning authority will have regard.

4.2.3 Road Layouts in Residential Areas

The layout and detailed design of roads is crucial to the shaping of all developments. Road layouts should be considered as part of the overall concept and should not be the starting point of the design layout. Housing layouts dictated solely by the

geometry and size of roads lead to bland, anonymous residential housing estates with no 'sense of place' or neighbourhood.

Instead, the arrangement of buildings to create enclosure and a sense of space with which residents can identify should be the primary consideration. Traffic demands generated by the resultant layout can then be checked against the requirements of road engineering standards. In this way attractive urban forms, where security for pedestrians, cyclists and children and 'traffic calming' to ensure low ambient traffic speeds can be designed in to the layout from the outset, rather than added as an afterthought.

Distributor roads must be not less than 7.3m.

For more detailed guidance on the design of road layouts the designer is referred to *Design Bulletin 32, Residential Roads and Footpaths – Layout Considerations*, (2nd edition) published by the British Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions. This guide sets out minimum carriageway widths for the free movement of traffic. Areas for other functions, such as parking or cycle lanes, should be included as an addition to the minimum widths. The *DoELG Recommendations for Site Development Works* (1998) are also acceptable.

4.2.4 Car Parking in Residential Areas

Car parking standards are laid out in table 4.1. Car parking should be within the curtilage of the site where possible. While grouped car parking is acceptable, for security reasons car parking should always be overlooked by housing. No more than 10 car parking spaces should be grouped together. The visual impact of large areas of car parking can be reduced by the judicious use of screen planting, low walls and the use of different textured or coloured paving for car parking bays.

4.2.5 Sub-Standard Development

New dwellings that closely overlook the rear curtilage of existing dwellings will not normally be permitted. Houses located in a piecemeal fashion to the rear of existing houses, with inadequate independent road frontage and that do not form part of a comprehensive development plan for a particular area are considered to represent sub-standard development and will not normally be permitted.

4.2.6 Pedestrian and Cycle Access

The Planning Authority intends that provision be made for main pedestrian and cycle links between the various centres of activity in the town and between the town centre and residential areas. All existing pedestrian routes will be preserved. New pedestrian routes should be designed with the security and safety of users in mind.

Generally, people prefer to walk along roads and streets where they can be seen by drivers, residents and other pedestrians. If segregated pedestrian routes are to be provided, they must be well-connected, well lit and overlooked by houses and other buildings. Pedestrian routes through backland areas are unacceptable.

Layouts should be designed to encourage cycling, including cycling by unaccompanied children over 12 years. Where possible roads should be designed to be safe for cyclists. Where cyclists and pedestrians share the same space a raised kerb and different coloured paving is helpful in segregating cyclists from pedestrians.

4.2.7 Private Open Space

Privacy is an essential part of human living and is particularly important in relation to homes. Private open space should be designed for maximum privacy and orientated for maximum sunshine and shelter. Access and layout should ensure normal

household activities such as refuse and fuel storage, clothes drying etc. can be carried out comfortably. The Council will also seek to ensure that neighbouring residential amenity is protected.

An absolute minimum private open space of 80 m. sq. will be required for all houses. The standards to be applied for private open space provision per bed-space⁸ are 20 sq. m. for houses and 12 sq. m. for apartments and flats. (Thus a standard 3 bedroom house, with one single bedroom and two double bedrooms, would require private open space of not less than 100 m. sq.). In addition a minimum of 22m will normally be required between directly opposing rear first floor windows. A minimum of 2.5m should be provided between dwellings to allow access for maintenance

In innovative designs, where a mix of houses, maisonettes and apartments with semi-private and communal open spaces are proposed, private open space may be provided in the form of courtyards, balconies, terraces and patios. In such cases adequate alternative provision for storage and laundry must be provided.

4.2.8 Public Open Space and Landscape Considerations

The primary functions of open space in housing areas are aesthetic and recreational. The purpose of the open space being provided, whether for small children playing close to their homes, larger open 'kick about space' for older children or smaller pockets of space for visual delight, should be clear and the space designed and landscaped accordingly.

Open spaces should be provided on a hierarchical system with areas intended for small children sited within sight of their homes and larger 'kick about' areas more remote from houses. Attention must be paid to the proportions and gradient of open space. Long narrow spaces and steeply sloping land will generally be unacceptable.

Open space must be considered as an integral part of the design and should always be overlooked by as many houses as possible. Incidental space and 'space left over after planning' will not be acceptable as open space provision. Areas of road, grass margin, car parking and communal open space not accessible to the general public shall not be considered open space.

