

Chapter 7

Development of Community Infrastructure

7.1 Introduction

There has been a long history of community-led development with both the credit union and co-operative movements having their beginnings in the County. This continues to this day, with a large number of groups specialising in a variety of areas.

Almost every large town and village in the County has a community group which is evidence of a high level of community organisation and infrastructure. There are also a large number of 'specialist' groups such as Disability Groups, Women's Groups, Youth Groups as well as a network of approximately fifteen groups dealing with deprivation (Monaghan Against Disadvantage).

Community development is vibrant in the county. The majority of villages and towns throughout the county have a community centre providing a variety of services and opportunities for people living in the area. Community facilities are constantly being upgraded, expanded and developed to meet the needs that arise from year to year. The economic downturn has increased the level of volunteering in the county in particular in relation to community infrastructure projects. Each year the council's community development fund receives approximately forty applications for community infrastructure projects to carry out improvements to existing facilities and improvements to footpaths, parking and access routes to community facilities.

A Profile of Cultural Diversity in Monaghan published in 2011 highlights the diverse and vibrant nature of the community sector in Monaghan.

- There are over 300 community groups registered with Monaghan Community Forum.
- Almost 80 different nationalities reside in the county and participate in community activities in each town and village.
- Over 40 community festivals take place annually in the county ranging from one day events in small rural villages to large weekend events such as the Harvest Time Blues Festival, Taste of Monaghan etc
- Community events, festival and activities all take place in well developed and maintained community facilities throughout the county.

The community development sector in the county is relatively well developed and has been supported by a variety of agencies including Monaghan County Enterprise Board, Monaghan Vocational Educational Committee, Monaghan Integrated Development and LEADER. These projects have made a major contribution to building social inclusion with groups such as asylum seekers, ex-prisoners, youth and lone parents.

An Audit of Community, Sports & Arts facilities in Monaghan carried out in 2008 found the following:-

- Facilities are distributed well throughout both urban and rural areas in the county, with a good mix of activities being provided by community, sports and arts
- Community facilities tended to be less well equipped in terms of amenities such as toilets or food provision or indeed disabled access
- Just under two thirds of all facilities have undertaken refurbishments in recent years

Objectives for Community Infrastructure

Appropriate Assessment

- CIO 1.** Ensure that all plans and projects relating to community infrastructure are subject to policies AAP1-AAP5 contained within Chapter 4, Environment and Heritage, of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2013-2019.

Arts and Culture

- CIO 2.** Continue to support the arts activities and artists through their creative process in the county by co-operating with the Arts Council, community arts groups and other relevant local, national and international bodies.
- CIO 3.** Encourage cross border community cultural initiatives.

Community Facilities

- CIO 4.** Ensure that all leisure and community facilities including crèches and play schools are located where there will be safe and easy access, with adequate car parking facilities, lighting and access and where they would not be detrimental to the privacy and amenity of any neighbouring residential properties.
- CIO 5.** Promote the use of existing buildings for community purposes particularly where the present use is redundant.
- CIO 6.** Promote the multiple use of school facilities for community purposes in so far as such uses are compatible with the primary purpose of the facilities.

Education

- CIO 7.** Co-operate with education authorities in the siting of school facilities and ensure that locations are easily accessible from all parts of a school's catchment area.
- CIO 8.** Ensure that sufficient lands are available for educational infrastructure and a third level institution.

Library Services

- CIO 9.** Ensure that library facilities are available to all people in the County.

Courthouses

- CIO 10.** Ensure that all courthouses in Monaghan are maintained in a good state of repair.

Motor Taxation

- CIO 11.** Provide sufficient and well maintained facilities for motor taxation incorporating access for disabled persons.

Objectives for Community Infrastructure

Allotments and Community Gardens

- CIO 12.** Facilitate the development of allotments and community gardens at suitable locations throughout the County.

Other Services

- CIO 13.** To co-operate with statutory and other bodies responsible for the installation of infrastructural services as necessary for the implementation of this plan, and to see that those services shall be located where they will have least impact on the environment.

