APPENDIX 1
LETTERKENNY REGIONAL GROWTH CENTRE STRATEGIC PLAN

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1. Context & Vision

1.1. Letterkenny & its role within the North West Metropolitan City Region

Letterkenny is identified as one of the Regional Growth Centres within the region but it is also recognised as part of a Cross Border Network with Derry City, within the North West City Region. The North West Metropolitan City Region (Letterkenny / Derry / Strabane) is identified in the National Planning Framework (Ireland 2040) as being a key enabler of Regional growth, and prosperity across Donegal, Derry & Tyrone.

The co-ordination of further growth across jurisdictions is the subject on ongoing work between both Donegal County Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council, this is an ongoing project, and is being advanced through a Growth Partnership. This Metro Area includes other significant settlements within Donegal, including Buncrana, and Ballybofey / Stranorlar. This NWMCR context is elaborated upon within the All Island Cohesion chapter. It is centered on four key strategic outcomes – closely aligned with the national strategic outcomes and priorities of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the eight strategic aims of the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035. Those outcomes are:

- Building Inclusive and Compact Places;
- Investing in Connected and Accessible Places;
- Planning for a Vibrant Economy and Nurturing Communities; and
- Creating Resilient Places and Low-Carbon Infrastructure.
1.2 Letterkenny Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan

Regional Growth Centres have been selected in the National planning framework because they are significant large towns that function in their areas in a similar manner, but at a different scale to the bigger cities. In the same way that the NPF requires Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASP) to be prepared for each for Ireland’s five cities, a Strategic Plan that responds to the lead role of each of the identified Regional Growth Centres is also required, with a similar focus.

This Strategic Plan for Letterkenny provides a framework for the strategic growth and investment in Letterkenny to deliver its function as a city and the primary urban centre within Donegal. It will chart the future growth of Letterkenny with an ambition to grow the population by at least 28,000 by 2040 and to ensure that commensurate employment growth is enabled, through appropriate investment in critical enabling infrastructure and support services, with strong emphasis upon the placemaking principles, as set out within the RSES. The goal is to ensure Letterkenny is a centre that offers sustainable choices in housing, employment, transport, and in the area of quality of life, health and well-being. The Strategic Plan should act as an instrument that enables this to happen.

The investment in Letterkenny is also vital to the future growth and development of all of County Donegal, with its reach and influence extending into all of the County and cross border, playing a key role in this part of the North West Region, including as a centre of employment, retail, health, education, social, cultural and community services etc for its extensive hinterland.
The existing employment provided in the public sector, retail, and major sectors such as Engineering, and ICT indicate that Letterkenny is already well placed to underpin the growth of the entire region of North & West Donegal. The successful growth and expansion of Letterkenny can be realised through increased, and significant capital investment in critical infrastructure, which will improve services, and accessibility, into and around the urban core, and a focus on enhancing quality of life for all its inhabitants.

**Vision:** Between 2020 and 2040 Letterkenny will grow to a centre of over 30,000 people, and will encompass all the key characteristics of a future city, with an expanded employment base, an additional 4,000 houses, together with an expanded offering in education, public services, civic spaces, and a Regeneration & reconfiguration of the extended Town Centre. Letterkenny will offer sustainable choices in housing, employment, and is a centre which is pedestrian friendly, well served by public transport, with an emphasis on well being, supported by a healthy environment, and quality spaces in the public realm.

**The Strategic Plan Area:**

The boundary of the Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan has been informed by identifying the main population and employment locations of the settlement that define the Principle Urban Area and those areas on the periphery with high commuting patterns. Geographical features and environmental considerations also inform the strategic plan boundaries. The boundary of the Letterkenny Regional Growth Centre Plan includes the Town Boundary as defined by the CSO, as well as incorporating additional small area’s which are considered urban in character and accord with CSO small area boundaries. The boundary incorporates all main residential area’s, employers, and education facilities. The surrounding towns / villages (e.g. Drumkeen, Ramelton, Kilmacrenan). Whilst these surrounding towns, and villages in the zone of influence of Letterkenny will retain their role in offering housing, and other activities the Growth Centre Plan is focused on Letterkenny and its current, and future role of the Town as an economic driver for the whole of Donegal.
2.0. STRATEGIC GOALS FOR LETTERKENNY