Generally public open space in new residential development, in access of private space attached to dwellings, shall be provided at the rate of 12 sq. m. per bed-space for houses and 10 sq. m. per bed-space for apartments.

Where, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, it would not be in the interests of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area to require the provision of open space to the above standards, the Planning Authority may require a developer to pay a stated sum of money towards the cost of providing open spaces and/or recreational facilities elsewhere in the town. Thus, in areas close to existing or proposed public amenity/open space areas (within 200m) and in the town centre, the developer may be required to contribute towards the cost of recreational facilities elsewhere in the town, rather than provide additional open space in the immediate vicinity. Such a requirement will be in the form of a condition attached to the grant of planning permission.

The developers will be required, at their expense, to vest all open spaces in the Council ownership as public open space in the taking-in-charge of the estate. As the Council does not have a Parks Department or other resources to maintain public open spaces at the moment, a management plan for the maintenance of open space should be provided as part of the development proposal. This plan will outline how, and by whom (whether a management company or the residents themselves), the open space will be maintained.

⁸ A bedroom of not more than 10 sq. m is considered to be one bed-space while a bedroom of 10 sq. m. or above is considered to be two bed-spaces.

Landscaping is an integral part of any development and should be designed for long term ease of maintenance. The potential of existing site features should be fully explored and planning applications should include an accurate landscape survey plan. Wherever possible, existing healthy trees should be protected and integrated into the development.

The landscaping should be appropriate to the function of the space and proposed long term maintenance plan. Thus, while seeding with grass may be appropriate for larger 'kick about spaces', grass requires high maintenance. Tree and shrub planting, or decorative paving, are lower maintenance alternatives which may be more appropriate in smaller and highly trafficked spaces.

Generally developments should include new trees within the site at a ratio of at least two trees per dwelling. Garden areas should be adequately landscaped. Rear gardens should be treated with a 300mm minimum cover of consolidated top soil, and front garden areas with grass, shrubs or paving.

Where town centre or infill development is proposed, particularly apartments and flats, a reduction in the levels of public open space provided per unit may be considered acceptable if the quality of building and landscape design is sufficiently high. The developer will be required to provide sufficient detail in his application, including a detailed planting schedule, fully rendered drawings and samples of proposed materials for such an assessment of quality to be made.

4.2.9 Apartment Developments

Apartment developments should be of high quality incorporating car and bicycle parking facilities (see tables 4.1 and 4.2) and refuse storage areas for the use of all residents. Refuse stores should be conveniently located, well ventilated and comply with all public health and fire safety requirements. A minimum internal storage areas of 5 cubic meters should be provided within each dwelling unit. Where combined kitchen/living areas are proposed, the apartments should have separate facilities for clothes washing and drying.

Entrance hallways, stairs and corridors should be well designed with good lighting and ventilation. Vertical and horizontal circulation should be arranged so that corridors do not extend more than 15 m from a widened 'landing' area, that should include natural lighting where possible. Corridors should be widened at entrances to apartments.

Service ducts serving two or more apartments should, as far as practicable, be accessible from common circulation areas for maintenance purposes. The number of apartments served by a single lift/core should not exceed 30 units.

Private open space for apartments should ideally be provided in the form of terraces, balconies or patios directly accessible from each individual apartment. However the provision of some or all of the space as communal open space may be acceptable. In such cases a management plan for the maintenance of the space must be provided.

The Council requires that an adequate level of private and public open space be provided for residents (see par. 4.2.8). Where it is not possible to provide an adequate level of open space on the site of the apartment block the developer will be required to make a contribution to the Council towards the provision of public open space that facilitates the occupants of the apartments.

4.2.10 Infill Development

Infill development policies apply to areas that are largely built up and where the proposal is not of such a scale that it represents a major addition to, or redevelopment of, the existing physical fabric. The design of new development in these areas must be in sympathy with the existing character and must protect amenity. Proposed development must have regard to the surrounding environment and predominant design features, the existing residential density and the existence of particular elements such as groups of trees, listed buildings or open spaces.

It is an objective to seek to provide public open space to Plan standards in infill areas. However where this is not possible or desirable, the Council may require a financial contribution towards the improvement of existing open space or recreational facilities.

4.2.11 Street Lighting

Street Lighting should be at least to the standards set out in the ESB publication *Public Lighting in Residential Estates*. Pedestrian links must also be illuminated. All electrical cabling is to be underground. Lighting levels within a development must create a secure environment. Dark corners and alleyways should be avoided. Lamp posts in prominent positions can help to define an area. Two lamp posts at the entrance to a road or estate, for example, can be used to form a gateway, which will help mark the area as special, in which drivers should behave differently.

