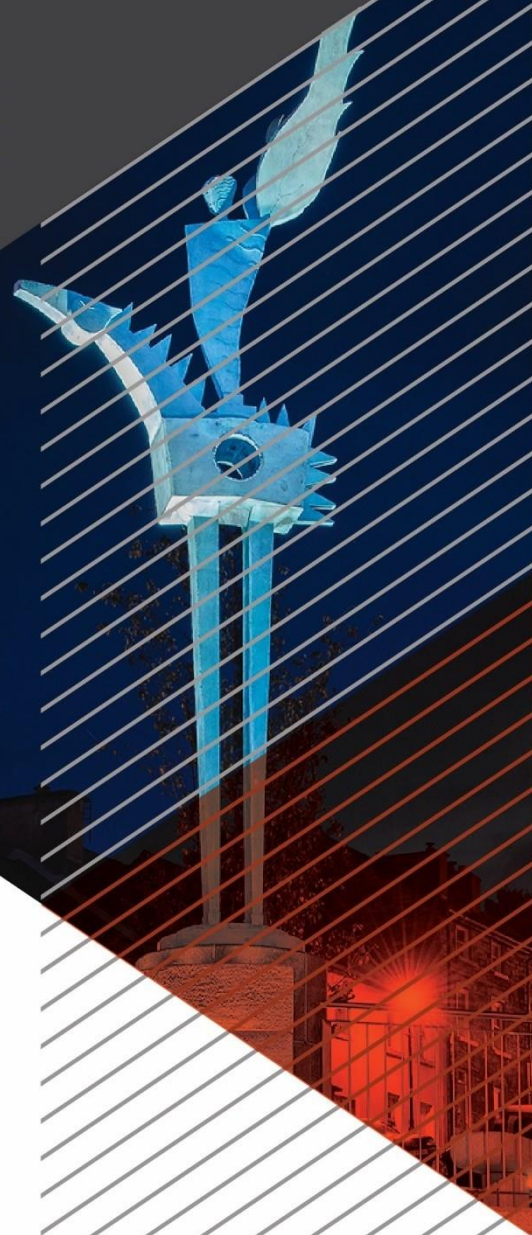

CHAPTER 9

Built Environment



CHAPTER 9

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

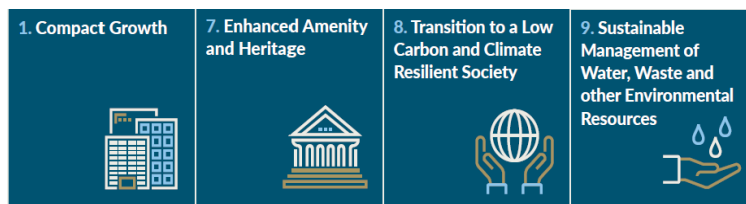
9.1 Strategic Aim

The strategic aim of this chapter is to recognise and enhance the unique identity, character and built heritage of Mayo's towns, village and rural areas, to improve quality of life through the application of healthy placemaking, underpinned by good urban design with the creation of attractive public spaces that are vibrant, distinctive, safe and accessible and which promote and facilitate positive social interaction.

Related UN Sustainable Development Goals



Related NPF National Strategic Outcomes



Related RSES Regional Growth Ambitions



9.2 Introduction

This chapter has been guided by the above strategic aim, sustainable development goals and national strategic objectives to ensure that the built environment in County Mayo is developed in a sustainable manner. This chapter has also considered the key legislative and policy documents set out in Appendix III, including the NPF and RSES for the Northern and Western region.

9.3 National and Regional Planning Position

The NPF and RSES recognise the need for enhanced amenities and heritage in urban and rural areas, to ensure they continue to be attractive places to live, work and visit. These spatial plans identify as a priority, the need to create and strengthen the built fabric of towns and villages, so as to ensure they are attractive and sustainable settlements that can offer a good quality of life for all. In order to achieve this, the NPF and RSES pursue a sustainable spatial growth strategy of 'Compact Growth'. An important component of this growth strategy is placemaking, through the regeneration, rejuvenation and repopulation of town centres to make them attractive and vibrant places. Cultural heritage plays an important role in the creation of place-making, by providing landmark buildings and features of interest, which contributes to the character and distinctiveness of towns and villages. The NPF and RSES also seek to protect and promote the sense of place, culture together with the quality, character and distinctiveness of the Irish rural landscape.

