
2.0 DEVELOPMENT POLICY

2.1 Housing Policy

In 1996 there were approx. 225 housing units within the town boundary of Rathangan, the bulk of new housing being traditional 3 and 4 bedroomed semi-detached. As the average household size declines and the number of single and two persons households increases, so the demand for smaller dwellings will increase.

P2.1.0 It is the policy of the Council to seek for a balance and mix in the provision of social and private housing in order to promote a social and demographic balance within the town.

2.1.1 Social and Affordable Housing

The Council is currently preparing a Housing Strategy for the county, in accordance with its obligations under the 2000 Planning and Development Act. Under this Act the Planning Authority may require a specified percentage of land zoned solely for residential, or for a mixture of residential and other uses, be made available for social and/or affordable housing, in accordance with this strategy.

P2.1.1 It is the policy of the Council to promote the provision of social and affordable housing accommodation in accordance with its Housing Strategy, and in other appropriate ways, including seeking an element of social and affordable housing in new residential proposals.

Kildare County Council, in carrying out its housing functions, will have regard to Government policy as established in '*Social Housing – The Way Ahead*' (DoELG 1995) and *Social Housing Design Guidelines* (DoELG 1999) or as subsequently amended. The Council recognise that social housing should have regard to a wide range of households. These should include the households that currently live in unfit or overcrowded accommodation, the homeless, travelers, elderly, disabled/handicapped, medical/compassionate reasons, involuntary sharing, young persons leaving institutional care as well as those that are unable to afford existing accommodation.

2.1.2 Accommodation of the Travelling Community

It is the responsibility of the Council, as the Housing Authority for the area, to provide suitable accommodation for the travelling community. There are a number of ways in which such accommodation may be provided, including standard housing, special group housing schemes, residential caravan parks, transient halting sites, loans & grants for the purchase of mobile homes and house purchase loans.

P2.1.2 It is the policy of the Council to facilitate the provision of appropriate accommodation for the travelling community in accordance with the *Traveller Accommodation Programme 2000-2004* adopted by Kildare County Council on 28th Feb 2000.

2.1.3 Residential Densities

The Council recognises that average household sizes continue to decline and that a greater diversity in household composition calls for a greater variety of dwelling types. Developments catering for a variety of household sizes, including one and two person households, will be encouraged as part of an overall development mix.

In accordance with the principals of sustainable development and government policy on residential density, higher densities will be encouraged in the town centre

zone. However, because of its rural location and relatively poor public transport linkages, Rathangan is not considered an appropriate location for high density housing.

2.1.3 It is the policy of the Council to encourage infill housing developments, the use of underused and vacant upper floors for accommodation purposes and higher residential densities in the town centre, subject to a high standard of layout, design and finish.

The Council is anxious that new residential estates develop as integrated neighbourhoods with a full range of social facilities and access to public transport easily available to their residents. The availability of such facilities will be a material consideration in all residential planning applications. Proposals for larger residential developments should be made in the context of Action Area Plans where these issues are addressed.

2.1.4 Temporary Dwellings and Caravans

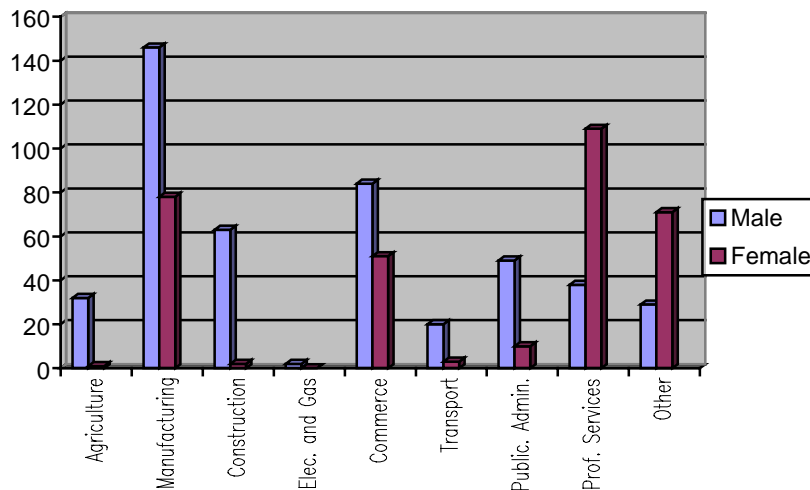
The Council is of the view that, wherever possible, accommodation should be provided in permanent dwelling units. Therefore, the provision of temporary dwellings and caravans will be permitted only in exceptional circumstances.

