

Draft Longford
CYCLE
Network



1. Introduction

AECOM, as part of the NTA Cycle Design Office, have been requested by the NTA to develop comprehensive cycle plans for counties outside the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), including Longford County Council. CycleConnects is intended to form a comprehensive cycle network for all cycle user types across each county in Ireland and to develop on from the cycle network proposed for the counties in the GDA.

This will include existing cycle networks such as urban cycle routes, greenways and interurban routes. This will be supplemented by proposed cycle routes/links outlined in latest development and transport plans, and other networks required to maximise the connection of the network to communities. It should be noted that this network does not specify any infrastructure types on any route and is focused on highlighting the key links required to form a comprehensive cycle network connecting all major communities and destinations.

This note will briefly summarise the proposed cycle network for Longford. For details of methodology, national policy and the overall aspirations for the CycleConnects networks, please refer to the main report of which this technical note is an appendix of.

2. Longford Population and Settlements

County Longford is located in the centre in the province of Leinster and is bordered by counties Cavan and Westmeath to the east, and counties Leitrim and Roscommon to the west.

According to the CSO Census 2016, the county has a population of 40,873 inhabitants. Table 2.1 below shows the shows the population of towns within Longford. Longford Town is the only settlement with over 5,000 people with all other towns having a population of less than 5000.

Table 2.1: Population Settlements in Longford

City/Town	Population (2016)
Longford Town	10,008
Edgeworthstown	2,072
Ballymahon	1,877
Granard	1,096
Drumlish	931
Newtownforbes	778
Lanesborough	757

3. Existing Longford Policies and Plans

Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027

This Longford County Development Plan (LCDP) was prepared under the Planning and Development Acts, 2000, (as amended) for the years of 2021-2027. The Development Plan sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Longford and consists of a written statement and maps indicating the development objectives for the County.

The Vision of the Plan is as follows:

“To set out a framework for the sustainable physical development of the County, ensuring the conservation and protection of the built and natural environment, while providing in an equitable manner for all our people within the County.”

As such the Longford County Development Plan provides for an overall strategy for the social, economic, cultural and physical development of the County.

Going forward over the lifetime of the Development Plan Longford County council will identify potential projects under the various funding sources. Among the potential projects for advancement regeneration Opportunities are provided for Longford Town and other specific areas in need of regeneration outside of Longford Town.

The following objectives that relate to the development of cycling networks and infrastructure are included in Chapter 5 of the LCDP:

Land Use and Transportation – County Policy Objectives:

- **CPO 5.3:** Provide for alternative forms of transportation and associated infrastructure in order to reduce the dependency on the private car, such as public transport initiatives and infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians.
- **CPO 5.4:** Engage with the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly in the creation of a coordinated sustainable transport plan for the Midland Region to guide and inform local policy in the development of more sustainable modes of transportation.
- **CPO 5.6:** Integrate the County’s transport and tourism strategies to promote increasingly sustainable travel patterns and improved linkages between the towns and villages within the County, with the aim of developing a coherent network dedicated to sustainable transport modes across the County and to the wider Midland Region.
- **CPO 5.9:** Prepare and implement a Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Longford Town in conjunction with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and other relevant stakeholders. Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and other relevant stakeholders, in accordance with the guidance note Area Based Transport Assessment 2019 (or any subsequent update) produced by the NTA and TII.

Roads and Streets – County Policy Objectives:

- **CPO 5.24:** Ensure that streets and roads within the county are designed to balance the needs of place and movement, to provide a safe traffic calmed street environment in accordance with the principles set out in the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2019)*, while meeting the needs of all road users.

Sustainable Transport:

- **CPO 5.45:** Ensure new development areas and employment land-uses are permeable for walking and cycling and are laid out in such a way as to facilitate the operation of and access to public transport by residents and employees.
- **CPO 5.48:** Retrospectively provide public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure and facilities in existing development areas to achieve growth in sustainable mobility.