7.2 Arts and Culture

The Arts Act 2003 defines “Arts” as any creative or interpretative expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form, and includes, in particular, visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, film and architecture, and includes any medium when used for those purposes.

Culture can be described as the sum total of our experience, encompassing history, archaeology, environment, an Gaeilge, folklore, customs, sports and recreation, contemporary life, religion, citizenship, the border, tourism, education and government. The arts give us the tools with which we can express our experiences.

County Monaghan benefits from a remarkably well-documented history and interest. Interest in local heritage is strong, with heritage groups in every parish. Conservation of heritage sites and the promotion of candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC) are steadily gaining importance within the voluntary, private and public sectors in the county.

The Council supports the practice of the arts, in whatever form or medium, which celebrates and enacts creativity and expression. The practice of the arts confers aesthetic values with which to enhance society. In addition to the intrinsic value of the arts, there is also the substantial and recognised value that the arts contribute to the socio-economic development of society, Participation in arts activities is frequently a means of both individual and community celebration. A vibrant arts sector can enhance both the socio-economic achievement of a locality.

Facilities for the arts are relatively well developed in County Monaghan, with four dedicated arts venues and one purpose built arts centre. There are two theatres (The Garage and Iontas Centre) and two exhibition areas in Monaghan Town and one Literary Resource Centre at Inniskeen. The Garage Theatre once relocated to the old army barracks in 2013, will be a full arts facility, and not just a theatre, The Iontas Centre is also a multi functioning arts venue, having an all year round Gallery programme. The Market House Venue & Gallery is an excellent arts space which is owned and operated by Monaghan County Council.

The Council recognises this contribution and makes provision for the continued development of the arts in order to further local cultural, social and economic development.

There are a large number of community established cultural festivals and activities within Monaghan

A large number of artists including local professional artists, and ten commercial craft workers practice in County Monaghan. The county has five performing arts and cultural groups supporting a long tradition of community based drama. The long tradition of community based drama waned during the years of economic boom in Ireland, primarily due to very high employment levels as people had little time to invest in the arts. However, the current economic downturn may reverse this trend.

There are three main Irish-language cultural groups in Monaghan and although only one-tenth of the population speaks the language on a regular (i.e. weekly) basis, the language has clearly benefited from the recent revival in interest nationally.

Objectives for Arts and Culture

- ACO 1.** Ensure that all plans and projects relating to arts and culture are subject to policies AAP1-AAP5 contained within Chapter 4, Environment and Heritage, of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2013-2019.
- ACO 2.** Develop programmes, alone or in partnership with others, where appropriate, to support the development of the arts.
- ACO 3.** Support people's experience of the arts, to advocate the unique value of the arts in society, and to recognise both promise and achievement in the making of art.
- ACO 4.** Encourage cross border cultural initiatives.
- ACO 5.** Support arts and entertainment activities in the county by co- operating with the Arts Council, arts groups in the county and other bodies.
- ACO 6.** Encourage the provision of facilities for the arts including theatres throughout the county.
- ACO 7.** Support the provision of facilities for arts in partnership with other bodies, arts organisations and local communities.

Childcare Facilities

7.3 Childcare Facilities

National policy with regard to childcare is due to increase the number of places available and to improve the quality of childcare facilities for the community. It is recognised that increased female participation in the labour force together with social change has resulted in a major increase in the demand for childcare. The provision of childcare facilities is now seen as being of utmost importance for economic and social well being. The Childcare Facility Guidelines for Planning Authorities (Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government, 2001) emphasise the role of planning in the promotion of increased childcare provision.

The provision of childcare facilities will be encouraged in appropriate locations, including residential areas, town centre, district and neighbourhood centres and in areas of employment. New residential areas have been identified as an important location for the provision of childcare facilities. In accordance with the requirements of the Guidelines, provision shall be made for purpose built, easily accessible facilities in new developments of 75 residential units or more. In existing housing developments, the establishment of small crèches will be considered, but the premises must remain primarily residential and traffic access arrangements must not interfere with general residential amenity. Development management standards in relation to childcare facilities are outlined in Chapter 15, Development Management Guidelines.