2.2 Industry and Enterprise Policy

2.2.1 Employment

The buoyant economic conditions in recent years has lead to a reduction in unemployment and an increase in employment in the town, in line with national trends.

Employment by Industry, Rathangan 1996



2.2.2 Industry Policy

Rathangan has historically been a service town for the surrounding rural hinterland. Bord na Mona in particular was an important local employer. However in recent years the importance of the surrounding boglands as a source of employment has declined. A number of small enterprise such as Noone engineering are important sources of employment.

P2.2.2a It is the policy of the Council to facilitate the continuity and encourage the expansion of such enterprises having regard to the protection of the amenity value of neighbouring properties.

Because of its remoteness from rail and motorway access, Rathangan is not considered an appropriate location for large scale industry or distribution. However small scale enterprises have an important role to play in the local economy. The Council will co-operate with IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, the County Enterprise Board, KELT and other agencies, organisations and individuals in promoting enterprise in Rathangan.

P2.2.2b It is the policy of the Council to promote start-up enterprises. Accordingly the Council will encourage the provision of a number of incubator units for small enterprises, at affordable rents, as part of larger light industrial developments.

2.2.3 Retail Policy

Rathangan is primarily served by the retail centres of Kildare and Droichead Nua. There has been relatively little recent development of the retail sector as compared to other towns, reflecting its small size.

The principal retail centre is Main St., where a range of shops serve the needs of the population.

P2.2.3a It is the policy of the Council to seek the strengthening of the retail base of Rathangan town centre and to encourage the further development and upgrading of modern shopping facilities.

The Council recognises the important role of retailing in the social and economic life of the town centre and supports the provisions of the recently issued retail planning guidelines.

P2.2.3b It is the policy of the Council that future retail development proposals must conform with the requirements set out in this Plan and the *Retail Planning Guidelines 2000* or as subsequently amended.

2.2.4 Tourism Policy

Rathangan town has a range of tourism assets including the Grand Canal and Slate river and an attractive streetscape. The Barrow tow path walking route connects with both the Wicklow Way and the South Leinster Way. The Robertstown Countryside and the Bog of Allen have considerable tourism potential which has yet to be fully realized.

P2.2.4 It is the policy of the Council to develop Rathangan as a tourism centre within the county.

2.3 Education, Cultural and Community Facilities

2.3.1 Community Facilities

The range of community facilities throughout the town include two primary and one secondary school, two churches, a library, community halls and other meeting places that in turn facilitate a wide range of activities.

P2.3.1 It is the policy of the Council to facilitate the land use requirements of the education, training and community needs of the population of Rathangan.

The Council recognises the need to provide a range of social and recreational facilities throughout the town to meet the needs of all residents. In major new residential and commercial developments the Council will seek to ensure that adequate provisions are made for community facilities, where this is appropriate, concurrent with the development.

2.3.2 Crèche and Playgroup Facilities

Changes in the population structure, changing lifestyles and economic needs have led to increasing demands for pre-school childcare facilities and day nurseries.

The Council is aware of the importance of the provision of adequate childcare facilities in consolidating new and existing communities and as a means of addressing social exclusion and disadvantage. Accordingly the Council will seek to facilitate the provision of crèche and playgroup facilities in appropriate location and will require their provision in large residential, commercial and retail developments.

P2.3.2a It is the policy of the Council to encourage the provision of purpose-built creches and playschools in residential areas and in workplaces.

However, the Council is also aware that such facilities, when located in residential areas, can adversely affect amenity through increased traffic generation and noise.

P2.3.2b It is the policy of the Council to permit the conversion of part of existing dwellings to such uses, where the bulk of the building remains in residential use, subject to residential amenity and traffic considerations.

In this regard the location and accessibility of the proposed creche or playschool and size, location and quality of private open space associated with it, will be material considerations.

