



APPENDIX 13-3

**WESTMEATH COUNTY
DEVELOPMENT PLAN –
POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES**

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Westmeath County
Development Plan –
Policies and Objectives**

Coole Wind Farm, Co.
Westmeath



13.1 **Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020**

Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2021 was consulted for all relevant policies and objectives relating to archaeology, built and cultural heritage.

13.1.1 **Archaeology and Built Heritage Policies and Objectives**

13.1.1.1 **Built Heritage Policies & Objectives**

P-BH1 To have regard to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government publication ‘Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ 2004, in the implementation of development objectives and the assessment of planning applications relating to Protected Structures, proposed Protected Structures or buildings within Architectural Conservation Areas.

P-BH2 To protect and conserve buildings, structures and sites contained in the Record of Protected Structures and to resist the demolition of such structures, in accordance with ‘Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ 2004.

P-BH3 To ensure that any development, modification, alteration, or extension affecting a Protected Structure and/or its setting is sensitively sited and designed, is compatible with the special character, and is appropriate in terms of the proposed scale, mass, height, density, layout, and materials so that the integrity of the structure and its curtilage is preserved.

P-BH4 To encourage the sympathetic and appropriate reuse and retention of Protected Structures. In certain cases, the relaxation of site zoning restrictions may be considered in order to secure the preservation and conservation of the Protected Structure, where the use proposed is compatible with the existing structure. This will only be permitted where the development is consistent with conservation policies and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

P-BH5 To have regard to any future advice from the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government regarding energy ratings for Protected Structures and requirements to protect architectural integrity.

P-BH6 To designate those areas that have particular environmental qualities that derive from their overall layout, design and unity of character as Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) and to ensure that the character of such areas is preserved.

P-BH7 To ensure that any new development or alteration of a building within or adjoining an Architectural Conservation Area positively enhances the character of the area and is appropriate in terms of the plot size, proposed design, including: scale, mass, height, proportions, density, layout, materials, plot ratio, and building lines.

P-BH8 To protect the character of designated Architectural Conservation Areas including the public realm area associated therewith and to resist inappropriate development that would detract from the heritage value of these areas.

O-BH1 To continue to administer a prioritised scheme of conservation grants for owners and occupiers of protected structures.

O-BH2 To continue to review the Record of Protected Structures on an ongoing basis.

O-BH3 To prepare Statements of Character for each of the identified Architectural Conservations Areas (ACAs) and guidance documents in relation to development in these areas.

O-BH4 To identify new ACAs and/or the modification of existing ACAs during the lifetime of the Plan.

13.1.1.2 Vernacular Buildings and Structures

In addition to Protected Structures, the county contains a wide variety of older vernacular buildings which are distinctive to the character of the county and contribute in a particular way to the distinctive character of local areas e.g. farm buildings, forges, gate piers, granite kerbs, public houses and many cottages. Vernacular buildings were built to perform a specific function and were constructed using local materials and designed to reflect local traditions. In the past, the less grand buildings were limited to using only local materials and designed to be functional.

13.1.1.2.1 Vernacular Buildings & Structures Policies & Objectives

It is a policy of Westmeath County Council:

P-VB1 To encourage the rehabilitation, renovation and reuse of existing vernacular buildings, where appropriate.

P-VB2 To retain where feasible, older buildings in towns which make a positive contribution to the character of the area or townscape.

It is an objective of Westmeath County Council

O-VB1 To carry out an audit of disused vernacular structures in Westmeath during the lifetime of the Development Plan, and promote their adaptation and re-use.

O-VB2 To ensure that proposed infrastructural and public utility works within the county do not remove historic street furniture such as limestone or granite kerbs, cobblestones, cast-iron post boxes, street lamps etc.

13.1.1.2.2 Historic Parks, Gardens & Demesnes

P-PGD1 To require a Design Statement with a planning application for development in a designed landscape, to demonstrate how the historical layout has been considered.

P-PGD2 To resist development that would lead to the loss of, or cause harm to the character, the principal components of, or the setting of parks, gardens and demesnes of special historic interest. It is an objective of Westmeath County Council

O-PGD1 To build on the information compiled as part of the National Survey of Historic Gardens & Designed Landscapes, and to carry out a survey to assess the intactness of these assets, including developing a strategy for their conservation, restoration and development.