9.4 Mayo in Context

County Mayo has a distinctive built environment. The built environment refers to the human-made environment, which encompasses places, spaces and structures of past and present generations. The built environment has evolved over time, from the earliest man-made structures to the modern built environment. Our built heritage represents the historical layer, while new developments represent the modern layer of our built environment. New developments will form the built heritage of tomorrow, in the same way as the building styles of the past have given identity to the towns and villages in the county today. Mayo County Council seeks to ensure the protection and conservation of our rich built heritage throughout the county, where it is warranted, along with the sustainable growth of our towns and villages, with particular emphasis on the regeneration and revitalisation of town and village centres.

9.4.1 Built Heritage

The built heritage of County Mayo, comprising its archaeological and architectural heritage, has a practical role in shaping a positive future for County Mayo. Combined with our cultural heritage, it should be viewed as one of the many assets that make the county an attractive place in which to live, work and visit. Our archaeological and architectural heritage assets form an intrinsic part of our national heritage and are an irreplaceable and finite resource. Mayo's unique heritage is an intrinsic part of the character and attractiveness of the county and is a catalyst for attracting tourism and investment. Mayo County Council recognises the importance of identifying, valuing and safeguarding the archaeological and architectural heritage of Mayo for future generations. This can be achieved through the proper management, sensitive enhancement and/or appropriate development of this resource.

9.4.1.1 Archaeological Heritage

Archaeological heritage consists of the material remains left behind by past societies and includes structures, places, caves, sites, features or portable objects, whether on land, underwater or in the inter tidal zones. It provides an irreplaceable link with the past and provides information on the development of Mayo from our earliest settlers. All known archaeological sites are identified in the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). The principal mechanism for the protection of the archaeological sites and monuments is through the provision of the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP). In addition to the RMP, some monuments are considered National Monuments. These are structures or sites, the preservation of which has been deemed to be of national importance and therefore worthy of state protection. The physical remains of an archaeological monument today is not necessarily the full extent of the original monument, which can remain buried in the ground with no visible surface evidence. This is known as the Zone of Archaeological Potential (ZAP), which is the area surrounding the identified site or monument.

Archaeological Heritage Policies

BEP 1	To support and promote the protection, appropriate management and sympathetic enhancement of the county's archaeological heritage within the Plan area, in particular by implementing the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the National Monuments Act 1930 (as amended).
BEP 2	To promote awareness of and encourage the provision of access to, the archaeological resources of the county.
BEP 3	To encourage the management and maintenance of the county's archaeological heritage, including historic burial grounds, in accordance with best conservation practice that considers the impact of climate change.

Archaeological Heritage Objectives

BEO 1	To protect the archaeological heritage and sites identified in the Record of Monuments and Places, National Monuments in the ownership or guardianship of the State in addition to National Monuments that are the subject of Preservation Orders, and to safeguard the integrity of the archaeological sites in their setting.
BEO 2	To protect the tentative World Heritage Site in Mayo on the UNESCO Tentative List - Ireland 2010, The Céide Fields, from inappropriate development and support its nomination to World Heritage Status.
BEO 3	To implement, in partnership with the County Mayo Heritage Forum, relevant stakeholders and the community, the County Mayo Heritage Plan and any revisions thereof.

BEO 4	To ensure that development in the vicinity of a Recorded Monument or Zone of Archaeological Potential is sited and designed in a sensitive manner, avoiding adverse effects on landscape setting and context of monument.
BEO 5	To protect all sites and features of archaeological interest discovered subsequent to the publication of the Record of Monument and Places, in situ (or at a minimum preservation by record), having regard to the advice and recommendations of the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
BEO 6	To protect archaeological sites, monuments, underwater archaeology and archaeological objects in their setting, which are listed on the Record of Monuments and Places for Mayo.
BEO 7	To promote awareness and the appropriate adaptation of Ireland's built and archaeological heritage to deal with the effects of climate change with reference to the Built and Archaeological Heritage Climate Change and Adaptation Plan.

9.4.1.2 Architectural Heritage

Architectural heritage consists of buildings and structures of architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical importance. The principal mechanism for protection of these buildings and structures is through inclusion on the 'Record of Protected Structures' (RPS). Mayo County Council recognises the important contribution that all historic structures, features and landscapes, including those which are not listed in the RPS, makes to the county's heritage. Local authorities can also preserve the special character of a place, area, group of structures, or townscape known as Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). The special character of an ACA is made up of its architectural features, setting, spatial qualities and land uses.