2.1 COMPACT GROWTH & DELIVERY OF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT FOR AN EXPANDING REGIONAL CENTRE:

Letterkenny’s population currently stands at 19,300 (CSO, 2016). The total number of jobs within the town 11,400 (Powscar 2016), this is almost 30% of the overall jobs within County Donegal. The growth targets set out for Letterkenny are an overall growth in population of 40% to a population of approximately 30 - 35,000 by 2040. In tandem to this growth, it is anticipated that employment numbers will also increase by approximately 7,000 additional jobs, bringing the overall number of jobs to approximately 18,000. Accordingly, the Letterkenny RGCP needs to include all the elements to provide for this growth, including additional housing, employment lands, retail offer, a high quality of life offer, and community, social & recreational attractions which ensure this. It should be noted the Letterkenny & environs Local Area Plan is currently being prepared, and this RGCP is a high level & long-term documents to accompany the RSES, and is not intended to supersede the LAP.
### New Plan for Letterkenny

Initial Consultation of the development of a new Letterkenny & environs Local Area Plan for Letterkenny have recently concluded, and this new Framework for Letterkenny will provide the detail to ensure the delivery of the Regional Growth Centre Plan, including identification of zoning priorities, phasing of zoning, and detail on the regeneration & town centre design framework to be delivered over the lifetime of the RGCSP.

**OBJECTIVES:**

1. **RGCO 1:** To grow Letterkenny to a Regional Centre of approximately 28,000 by 2040.
2. **RGCO 2:** To grow the number of jobs in Letterkenny to approximately 16,000 by 2040.
3. **RGCO 3:** To ensure that at least 40% of all newly developed lands (Residential, Enterprise & Employment) are within the existing built up envelope of Letterkenny & its environs.
4. **RGCO 4:** To provide an additional 3,000 - 4,000 residential units within Letterkenny to facilitate the growth as set out at No.1, above.

#### 2.3. Regeneration & Renewal Projects

**Key Regeneration / Renewal sites:** There are a number of regeneration projects which have the potential to transform the town’s centre, including the Main Street, and area’s immediately surrounding the Main Street, and between the Main Street & Retail Park Area’s.

- **(i)** Town Centre - Strategic Design Framework
- **(ii)** Church Lane – Continued Regeneration & Restoration
- **(iii)** Lower Main Street.
- **(iv)** Opportunity Sites: (1) Donegal Creameries site, (2) Gortlee Site, (3) Unifi lands, (4) Lands at Port Bridge (5) Former Mart at Sentry Hill.

Each of the opportunity sites represents brownfield development within the Town, and the re-use of these sites would represent a key element of achieving the Compact Growth objective which is a central pillar of the NPF. The Letterkenny & Environs Plan will set out further detail in respect of these sites, and the parameters within which they can be redeveloped, the locations of these sites is mapped below.

**Inter-Linkages across Town Centre:** Creating a more coherent, and inter-linked town centre has been recognised as a key strategic goal for Letterkenny since before the 2009 Letterkenny & Environs Plan. The achievement of an improved inter-connectivity between the original Town Centre (Main Street Zone) and the new Retail Centre, including the Retail Park, and the Area surrounding Letterkenny Community Centre. The advancement of this Framework should include prioritisation of pedestrian friendly linkages, with identified walkways, crossing points, and similarly lanes and improved route availability for cycling. The Letterkenny & Environs Plan will set out further detail in respect of these sites, and the parameters within which they can be redeveloped.
2.4. Residential Growth

Letterkenny is the key urban settlement within the Donegal. Since 2006, the population living within the Town Boundary has increased by almost 10%. The ambition in the coming 20 years is to significantly advance upon this growth giving Letterkenny many of the future requirements to build on its function as a regional city in its own right. Letterkenny has a number of established neighbourhoods with potential to develop new ones.