Objectives for Childcare Facilities

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| CFO 1. | Ensure that all plans and projects relating to the provision of childcare facilities are subject to policies AAP1-AAP5 contained within Chapter 4, Environment and Heritage, of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2013-2019. |
| CFO 2. | To encourage the provision of childcare facilities in appropriate locations, including residential areas, town centres, district and neighbourhood centre and in areas of employment. Such facilities will normally provide open space play areas, good accessibility and off street parking and will be subject to normal proper planning and development considerations. |
| CFO 3. | Childcare facilities will be permitted in rural areas within 2 km of existing community/social facilities such as a community hall, school, sporting facilities etc, where a demand has been established and where no alternative is available locally, subject to good planning practice. Childcare facilities may also be permitted outside the 2 km radius where a local need has been clearly identified and is approved by the County Childcare Committee. |

7.4 Community Facilities, Sports, Recreation, Amenity and Open Space

7.4.1 Community Facilities, Sports, Recreation and Amenity

Access to opportunities for recreation and amenity is an important consideration in determining the quality of life. Recreation ranges from competitive sports to the passive appreciation of the natural environment and the expression of the artistic spirit through painting or craftwork. County Monaghan has a wide diversity of recreational activities some of which form local customs and traditions. Many of the competitive sports demand ever increasing standards of facilities and accommodation, and participants in County Monaghan will require access to such facilities in order to compete equally at national and international level. Community facilities play a very important role in helping to develop a sense of community. So too do sports and physical recreation, in addition to being important components of everyday life and well being. The county is well endowed with outdoor facilities including lakes, rivers and forests, providing the main assets for passive recreational use. These natural assets facilitate participation in pursuits such as angling, water sports and walking.

There is a strong sporting tradition in Monaghan, especially in Gaelic sports. The GAA has 38 clubs in the county, each owning their own ground, and many with indoor social and sporting facilities. Women's Gaelic football has a strong presence in the county and soccer continues to increase in popularity. Golf also continues to gain in popularity with five 18 hole courses, two driving ranges and a number of pitch and putt clubs around the county. Other sports played include athletics, rugby, boxing, rally driving, motor cycling, bowling, horse riding, gymnastics and water sports such as water skiing and kayaking. The number however of indoor sports and leisure facilities are suitable only for a narrow range of activities. The new leisure centre and swimming pool in Monaghan Town has improved the provision of facilities within the county.

The Council will ensure that adequate land is zoned for the development of accessible sporting and recreational facilities, particularly for the youth, the older adult and those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. The Council will also ensure that adequate land is provided within residential developments for play and sports facilities, through development management measures.

7.4.2 Public Rights of Way

The Planning and Development Act, 2010 requires development plans to include objectives for the preservation of public rights of way providing access to mountains, lakeshore, riverbank, or other place of natural beauty or recreational utility by the identification on maps and listing of such public rights of way. Public rights of way constitute an important amenity and economic asset. They enable enjoyment of the County's high quality landscape and are important for tourism development and recreation and the enjoyment of the County's cultural heritage.

Objectives for Recreation and Amenity

- RAO 1.** Ensure that all plans and projects relating to the provision of recreation and amenity are subject to policies AAP1-AAP5 contained within Chapter 4, Environment and Heritage, of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2013-2019.
- RAO 2.** Co-operate with all agencies in promoting and developing the recreational potential of the county and carry out appropriate development as and when resources permit.
- RAO 3.** Where possible, the Local Authority may combine with developers and local communities in the provision and improvement of recreational facilities.
- RAO 4.** Protect the amenity of scenic and environmentally sensitive areas and promote the knowledge and appreciation of the natural amenities of the County.
- RAO 5.** Facilitate the provision of adequate amenity and recreational open space and facilities for all groups of the population at a convenient distance from their homes and places of work.
- RAO 6.** Support local sports and community groups in the development of facilities.
- RAO 7.** Promote the provision of public playgrounds and parks in all settlement centres and ensure compliance with the Play Policy of Monaghan Local Authorities.
- RAO 8.** Facilitate and encourage the provision of youth centres or amenity centres for young people.
- RAO 9.** Promote and provide, where possible access to rivers and lakes for recreational and amenity uses and facilitate where appropriate, the development of ancillary facilities which would not detract from the setting of the recreational or amenity value of the area.
- RAO 10.** Maintain and conserve existing rights of way within the County.
- RAO 11.** Identify on maps and by list those public rights of way giving access to mountains, lakeshores, riverbanks, canals or other place of natural beauty or recreational activity during the lifetime of the development plan where resources are available to do so.
- RAO 12.** Confine games/recreational activity, which would give rise to loss of amenity including elevated levels of noise, to locations, which would not create disturbance to residents or have a negative impact on the conservation status of protected structures.

