

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Background to the Waterford PLUTS

The Waterford Planning Land Use and Transportation Study (PLUTS) was commissioned by Waterford City Council in February 2001 in order to provide a vision and strategy for the development of Waterford City and Environs up to the year 2020. Waterford has been designated as a Gateway City in the recently published National Spatial Strategy (NSS).

The PLUTS Strategy has been prepared in order to be consistent with the policy direction and requirements of the NSS. It supports and fosters balanced spatial development at a national, regional, city and local level. A key element of the Strategy is the achievement of critical mass to allow the City to reinforce and develop its role as the economic driver of the South-East region of Ireland.

The population of Waterford City and its environs is currently in the region of 52,000 people. The City has developed principally to the south of the River Suir and over the last 20 years, a trend of low-density residential growth has prevailed, primarily to the south and east of the City. Historically, development to the north of the Suir has been constrained by difficult topography, the availability of adequate amounts of development land on the southern bank of the River, the location of the Port facilities on the northern bank of the River, the existence of only one river crossing and by the width of the River itself, which is approximately 200 metres wide at the City Centre. These development trends are unsustainable and in response to this, Waterford City Council has commissioned this Study to redress such trends and provide a strong and dynamic planning framework for the future development of the City and Environs.



The PLUTS sets out a strategy that aims to provide guidance as to the general scale and location of growth of Waterford so that the City and its environs can be developed in a balanced, sustainable, transport friendly and attractive way to provide a high quality of life and opportunities for all its citizens over the next 20 years. It reflects spatial planning guidance from the NSS and the National Development Plan (NDP) to develop as the focus of a successful and innovative region. The PLUTS will be a key input into the preparation of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the South-East Region. It will play a key role in the planning process by providing a coherent, long-term spatial context, within which the more detailed statutory City and County Development Plans can be developed over the 20-year Study period.

1.2 The PLUTS Strategy

The Waterford PLUTS proposes a more sustainable form of spatial development for Waterford with the following key features:

- Improved access to jobs, education, health, culture, leisure and other services for all through the provision of a high quality public transport system, an orbital road network and additional river crossings;
- The location of new housing as close as possible to employment opportunities and public transport routes in order to minimise commuting;
- A move towards higher housing densities and a wider choice of housing unit sizes reflecting projected population structure;
- World class educational and research facilities working in close collaboration with indigenous and new high-tech industries;
- Areas of natural and cultural heritage will continue to be conserved and enhanced.



All of these measures will maintain and enhance the quality of life for Waterford's inhabitants and foster an excellent environment for the future economic development of the City.

The highlights of the proposed strategy are:

- Provision for a population increase of almost 30,000 people (or 57% population growth) in Waterford City and Environs by 2020;
- Investment needed for almost 12,800 new jobs or 46% growth by 2020;
- Requirement for approximately 11,500 new dwellings located both north and south of the River Suir;
- Significant retail expansion in the expanding City Centre;
- A Downstream River Crossing to facilitate the extension of the Outer Ring Road northwards to the N25;
- A new City Centre Bridge for pedestrians and cyclists which will link the redeveloped North Quays with the existing City Centre;
- Provision of a rail-passenger platform on the North Quays as part of a new Public Transport Interchange;
- Development of a high-quality bus-based public transport system in the City supported by Park and Ride facilities located north and south of the River;
- Expansion and improvement of the South-East Regional Airport with an extended runway, more operators and improved transport linkages.