The Council will have regard to *the Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities* issued by the Department of the Environment in July 2001 and as subsequently amended.

2.3.3 Schools

The population of Rathangan is served by 2 primary schools; Bunscoil Bhride, (220 pupils), and St. Patrick's National School, (121 pupils) and a secondary school, (631 pupils).

While accommodation is sufficient to meet existing demand, in the future there may be a need to facilitate the expansion of some of these schools as Rathangan expands. Recreational facilities for schools in Rathangan are generally inadequate.

P2.3.3 It is the policy of the Council to facilitate the development of educational facilities to meet the needs of the population of Rathangan and its environs.

2.3.4 Places of Worship

Rathangan is served by the the Church of the Assumption Catholic Church on New St. and the Church of Ireland on Portarlinton Rd. They are considered to have adequate capacity to meet present and future demand.

2.3.5 Library Facilities

Kildare County Council Library Service operates a branch library on the Chapel St. It is hoped to develop a new library in the town during the period of the plan.

P2.3.5 It is the policy of the Council to provide a new library in the town as funds allow.

2.3.6 Health Services

The South Western Area Health Board operates Health Centres on the Edenderry Rd. and the Portarlinton Rd. offering a wide range of services. A day care centre operates from the former vocational school. The Council will support and facilitate the SWAHB in the implementation of the health board's objectives for Rathangan.

2.3.7 Fire Service

Rathangan is served by the fire stations in Monasterevin and Droichead Nua. The service is considered adequate to serve the needs of Rathangan.

2.4 Public Utilities Policies

Kildare County Council, together with other utility companies and authorities, provide important services for residents and enterprises in Rathangan. The Council, both directly and through the facilitation of other utility companies and authorities, will seek to ensure the efficient and effective provision of utility services throughout the town.

2.4.1 Water Supply

Rathangan is connected to the Ballymore Eustace Reservoir, as part of the Mid-Regional Water Supply Scheme. Water supply is adequate to serve the present and future needs of the town.

P2.4.1 It is the policy of the Council to provide water in sufficient quantity and quality to serve the needs of the existing and future population, and future commercial development.

2.4.2 Sewerage

Rathangan has its own sewage treatment plant which is currently working close to capacity. A new treatment plant is planned within the life of this plan.

P2.4.2 It is the Policy of the Council to ensure that the necessary drainage facilities to serve the needs of all development within the town and to prevent pollution are provided and to separate the disposal of foul and surface water through the provision of separate sewerage networks.

Given the constraints on the capacity of the existing treatment plant, development must be restricted in accordance with any non-availability of essential infrastructural services Any development permitted must be phased with the upgrading of the treatment plant and sewerage network and any other services deemed necessary. Developers should consult with the sanitary services department before submitting planning applications.

2.4.3 Surface Water Drainage

The Council intends to establish a separate foul and surface water sewerage networks for the town of Rathangan.

2.4.4 Solid Waste Disposal

Refuse collection in Rathangan is currently carried out on a weekly basis and disposed of at Silliot Hill landfill.

The Council will continue to encourage recycling and the minimisation of waste and will work with the community in the provision of a refuse disposal service and recycling facilities for Rathangan.

2.4.5 Electricity and Telecommunications

Electricity is supplied by the ESB transmission system, which is adequate to serve the needs of the town for the period of this plan.

The telecommunications network in Rathangan is being upgraded progressively.

Within the town, phone boxes provide a valuable service to the local community. The Council will encourage the provision and renewal of call boxes in the town and will seek consultation with the telecommunication undertakers with regard to location and design.

- P2.4.5 It is the policy of the Council to have regard to the "Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures, Guidelines for Planning Authorities" (DoELG 1996) or as subsequently amended, when considering proposals for telecommunication antennae and support structures.**

2.5 Transportation Policy

2.5.1 Access to and from Rathangan

The Council recognises the need to develop an efficient, integrated public and private transport system within the Dublin Metropolitan area. Rathangan falls within the area covered by the Dublin Transportation Office. The policies and measures adopted by the Council will be in keeping with the recommendations of the Dublin Transportation Office.