Objectives for Recreation and Amenity

- RAO 13.** Require developers to include the provision of sports and recreation infrastructure in new residential schemes. Natural features such as rivers, streams, trees and tree groups as well as landscaping plans and maintenance arrangements should be incorporated into new developments.
- RAO 14.** Identify locations for recreation facilities suitable for older persons, in appropriate locations, during the lifetime of the plan.

7.5 Cycling and Walking

The provision of cycling and walking is part of a drive to promote alternatives to the private car and encourage a more sustainable means of travel. One step in this process is to improve the provision, safety, convenience and general environment for cycling and walking by ensuring the needs of cyclists and pedestrians are fully taken into account in the development process. Past census data has shown that an increasing proportion of short trips are being made by car. Many of these trips could be, and were in the past made on foot or by bicycle. These alternatives have both economic and social benefits which make for a healthier environment. The full potential of walking and cycling will have to be realised to address the negative social, economic and environmental impacts of ever increasing volumes of road transport.

Cycling and walking are inexpensive transport modes and the cost of infrastructure provision is low in comparison to other modes of transport. Measures to support cycling and walking can easily be integrated with both new development and existing private and public transport.

Ireland's first National Cycle Policy Framework was launched in April 2009 and sets out nineteen specific objectives that will meet the vision of creating a strong culture of cycling in Ireland. The framework includes objectives such as cycling and walking friendly design of development and infrastructure, rural cycle networks, cycle friendly routes to school, adequate and secure cycle parking facilities, well lit and well surfaced cycling routes, sign posted cycle networks, proper integration of cycling and public transport, the provision of fiscal incentives to cycle, appropriate and timely financial resources towards implementing the framework, and coordination of the implementation of activities across Government Departments, Agencies and Non Government Organisations.

To help promote cycle use the amount of good quality cycle parking needs to be increased. It is therefore important that safe and secure cycle parking is provided as an integral part of any development involving jobs, residential, shopping, leisure and/or services.

Objectives for Cycling and Walking

- CWO 1.** Ensure that all plans and projects relating to the provision of cycling and walking facilities are subject to policies AAP1-AAP5 contained within Chapter 4, Environment and Heritage, of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2013-2019.
- CWO 2.** Support, promote and facilitate walking and cycling as alternative modes of transport in appropriate locations throughout the county.
- CWO 3.** Develop a walking and cycling strategy for the County during the lifetime of the plan.
- CWO 4.** Support, promote and encourage the development and maintenance of looped walks, and long and medium distance walking and cycling routes (including long and medium distance trails) throughout the county in line with the Government's Smarter Travel Policy, particularly those which have cultural or historic association, which provide linkages with trails to existing established national, and local and cross border walking/cycling routes.
- CWO 5.** Protect established walking routes from development which would adversely impact upon them.
- CWO 6.** Identify safe and convenient cycle routes in urban areas and between the main towns and villages in the county, and provide signage and ancillary facilities at appropriate locations to promote their use, during the lifetime of the plan.

Policies for Cycling and Walking

Any development providing jobs, shopping, leisure and or services, including education and community uses should take into account the needs of cyclists and pedestrians. Where appropriate, provision of the following will be required:

- CWP 1.** Safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle access, and accessible pedestrian crossing policy developed under the Disability Act.
- CWP 2.** Safe, convenient and secure cycle parking and ancillary/associated facilities.
- CWP 3.** Safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle links to existing or programmed networks (including existing applications) where they adjoin the development site using the accessible pedestrian crossing policy developed under the Disability Act.