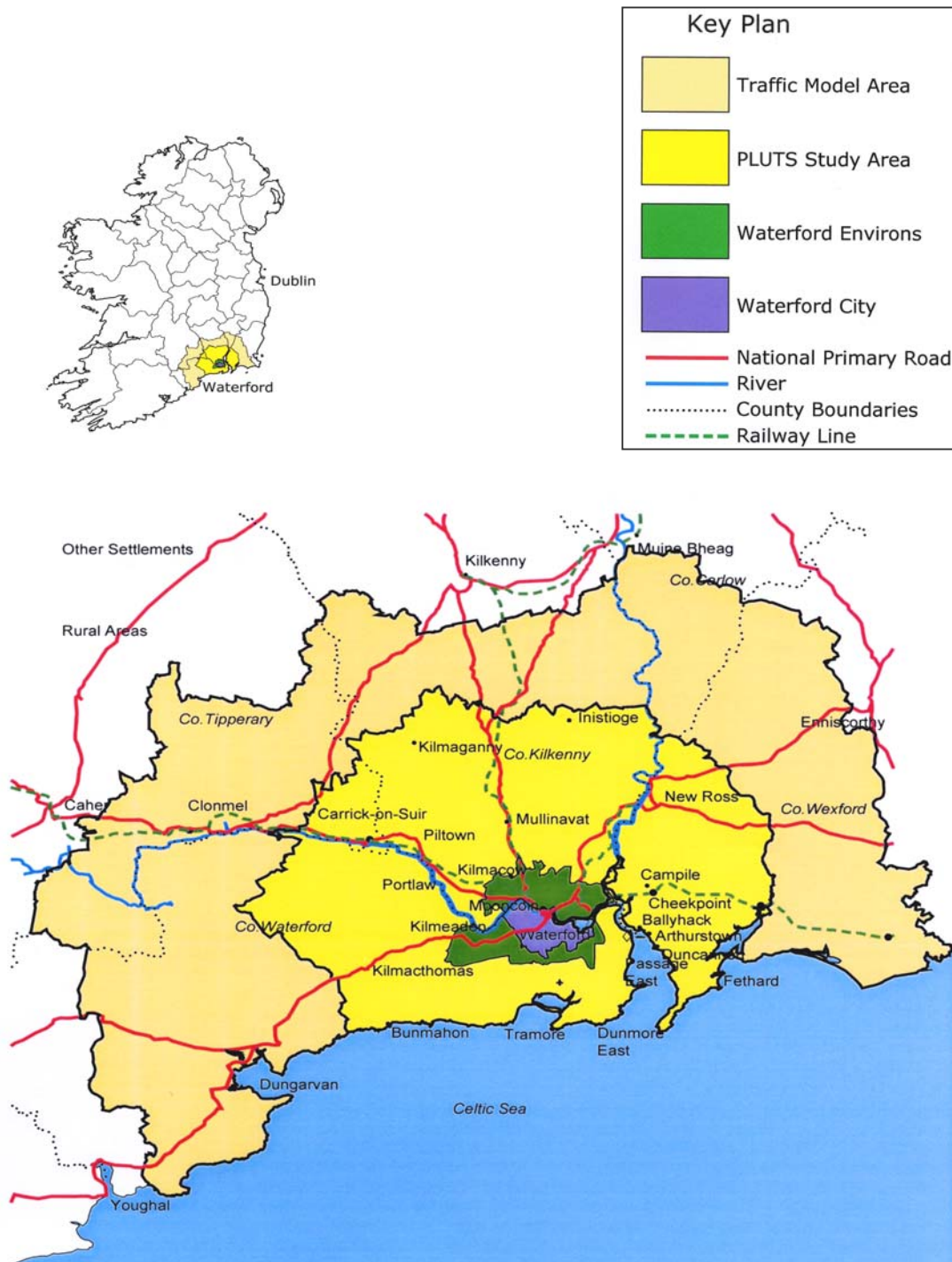
The proposed spatial strategy is shown in **Figure 1.1** and the proposed transport strategy is shown in **Figure 1.2**.

Figure 1.1 Proposed Spatial Strategy

Figure 1.2 Proposed Transport Strategy

1.3 Study Area

The Study Area radiates out from Waterford City to include the satellite towns of Tramore in County Waterford, Carrick-on-Suir in County Tipperary and New Ross in County Wexford and a number of smaller settlements including Dunmore East, Kilmacthomas, Portlaw, Piltown, Mooncoin, Kilmacow and Passage East. The Study is primarily focussed on Waterford City and its immediate environs in Counties Waterford and Kilkenny. The areas outside the City and Environs, including the satellites and smaller settlements, are not considered in any detail other than to identify their relative sub-regional scale in 2020.



1.4 A Vision Statement for Waterford

The following vision statement was adopted for the development of Waterford City and Environs:

“Waterford will realise its potential as an internationally competitive City and the premier settlement within the South-East region. The City will provide a range of employment and educational opportunities and a choice of residential, retail, leisure, tourist and cultural facilities, where the principles of quality of life, environmental enhancement, economic development and social equity will be key drivers of the City’s future.”

This future will be achieved by integrating and harnessing:

- The City’s strategic links with Europe and the capital;
- Its vibrant intellectual and educational life and its capacity for innovation;
- The quality of its built environment and landscape setting;
- Its compactness and human scale, arising from its origins as a walled City;
- Its potential to focus development on the banks of the River Suir to create a unique and memorable Irish urban experience.