Architectural Heritage Policies

BEP 4	To protect the architectural heritage of County Mayo which is a unique and special resource.
BEP 5	To promote best conservation practice and encourage the use of appropriately qualified professional advisors, tradesmen and craftsmen with recognised conservation expertise, for works to protected structures or historic buildings in an Architectural Conservation Area.
BEP 6	To encourage the conservation of Protected Structures, and where appropriate, the adaptive re-use of existing buildings and sites in a manner compatible with their character and significance.

BEP 7	To protect buildings and structures included in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) which forms part of this Plan.
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Architectural Heritage Objectives

BEO 8	To review and update the Record of Protected Structures within 12 months of adopting this plan, and on-going basis, and to make additions and deletions, as appropriate. Where exceptional circumstances apply, that discretion would be applied to work with affected parties.
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BEO 9	To ensure the protection and sympathetic enhancement of buildings and structures included and proposed for inclusion in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) that are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest, together with the integrity of their character and setting.
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BEO 10	To protect the setting of protected structures and seek to prevent the demolition or inappropriate alteration of Protected Structures, which would adversely impact on the character and special interest of the structure, where appropriate.
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BEO 11	To ensure that any new development or alteration to a building within or adjoining an Architectural Conservation Area positively enhances the character of the area and is appropriate in terms of the proposed materials, scale, density, layout, proportions, plot ratio and building lines.
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BEO 12	To identify places of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest, and to define them as Architectural Conservation Areas and to undertake an assessment to inform the potential ACA designation for the following areas: Castlebar, Ballinrobe, Killala, Pontoon and Doogort or any other special character areas considered by the Planning Authority worthy of such protection in County Mayo.
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BEO 13	To protect the built heritage of Ballina, Castlebar and Westport, including the protected structures listed in the existing town and environs development plans and seek to review the Record of Protected Structures for County Mayo to incorporate protected structures from the plan areas of these towns.
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9.4.1.3 Historic Building Stock and Vernacular Architecture

Scattered throughout the countryside and within the towns and villages of Mayo is an extensive stock of modest historic buildings and structures, some of which have been designed by an architect or engineer, while others are vernacular structures built to no formal plans, using traditional building types and materials. While these older buildings may not meet the criteria of sufficient special interest to be designated protected structures, their form, scale, materials and orientation contribute positively to the rural landscape, as well as to the historic villages and towns of Mayo, establishing the

distinctive character of a particular area. The retention and reuse of these buildings and structures exemplifies sustainable development and so Mayo County Council will encourage the appropriate re-use of vernacular buildings, rather than their replacement or dereliction, where practicable.

Historic Building Stock and Vernacular Architecture Policies

BEP 8	To encourage the retention, sympathetic maintenance and sustainable re-use of historic buildings, including vernacular dwellings or farm buildings and the retention of historic streetscape character, fabric, detail and features, where appropriate.
BEP 9	To promote the retention and restoration of thatched dwellings as a key component of the built heritage of the county.
BEP 10	To encourage the protection, retention, appreciation and appropriate revitalisation of the vernacular heritage of Mayo.
BEP 11	To promote the sympathetic maintenance refurbishment and re-use of vernacular built heritage and to support the retention of original fabric such as windows, doors, renders/pub/shopfronts, roof coverings and interiors.
BEP 12	To support proposals to appropriately refurbish and extend vernacular structures in a semi-derelict or derelict condition.
BEP 13	To encourage the protection, conservation, promotion and enhancement of Country Houses, Gardens and Demesnes in the county and support public awareness, enjoyment of and access to these sites, where appropriate.
BEP 14	To discourage development that would lead to a loss of, or cause damage to, the character, the principle components of, or the setting of Country Houses, Gardens and Demesnes in recognition of their contribution to cultural heritage, landscapes and green infrastructure. Architectural heritage impact assessment, including consideration of demesne and setting may be required for proposals.