O-PGD2 To utilise the designation ‘Architectural Conservation Area’ where considered appropriate, to preserve the character of a designed landscape.

13.1.1.3 Industrial Heritage

Industrial heritage relates to the physical structures which remain today from the industrial era of the late eighteenth century. Although Westmeath would have been predominantly an agricultural county, there are many artefacts and structures remaining connected to the industrialisation period; namely the railways, turnpike and coach roads, canals and their locks, distilleries, mills, hydraulic rams, and the peat and quarry industries which all led to economic and social change in the county.

13.1.1.3.1 **Industrial Heritage Policy & Objective**

It is a policy of Westmeath County Council

P-IH1 To protect buildings, features and the setting of industrial sites and their heritage and to encourage their sensitive restoration, consistent with the Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht Guidelines.

It is an objective of Westmeath County Council

O-IH1 To prepare an inventory, survey and record of the county’s industrial heritage during the lifetime of the plan and raise awareness of the value of same through the Heritage Plan.

13.1.1.4 **Cultural Heritage**

Westmeath has a rich cultural heritage with links to many historic figures and events. Cultural bonds help to form a people’s identity and imbue a place with unique character. The Táin Trail, Goldsmith Country, the Hill of Uisneach and various Monastic sites are just some of the many places with cultural association within the county. The Council will protect the context of such places and will support sensitive appropriate development of places of cultural association.

13.1.1.4.1 **Cultural Heritage Policy & Objective**

It is a policy of Westmeath County Council

P-CH1 To protect and conserve the natural, built and cultural heritage features that contribute to the distinctive character and heritage value of County Westmeath.

It is an objective of Westmeath County Council.

O-CH1 To increase public awareness of the Cultural Heritage of the county.

13.1.1.5 **Fore Special Heritage Area**

The designation of Fore Village and its hinterland as a Special Heritage Area results from the realisation of its exceptional historical and archaeological importance and the significant contribution which it can make towards the development of tourism within the county. The richness of the archaeological and historical remains of Fore Village, together with the attractive landscape in which they are set mark this area out as one of national importance. In 2010 the Council adopted a Fore Special Heritage Area Management Study to identify key issues for future action in the area and to secure the sustainable conservation and protection of the built and natural heritage of the site.

13.1.1.5.1 **Fore Special Heritage Area Policies & Objective**

It is a policy of Westmeath County Council

P-FSH1 To protect and enhance the Fore Special Heritage Area in accordance with the Management Study adopted in 2010, subject to archaeological and ecological assessment.

P-FSH2 To maintain the high environmental quality of the Fore Special Heritage Area. Policies relating to the siting and design of new development in High Amenity Areas will apply. New development including restoration and renovation of buildings should not cause direct or indirect damage or interference to the designated areas, archaeological monuments or buildings of artistic, historic or architectural value.

P-FSH3 To reinforce the nucleated nature of the village of Fore and to protect the setting of the various features of historical and archaeological evidence. In cases where it is deemed the Archaeological Heritage may be impacted upon by a proposed development, the Planning Authority will require an Archaeological Assessment and any site works to be monitored by a licensed Archaeologist in accordance with requirements of the National Monuments Service of the Department of the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

It is an objective of Westmeath County Council

OFSH1 To develop the walks, village conservation and projects identified in the Fore Special Heritage Area Management Study and assist in the promotion of sustainable development and tourism in the area, subject to archaeological and ecological assessment.

13.1.1.6 Archaeological Heritage Policies & Objectives

It is a policy of Westmeath County Council

P-AH1 To generally preserve in situ all archaeological remains and sites of importance, such as National Monuments, Recorded Monuments, their setting and context and zones of archaeological potential. Within zones of archaeological potential and in the vicinity of Recorded Monuments, development shall only be permitted where the Council considers the importance of the proposed development or other material considerations outweigh the value of the remains in question, in consultation with the National Monument Service.

P-AH2 To protect and retain surviving medieval plots and street patterns in towns and villages of the county.

P-AH3 To ensure that all sites of archaeological potential are protected from development that may injure any potentially important archaeological features or sites, in consultation with the National Monument Service.