Established neighbourhoods: Glencar, Kilttoy, Lisnennan, Lismonaghan, Mountain Top, Ballymacool

Potential new area’s for Residential Development: Leck / Scibley, Windy Hall, Killylastin, Carnamuggagh.
To cater for projected growth, it is likely that at least an additional 4,000 new homes will need to be provided between now, and 2040. The phasing of this growth in residential units, will have to be done in tandem with the approximate growth figures outlined in the Table above.

Central to this future growth will be to ensure the delivery of 40% of future homes are within the built up envelope of Letterkenny. Achieving this will require the identification of lands which are already within the built up envelope of the town and can be located close to potential public transport corridors, or within accessible walking distance of the town centre.

**Neighbourhoods:** There are 8 distinct and recognised neighbourhoods and the forthcoming Letterkenny & Environs Plan presents an opportunity to re-examine them and to deliver further measures, such as neighbourhood centre’s, and additional consolidation measures depending on the extent of projected future growth of the area’s set out below, as well as any new residential centre’s.

In addition to the established neighbourhoods, there are a number of area’s where there are opportunities to provide infill and/or consolidating development that would assist in expanding the growth of the Town, without significantly extending the overall urban footprint in an outward manner, such as greenfield lands between Carnamuggagh and Lisnenan, and between Windyhall and Glencar.
HOW CAN THIS BE ACHIEVED?

Delivering 4,000 new homes – How can this be achieved. measures include:

1. Ensuring the Zoned Lands are delivered sequentially in a phased basis, providing for compact and inclusive places.
2. To ensure that within the extended Town Centre area, that a mix of residential accommodation is included within mixed use developments, which cater for a wide variety of needs, including students, and smaller family units / single occupancy apartments based upon the housing needs of the town.
3. In the medium term to ensure the Southern Relief Road (Part of the Ten-T at Leck/Scribley) enables a greater extent of new residential growth to the South of the River Swilly, with enhanced links to the Town Centre, through a new crossing of the Swilly, and a new neighbourhood focal point.

OBJECTIVES for Regeneration & Compact Growth

1) RGCO 10: To develop a Town Centre Living Scheme within 3 years of the adoption of the RSES, and to ensure the main findings of this Scheme are implemented by 2025.
2) RGCO 11: To deliver a Masterplan, in Urban Regeneration & Linkages between the Main Street Area, and the New Retail Park within 4 years of the adoption of the RSES, ensuring this Masterplan is delivered and implemented by 2027.
3) RGCO 12: To expand Letterkenny’s bed-night capacity, and overall Tourist Offer as a Destination Town serving the Northern Headlands of the WAW.
4) RGCO 13: To consolidate existing neighbourhoods (hereinunder listed) through a series of targeted measures. Town Centre, Glebe / Kiltoy, Lsnennan, Carnamuggagh, Glencar Scotch, Glencar Irish, Ballymacool & Oldtown.

2.5. LIVEABLE LETTERKENNY

Letterkenny is already well served with a number of outstanding public realm facilities, which include An Grainan Theatre, Aura Leisure Centre, Ballymacool Park at the Southern edge of the Town & Bernard McGlinchey Town Park. The challenge in the coming years is enhancing sustainable
connectivity to some of these facilities. In order to ensure Letterkenny becomes a less car dependent large town, dedicated cycle networks are key to enabling more sustainable modes of transport across the Town. In tandem with such provision, will be a need to provide adequate bike facilities at the aforementioned locations, as well as a number of other identified strategic sites.

![Bernard McGlinchey Town Park, Letterkenny.](image)

### 2.6. Education

LYIT has approximately 4,000 students, and has expanded by 40% in enrolment numbers in the last 10–15 years. The IT has in recent years secured a significant site on the Southern side of the Derry Road, opposite their existing campus, which will enable future expansion without the fragmentation of the student facilities. It is one of the key strategic aims for Letterkenny over the next 2 decades that this expansion is realised, and the range of courses, and number of under Graduates, as well as Post Graduates is increased incrementally between now and 2040. This expansion is expected to take place in tandem with University status for LYIT, as part of the Connacht / Ulster Alliance, where talks remain ongoing with Sligo IT, and GMIT.

