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# Chapter 12

## Zoning & Landscape

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## 12.1 Introduction

The outstanding landscapes of County Kerry are one of the County’s defining features and one of its most important economic assets. Few counties possess the variety of different landscapes that are found here - from the beautiful unspoilt beaches and rolling hills and pastureland of North Kerry to the rugged coastline and elevated mountainous wilderness of South & West Kerry.

Fáilte Ireland conducted a Holiday Maker Survey of visitors to the Ring of Kerry<sup>(1)</sup> and the Dingle Peninsula<sup>(2)</sup>. Of those surveyed, over 80% cited the quality and beauty of the countryside as the main reason for their visit. Tourism is the industry most likely to deliver jobs to rural areas in the short to medium term. In addition, the landscape is also an important contributor to the quality of life that underpins the attractiveness of County Kerry as a location for inward investment. It is critical, therefore, that County Kerry’s landscapes are protected and this is a key objective of this Development Plan.

The sensitivity of a landscape is a measure of its ability to accommodate change or intervention, without suffering unacceptable effects to its character.

Differing landscapes, based on their sensitivity, have the capacity to absorb different levels of development.

In order to fully determine the sensitivity and capacity of a landscape, a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is required. A Landscape Character Assessment for a geographic area has, in general, three distinct elements:-

- Identification and Classification of Landscape Types.
- Landscape Character Areas.
- Landscape Value and Sensitivity to Development.

### 12.2.1 Identification and Classification of Landscape Types

Landscape Character Types are defined as “*natural distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character*”. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas or different parts of the country, but wherever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, and historical land use and settlement pattern<sup>(1)</sup>. For example, drumlins and mountain moorlands are recognisable and distinct from other landscape types.

Landscape Protection	
<b>It is an objective of the Council to:-</b>	
<b>ZL-1</b>	Protect the landscape of the County as a major economic asset and an invaluable amenity which contributes to the quality of people’s lives.

## 12.2 Landscape Sensitivity and Landscape Capacity

The landscape of the County is comprised of a mixture of man-made and natural features. The interaction between the different elements is central to the designation of development zones throughout the County.

(1)[http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/3\\_Research\\_Insights/4\\_Visitor\\_Insights/Final\\_Ring\\_of\\_Kerry\\_2012.pdf?ext=.pdf](http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/3_Research_Insights/4_Visitor_Insights/Final_Ring_of_Kerry_2012.pdf?ext=.pdf)

(2)[http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/3\\_Research\\_Insights/4\\_Visitor\\_Insights/Final\\_Dingle\\_2012-1.pdf?ext=.pdf](http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/3_Research_Insights/4_Visitor_Insights/Final_Dingle_2012-1.pdf?ext=.pdf)

(3)Heritage Council (2009) Landscape Character Assessment in Ireland: Baseline Audit & Assessment Update.

### 12.2.2 Landscape Character Areas

Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) are defined by the Heritage Council in its Baseline Audit<sup>(4)</sup> as *“unique, geographically-specific areas of a particular landscape type. Each has its own individual character and identity, even though it shares the same generic characteristics with other areas of the same type”*.

This distinction is reflected in the naming of types and areas: landscape character types have generic names, but landscape character areas take on the names of specific places such as the Paps Mountains. Forty Six Landscape Character Areas were identified for the Renewable Energy Strategy prepared by Kerry County Council in 2012. These LCAs are listed in Table 7.4 and illustrated on Map 7.5 of the Renewable Energy Strategy.

### 12.2.3 Landscape Value and Sensitivity to Development

The European Landscape Convention defines landscape as *“an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”*<sup>(5)</sup>. How an individual or community perceive a landscape is informed by how they interact with the landscape.

A landowner sees a working landscape, a tourist a beautiful landscape, a family the backdrop to their daily lives. Landscapes have cultural, historical and literary values. A landscape historian, a native, or a rural dweller, sees in the landscape a visual representation of the social, cultural and economic development of society, making landscape part of Ireland’s identity. In addition, the intangible but important characteristics of a landscape, such as emotional responses, are also important.

(4)ibid.

(5)ECOVAST (2006) Landscape Identification - A Guide to Good Practice.

Take for example the Great Blasket Island which evokes feelings about the people who once lived there, or a feeling of tranquility which might be felt in a remote and beautiful landscape.

Zoning	
<b>It is an objective of the Council to:-</b>	
<b>ZL-2</b>	Prepare a Landscape Character Assessment of the County following the publication of the proposed National Landscape Strategy. This assessment will include capacity studies for different forms of development and will involve consultation with adjoining local authorities.

## 12.3 Zoning

In the preparation of zoning designations for the County, the Planning Authority considered not only the quality of a landscape itself, but also the level of existing development and the ability of the landscape to absorb further development without altering its character to an unacceptable degree. Zoning designations are not wholly dependent on a hierarchy of the quality of landscapes. Amenity zonings also reflect the importance of a landscape to the overall amenity of a locality and its importance to the communities within these areas.