Cycling and Walking:

- **CPO 5.65:** Work with the relevant statutory bodies and other relevant stakeholders, to improve on the existing level of infrastructure and facilities for walking and cycling.
- **CPO 5.66:** Identify and implement a strategic, coherent and high-quality cycling and walking network across the County that is integrated with public transport and interconnected with cultural, recreational, retail, educational and employment destinations and attractions.
- **CPO 5.67:** Promote the organisation of traffic in towns and villages to separate motor vehicular, bicycles and pedestrian traffic.
- **CPO 5.69:** Adopt and implement the provisions of the Draft Longford Walking and Cycling Strategy and, where necessary and appropriate, reserve lands for the provision of off-road cycling tracks and cycling/pedestrian infrastructure as identified as part of any such cycling strategy prepared.
- **CPO 5.70:** Seek the development of effective cycling infrastructure along the key urban arterial routes to and from Longford Town: - (R198 – Battery Road/Church Street/Bridge Street; - R393 – Dublin Road; and - the N63 – Ballinalee Road); in order to coincide with key employment areas, public transport hubs and schools within Longford Town.
- **CPO 5.71:** Facilitate the provision of cycleways and footpaths, particularly in conjunction with new housing developments.
- **CPO 5.72:** Ensure that all new roads and cycle routes implement the National Cycle Manual or any replacement document, with a focus on a high level of service for cyclists and encourage a modal shift from the private car to cycling.
- **CPO 5.73:** Provide for safer routes to schools within the county and promote walking and cycling as suitable modes of transport as part of the Green Schools Programme and other local traffic management improvements.
- **CPO 5.75:** Promote the potential development of long-distance walking and cycling routes, particularly those with historical and cultural associations and links to other routes in adjacent counties in association with the Irish Sports Council. Aim to establish and link with a strategic network of trails from residential areas, open spaces and existing or new public rights of way to facilitate the creation of a secure and safe greenway network.
- **CPO 5.78:** Provide signposting, information boards and public lighting for walking and cycling routes at appropriate locations.

Regeneration:

- **CPO 6.5:** Enhance accessibility and sustainable mobility within the town centres of Longford, Edgeworthstown, Granard, Ballymahon, Lanesborough and Drumlish, by improving links between the core and surrounding areas through the further integration of public transport, walking and cycling facilities.

- **CPO 6.25:** Promote access to sustainable transport and availability of alternative transport modes such as walking and cycling between strategic areas and services.

Longford Town Regeneration Opportunities:

- **CPO 6.70:** Enhance accessibility and sustainable mobility within the town centre by improving links between the core and surrounding areas through the further integration of public transport, walking and cycling facilities.

Tourism - Greenways, Cycling and Walking:

- **CPO 10.59:** Continue to develop the greenways in the county and to augment the visitor experience through the provision of infrastructure, including car parking and access barriers, having regard to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport various Guidelines along with high quality signage and links to nearby visitor attractions and places of interest.
- **CPO 10.61:** Continue to support the development of the Longford Bogs Greenway, the Royal Canal Greenway, the National Famine Way, a River Shannon Greenway and a Longford to Westport Greenway by working with Bord na Móna, Regional Authorities (EMRA and NWRA), neighbouring counties and national bodies to develop and complete these routes.
- **CPO 10.64:** Continue to develop the Longford Bogs Greenway utilising the Bord na Móna Rail lines from Longford Town to Clondra, Lanesborough, Corlea and Ballymahon interconnected with the Royal Canal Greenway at selected locations.
- **CPO 10.65:** Support the conversion of the Bord na Móna Kilnacarrow Rail Bridge to a greenway crossing of the River Shannon and facilitate a link through the Roscommon bogs to Roscommon, Strokestown and Roosky, Co. Leitrim.

Future Local Transport Plans

Longford County Council are required to develop Local Transport Plans as part of their Development Plan process. While the cycle network outlined in this plan has been created to reflect current transport arrangements, it may be subject to change based on the more detailed analysis and recommendations developed as part of the LTP process.

4. Proposed Longford Cycle Network

Introduction

Following a review of existing data, policies and conducting workshops with Longford County Council to review the draft cycle network, the following summarises the methodology and proposed cycle network development for Longford. The full details of how all the CycleConnects networks were developed are available in the NTA Consultation website.

Prior to developing the Longford County Network, a GIS model was established for the county. This model mapped all existing information made available for the county, supplied by various bodies including the NTA, CSO, Department for Transport, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Department for Education and Longford County Council. The data collected includes;

- Locations of major employment and job density
- Existing cycle infrastructure and routes
- Existing bus stops, rail lines and other public transport
- Location of schools and education centres
- Shopping centres, hospitals and other destinations that may attract cyclists

The collation of this data has aided the selection of cycle routes in Longford that are available to as many people as possible. It has also allowed for the servicing of key destinations within County Longford.