4.2.12 Road Names

Bilingual road names of the standard Council type shall be erected on all housing estate roads. It is the policy of the Council that names of residential developments should reflect local and Irish placenames. The naming of residential estates shall be approved by the Planning Authority in order to avoid duplication or confusion. All dwellings will be provided with numbers visible from the public road.

4.2.13 Standards of Construction

Standards of construction of roads, footpaths, sewers and drains shall be as set out in the DoELG publication *Recommendations for Site Development Works for Housing Areas (1998)*. Arrangements shall be made during construction work to allow monitoring by Council staff.

4.2.14 Services

All services, including electricity, telephone and TV, shall be provided underground. Provision should be made for the siting of transformer stations, control boxes, pumping stations and other necessary service buildings in unobtrusive locations. Siting so as to cause obstructions to pedestrians, the disabled, cyclists and traffic will not be acceptable. Early discussions with utility companies are advisable. Pole mounted equipment such as transformers will not be permitted.

All services must be a minimum 300mm below ground level under grass verges and 600mm below roads, footpaths and other paved areas. Water services must be a minimum 600mm below ground level in all cases. Landscape features and utilities should be co-ordinated, with services bunched where necessary, to avoid tree pits.

4.2.15 Design of Houses

In recognition of the special character of Rathangan new house design should respect traditional design. Where it is necessary in the context of preserving architectural heritage or having regard to the established pattern of development or use of materials in an area front boundary walls should be faced in local stone and the stone walls on the approach roads to Rathangan should be retained .

4.3 Retail Development

4.3.1 Shopping Centres

Applications for shopping centre developments will be considered in the light of the recommendations of the *2000 Retail Planning Guidelines* or as subsequently amended.

Generally shopping centres should be located in areas zoned Town Centre and should incorporate other uses so as to maintain activity outside normal shopping hours. Consideration must be given to the integration of the building into the surrounding townscape and the landscaping of the site. The design of the centre should ensure that the site is not dominated by car parking.

Shopping centres must include public toilets and baby changing facilities and should, where possible include other utilities such as creches, sub-post offices etc.

Shopping centres should provide recycling facilities and secure bicycle parking.

4.3.2 Petrol Filling Stations

Petrol filling stations must be located on the outskirts of the town but inside the 30mph or 40 mph speed limits. The preferred location is the near side of the roadway on the way out of town.

Filling stations will not be allowed in open country, within the town boundary. Access to/from the proposed filling station must be in accordance with the Council's requirements, relating to each site.

The element of convenience retailing forming part of the station must be made explicit in any planning application.

4.3.3 Gaming and Amusement Arcades

The Council considers that gaming and amusement arcades are an undesirable use and potentially detrimental to the business and commercial environment of the town centre. Any proposals for such arcades accordingly, will be refused.

It should be noted that the placing of amusement machines in business premises used primarily for other purposes (e. g. take-aways, licensed premises etc.) require planning permission and is not considered by the Council to constitute exempted development.

4.3.4 Hot Food Take-Aways

Hot food take-aways will only be permitted where they do not interfere with the amenity of other businesses and neighbouring residences. In this regard potential smell, late night noise and potential litter will be taken into consideration.

4.3.5 Shop Front Design Standards

The Council requires a high standard of shop front design and advertising. Existing traditional shop fronts should be retained where possible, especially in the town centre.

The Council will encourage good shop front design, either of traditional or modern design, provided that they are constructed of appropriately robust materials and are in scale and proportion to the building and neighbouring buildings. The design must be approached in an integrated way, including signage, advertising and lighting.

Building and plot divisions should be retained externally, even when the internal divisions have been removed.

The use of external roller shutters and the permanent removal of shop fronts leaving the shop open to the pavement, are unacceptable. Security shutters should be mounted behind the window glazing, be of the open grill type and coloured to blend with the overall shop front. Alternatives to roller shutters, such as removable timber shutters or open grilles are preferred.

Externally mounted loudspeakers are unacceptable.

Internally lit neon signs, flashing, reflectorised or glitter type signs located on or visible from the exterior are unacceptable.

Signs and advertising of excessive size or number, or projecting above the parapet/eaves height or outside the bulk of the building are unacceptable.

Where brand or corporate signage is permitted it will be expected to be in a form and design which is compatible with the streetscape. Compatibility with the streetscape and individual buildings will be considered more important than the uniformity between branches of a company.

Projecting brand signs, of whatever type or design, are unacceptable.

4.4 Advertising and Signage

The Council accepts that advertising is an integral part of commercial and industrial development. However, in considering applications for advertising structures, it remains the primary concern of the Planning Authority to protect the essential character of the town.