The proliferation of one-off houses in the countryside has been a feature of recent development. Much of this housing is urban-generated and is in part a result of the high prices of land and housing in the urban areas. The Planning Authority recognises the importance of providing a sustainable range of housing options to meet the housing



needs of people in urban and rural areas throughout the County. Sufficient land has been zoned to meet the demand for housing within settlements through the provisions of Functional Area Local Area Plans. In addition, provision has been made for the development of single houses in rural areas to meet local housing need as identified in the Settlement Strategy set out in Chapter 3 Section 3.3.

It is considered that while the landscapes of South and West Kerry are universally considered as being among the most scenic landscapes in the Country from a tourist perspective, the landscape of the remainder of the County has also got significant tourism potential and needs to be protected from inappropriate developments which might detract from the landscape.

Zoning	
<b>It is an objective of the Council to:-</b>	
<b>ZL-3</b>	Determine the zoning of lands in rural areas having regard to the sensitivity of the landscape as well as its capacity to absorb further development.

### 12.3.1 Zoning Designations

The zoning designations for the County are as follows:-

- Urban
- Rural Prime Special Amenity
- Rural Secondary Special Amenity
- Rural General
- Tarbert/Ballylongford Landbank (Industrial)
- Shannon Estuary (Land and Marine Based Development)

Residential development in Rural zoning designation areas will be regulated in accordance with the provisions of Section 3.3 of the Settlement Strategy set out in Chapter 3.

#### • **Urban**

These are the areas located inside the development boundaries of towns and villages and their boundaries are indicated on maps in the adopted Functional Area Local Area Plans. The zonings within each settlement and a zoning matrix are contained within each Plan.

#### • **Rural Prime Special Amenity**

Rural Prime Special Amenity Areas are those landscapes which are very sensitive and have little or no capacity to accommodate development. In these areas all development will be prohibited, other than normally exempted development in accordance with Section 4, Planning and Development Act 2000-14, Schedule 2 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001-2013 and Chapter 3.3.2, which will be open to consideration, subject to satisfactory integration into the landscape and compliance with the proper planning and sustainable development in the area.

#### • **Rural Secondary Special Amenity**

The landscape of areas in this designation is sensitive to development. Accordingly, development in these areas must be designed so as to minimise the effect on the landscape.

Proposed developments should, in their designs, take account of the topography, vegetation, existing boundaries and features of the area, as set out in the *Building a House in Rural Kerry Design Guidelines* (Kerry County Council 2009).

Permission will not be granted for development which cannot be integrated into its surroundings. Development will only be permitted where it is in accordance with the

provisions of Chapter 3.3.2.

- **Rural General**

Rural landscapes within this designation generally have a higher capacity to absorb development than the previous rural designations. It is important that development in these areas be integrated into their surroundings in order to minimise the effect on the landscape and to maximise the potential for development.

Proposed developments in areas zoned Rural General, should in their designs take account of the topography, vegetation, existing boundaries and features of the area as set out in the Building a House in Rural Kerry Design Guidelines (Kerry County Council 2009). Permission will not be granted for development which cannot be integrated into its surroundings.

Rural Zoning	
<b>It is the objective of the Council to:-</b>	
<b>ZL-4</b>	Regulate residential development in Rural Areas in accordance with the zoned designation of that area and the policies outlined in the Rural Settlement Strategy set out in Section 3.3 of this Plan.

**Lands Zoned in Functional Area Local Area Plans outside Settlement Boundaries**

There are lands zoned for a range of uses outside settlement boundaries in Functional Area Local Area Plans. The development of these lands will be subject to the provisions of the relevant Functional Area Local Area Plan in addition to the objectives and development standards of this Plan.

- **Tarbert/Ballylongford Landbank**

Land known as the Tarbert/Ballylongford Land Bank comprises 390 hectares of land and is zoned for development as set out in S4.7 of this Plan.

- **Shannon Estuary**

The Strategic Integrated Framework Plan (SIFP) for the sustainable development of the Shannon Estuary identifies land for a variety of land and marine based development. Developers should have regard to the provisions of this Plan in formulating proposals for development in this area.



**12.4 View and Prospects**

County Kerry contains areas of outstanding natural beauty which are recognised internationally. There is a need to protect and conserve views and prospects adjoining public roads throughout the County. These views and prospects are important to the amenity of the County and to its tourist industry. To this end a survey of viewing points along a number of important walking, cycling and driving routes (including the Wild Atlantic Way) has been carried out. Views and Prospects requiring protection have been identified and are indicated in Volume 3.

It is not proposed that the protection and conservation of these views and prospects should give rise to the prohibition of development along these routes, but

development where permitted, should not seriously hinder or obstruct these views and should be designed and located to minimise their impact.

The Fáilte Ireland Wild Atlantic Way has identified a network of existing viewing points along its route. In order to maximise the potential of the Wild Atlantic Way these existing viewing points will be protected. Views from these points are also identified in Volume 3. The Council will work with Fáilte Ireland in the sustainable development of these viewing points.

View and Prospects	
It is an objective of the Council to:	
<b>ZL-5</b>	Preserve the views and prospects as defined on Map No's 12.1, 12.1a – 12.1u.
<b>ZL-6</b>	Facilitate the sustainable development of existing viewing points as identified by Fáilte Ireland along the route of the Wild Atlantic Way, while ensuring the protection of environmental attributes in the area through the implementation of environmental protection objectives, standards and guidelines of this Plan.