At present the town is served by Bus Eireann bus service. However this service is infrequent and inadequate to serve the future needs of the town. Rathangan is also served by Kildare Town railway station accessed by the R401 regional route.

- P2.5.1 It is the policy of the Council to co-operate with the Dublin Transportation Office, Bus Eireann and private bus operators to secure improvements in the transportation system.**

At present the public transport network is designed to facilitate movement to and from Dublin City. The Council will seek to further develop and diversify this system by encouraging the development of a local public transport connecting towns and villages within Co. Kildare and Co. Offally.

2.5.2 Access around the town

Traffic levels in the town are relatively modest leading to an attractive, peaceful urban environment. The Council will aim to ensure this environment is maintained as the town expands by creating a network of cycle tracks and footpaths to aid circulation and encouraging through traffic around the town.

P2.5.2 It is the Policy of the Council to seek to improve residential amenity, traffic flow and the provision of public transport in conjunction with the Garda, local business interests and residents' associations.

The basis of the Council's roads policy will be to prevent traffic congestion in the town centre and minimise through traffic in residential estates. To this end an orbital road network around the town is planned.

2.5.3 Parking and Loading

Parking in the town centre is mostly provided on street and is adequate. The Council will consider proposals for additional car parking facilities on suitable sites as the need arises.

P2.5.3 It is the policy of the Council to review parking requirements in Rathangan and to introduce new or amended measures to control parking throughout the town if required.

All new developments will be required to provide sufficient and adequate off-street car parking facilities, either directly or indirectly, to cater for the immediate and anticipated future demands of the development. In addition, adequate loading and unloading facilities will be required. The Council will also seek that adequate parking facilities are provided for schools and other uses.

The parking of trucks in residential estates can pose nuisance problems. The Council will facilitate the provision of truck parking in industrial zoned lands in the town. All truck parking areas should be appropriately landscaped.

2.5.4 Cycleways and Pedestrian Routes

The Council will seek to establish and provide a network of safe, convenient and pleasant cycle and pedestrian links between the town centre, schools, recreational facilities, industrial and residential areas. A vital component in encouraging people to travel by bicycle is the provision of secure cycle parking facilities. The Council will seek for the provision of such facilities at strategic locations in the town and as part of all new commercial, educational, recreational and retail facilities.

P2.5.4 It is the policy of the Council to facilitate and encourage cycling and walking as a more convenient, popular and safe method of transport.

2.6 Open Space, Recreation and Amenity Policies

2.6.1 Recreation Facilities

Rathangan has a variety of sports and social clubs including GAA and tennis, clubs. The Grand Canal and Slate River are important recreational amenities and this Plan excludes development from 20 m. either side of both.

The Council is conscious of the need for the provision of recreational facilities in the rapidly expanding towns of Kildare and recently appointed a Recreation Officer to assess needs and promote the provision of a wide range of recreational facilities. The Council will investigate ways of improving the quality and capacity of existing sporting and recreational facilities and possible sources of funding.

P2.6.1 It is the Policy of the Council to co-operate with sports clubs, schools and community organisations in the provision of sports and recreational facilities to serve the residents of Rathangan.

2.6.2 Provision of Open Space

The provision of attractive recreational open space is an essential component of the Council's vision of developing Rathangan. The quality and location of such space is as important as the quantity. The most effective open spaces are large, multi-purpose, informally supervised parks, preferably fronted by houses. The Council has recently approved the establishment of a parks department to develop and maintain public open spaces throughout the county.

P2.6.2 **It is the policy of the Council to seek a contribution towards the landscaping of public open space and creation of recreational facilities in association with the development of nearby residential, industrial or commercial developments.**

The loss of existing public or private recreational open space will normally be resisted by the planning authority unless alternative recreational facilities are provided at a suitable location, or it can be demonstrated that there is not sufficient demand to sustain the facility.

2.6.3 Provision of Playgrounds

The Council is aware of the need for playgrounds in expanding towns such as Rathangan and will co-operate with community groups in their provision.

2.6.4 Protection of Existing Open Space

In certain circumstances, where proposed developments are considered to be in the best interests of the general community, the Council is willing to facilitate the re-location of some facilities, on condition that the overall level of sports and recreational facilities in the town and environs is not diminished.