Facilities at Primary School Level extend to 7 Schools. Three of these Schools (the 3 largest) are located outside the Town Boundary (Woodlands, Lurgybrack & Ilistrin). The provision of the new Educate Together Campus in 2018 has brought additional capacity to the Primary School system in the Town Environs. The future provision of a significant residential neighbourhood to the South of the River at Leck / Scribley, and the Southern Relief Road associated with the Ten-T project delivery may require an additional Primary School in this area.

There are 4 Secondary Schools in the Town, with Donegal County Council communicating with the Dept. of Education in relation to additional provision should the need arise. The re-development & enhancement of the St. Eunan’s Secondary School Campus is a priority in Educational infrastructure provision.
3.0. CRITICALLY ENABLING STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE FOR LETTERKENNY

3.1. In order to achieve the population growth, economic advancement, including significant employment growth, and advancement in the overall offer for citizens, and visitors alike, Letterkenny has a number of key projects which must be delivered over the next 10-20 years, and indicative timeframe is attached for each, applicable from 2019:

Table XX: Critically Enabling Infrastructure for Letterkenny

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critically Enabling &amp; Transformative Projects for Letterkenny</th>
<th>Indicative Timeframe Delivery (Short – 2026; Medium – 2031; Long – 2040)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Donegal Ten-T Improvement Scheme’s. Strategic Regional Connectivity (N-13, N-14 &amp; N-56)</td>
<td>Short/Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Letterkenny Urban Design&amp; Masterplan for Town Centre.</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Regional Transport Hub for Letterkenny</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. LYIT Campus Extension</td>
<td>Short/Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Urban Greenway Development around Letterkenny: Letterkenny – Burtonport, River Swilly Greenway</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Development of Letterkenny Social Enterprise Centre.</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Creating a ‘Smart’ Regional Centre.</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Town Centre Living Scheme: Regeneration of Derelict &amp; Vacant Sites</td>
<td>Short/Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Development of Town Centre Enterprise Quarter</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Connected Letterkenny: Enabling Projects:

1. **Ten-T Projects:** The key infrastructure needs of Letterkenny & Donegal are set out in the RSES (Sec 6). The delivery of the Ten-T improvement schemes, including the provision of the strategic river crossing (Swilly) via the N-56 Bonagee Link and the significant upgrading of the road network approaching the Town from the South (Southern Relief Road). The combined significance of these investments, including reduced travel times to Letterkenny from East Donegal, and Northern Ireland will directly impact upon the Town, allowing for multi-modal access across Letterkenny, and providing more effective long term traffic management beyond 2040.

2. **Regional Transportation Hub:** Letterkenny currently does not have a multi purpose transportation point. There are multiple Private operators transporting patrons around Ireland, and wider Donegal on a daily basis, and the stop adjacent to the Oatfield Roundabout does not have sufficient capacity to cater for growing demand. The provision of a Transportation Hub, which is within the Town Core, and within walking distance of the Town Centre & LYIT is a priority piece of infrastructure to increase accessibility and connectivity in Letterkenny. Whilst a specific site has yet to be identified, the RTH is a critical priority in the coming years.
3. **Cycle Lane & Urban Greenway:** Easy and safe Cycling and walking facilities will form a key priority for Letterkenny’s Centre, and Neighbourhoods over the next 2 decades. Secure cycling, and dedicated lanes for bicycles are recognised as a direct incentive for people to travel to school and work without being dependant upon the private car. A cycle route network will be prepared in the next 2-3 years, and this will include a Greenway along the River Swilly, as well as a full Landuse & Transportation Strategy to establish a number of key priority cycle routes which traverse the Town. Provision shall also be made for the Letterkenny – Burtonport Greenway, along the Former Donegal Rail Line, and onto the Cycle lane being provided along the newly realigned Section of the N56 at Illistrin / Coolboy.