Traveller Accommodation

7.6 Traveller Accommodation

The Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013 was adopted by Monaghan County Council. The plan was developed at County Council level, and identified the relevant needs and input for delivery by the Town Councils of Clones, Monaghan, Castleblayney and Carrickmacross.

The total number of traveller families in the Monaghan Local Authorities area in November 2010 was 153. This represents an increase of 29 in the number of Traveller families in the county since the adoption of the programme.

7.6.1 Existing Facilities

Monaghan County Council currently maintains and manages a permanent residential caravan park at Gortakeegan, Monaghan (20 bays).

Objectives for Traveller Accommodation

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| TAO 1. | Ensure that all plans and projects relating to the provision of traveller accommodation are subject to policies AAP1-AAP5 contained within Chapter 4, Environment and Heritage, of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2013-2019. |
| TAO 2. | Monaghan Local Authorities within the resources available to it, will aim to provide suitable accommodation in accordance with the Assessment of Needs carried out in March 2002. |
| TAO 3. | Monaghan Local Authorities will aim to improve existing accommodation and provide new accommodation, particularly in Carrickmacross and Castleblayney. |

Social Inclusion

7.7 Social Inclusion

The wide dispersal of population across the country tends to conceal many social issues. Unemployment, hidden poverty and lack of facilities within the county are the key problems. The challenge for this plan in conjunction with all other plans and programmes is to ensure that the county's economic progress benefits all sectors, particularly those who are marginalised. Inclusion will involve taking all the necessary steps to ensure that disadvantaged groups can have equal access to facilities and services together with the opportunity to improve their skills.

Social inclusion will therefore be an important part of all development. The following policy will encourage social inclusion in land use planning within the county.

Objectives for Social Inclusion

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| SIO 1. | Identify locations where a local action plan is required to tackle urban/rural decline and adopting a community involvement approach in accordance with <i>The Monaghan Model – A Guide to Best Practice in Community Consultation</i> . |
| SIO 2. | Facilitate and promote parity of access to transport services in order that the socially excluded may gain access to employment and services. |
| SIO 3. | Monitor and implement the Housing Strategy, contained within Chapter 16 of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2013-2019, and ensure that as far as possible access for people with a disability is provided. |
| SIO 4. | Identify and develop in areas of need, schemes for environmental improvement in cooperation with the local community and in local authority housing estates. |
| SIO 5. | Increase access to suitable and appropriate accommodation for all in the county of a type suited to their requirements. |

Disabled Accessibility

7.8 Disabled Accessibility

Monaghan Local Authorities have demonstrated a significant commitment to improving accessibility in the county in recent years. In 2008 Monaghan local authorities ratified ***Making Monaghan Accessible***, A detailed implementation plan that sets out how the Local Authorities are going to meet the obligations placed on them by the Disability Act 2005. Monaghan Local Authorities continue to be one of the frontrunners nationally in meeting the objectives of the Disability Act and improving accessibility for everyone in the county. The Disability Act 2005 requires each local authority to improve access to their buildings, public spaces, services, information and services and goods they acquire. In our approach to implementing the Disability Act 2005 through our implementation plan Making Monaghan Accessible priority is being placed on moving forward and how Monaghan local authorities will promote accessibility in its future work practices. A number of accessible policies have been developed to ensure accessibility is embedded in planning and development processes. Efforts have also been made to raise awareness of the needs of people with a disability in the county in particular in relation to accessible play facilities, use of accessible parking bays and access to services.

Objectives for Disabled Access

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| DAO 1. | Continue to raise awareness of the needs of people with disability in the county through media, social networking and other campaigns. |
| DAO 2. | Continue to deliver on the objectives of Making Monaghan Accessible- response to the Disability Act 2005. |
| DAO 3. | Ensure accessible policies that have been developed continue to be implemented and accessibility remains a priority within the decision making processes of the local authority. |

7.9 Library Services

Monaghan County Library was established by Monaghan County Council in 1928. It was the first service in Ireland to introduce a rural mobile library, in 1956. The service developed rapidly in the 1960s, building a new branch in Monaghan Town and refurbishing branches in Carrickmacross and Castleblayney. The refurbished Headquarters in Clones was opened in 1966. A branch was also opened in Ballybay in 1981. Monaghan County Library is located physically in 6 buildings across the county, mainly owned by its parent body, Monaghan County Council

Now in the new millennium, progressive council management has again focused on the service with the recently opened headquarters in Clones and new branches in Carrickmacross and Castleblayney. Both provide significantly improved service to the people of the county.