P-AH4 To protect historic burial grounds within the county and encourage their maintenance and public access provision.

P-AH5 To designate walking routes to important archaeological sites, as public rights of way where possible, in consultation with the National Monuments Service.

It is an objective of Westmeath County Council

O-AH1 To strictly control development that may be detrimental to any feature or site of archaeological significance or that may seriously detract from the interpretation and setting of these sites.

O-AH2 To endeavour to ensure that all reports, excavation results and other information relating to archaeological heritage be made available for public viewing in libraries and to create and maintain a database of same.

O-AH3 To promote pre-planning consultations in relation to proposed developments that may potentially impact upon Archaeological Heritage.

O-AH4 To provide guidance to developers and landowners in relation to proposals for development that may potentially impact upon Archaeological Heritage, drawing their attention to additional published government guidance available such as ‘Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, 1999’.

O-AH5 To endeavour to improve public access to the Hill of Uisneach, in support of the County Heritage Plan and with the involvement of landowners and relevant Authorities, in consultation with the National Monument Service.

O-AH6 To seek in consultation with the National Monuments Service of the Department of the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht to designate Fore, Kilbixy, Ardnurcher and the Hill of Uisneach as Archaeological Landscape Areas, in recognition of their numerous archaeological monuments and national heritage significance.

O-AH7 To require where appropriate, that an Archaeological Assessment be carried out by a suitably qualified person, prior to authorisation or commencement, as appropriate, of any activity that may impact upon Archaeological Heritage.

O-AH8 To ensure that any development taking place either above or below ground which is within, adjacent to, or might affect sites and features of historical and archaeological interest, shall respect the character of the archaeological site and its setting, and shall be sited and designed so as not to undermine the character of the site and its setting.

O-AH9 To impose conditions on development that may impact upon sites of archaeological potential and to ensure that appropriate measures are taken for the identification and mitigation of the archaeological impacts, including a licensed excavation and recording of remains, prior to commencement of development, where appropriate.

O-AH10 To seek funding to carry out archaeological research at the Hill of Uisneach and to facilitate a Management Plan for Uisneach in consultation with landowners, the National Monument Service and the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government.

13.2

Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 also outlines policies and objectives relating to archaeological, cultural and built heritage as follows:

13.2.1

Archaeology Policy Objectives

It is a policy of Westmeath County Council to:

CPO 14.5

Seek to ensure the protection and sympathetic enhancement of archaeological heritage, and in this regard applications will be referred to the National Monuments Service, Department of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht for comment.

CPO 14.6

Seek to ensure the protection of archaeological sites and monuments and their settings and archaeological objects that are listed in the Record of Monuments and Places, in the ownership/guardianship of the State, or that are the subject of Preservation Orders or have been registered in the Register of Historic Monuments. Seek to ensure the protection and preservation of archaeological sites, which have been identified subsequent to the publication of the Record of Monuments and Places.

CPO 14.7

Ensure that any development adjacent to an archaeological monument or site shall not be detrimental to the character of the archaeological site, or its setting and shall be sited in a manner which minimises

the impact on the monument and its setting. Development which is likely to detract from the setting of such a monument or site will not be permitted.

CPO 14.8

Seek to ensure the protection and preservation of underwater archaeological sites in riverine or lacustrine locations.

CPO 14.9

Encourage and promote the appropriate management and maintenance of the County’s archaeological heritage, including historical burial grounds, in accordance with conservation principles and best practice guidelines.

CPO 14.10

Consult with the National Monuments Service in relation to proposed developments adjoining archaeological sites.

CPO 14.11

Ensure that archaeological excavation is carried out according to best practice as outlined by the National Monuments Service, Department of Culture, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht, The National Museum of Ireland and the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland.

CPO 14.12

Prepare conservation plans for the management of archaeological sites and monuments in Council ownership.

CPO 14.13

Encourage increased awareness of and public access to monuments within Council ownership.

13.2.2 Fore Special Heritage Area Policy Objectives

It is a policy of Westmeath County Council to:

CPO 14.14

Continue to protect and enhance the Fore Special Heritage Area in accordance with the Fore Special Heritage Management Study adopted in 2010, and any update made thereto.