1.5 Main Strategy Themes

The Strategy is underpinned by a number of key development themes as follows:

- Development of a Compact, Vibrant Sustainable City;
- Integration of Land Use and Transportation Planning;
- Provision of High Quality Transport Infrastructure;
- Expanding and Sustaining a Thriving Commercial Centre;
- Development of a High Level Research Institute and Knowledge Based Economy;
- Strengthening the City’s Tourism Product;
- Maintenance and Enhancement of the Attractive Landscape Setting;
- Support for the Key Assets of the City;
- Support for Indigenous Industry.

Development of a Compact, Vibrant and Sustainable City

As a consequence of the southern emphasis on development in Waterford City, the potential associated with Waterford’s stunning riverside location has not been fully realised in recent generations. The PLUTS proposes that the future, balanced development of Waterford should aim to harness this riverfront potential to create a new focus for the proposed spatial layout and to bring the North Quays and the Northern Suburbs fully into the social and economic ambit of the City.

To achieve a more compact, balanced layout over the 20-year study period, growth in Waterford City and Environs will be distributed between the north and south sides of the River Suir respectively in the ratio of approximately 2:3. A compact city form will be developed within a new orbital road network comprising the N25 Waterford Bypass and the Outer Ring Road and will be facilitated by the construction of two additional river crossings. These will include a vehicular crossing downstream of the

City Centre, the Downstream River Crossing, and a new City Centre Bridge which will be exclusively for pedestrians and cyclists. There will be three major development nodes in the City under the proposed spatial strategy located at the following locations:

- Belview;
- The City Centre including the redeveloped North Quays;
- Adjacent to WIT and Waterford Technology Park.



The development nodes will be linked together by a new high-quality Green Route.

The City Centre area will expand northwards across the River into the North Quays and will be linked to the existing core by the new City Centre Bridge. The design concept of the bridge will focus on ease of access and movement for pedestrians and cyclists as well providing shelter from the elements. The extended City Centre will be the physical, social, retail and commercial focus for the urban area and will accommodate a significant portion of the projected growth in jobs and services. It will also be the centre for leisure and entertainment with a specific emphasis on riverside amenities including the marina on the South Quays. Improved public spaces and extended pedestrian areas will create an attractive ambience for both visitors and residents alike.

Sustainable growth will be facilitated by the provision of efficient public transport links between residential and employment locations thus facilitating easier circulation and mobility within Waterford and reducing the use of energy resources and the associated emissions of pollutants and greenhouse gases. A move towards higher housing densities and a wider choice of housing unit sizes coupled with the provision of sustainable, high quality open spaces and recreational facilities will facilitate more concentrated residential development.

Integration of Land Use and Transport Planning

The concept of integrated land use and transportation planning is central to the Waterford PLUTS. To maximise the benefits of delivering integrated development, the whole transport planning process will be directly linked to the land use and spatial planning process so that the demand for transport services can be managed at a strategic level to provide a sustainable and high quality transport system. It is recognised that while the provision of new roads and bridges is needed to complete the orbital road network in Waterford, it does not provide the complete solution to the issues of accessibility and mobility for the City. A sustainable development plan will direct investment towards public transport and sustainable non-motorised modes and will focus on planning new transport systems that integrate with designated land uses.

In the first instance, the Study seeks to direct growth where capacity in the existing transport infrastructure exists. In the short-term, this may necessitate consideration to the rezoning of lands within future development plans post 2006. The provision of new transport infrastructure in areas where it is required and feasible will be in advance or in tandem with new housing and other developments. It is recommended

that appropriate lands be reserved in the development plans so as to retain options for current and future transport proposals.

Provision of High Quality Transport Infrastructure

The creation of a high quality transport infrastructure is central to the PLUTS and is based upon the completion of essential strategic roads infrastructure including three additional bridges over the River Suir, the development of a high quality bus network supported by Park and Ride facilities and improved pedestrian and cycle networks. Parking and traffic management initiatives in the City Centre will support the overall transport strategy so as to provide a sustainable and high quality urban environment.

There will be a strong emphasis on developing and strengthening the role of public transport in order to provide improved mode choice and high-quality services to the travelling public. A strategic objective is to create conditions that will facilitate a change in public attitude towards the use of bus-based public transport. This is seen as a strategic requirement not only for reasons of environmental sustainability, but also to be able to accommodate the growth in demand for transport that accompanies the projected economic growth and expansion of the City.



