Chapter 02

Vision Statement

"Monaghan is an inclusive, outward-looking, progressive county, which enjoys a diverse, vibrant economy, a sustainable environment and a high quality of life for all"

2.1 The County and Town Development Plans seek to:

(i) Create a clear strategic framework for the sustainable development of the county and its towns that is consistent with the long-term strategic aims set out in the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines

(ii) Give spatial expression to the economic, cultural and social aims of the County Development Board Strategy

(iii) Provide a basis for significant public and private sector investment in infrastructure, services and development, offering clear guidance to both sectors in framing development proposals

(iv) Establish a framework for more detailed plans within the county on a sectoral or geographical basis

(v) Protect and enhance the amenities of the county

Monaghan is an inland county in the province of Ulster, covering an area of 52,244 hectares (129,000 acres) or 1.9% of the land area of the Republic of Ireland. Its population in 2002 totalled 52,772 giving an average density of 100 persons per sq. kilometre.

Census 2006 revealed that population growth in Co. Monaghan at 6.4%, lagged behind the national average, at 8.2%. Whilst some parts of the county areas enjoyed modest population growth, a decline in population was most marked in the west and south west of the county. The lack of health and third level education facilities together with a reliance on primary production and predominantly low-skilled industry has impacted on the development of the County. Infrastructural deficiencies in the county and five towns has hindered the development of a "critical mass" that is required to attract new investment and maintain social, recreational and employment services.

However the County's tradition as a self-starting, progressive and independent economy was recognised in "The Shared Vision for Monaghan", the County Development Board's Integrated Strategy for Monaghan 2002, which stated that:

"Monaghan is an inclusive, outward-looking, progressive county, which enjoys a diverse, vibrant economy, a sustainable environment and a high quality of life for all"

It is this quality that differentiates Monaghan from other counties. The Development Plans aim to provide a framework to ensure that development and land use within the county reflects this vision.

The strategic aims of five local authorities in County Monaghan in preparing County and Town Development Plans are to:

• Develop the full potential of each part of the County in economic, social and environmental terms.

• Sustain traditional settlement patterns, while developing the role and function of each town, village and settlement throughout the county

  – Developing Monaghan town as a hub town with a target population of 15,000 by 2020.

  – Developing Carrickmacross, Castleblayney, Clones and Ballybay towns as attractive, viable services centres to meet the needs of their surrounding hinterlands

  – And sustaining the vitality of the villages and settlements throughout the county as sustainable service centres to meet the needs of rural communities

• Improve transport linkages and communications between County Monaghan and its neighbouring counties, to capitalise on the county's strategic spatial location.

• Support balanced economic development throughout the county by delivering improved infrastructure and services

• Preserve the environmental quality of the natural and built environment in rural and urban areas

• Improve the quality of life of all who live and work in the county.

County Monaghan is a small county strategically located in an all-Ireland setting, to the west of the "Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor", with linkages to the north-west and west. The county must capitalise economically on its strategic location, whilst retaining its high quality landscape and rural environment. The proximity to Northern Ireland which discouraged inward investment in the past is now recognised as a key asset, with access to new markets, linkages and partnerships, presenting Monaghan with a significant advantage over other counties.

The traditional settlement patterns which define the county and contribute to the quality of life must be supported. In recent years the county has welcomed new additions to the population from abroad. Their contribution to the local economy is positive. However new inhabitants must be encouraged to settle within established settlements to build on the critical mass necessary to sustain existing local services and attract additional investment and opportunities. The key functions of Monaghan and the other four towns must be recognised and supported to provide critical mass and attract new industries and services to the county.

Improved east-west linkages are required to ensure balanced development throughout the county. Up to now major investment in transport and telecommunications infrastructure was focussed on a north-south axis in the county. Infrastructural improvements, economic development and population growth has concentrated along the N2 and its towns. The centre and west of the county has suffered by virtue of its relative distance from the N2 and its infrastructural needs must be addressed in these plans.

Whilst the Plans aim to foster economic development and improve infrastructure and services, the conservation and protection of the environment and heritage of the county must also have priority. The Plans contain comprehensive policies and guidelines for the protection of the built and natural heritage and a record of protected structures and monuments.

The Development Plans comprise of three main sections, which focus on:

- Strategic Overview and Policy Statements
- Strategy Implementation and Guidelines
- Supporting Details

2.2 Strategic Overview and Policy Statements

Chapter 1, 2 and 3 provide a strategic overview of the major planning issues and place them in a national and regional context.

Chapter 1 identifies the legal, political and economic background to the Development Plans and explains their role and relationship within national and regional spatial planning.

Chapter 2 and 3 identify the strategic vision, key social, economic and demographic trends and the strategic issues to be addressed in the plan. A strategic overview will identify strategic aims and objectives together with the principal threats and opportunities that face the county.

The Development Plans do not seek to duplicate or re-invent the County Development Board's (CDB) Integrated Strategy for County Monaghan 2002. The focus of the plans is on physical development and land-use and how it can serve the wider social, economic and environmental objectives agreed in the CDB Strategy.

Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 address the strategic issues and establish policies within the key areas of the Environment, Economic Development, Infrastructure and Services and Community Infrastructure. The Integrated Strategy for County Monaghan 2002 identified twelve strategic aims or "themes" in developing a vision for the county. The CDB Strategy also identified goals and objectives for each theme and specified necessary actions that were required to achieve the set objectives. The CDB Strategy provides the socio-economic context for the Development Plans.

This vision and the goals identified in the CDB Strategy together with detailed objectives and policies needed to achieve the core strategy of the plan are expressed spatially in the Development Plans.

These objectives are supported by land use zoning in built-up areas and protective zoning to secure environmental and amenity objectives. The plan identifies land use objectives for both urban and rural areas of the county. To achieve its strategic objectives, the Plan identifies means through which these policies will be implemented. The planning authorities may implement policies through direct provision, regulation or in partnership with the social partners and individuals. Key proposals for the provision of infrastructure and services are incorporated into the Plans. In areas such as provision of infrastructure, local authorities have a historic and successful role in the direct provision and maintenance of services. In other areas, such as economic development, the planning authority's role may be passive. In the provision of services, especially amenity and social services, the community and voluntary sector, may be more suited and the local authorities' role may be to provide support or resources through a partnership arrangement. The means of achieving the policy objectives will vary from sector to sector. The Plans identify, in so far as practicable, the method of provision and delivery of infrastructure and services.

The Development Plans also provide for the development of local plans and strategies for specific geographical areas or activity sectors. Over the past six years, Housing and Retail Strategies and nine Local Area Plans for Villages were incorporated into the County Development Plan. Regional, sub-regional and trans-boundary Plans in areas such as Waste Management, Water Management and Transportation will also advise the Plans over the coming six years. These plans will incorporate new policy implementation methods.

2.3 Strategy Implementation

Chapters 8 to 14 set out development management guidelines and town plans, including land use zoning maps that provide clear guidance to developers throughout the county. The guidelines and maps are based on the policies and aims established in the preceding chapters and form the basis for development management in the county and towns over the next six years.

2.4 Supporting Details

The written plans and policies are underwritten and supported by key information and statistical data. The Plans incorporate key data on areas such as design and safety standards for development in the county. The Plans and policies are supported by population growth projections, traffic forecasts, economic and census data that have been collated by other agencies and impact on the development of the county.