CPO 14.15

Support the development of sustainable tourist initiatives in Fore subject to appropriate archaeological and ecological assessment.

CPO 14.16

Ensure that new development proposals which have the potential to impact on Archaeological Heritage must be accompanied by an Archaeological Assessment in accordance with requirements of the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

CPO 14.17

Ensure that development proposals that would detrimentally impact upon the setting and interpretation of archaeological monuments, historic landscape or buildings of architectural value at Fore will not be permitted.

CPO 14.18

Protect and sustain the established appearance and character of views over the surrounding countryside at Fore, while facilitating the continued development of uses that sustain the activities that give rise to the appearance and character of the landscape.

CPO 14.19

Ensure that development and activities that are immediately adjacent to the scenic off-road walking routes of Fore, sustain the established appearance and character of views, that contribute to the distinctive quality of the landscape.

13.2.3 Hill of Uisneach Policy Objectives

It is a policy of Westmeath County Council to:

CPO 14.20

Continue to support the promotion of Uisneach as one of the Royal Sites of Ireland under the proposal for its designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and/or other appropriate initiatives.

CPO 14.21

Support the development of a greenway from the Old Rail Trail to the Hill of Uisneach, subject to the protection of the archaeological significance of the site.

CPO 14.22

Endeavour to improve public access to the Hill of Uisneach, with the involvement of landowners and relevant stakeholders, in consultation with the National Monument Service.

CPO 14.23

Seek funding to prepare and implement a Conservation Management Plan for Uisneach in consultation with landowners, the National Monument Service and the Department of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht.

In addition to those policies and objectives detailed above the draft Westmeath CDP 2021-2027 also outlines policies and objectives in relation to the setting of the Hill of Uisneach, Character Area 9.

CPO 13.17

Protect and enhance the setting of the Hill of Uisneach and support increased public access to the site. Only sensitive development that does not undermine the archaeological and cultural significance of the site will be permitted.

CPO 13.18

Protect and sustain the established appearance and character of views associated with the High Amenity Area around the Hill of Uisneach. Require any development proposals within the High Amenity Area around the Hill of Uisneach to demonstrate that no adverse effects will occur on the established appearance or character of this feature as viewed from either the Protected Panoramic Views or from surrounding public roads.

13.2.4 Protected Structures Policy Objectives

It is a policy objective of the Council to:

CPO 14.24

Protect and conserve buildings, structures and sites contained in the Record of Protected Structures and to encourage the sympathetic re-use and long-term viability of such structures without detracting from their special interest and character.

CPO 14.25

Protect the architectural heritage of Westmeath through the identification of Protected Structures, the designation of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs), the safeguarding of designed landscapes and

historic gardens, and the recognition of structures and elements that contribute positively to the vernacular and industrial heritage of the County.

CPO 14.26

Applications for modifications, alterations, or extensions to a Protected Structure will be assessed in accordance with the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines 2011 and should be sensitively sited and designed, compatible with its special character, and appropriate in terms of the proposed scale, mass, height, density, layout, and materials so that the integrity of the structure and its curtilage is preserved.

CPO 14.27

Seek that the form and structural integrity of Protected Structures is retained as part of any redevelopment proposal and that the relationship between the Protected Structure and any complex of adjoining buildings, designed landscape features, or designed views or vistas from or to the structure is considered.

CPO 14.28

Encourage rehabilitation, renovation and re-use of existing Protected Structures for their own economic benefit and that of the area in which they are located.

CPO 14.29

Carry out an audit and assess the condition of Protected Structures within the Council's ownership and devise a Conservation Management Plan/maintenance regime for these structures.

CPO 14.30

Carry out an audit of Protected Structures within the Council's ownership to identify any Protected Structures that are under threat directly or indirectly due to climate change.

CPO 14.31

Integrate climate change adaptation measures into future heritage management plans.

CPO 14.32

Provide guidance for owners of protected structures or historic buildings on upgrading for energy efficiency and climate resilient measures and promote the principles of sustainable building design in conservation.