P2.6.4 **It is the policy of the Council to protect land zoned as open space from inappropriate development. Within such areas only very limited development, directly related to amenity, community and leisure uses, and to the on-going development of agriculture, will be permitted.**

The Council will ensure roads, pedestrian and cycle routes are appropriately landscaped and maintained to a high standard.

2.7 Town Centre Policies

2.7.1 Rathangan town centre saw relatively little investment during the 20th century. Much of the recent development that has taken place in the town has been to the south.

P2.7.1 **It is the policy of the Council to re-establish the historic town centre as the heart of the town, to increase its vibrancy and to improve its environment.**

The Council recognises the importance of maintaining a strong retail base in the town centre and its policies on retailing reflect this (see par. 2.2.3). It is Council policy to direct appropriate retail, commercial and other uses to the town centre. The retention and further development of ground floor retail uses will be particularly favoured.

Given the expansion of the residential base of the town, it is appropriate that the town centre expand to reflect this. An amount of land has been zoned for town centre uses contiguous with the existing town centre. It is envisaged that mixed use buildings, with an appropriate urban form, will be developed in this zone.

2.7.2 Urban Renewal

Rathangan was selected by Kildare County Council to benefit under the Town Renewal Scheme. This scheme will make tax incentives available for appropriate development on selected sites in accordance with the policies of the Rathangan Town Renewal Plan. Kildare County Council will actively encourage the redevelopment and refurbishment of sites benefiting from tax incentives.

P2.7.2a It is the Policy of the Council to promote the town centre as a retail, commercial and service location.

P2.7.2b It is the Policy of the Council to protect the architectural quality of the town centre through designating a significant portion of it as an Architectural Conservation Area (see par 2.8.2).

2.7.3 Obsolescence, Dereliction and Areas in Transition

There are a number of high profile properties and lands in the town that are vacant or under-utilised. The Council recognises the need to encourage the beneficial use of these properties.

P2.7.3 It is the policy of the Council to seek the removal and renewal of derelict, underused and vacant sites throughout Rathangan.

In this regard the Council will use its powers under the Derelict Sites Act (1990) or as subsequently amended, as appropriate. These powers will be used in particular where properties benefiting from tax incentives under the Town Renewal Scheme continue to lie derelict.

2.8 Environment and Conservation Policies

The natural and built environments make vital contributions to the quality of life in Rathangan. The Council will also seek to promote environmental awareness and good practices, together with high standards of design in all development proposals. The Council has recently appointed a conservation officer who will be responsible for implementing the conservation policies of the Council and encouraging good practice in building conservation.

2.8.1 Buildings and Structures

The built heritage of the town centre is an important element in the character of Rathangan. Buildings and structures with an architectural, historical and/or streetscape value have been listed for preservation or for consideration for preservation and are listed in Table 3.2.

P2.8.1a It is the policy of the Council to protect buildings and structures listed for protection in Table 3.2 of this plan.

In this regard, the Council will offer such expert advice on conservation as is available to it. The Council will also actively pursue funding for building conservation under the Conservation Grants scheme run by the Department of Environment and Local Government.

P2.8.1b It is the policy of the Council to encourage and support Duchas in carrying out an Inventory of Architectural Heritage for Rathangan..

2.8.2 Architectural Conservation Area

In addition to protecting individual buildings and structures, the Council is aware that many other buildings, while not of sufficient merit to warrant individual listing, are nevertheless important in the context of their contribution to the streetscape.

P2.8.2 In recognition of the importance of townscape, it is the policy of the Council to designate a portion of the town centre as an Architectural Conservation Area.

The Council will seek the retention and restoration of the external fabric of buildings within this zone. Particular attention will be paid to the retention and repair (or replacement with replicas of the originals if necessary) of original natural slate roofs, chimneys, external renders, iron rainwater goods, original timber sash windows and shop fronts. New development within this zone will be required to reflect the massing, fenestration patterns, building lines and heights, roof pitches, proportions and finishes prevailing in the zone. The Council will pursue such grant aid and/or tax incentives as may be made available in support of this policy.