Methodology

Following the collation of existing data, the cycle network plan for Longford was developed. This was based on a three-tier system outlined in Figure 4.1 below.

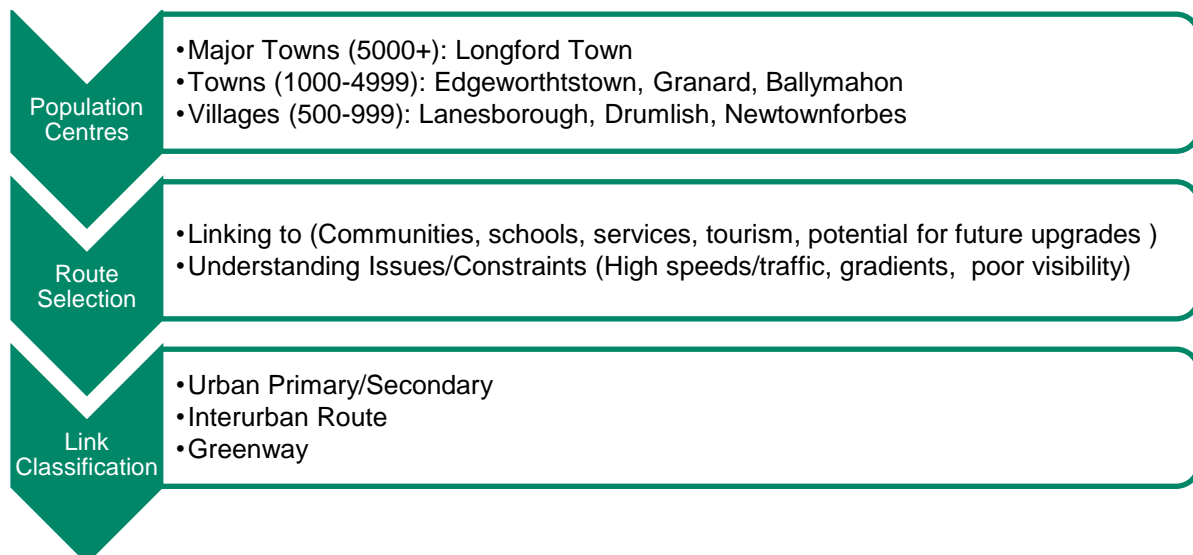


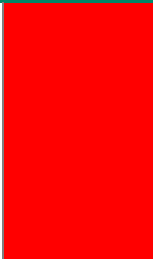

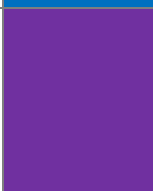

Figure 4.1: Cycle Network Development Methodology

Population Centres: The Longford CycleConnects Network will look to link towns and villages together as part of a fully connected network. Thus, all towns were mapped with the larger towns such as Longford Town noted. By mapping all towns and villages, a profile emerged of where most people in Longford were situated and where potential cycle routes should be provided. CSO Settlement data was also referenced to inform where people were located within the county.

Route Selection: Once the population areas were established, potential routes were then considered along strategic corridors. This allowed multiple communities to be linked along individual interurban routes in the County and into adjacent Counties. Where possible, these routes were also located within TII National Cycle Network Corridors. This avoided too many parallel cycle routes being developed and for an integrated cycle network to be developed within the county.

Cycle Route Classification: The classification for each route has been summarised below in Table 4.1. It should be noted that this link classification does not reflect the existing condition of roads for cycling but seeks to highlight their potential for various route classifications. For example, while there are many interurban routes that currently have no cycle infrastructure, the aspiration will be to target these over the next decade for appropriate upgrades.

Table 4.1: CycleConnects Route Classification

City/Town	Colour	Description
Urban Primary		High quality cycle route that can accommodate a high volume of cyclists typical in most urban areas. These will look to feature on major desire lines in town centres and form distinctive radial and orbital cycle routes in the major towns and cities. These primary routes should also form a cohesive and connected network within the urban area that will be simple for cyclists to navigate
Urban Secondary		Second tier cycle route in major urban areas to link with urban primary network to add greater route density and options on the network. These will typically be passing through residential areas, school and employment areas
Interurban		On-road cycle route to link all key settlements and destinations outside urban areas both within the County and into adjacent Counties. These may have potential to provide off-road/segregated routes parallel to the existing road in later years.
Greenway		Off-road cycle route with no adjacent traffic for the majority of its route. These are typically located on old rail trails and existing/proposed blueways (route alongside lakes, rivers and canals) with cyclists sharing the route with pedestrians.