In addition to the major transport related proposals outlined earlier (Page iii), the following are considered to be critical to the Strategy:

International and National Connections

- Support for the South-East Regional Airport including improvements to the runway and road access and better integration with the public transport network.
- Continued development and rationalisation of facilities at the Port of Waterford at Belview.
- Improved mainline rail service to Dublin and maximisation of other key rail assets, particularly the Rosslare to Limerick rail corridor;
- Improvements to the National Road Network including construction of the M9 to Dublin and continued improvements to the N25 (Cork – Wexford Road) and the N24 (Limerick – Waterford Road).

Public Transport and other Sustainable Modes

- Introduction of bus lanes on radial and orbital roads linked to a range of operational improvements in public transport provision including new routes and increased frequencies and improved parking management in the City Centre;
- Provision for sustainable transport modes with a network of pedestrian and cycle routes including an orbital route linking employment, residential and educational facilities.

Road Transport

- Completion of the N25 Waterford Bypass including the upstream river crossing;

- Completion of the southern section of the Outer Ring Road;
- Extension of the Outer Ring Road northwards and development of the associated road links to the N25 and N29;
- Other selective on-line improvements.

Traffic Management

- Extension of the Area Traffic Control (ATC) system;
- Improved parking management and provision for Park and Walk linked to the construction of new off-street car parks;
- Introduction of traffic calming and environmental improvements in the City Centre.

Expanding and Sustaining a Thriving Commercial Centre

The City Centre will be the focus for commerce, retail, office development, service and transport as well as leisure and entertainment amenities associated with the River and the marina on the South Quays. To accommodate the projected growth in population, jobs and services an expansion northwards into the landmark North Quays redevelopment site will be required along with an emphasis on the development of “brownfield” sites within the existing centre. The North Quays will form a new, modern, mixed-use district with a major emphasis on retail and office based employment. Other significant uses will include high-quality urban dwellings, a concert and exhibition building, a public transport interchange and a marine terminal capable of accommodating ocean-going cruise liners. The new City Centre Bridge will link the North Quays to the existing City Centre. The South Quays will be redeveloped for recreational and amenity facilities.

There will be a major expansion in retail floorspace in the City and Environs, particularly in comparison-shopping floorspace. A significant proportion of this retail development will focus on the extended City Centre area including the redeveloped North Quays. Such expansion will be introduced in a phased and timely manner and will require a proactive and integrated approach on the part of the commercial community and the civic authorities. A thriving, commercial centre will be supported by urban design initiatives, such as extended pedestrian zones, architecturally designed open spaces as well as public transport facilities and traffic management initiatives that will remove excess traffic from the City Centre. The PLUTS also highlights the importance of expanding the commercial heart in a manner that is sympathetic to the rich heritage fabric of the urban core. Waterford’s historical legacy as the oldest city in Ireland and its future as a modern, vibrant, cosmopolitan, European city will be nurtured and developed in a balanced way that highlights its unique features.



Development of a High Level Research Institute and Knowledge Based Economy

The Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) is a highly progressive regionally based centre of education. The success of WIT forms a strong platform for the development of a new University of the South-East (USE). By securing university status and funding, it has the potential to be at the forefront of innovative and collaborative research.

The Waterford PLUTS supports the creation of a high-tech technology park in conjunction with the development of USE. This will secure a prominence for the South-East region as a centre for high level research which supports commercial and industrial development and will enhance the social, political and cultural vitality of the City and its people. Clusters of cutting edge industries will be developed and sustained by an indigenous world-class work force and an educational and entrepreneurial environment of intellectual ferment. Waterford has many attractions and incentives to offer, including in particular a high quality of life, and these are important as regards attracting and retaining the leading national and international experts in key designated sectors

The educational and research sectors including WIT/USE provide key regional resources for realising the vision of the South-East Information Society Strategy (SEISS) in developing “a more dynamic, innovative knowledge based society where the opportunities offered by Information and Communication Technologies (ICT’s) are embraced enthusiastically, helping to make the (South-East) region an ideal place to live, learn and prosper”. The Waterford PLUTS fully supports the aim of the SEISS to promote Waterford and the South-East as “a forward looking and e-work enabled place in which to live, work and locate businesses” thus enhancing Waterford’s and the South-East region’s competitiveness nationally.

Strengthening the City’s Tourism Product

Waterford attracts the highest number of visitors in the South-East region and Waterford Crystal is the fourth most popular tourist attraction in the State. However, the range of other tourist attractions in the area have not fully benefited from the strength of this one attraction. As a consequence, Waterford City is under performing in attracting long stay visitors.