2.8.3 Views and Prospects

Rathangan contains a number of sites, areas and vantage points from which views over local landmarks, lands and the river may be obtained. Views and prospects for protection have been identified in the Plan and are listed in Par 3.11 and on Map 2.

In the implementation of this policy, it is the intention of the Council to refuse permission for development that would block or otherwise interfere with a view that is designated for protection. In evaluating planning applications located in the foreground of identified views and prospects, consideration will be given to the effect such development may have on the view or prospect.

P2.8.3 It is the policy of the Council to protect the views and prospects of special amenity value or special interest listed in Par 3.11.

2.8.4 Pollution

Development that causes noise, smell, smoke, soot, grit, dust, vibration or other forms of disturbance can damage the health of people, animals and plants and lead to a deterioration of building materials. Government policy, as expressed in *'Sustainable Development - A Strategy for Ireland'*, attaches great importance to controlling and minimising pollution. It advises that relevant agencies should aim to prevent pollution, minimise the risk to human health and the environment; and encourage and apply the most advanced technical solutions.

While the *Environmental Protection Agency* is responsible for the control and monitoring of pollution, Kildare County Council, as planning authority, exercises control over pollution and nuisance primarily through the development control process. The Council will refuse planning applications that are likely to give rise to unacceptable levels of pollution or nuisance, and will adopt a precautionary approach where scientific knowledge is inconclusive.

Some commercial operations can cause environmental problems and harm residential amenity. The Council will encourage these uses to relocate to a more suitable area or to improve operations on site. The Council will seek to control the

effect of such uses through the implementation of the Air Pollution Act 1987 and other legislation.

P2.8.4a It is the policy of the Council to refuse planning permission for development that may create unacceptable air, water, noise or other pollution or nuisance and any development likely to be classified under the Major Accidents Directive.

The Council will seek to improve the water quality in the Slate. The Council will minimise the impact on ground water of discharges from septic tanks and other potentially polluting sources.

P2.8.4b It is the policy of the Council to implement the provisions of water pollution legislation, in conjunction with other agencies, as appropriate.

2.8.5 Trees and Hedgerows

The Council is mindful of the importance of mature trees in development and accordingly the preservation of such trees will be a prime consideration in the determination of applications for sites containing trees of amenity value. All new developments will be required to integrate existing trees into the new schemes, where this is appropriate and practical in the opinion of the planning authority.

P2.8.5a It is the policy of the Council to make tree preservation orders for the trees, groups of trees and woodlands listed in Par 3.11.

The Council will promote the environmentally sensitive management of hedges. The cutting of hedgerows during the nesting season is prohibited.

P2.8.5b It is the policy of the planning authority to protect and preserve existing hedgerows and to encourage the planting of new hedgerows, using traditional native species.

Where development is proposed in landscapes of which mature trees are a feature, the Council may request the submission of a comprehensive tree survey with the application.

In some instances, the Council may require a detailed landscaping scheme to accompany the planning application. Planting details will be required, including the type and density of species to be planted and a likely time-scale within which this would be completed.

P2.8.5c It is the policy of the Council, wherever appropriate in the opinion of the planning authority, to ensure that existing trees are incorporated into development proposals and that detailed landscaping schemes are incorporated into major development proposals.

The Council will require, as appropriate, tree surveys and landscaping schemes to be carried out. The Council will seek to undertake a review of the trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders and planting schemes during the plan period.

2.8.6 Control of Litter

The Council recognises the importance of maintaining the town free from litter and protecting it from indiscriminate dumping and bill postering. Accordingly, the Council will carry out its functions under the Litter Act (1997) and as subsequently amended, and will actively combat litter through the Council's waste and litter management plans.

2.8.7 Archaeology

The Urban Archaeological Survey commissioned by Duchas has identified a zone of archaeological potential in Rathangan. This is identified in the map accompanying this plan.

P2.8.7 It is the policy of the Council to ensure an archaeological investigation of a site is carried out by an archaeologist licensed by Duchas, prior to any development works within this zone.

The carrying out of such a survey will be a condition of any planning permission granted within this zone which may damage or disturb archaeological deposits and will be carried out at the expense of the developer.