Proposed Longford County Network

Following the methodology outlined above, the Longford CycleConnects Network has been outlined in a series of maps shown in Table 4.2 below. These are also available to view as an individual PDF when selecting county Longford in the NTA consultation page.

Table 4.2: Longford CycleConnects Network – List of Maps

Cycle Map List
Longford County Cycle Network
Longford Town Urban Cycle Network

The Longford County Cycle Network primarily extends the network beyond the key settlement area of Longford town. In summary, it will consist of an urban cycle network for Longford, with interurban connectors between the towns of Edgeworthstown, Ballymahon, Granard, Drumlish, Newtownforbes and Lanesborough. These then extend into adjoining counties forming a comprehensive and connected cycle network nationally.

Interurban Link Development

The primary towns with a population of over 1,000 were connected via interurban links. Where possible, towns with a lower population that were located along the route were included in the routes. Connections were also made to larger cross border towns in order to create a comprehensive and connected cycle network nationwide. The selection of interurban routes was also influenced by the location of schools/sports grounds on various parallel routes.

As part of the development of the interurban network, the Google travel planning tool was utilised to assist in selecting the most appropriate route between the various settlements. This included avoiding routes with excessive gradients. In some cases, selecting a sufficiently flat route was not available. Thus, the most available flattest route was selected. However, some routes were modified slightly to connect with adjacent towns/villages or key destinations such as schools, sports pitches or tourist attractions.

The TII National Cycle Network Corridors have also been used to overlap corridors. These include corridors and routes into counties Westmeath, Cavan, Leitrim and Roscommon.

Greenway Route Integration

Grand Canal Greenway

The existing Royal Canal Greenway is a 130km of level towpath, ideal for walkers, runners and cyclists of all ages and stages. It provides a link between Longford Town and Mullingar in County Westmeath. This greenway was officially launched on 24th March 2021.

Additional Proposed Greenways

Longford County Council are also looking to construct additional Greenways along various peatlands and similar areas in the southwest of the county and link Lanesborough with Ballymahon. An additional link is also proposed between Newtownforbes and Roosky on the Roscommon/Leitrim border as part of linking with the Athlone to Strokestown Blueway on the River Shannon

Urban Network Development: Longford

With a population of over 5000 inhabitants, an urban cycle network has been developed for Longford town. The urban network is comprised of various primary orbital and radial routes

linking key destinations in the town. This also includes a greenway link to the south of the town linking to the Royal Canal Greenway. In the town centre, an inner orbital route is proposed along Dublin Street, New Street, Market Square, Harbour Row and Killashee Street. To the north of this, a second orbital route is proposed along Main Street, Great Water Street, St. Mel's Road, and Dublin Street. An outer orbital route is also proposed in the east of the town along Dublin Road, Ardnacassa, Oaklands Avenue and a proposed road link north of the Camlin river. This will then be supplemented by primary radial routes on the edge of the town along streets such as Church Street, Ballinalee Road, Dublin Road, Park Road, Athlone Road and Battery Court. At Battery Court, this also includes a proposed bridge crossing over the Camlin River.

Locations that are served by these primary orbital and radial routes include:

- Longford Town Centre
- Longford Train Station
- Pearse Park
- Longford Rugby Club
- St John's National School
- St. Michael's Boys National School
- Meán Scoil Mhuire
- St. Joseph's National School
- St Christopher's Special School
- St Mel's College

A number of secondary routes are also proposed along streets such as Abbeycartron Lane, Templemichael, Ardnacassa Avenue, St. Michael's Road, and Richmond Street. These are intended to act as interlinks to the orbital and radial routes in addition to serving locations not served by the orbital or radial routes previously mentioned.

5. Next Steps

AECOM, as part of the NTA Cycle Design Office, have been requested by the NTA to develop comprehensive cycle routes for County Longford and the town of Longford.

The network design for Longford has now been made available for public consultation. This will allow for members of the public to submit their feedback. Individual maps are available to view on the National Transport Authority website and are available in the links below:

Table 5.1: Longford County Cycle Network – List of Maps

Cycle Map List
Longford County Cycle Network
Longford Towns Urban Cycle Network

Following the public consultation, submissions will be reviewed and the network maps updated as required.