CPO 14.33

Ensure a sustainable future for Protected Structures and buildings sited within ACAs by encouraging and supporting works to upgrade the environmental performance of such structures together with the implementation of measures to address the impacts of climate change. Such works should not adversely affect the special character of the structure including impact on historic fabric, traditional construction, visibility, siting and design. The installation of renewable energy measures and equipment will be acceptable where sited and designed to minimise the visual impact, where it does not result in any significant loss of historic fabric or otherwise affect the significance of the structure.

CPO 14.34

Incentivise the restoration of Protected Structures in towns and villages.

CPO 14.35

Facilitate contemporary and innovative designs providing that they are of a sufficient high quality and do not detract from the character of the historic fabric of the Protected Structure.

13.2.5 Cultural Heritage Policy Objectives

It is a policy objective of the Council to:

CPO 14.1

Improve accessibility to our cultural heritage and maximise its potential as a learning resource.

CPO 14.2

Promote the understanding of cultural heritage in terms of its inherent and unique character and to recognise what elements should be preserved, conserved or enhanced.

CPO 14.3

Support the implementation of objectives and actions of the Westmeath County Heritage Plan 2018-2023 and update during the lifetime of the Plan.

CPO 14.4

Support the growth of cultural tourism in the County, including the potential for niche heritage based tourism products by facilitating the development of heritage events, festivals and infrastructure in a sustainable manner.

13.2.6 Vernacular Building and Structures Policy Objectives

It is a policy objective of the Council to:

CPO 14.41

Encourage the retention and appropriate re-use of vernacular buildings, including vacant traditional farm buildings, where appropriate and encourage the retention of the original fabric such as windows, doors and other significant features of historic buildings.

CPO 14.42

Require that the size, scale, design, form, layout and materials of extensions to vernacular dwellings or conversions of historic outbuildings are in keeping and sympathetic with the existing structure.

CPO 14.43

Ensure that works to existing buildings and structures of architectural merit maintain and enhance their character and distinctiveness.

CPO 14.44

Ensure wherever possible that proposed infrastructural and public utility works within the County do not remove historic street furniture such as limestone kerbs, cobblestones, cast-iron post boxes, street lamps etc

CPO 14.45

Promote, where feasible the retention of surviving historic plot sizes and street patterns in the villages and towns of Westmeath and have regard to ancient boundaries or layouts, such as burgage plots and townland boundaries in new development proposals.

CPO 14.46

Ensure that works to existing buildings and structures of architectural merit maintain and enhance their character and distinctiveness.

13.2.7 Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes Policy Objectives

It is a policy objective of the Council to:

CPO 14.47

Support the economic viability of parks, gardens and demesnes by encouraging high quality development that does not lead to the loss of, or cause harm to the character, the principal components of, or the setting of parks, gardens and demesnes of special historic interest.

CPO 14.48

Support the preparation and implementation of a Conservation Management Plan for Belvedere House, Gardens & Park.

CPO 14.49

Require a masterplan to be prepared for development proposals within historic designed and demesne landscapes. Such a plan should include an appraisal of the designed landscape together with an architectural appraisal, in order to inform design proposals, which must be sensitive to and respect the built heritage elements and green space values of the site.

13.2.8 Industrial Heritage Policy Objectives

It is a policy objective of the Council to:

CPO 14.50

Protect, where appropriate, industrial heritage structures or elements of significance identified in the Inventory of Industrial Heritage and any subsequent surveys by adding them to the Record of Protected Structures.

CPO 14.51

Utilise the information provided within the Inventory of Industrial Heritage Sites in Westmeath, and any subsequent surveys when assessing development proposals for industrial heritage sites.

CPO 14.52

Support the retention and appropriate repair/maintenance of historic bridges and other significant industrial heritage features in the County.

13.2.9 Language Heritage Policy Objectives

It is a policy objective of the Council to:

CPO 14.53

Promote the naming of new residential developments in bi-lingual format. The naming of new estates should reflect local place names, townlands, history, folklore and/or cultural features in the area.

CPO 14.54

Preserve historic place and street names and ensure that new street names should reflect appropriate local historical or cultural associations.

CPO 14.55

Support the use of the Irish language on shopfronts.

CPO 14.56

Support the establishment of a naming committee within one year of adoption of the Plan, to evaluate naming proposals for new residential and/or mixed-use developments.