Historic Building Stock and Vernacular Architecture Objectives

BEO 14	To identify and retain good examples of vernacular architecture and historic street furniture in situ, for example, cast-iron post boxes, water pumps, signage, street lighting, kerbing and traditional road and street surface coverings.
BEO 15	To ensure that conversions or extensions of traditional buildings or the provision of new adjoining buildings, are sensitively designed and do not detract from the character of the historic building.

BEO 16	To update the survey of surviving thatched structures in the county and to promote available grant schemes in order to assist owners with their retention and repair.
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BEO 17	To preserve the character and setting (for example, gates, gate piers and courtyards) of historic building and vernacular buildings, where deemed appropriate by the planning authority.
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9.4.2 Sustainable Buildings

Buildings form a valuable part of our historic building stock, yet most are not protected structures. On environmental grounds and in the interest of sustainability and locking in carbon, the Plan encourages the reuse of as much of an original building/ structure as is possible. Raw material shortages will become a critical factor over the next 10 to 20 years and already major companies worldwide are switching to recycling old concrete, steel, glass, etc. Demolition and rebuilding generates significantly greater amounts of carbon. The Plan promotes the re-use and re-purposing of extant building stock on these grounds.

To create sustainable buildings, it is vital to examine the lifecycle performance of the building to address greenhouse gas emissions and circular economy principles. In the building life cycle, embodied carbon is the greenhouse gas emission associated with the non-operational phase of the building. This includes emissions caused by extraction, manufacture, transportation, assembly, maintenance, replacement, deconstruction, disposal and end of life aspects of the materials and systems that make up a building. The whole life carbon of the building is both the embodied carbon and the carbon associated with operation (heating, cooling, powering, providing water, etc). Low embodied, carbon building designs can make projects more resilient to future resource and material scarcity, price rises and uncertainty, as well as rising energy prices.

Crucially, improved buildings deliver substantial societal benefits. By improving indoor air quality and lighting, green buildings improve the health of their occupants and neighbours. While energy savings are themselves valuable, adding public health to the equation makes it even clearer, that zero carbon buildings are worthy investments.

Sustainable Buildings and Structures Policies

BEP 15	To support and promote retaining built urban fabric/structures in towns and villages, in the interest of sustainable development in the national and global context of locking in carbon.
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BEP 16	To promote and support the re-use and re-purposing of extant building stock, in the first instance, over demolition and rebuilding building, where practical, with reference to the loss of our historic building stock, sense of place and the environmental cost.
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BEP 17	To support and promote the development and use of passive solar design principles in all new developments taking account of national guidelines.
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BEP 18	To encourage the use of green roofs and green walls particularly on apartment, industrial, commercial, leisure and educational buildings.
BEP 19	To encourage improved energy efficiency of existing building stock and promote energy efficiency and conservation in the design and development of all new buildings, including local authority dwellings.

Sustainable Buildings and Structures Objectives

BEO 18	To seek to reduce reliance on fossil fuels in the county by reducing the energy demand of existing buildings, in particular residential dwellings.
BEO 19	To require, where feasible and practicable, the provision of green roof technology for all new public buildings (Council buildings, school buildings, hospitals, community centres, sports facilities, libraries, Garda stations etc.) to assist in flood alleviation, climate change adaptation, insulation and improved biodiversity and to actively promote these measures where appropriate in new commercial and industrial buildings.
BEO 20	To seek to improve the energy efficiency of the county's existing building stock in line with good architectural conservation practice and to promote energy efficiency and conservation in the design and development of all new buildings in the county, in accordance with the Building Regulations Part L (Conservation of Fuel and Energy).
BEO 21	To consider the adaptability of buildings over time and seek to improve the efficiency of existing building stock, promote energy efficiency, high levels of energy conservation and the use of renewable energy sources in the design and development of all new buildings in the county.
BEO 22	To inform and encourage new developments to mitigate against, and adapt to where possible, the impacts of climate change through the location, layout and design of the development.
BEO 23	To ensure that new development proposals maximise energy efficiency through siting, layout, design and incorporate best practice in energy technologies, conservation and smart technology.

9.4.3 Placemaking

The built environment not only includes buildings but the spaces between buildings, such as town squares, parks, community gardens and the physical infrastructure that support human activity, such as transportation and utility networks. The Plan supports the hierarchy of high quality, vibrant, consolidated and attractive urban and rural settlements, and aims to improve the quality of the built fabric of Mayo's towns and villages by applying the principles of placemaking.