4. **Public Transport Linkages:** A Local Transportation Plan (LTP) will be prepared in the short term for Letterkenny, the LTP should examine the current lack of alternatives to the car, and landuse patterns which can better effect a modal shift to public transport, as well as walking & cycling. A new Regional Transport Hub shall form a central part of this vision, as well as the potential of Bus corridors, Park & Ride facilities & neighbourhood services.

**OBJECTIVES for Critical Infrastructure:**

1) RGCO 5: To deliver the entire Ten-T network solution for Donegal & Letterkenny by 2028, including the N-56 Link, and the Southern Relief Road (Leck Road), the N-14 Manorcunningham – Lifford. & N-13 Letterkenny Bridgend.

2) RGCO 6: To facilitate the expansion of the LYIT Campus.

3) RGCO 7: To prepare (within 2 years of the adoption of the RSES), a Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Letterkenny, which will include a multi-modal focus, and Public Transport roadmap.

4) RGCO 8: To develop a dedicated & integrated cycle network around Letterkenny, including the creation of a Greenway along the line of the River Swilly to offer residents a viable alternative to car based journeys.

5) RGCO 9: To deliver a multi-purpose Public & Private Regional Transport Hub within the Town Core of Letterkenny to serve County Donegal & the wider Region. RGCO 13: To carry out a feasibility study which investigates the potential & viability of a Rail Link between Letterkenny & Derry in future decades.

**4.0. ENTERPRISE & EMPLOYMENT - FUTURE ECONOMIC EXPANSION:**

4.1. **INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT & FDI**

Letterkenny is the economic driver of County Donegal. There are currently (CSO 2016) 11,400 Jobs in Letterkenny, which comprise approx. 28% of the overall jobs figure for County Donegal this share is anticipated to grow as the scale of the Town increases.

In tandem with the targeted population growth of approximately 8,000 additional people expected to reside in Letterkenny by 2040, the National Planning Framework (Ireland 2040) anticipates that employment growth will occur at a ratio of approximately 2:1 (people to jobs), this will equate to (a minimum) additional 4,000 workers employed in the Town over the next 15-20 years. In order to ensure
this expansion is realised, it will be necessary to secure adequate provision of zoned land for a mix of enterprise and employment uses.

(i) General Employment.
(ii) Commercial Use.
(iii) Established Employment use.
(iv) Town Centre / Retail.

Employment growth in Letterkenny has continued apace over the last decade. In addition to expanded retail, and service employment. The emergence of the ‘Letterkenny Cluster’ in ICT includes multi-national and indigenous companies. This cluster includes Sita, Kirchoff, Optibelt, Pramerica, Zues, Optum, United Health. Paremerica alone employ over 1,400 staff, and there will be scope in the coming years to expand this cluster, with Donegal County Council, IDA & Enterprise Ireland the primary stakeholders tasked with delivering further sustainable employment for the North West Region.

The targeted Area’s for General Employment will include additional lands adjacent to and within the IDA Business Park along the N-56 Link, and the former Unifi lands at Kiltoy / between Carnamuggagh / Lisnenan. 

The Mountain Top (Pinehill) supports approximately 40 business operators at present, and there is scope to introduce incremental environmental improvements which could enhance the general appearance of the area, and better separate pedestrian, and vehicle users.

4.2. RETAIL:

Letterkenny functions as County Donegal’s primary retail and shopping destination. The Retail area within Letterkenny can be summarised in a number of zones:

- The traditional Town Centre:
- Paddy Harte / Loop Road Retail Park.

A multi-purpose open / civic amenity space within the heart of the Town (aside from Market Square) would assist in helping the balance struck between vehicles, and pedestrians / cyclists, it would also encourage additional uses relating to events / activities.

In addition to the above, the incremental improvement of the Towns retail offer will include (i) Enhancing sustainable links between the 2 retail area’s. (ii) Providing public facilities at Letterkenny Retail Park, (iii) Targeted addressing of vacant retail floor space (iv) Emphasis on high quality urban design within the Town Centre, and on key strategic approach roads. Further detail in this regard will be set out in the forthcoming Letterkenny & Environ Local Area Plan. (LKLAP)
4.3. TOURISM

Letterkenny has been identified by Failte Ireland as a Destination Town (always on) owing to a number of factors.