4.4.1 Location of Advertising

The Council is opposed to advertisements in residential areas, on or near buildings of architectural or historical importance, adjacent to amenity and recreational areas. As advertising is an accepted part of commercial and shopping activity, appropriate levels and types of it will generally be allowed on commercial buildings and shops. Control will be exercised to prevent clutter in any location and to limit the size and number of signs on any building.

4.4.2 Design of Advertising

The Council will seek to avoid a proliferation of advertisements in the town. Proposals for signs and advertising structures should:

- be in scale and harmony with the surrounding environment;
- not interfere with the safety and free flow of traffic;
- not obscure traffic signs;
- not impair the amenities of the area;
- not interfere with windows or other features of a building façade; and
- not project or obtrude, in whole or part, above the eaves of the building or skyline.

4.4.3 Temporary and Free Standing Advertisements

Free-standing advertising structures, such as sandwich boards, which require a license under Section 254 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, will not be

allowed on footpaths or in pedestrian areas where they have the potential to cause an obstruction and may be a hindrance, particularly to disabled persons. Temporary advertisements may be permitted in certain positions and in greater numbers than would be acceptable on a permanent basis. Where locations are considered suitable, advertising panels may be permitted on builder's hoardings for a specified period. As a general principle the planning authority has a clear preference for smaller sized and vertical proportioned advertising panels.

4.5 Telecommunications Masts and Satellite Dishes

Telecommunications masts, satellite dishes and associated equipment should be located on existing masts or pylons, or in industrial or utility areas. They may be permitted on high buildings of utility or industrial types but will not be permitted on churches or other civic buildings, nor in the vicinity of schools or residential areas.

The Council will require all services to be installed underground in new developments and where possible in existing areas.

Satellite dishes should generally be located to the rear of buildings. Planning permission will be required for satellite dishes on protected structures and within the architectural conservation zone.

4.6 Environmental Impact Assessments

The Council will operate the provisions of the European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment), Regulations 97/11/EC of 1997 and the Planning and Development Act 2000, EIS Amendment Regulations SI No 93 of 1999 and as subsequently amended. All developments to which these regulations apply, including proposed public authority projects, will be required to submit detailed Environmental Impact Statements as part of the planning approval process.

4.7 Care for People with Disabilities

In addition to the obligation to provide for the needs of people with disabilities contained in the Building Regulations the Council shall require all public footpaths and pedestrian links to be accessible to people with disabilities. Street furniture shall be placed in such locations as to not impede wheelchairs, push chairs and buggies. Footpaths must be dished and marked by stippled paving at crossing points.

4.8 Development Contributions and Cash Deposits

4.8.1 Development Contributions

The Planning Authority, taking into consideration the capital expenditure necessary for the provision of infrastructure required to facilitate development, will require financial contributions in relation to drainage, water supply, roads, open space and car parking. It is the policy of the Council that the rate of contribution in respect of development will be assessed on an individual basis, except where overall contributions are warranted (e. g. for mains water, sewerage and the road network for the town as a whole). The Council may update on an annual basis the amount of contribution having regard to the rise in the building cost index or in the consumer price index, as appropriate. The Council may also impose a levy on all planning permissions to assist the Council in carrying out the objectives contained in this plan.

4.8.2 Cash Deposits and bonds

Developers will be required to lodge a Cash Deposit or Insurance Bond for the satisfactory completion of residential and other developments and their ancillary services, prior to their being taken in charge. In determining the amount of the bond, the previous record of the developer in completing estates satisfactorily will be taken into consideration. Deposits/Bonding will be required in residential, industrial estate development and other developments as the Council considers necessary. It is Council policy that all developments will be taken-in-charge on completion.

4.9 Planning Advice and Guidance

4.9.1 Planning Clinics

The Council operates a system of free planning advice where intending developers or individuals can avail of guidance on all planning matters. It is intended this system will continue for the period of this plan. All persons contemplating development are strongly advised to consult with Council planning officials prior to submitting planning applications. Even in the event that intended development is exempt and, therefore does not require planning permission, developers are advised to consult with the planning authority before beginning work, so as to satisfy themselves that no planning permission is required. It is Council policy to give this advise and guidance without charge. Such advice is without prejudice to the final decision of the Planning Authority.

4.9.2 Publication of Guidance

It is the intention of the Council to publish leaflets and brochures to give guidance on many of the policies of the Plan to the general public.

4.9.3 Co-operation with Voluntary Bodies.

It is the policy of the Council to co-operate with the various voluntary and statutory bodies towards the development and renewal of the town, and towards its promotion and beautification. To this end joint venture operations and award schemes will be undertaken as appropriate.