Placemaking is multidimensional and represents the connection between people and place. A high-quality public realm facilitates a positive environment in which to live, work and visit, and provides for an improved quality of life for everyone. Placemaking also seeks to incorporate distinctive features and structures in a town, like historic buildings, to provide a sense of place. Successful implementation of place-making principles serves to create and support sustainable communities by providing accessible, safe and distinct built environments reflective of the character, heritage and identity of each individual settlement, supported by the creation of qualitative safe and attractive public spaces.

Placemaking Policies

BEP 20	To provide for a high-quality public realm and public spaces by promoting quality urban design that accommodates creative patterns of use, having regard to the physical, cultural, and social identities of individual settlements.
BEP 21	To encourage the continued vitality and viability of town and village centres by promoting ongoing environmental improvements to the public realm, including blue and green infrastructure measures.
BEP 22	To encourage high quality and well-designed buildings, structures, public spaces and streets and support and promote healthy place-making and quality of life.
BEP 23	To encourage and facilitate improvements to the physical fabric and environment of town and village centres, including streetscape, street furniture, landscaping (hard and soft), signage and wirescape, while recognising that both private and public developments can contribute to effective public realm.
BEP 24	To be flexible in terms of enabling brownfield / infill development within settlements, focusing on design-led and performance-based outcomes, rather than specifying absolute requirements in all cases, whilst seeking to achieve 30% target for housing on infill/brownfield lands in urban settlements, as specified under the National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial Economic Spatial Strategy for the Northern and Western Region.
BEP 25	To support the consolidation and aggregation of land where required in order to enable regeneration and proper planning and sustainable development.

Placemaking Objectives

BEO 24

To apply the following key attributes when considering public realm and public space enhancements:

Accessible - connected and linked permeable spaces to ensure ease of movement.

Functional - safe, adaptable and social environments to attract and foster activity.

Attractive - visually pleasing spaces with high quality design, materials and installations (lighting, furniture and signage) based on a singular common design theme.

Distinctive - reference to local context and building on the character and identity of place.

Where appropriate, recreational considerations and access to blue and greens space should be underpinned by the Green Space Principles including:

- Enhance urban greening through planting strategies that mitigate noise and air pollution and maximise local biodiversity gain and facilitate sustainable drainage (e.g. deciduous wooded and wildflower meadow areas).
- A networked approach: emphasising green infrastructure networks (rather than isolated parks) can provide new opportunities for connecting existing and new green spaces and creating linkages between urban and rural areas. Examples include greenways and linear parks, local greenways or cycleways that link to regional and national greenways and de-culverting watercourses to provide new blue corridors.
- Well managed and maintained, creating a high-quality environment: poorly managed spaces or vandalism lead to negative perceptions among potential users.
- Multifunctional uses: examples include spaces that encourage active mobility, physical activity and sports, relaxation and tranquillity, and opportunities for social exchange (e.g. that incorporate community gardens or encourage park runs).
- Create multisensory restorative environments that help mitigate the psychological stresses of modern living through the provision of “restive places for rejuvenation”.

BEO 25

To facilitate, promote and encourage the development of Town Centre Consolidation Sites and Opportunity Sites, identified in Chapter 12 (Settlement, or any such regeneration sites in the Local Area Plans Ballina, Castlebar and Westport for appropriate development, that contributes positively to the character of the settlement. Any proposal brought forward on Opportunity Sites shall be in accordance with the Development Principles for Town Centre Opportunity Sites/Opportunity Sites should include of an urban design statement, site brief/masterplan and shall demonstrate the rationale for the proposal and how it will interact within its context and the wider urban area.

BEO 26	To require that all new developments, including public open spaces, cater for disability needs by way of appropriate design of the built environment.
BEO 27	To make a Place-Making Strategy for towns and implement Town Centre Renewal Plans.
BEO 28	To support the preparation of Design Guidelines to provide for improvements in the appearance of streetscapes.
BEO 29	To support the revitalisation of vacant spaces for example with cost effective, temporary uses that build on the longer-term vision for space.
BEO 30	To require proposals for public realm enhancements to include inclusive universal design principles.
BEO 31	To seek funding to support the preparation of site-specific Public Realm Strategies to enhance the unique characteristics and assets of Mayo's towns and villages.
BEO 32	To prepare and deliver Placemaking Strategies for Ballina, Castlebar and Westport.
BEO 33	To prepare a Placemaking Strategy for the Tier II towns of Ballinrobe, Ballyhaunis, Béal an Mhuirthead (Belmullet), Claremorris and Swinford.