It is proposed to promote measures that will exploit the potential that exists in terms of retaining visitors for longer periods and in marketing the City as the regional base for tourists in the South-East. Waterford should be promoted as the nearest city to Rosslare Europort. The PLUTS proposes that urban redevelopment projects be undertaken in order to highlight the City’s rich historical legacy, to emphasise the link between the City and the River and to improve the public realm of the City generally. As part of this initiative, pedestrian areas in the City Centre should be extended. The continued development of high quality urban renewal schemes that enhance the City will improve the quality of the visitor experience by providing a safe, welcoming, attractive and lively urban environment which will offer a range of choices as regards accommodation, shopping, eating-out and entertainment.



Maintenance and Enhancement of the Attractive Landscape Setting

The attractive landscape of Waterford, its areas of nature conservation importance, the quality of the River Suir and its tributaries, and the rich archaeological and architectural heritage should all be conserved for future generations. The PLUTS recognises that these environmental resources are vital in contributing to a high quality of life for the population, and are important as an attraction to investors. The PLUTS supports the continuation of provisions in current development plan zonings

in accordance with the concept of sustainable development and the creation of a compact city.

Support for the Key Assets of the City

Waterford has a number of outstanding assets that distinguish it from other towns and cities both nationally and internationally and the value of these assets are very often under appreciated and given little prominence outside the City.

One of Waterford's key assets is its riverside and estuarial location. The River Suir provides a striking landscape setting for the City and has a recreational value that enhances the quality of life of residents and provides potential to further promote tourism and related employment. The redevelopment of the North and South Quays will support this asset by integrating everyday city life with the River. The tourism aspect of the proposed Strategy will seek to harness the amenity value of the River to attract longer stay visitors to the area. The Waterford Crystal name has put the City on the map internationally and the PLUTS supports the development of measures that will entice visitors to stay longer in the City.

The Port of Waterford is a key asset and the proposed strategy seeks to further develop the area adjacent to the Port as a major employment development node supported by residential development in the Northern Suburbs. The PLUTS fully supports the strategic aim to amalgamate the Port of Waterford with the ports at New Ross and Rosslare in order to strengthen the regional and commercial offer and to seek efficiencies by rationalising current operations.

The South-East Regional Airport has the potential to provide direct air links between the South-East and major airline hubs in the UK and on the continent to facilitate business users and tourists and to offer a choice of holiday destinations for the residents of the South-East. The PLUTS supports the further development of the Airport in terms of securing and retaining new operators, extending and widening the runway, upgrading the R708 Airport Road and better integrating the Airport with the public transport network. As regards strategic road and rail links, the PLUTS seeks to improve existing provision and provide new infrastructure where required.

The WIT is a valuable educational resource and its further development in association with the establishment of a high-tech business campus will attract major investment and establish a knowledge-based economy. Under the PLUTS, residential development will be allocated to southern neighbourhoods in support of the projected employment growth related to the new USE and the associated high-tech campus. Sustainable transport links will be created between the employment centres and the residential areas as part of the proposed strategy.

Support for Indigenous Industry

The Waterford PLUTS recognises Waterford's long tradition of local and indigenously developed industries including foundries, port related industries and major craft based industries, most significantly crystal making. As a strategic planning framework, the PLUTS will ensure that adequate land is available for industrial development in the most appropriate and accessible locations in the City to 2020 and beyond.



Proposed Downstream River Crossing at Maypark

1.6 Phasing and Implementation

The phasing and implementation of the Waterford PLUTS is critical to the management of the Strategy over time and in particular to the coordination of development with the provision of new strategic infrastructure in the most efficient and economical way.

The phasing programme for Waterford City and Environs has been designed to deliver the proposed strategy in this efficient and cost effective manner. Although there is a steady growth in population in each successive phase of development, the emphasis gradually shifts from south to north as the plan progresses. The priorities in the early part of the phasing programme are the consolidation of existing development areas and development in areas with existing or planned infrastructure. In the later stages, significant development will occur north of the River as infrastructure comes on stream.

The local authorities in Waterford City Council, Kilkenny County Council and Waterford County Council will agree on how best to cooperate and coordinate on implementation issues and to agree on appropriate joint monitoring and review structures.

The Waterford PLUTS will be seen as the key driver for the NSS in the South-East region. The NSS gives a pivotal role to the Regional Authorities in the overall implementation of the NSS. The relative ease with which the Waterford PLUTS and the NSS itself can be implemented will depend on the level of finance available at a national level and through private sector funding and to a lesser extent through EU funding processes.