The role of Monaghan County Libraries continues to evolve, with the traditional concept of the library being redefined from a place simply to borrow books to one which allows access to the world of information and supports all members of the community in their quest for knowledge, education and self development. Free internet access is available in each of the five branch libraries and there is free WIFI access in Monaghan, Clones and Castleblayney branches.

The Monaghan County Library Development Plan 2005 has the following mission statement:

“To enrich the lives of all our users by providing a modern library and information service which stimulates knowledge and supports lifelong learning, imagination and recreation in an inclusive and accessible manner”

Within the life of Monaghan County Library's last Five Year Development Plan the library service profoundly changed and expanded, changing from a manual to a fully automated system, providing 24 hour catalogue and account access for all members.

The new five year plan, due for publication at the end of 2011 maintenance of the high standards of service currently provided at a time when budgets are severely restricted is the challenge.

Objectives for Library Facilities and Services

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| LFO 1. | Strive to ensure that library services are fully accessible to all throughout the county. |
| LFO 2. | Engage in a meaningful way with the public when planning and developing new services. |
| LFO 3. | Develop formal links with other service providers and community organisations and where appropriate deliver joint services. |

Nursing Homes and Retirement Villages

7.10 Nursing Homes and Retirement Villages

The demand for nursing homes has grown over the last number of decades. Advances in the field of medicine as well as improved nutrition and quality of life have increased average life expectancy. As this trend continues so will the demand for nursing and care facilities for the elderly. The planning authority has had considerable pressure for retirement homes/villages and homes for the disabled and elderly in the rural areas of the county. There is a presumption against this type of development in the open countryside for reasons relating to unsustainability, poor accessibility, social exclusion and visual intrusion.

Objectives for Nursing Homes and Retirement Villages

- NHO 1.** Ensure that projects relating to the provision of nursing homes nursing home/retirement villages are subject to policies AAP1-AAP4 contained within Chapter 4, Environment and Heritage, of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2013-2019.
- NHO 2.** For reasons of sustainability, accessibility, social inclusion and availability of services, nursing homes and nursing home/retirement villages should be located within or adjacent to towns and villages.

Schools and Education

7.11 Schools and Education

The Council will seek to ensure that school sites are made available to school authorities in phase with development. Should a school become redundant; an appropriate change of use will be considered on its merits and shall be subject to development management standards as laid out in Chapter 15, Development Management Guidelines of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2013-2019.

Objectives for Schools and Education

- SEO 1.** Ensure that all plans and projects relating to the provision of schools and education facilities are subject to policies AAP1-AAP5 contained within Chapter 4, Environment and Heritage, of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2013-2019.
- SEO 2.** Identify suitable sites for educational facilities that are integrated in a sustainable manner into settlements and communities, and that are capable of being accessible by public transport modes and safe alternative modes of transport such as cycling and walking.
- SEO 3.** Work in close association with all relevant agencies to ensure that educational provision is matched to future skills and needs within County Monaghan.

Policies for Schools and Education

- SEP 1.** All projects relating to the provision of schools and educational facilities shall be considered under policies AAP1-AAP4 contained within Chapter 4, Environment and Heritage, of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2013-2019.
- SEP 2.** Proposals for new educational facilities or extensions to existing facilities will normally be granted planning permission subject to the following criteria:
- (i) Scale and design of any resulting building does not harm the character and visual amenity of the area
 - (ii) The proposals would not result in significant disturbance in terms of traffic, car parking and noise
 - (iii) The facilities are accessible by a choice of modes of transport and satisfactory provision of bus parking, drop off areas, and car parking spaces are made available in accordance with table 15.2 in Chapter 15, Development Management Guidelines of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2013-2019
 - (iii) Traffic safety considerations are met.