9.4.4 Regeneration

The regeneration of town and village centres is a central goal of the plan, by maximising the use of underutilised land and buildings within the existing built-up footprint and by driving the delivery of quality housing and employment choice. The NPF and RSES require a minimum allocation of new housing to be directed into town and village centres, on brownfield, infill and under-utilised sites to repopulate and rejuvenate these core areas. Coupled with the need to repopulate town and village centres, the NPF and RSES recognises the need to strengthen the built fabric of towns and villages to ensure they are attractive places to live and invest, through the creation of a well-designed public realm, such as public spaces, parks and streets, as well as recreational infrastructure. The plan promotes a high standard of design for all new developments.

Heritage-led regeneration through reuse, presents an opportunity to encourage the enhancement and protection of both the existing built heritage and the wider historic building stock. Part of that protection will encompass renovation and renewal, in order to accommodate new and current uses, which in turn should enhance the longevity of the structures concerned. The successful development of Westport, for example, has been accommodated in a manner that maintained the integrity and character of Westport's heritage, protected the town's architectural quality and sense of place, and strengthened the separation between the historic core and its rural hinterland.

Active land management measures will be required to ensure such lands become developable over the lifetime of the plan. The NPF acknowledges that investment is required to aid local authorities in the regeneration of their town centres and provides assistance through the NDP, under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF) and the Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF). Mayo County Council and local communities have been successful in securing funding for various projects under the URDF and RRDF to date.

Regeneration Policies

BEP 26	To promote the regeneration of settlements by making better use of underutilised land and buildings, particularly within the existing built-up areas to achieve compact growth.
BEP 27	To support initiatives that promote the reuse, refurbishment and retrofitting of existing buildings within town and village centres.
BEP 28	To apply for funding under various funding streams to facilitate the enhancement, revitalisation, renewal and regeneration of communities and town/village centres, and the delivery of innovative and transformational regeneration proposals, for example, under the Urban and Rural Regeneration and Development Funds and Town and Village Renewal Schemes.
BEP 29	To promote the consolidation of town and village centres with a focus on the regeneration of underused buildings and strategic sites and on the establishment of a mix of uses to encourage greater vibrancy outside of business hours.
BEP 30	To promote regeneration and revitalisation of small towns and villages and support local enterprise and employment opportunities to ensure their viability as service centres for their surrounding rural areas.

Regeneration Objectives

BEO 34	To require all development proposals for strategic opportunity, brownfield and infill sites to be accompanied by a site brief and/or masterplan that sets out a phased programme for the regeneration of the site and demonstrates how the proposal will comply with national guidelines that seek to integrate principles of good urban design and placemaking
BEO 35	To support the regeneration of rural towns and villages through identification of regeneration projects for rural towns, villages and rural areas and promoting the utilisation of investment opportunities such as the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.

BEO 36	To support the viability of small towns and villages, through sustainable targeted measures that address vacant premises and deliver sustainable reuse and regeneration outcomes targeted in core areas.
BEO 37	To use specific powers, such as the Vacant Sites register to address issues of vacancy and underutilisation of strategic lands in town centre locations and within the built-up footprints of Tier I to V towns and villages, including the implementation of the Vacant Sites Levy in accordance with the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015. Each year of the plan period, the planning authority will assess the county's settlements for the purposes of identifying vacant sites for addition to the Vacant Site's Register and accordingly implement the statutory provisions for same.
BEO 38	To establish a database of strategic brownfield and infill sites within two years of the adoption of the Mayo County Development Plan, to ensure brownfield land re-use can be managed and co-ordinated across multiple stakeholders, as part of an active land management process, and to monitor the brownfield housing targets urban and rural areas, as set out in Objectives CS0 5 and CS0 6.
BEO 39	To identify derelict sites and vacant sites which are suitable for redevelopment and to maintain the respective registers.
BEO 40	To facilitate appropriate densities and compact growth within urban settlements, the Planning Authority will consider a relaxation of relevant the development management guidelines to assist the delivery of appropriate uses on urban brownfield and infill sites, based on the individual merits of each development proposal, with due cognisance to NPO 13.