(i) Bed Night Capacity (Approx. 4,200)
(ii) Proximity to Wild Atlantic Way (Donegal Headlands, including Discovery Points such as Malin Head & Fanad Lighthouse)
(iii) Proximity to Glenveagh National Park, Grianan of Aileach & Derryveagh Mountains.
(iv) Ability to offer attractions in its own right, including range of pubs, restaurants, and nightlife.

It will be vital that given the significant growth in Tourist numbers visiting Ireland, and the potential to grow significantly the figures travelling on the Northern Half of the WAW, that Letterkenny continues to grow its offer as a Regional Centre of Scale to host, and support visitors across all of North Donegal. In order to do this, a number of Objectives need to be progressed in the short to medium term:

1. Provide sufficient zoned lands to ensure additional Hotels, and Tourist Accommodation can be accommodated within reach of the Town Centre.
2. To provide a Regional Transport Hub within Walking Distance of the Town Centre, so as to ensure onward Journeys (WAW & Glenveagh NP etc.) are within easy reach of the majority of Hotel Accommodation.
3. To ensure the advancement of the Letterkenny – Burtonport Greenway Project, along the Disused Donegal Rail Line.
4. To further enhance Public Realm Offer within Letterkenny to enhance visitor experience.

5.0 – IMPLEMENTATION

Section 10 of the RSES sets out in further detail how the RSES will be reviewed, and implemented. Similarly, the Letterkenny RGCP will require an implementation panel, which periodically reviews the progress in terms of housing supply, infrastructure provision, as well as general well-being of the Town.


Following the adoption of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), Donegal County Council will continue with the already commenced work towards a Letterkenny & Environs Plan to ensure consistency with the Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan (RGC SP) and all other relevant provisions of the RSES. Work is also ongoing in relation to the NW City Region, and this will further inform the growth, and direction for Letterkenny over the next decade and beyond.

Building upon the RGC Strategic Plan set out in the RSES, the LAP will set the detailed framework for decisions on investment and development proposals in Sligo’s main urban area.
National Development Plan funding

As part of Project Ireland 2040, the Government announced the establishment of two new funding streams:

- the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF), which has an allocation of €2 billion in the National Development Plan (NDP) to 2027, primarily to support the compact growth and sustainable development of Ireland’s five cities and other large urban centres; and

- the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF), which has an allocation of €1 billion in the National Development Plan (NDP) to 2027, primarily to provide investment to support rural renewal for suitable projects in towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000, and outlying areas.

Donegal County Council are already proactively working to garner maximum funding from the NDP, in order help achieve the 13 Key Strategic Objectives set out in the Letterkenny RGC Plan.

Vacant Site Register

The register lists vacant sites in Letterkenny, zoned for housing and regeneration purposes, which have remained undeveloped. The Register is a land activation measure with the ultimate aim of encouraging the development and regeneration of key lands.

Sites entered on the Register for Donegal in general, and specifically Letterkenny, are subject to the Vacant Site Levy provisions introduced under the Planning and Development Act. It is likely that Donegal County Council will have to apply this levy to encourage movement on key lands across the lifetime of the RGCP, and this should be reviewed annually.

National Transport Agency (NTA) & Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII): Donegal County Council will continue to work with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) to ensure that any roads-related infrastructural deficiencies are addressed through their ongoing capital investment programme, and with the National Transport Agency (NTA) to ensure ongoing engagement in relation to the provision of a Regional Transport Hub for Letterkenny.

Irish Water investment: Given the Donegal County Council will continue to work with Irish Water to ensure that any water and wastewater infrastructural deficiencies are addressed through the ongoing Irish Water capital investment programme.

Potential Delivery Constraints

The implementation of the Lettekenny Regional Growth Centre Plan and the strategic targets, and critical infrastructure listed therein may (over the 20 year period) be occasionally be constrained by factors such as the economic climate, political support, allocated local authority funding and the availability of funding from diverse sources.

However, it is the intention of the NWRA and of Donegal County Council to exercise all legal powers to ensure that the strategic objectives are implemented.