

4 | Retail & Town Centre



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4.1 Vision

To create an attractive and accessible retailing environment in which people can enjoy themselves and benefit from a choice of high quality shops which are on offer within the nucleus of the town centre.

4.2 Context

- Retail Planning: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (Department of the Environment and Local Government (DoELG), 2000)
- Retail Planning Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area (DTZ PIEDA Consulting, 2001)
- Wicklow County Retail Strategy (DTZ PIEDA Consulting, 2004)
- Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area, 2004-2016
- Bray Main Street Shopfronts Study (Murray O’Laoire Associates, 1991)

4.3 Strategy

Bray is regarded as the primary retail, commercial and service centre in the County of Wicklow. Its retail base is predominantly made up of comparison floorspace¹, and with just over 50% of the County’s total comparison floorspace located in the town, it is marked out above other centres in the County. Retailing in the town centre is concentrated along the Main Street and Quinsborough Road, and at Castle Street Shopping Centre. Outside the town centre, retailing is focused in local neighbourhood centres along the Boghall Road, Vevay Road, and Dublin Road.

Despite the fact that the town is the largest settlement and retail centre in the County, the quantum and quality of Bray’s retail floorspace is not comparable to other major town centres in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA). Bray’s proximity to competing centres and its accessibility to Dublin City Centre mean that, unless this issue is addressed, Bray will continue to lag behind with resultant increasing leakage of comparison expenditure from the town and County. In addition, the success of the town centre’s retailing environment is challenged by factors including (i) the limited opportunities for any major increase in retail floorspace within the existing town centre due to the tight nature of the built up area, (ii) traffic congestion, and (iii) a poor quality shopping environment.

4.4 Policy

4.4.1 Retail Strategy

It is the policy of the Council to promote and encourage the major enhancement and expansion of retail floorspace and town centre activities in Bray Town Centre, in order to sustain its competitiveness as a Major Town Centre in the GDA. In achieving this, the Council will have regard to the ‘Retail Planning Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area’, the ‘Wicklow County Retail Strategy’ and the ‘Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities’.

The retail policies and development control objectives of this Plan are framed within the ‘Retail Planning Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area’ (2001) and the ‘Wicklow County Retail Strategy’ (2004). These strategies are designed to ensure that there will be sufficient retail floorspace to accord with population and expenditure growth, and that it is provided in an efficient, equitable and sustainable manner.

Under the retail hierarchy of the GDA Retail Strategy, Bray is classified as a Major Town

¹ Comparison goods include items such as clothing, footwear, furniture, household equipment, medical and pharmaceutical products and educational and recreation equipment and accessories.

Centre, which is the second highest designation after Dublin City Centre. As such, it is in a position to attract a variety of different shopping outlets, including high, middle and low order comparison outlets, superstores and supermarkets, as well as attracting the cultural, social and employment opportunities that are associated with high ranking centres:

“The Major Town Centres embrace the most important centres in the Metropolitan Area beyond Dublin City Centre. They will tend to serve catchment areas well beyond their immediate locality, they should have the potential for significant comparison floorspace and some already have, including some higher order shopping, and offer a wide range of non-retail services.” (GDA Retail Strategy)

As a result of Bray’s designation as a Major Town Centre in the GDA, the town will retain and strengthen its role to become a regional and County centre for retail and commercial services and development.

The Council will have regard to ‘Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ (DoELG, 2000), or as subsequently amended, in dealing with applications for retail developments. These Guidelines outline a number of strategic policy objectives which seek to accommodate additional development in a way that is efficient, equitable and sustainable. The role of the town centre and adherence to sustainable land use and transportation principles are central tenets of the Guidelines.

4.4.2 Bray Town Centre

It is the policy of the Council to promote the town centre as the primary retailing and commercial sector location in the town. Retailing will be promoted as the core function of the town centre.

Bray Town Centre consists of the area of land which is zoned ‘B1: Primarily Town Centre Uses’, which extends in a north/south direction from the Dublin Road to Market Square, and in an easterly direction, encompassing Quinsborough Road, Florence Road, Bray Dart Station and part of Novara Avenue. It is the area of the town that provides a broad range of facilities and services and which fulfils a function as a focus for both the population of Bray and public transport.

As far as possible, new retail and commercial development is to be sited within Bray Town Centre. The Council will follow the ‘sequential approach’ to the location of these developments. This essentially means that the preferred location for new retail and commercial development, where practicable and viable, is within the town centre. If town centre locations are not readily available within a reasonable and realistic development timescale then edge of centre sites should be looked to, i.e. sites that are within 300-400 metres of the core retail area. Only after the options for town centre and edge of centre are exhausted should out of centre locations and sites be considered.

The core retail area of the town centre is the area including and immediate to the ‘prime pitch’. This is the area that achieves the highest rentals, best yields, is highest in demand from operators, is overwhelmingly retail floorspace and has the highest footfall of shoppers. The current core retail area of Bray includes Castle Street, Main Street, Quinsborough Road and the section of Florence Road that extends from the junction of Main Street to the junction of Eglington Road.

The Council considers that the quality of shops in the town centre should be improved and will particularly favour the development of specialist, niche-type shops, which could perform an important function with regard to improving Bray’s shopping environment and enhancing its image as a unique, high quality and attractive town to shop in.

The Council will promote office developments at appropriate locations within the town centre.

4.4.3 Vitality and Viability

It is the policy of the Council to promote the vitality and viability of the town centre so that it becomes a high quality environment for shopping, working and visiting.

In order to ensure that Bray has a healthy town centre, the vitality and viability of it will be maintained and enhanced through the following objectives;

It is the policy of the Council to:

- sustain and improve retail competitiveness;
- strengthen the range and quality of retail outlets on offer;
- ensure an equitable, efficient and sustainable spatial distribution of retail development;
- ensure that the retail needs of the town's residents are met as fully as possible within Bray;
- encourage and facilitate innovation and diversification;
- enhance the image of the town centre;
- improve the quality, amenity and safety of the shopping environment;
- improve accessibility to retail developments.

The Council will look unfavourably on new developments that have an adverse impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre. Proper planning and development includes promoting healthy town centres, in the public interest. Where new developments compromise this planning goal, they will be rejected.

4.4.4 Town Centre Expansion

It is the policy of the Council to expand the town centre into a significant portion of the Golf Club Lands.

In order for Bray to elevate its level of retail offer and attraction in accordance with the Wicklow and GDA Retail Strategies, it will require significant improvement in the quantum and quality of retail offer. Significant enhancement to the scale required cannot be achieved within the existing town centre. Therefore, the town centre will be expanded to include a significant component of the Golf Club Lands. The new town centre must be connected to, and complement the current town centre. This is an appropriate edge of town centre location with strong links to the core retail area. The expansion of the town centre into this area will substantially enhance the town's profile and importance within the GDA hierarchy.

4.4.5 Living Over the Shop

It is the policy of the Council to promote the concept of ‘Living Over the Shop’ in the town centre (B1 zone) and in local neighbourhood centres (G zone).

The concept of ‘Living Over the Shop’ (LOTS) aims to promote the conversion of vacant space over commercial premises into residential accommodation. In Bray, the promotion of LOTS will have added benefits in terms of relieving pressure on housing supply and in assisting the creation of a ‘living’ town centre environment, which will make the town centre a safer and more vibrant place to be in during periods of the day when commercial trading has concluded.

To accommodate the introduction of this residential component in the town centre, the height of buildings in the town centre will be allowed to increase. The height of buildings will only be allowed to increase in a manner that does not compromise the scale and character of the existing buildings and streetscape of the town. Specific criteria relating to height standards in the town centre and G-zoned neighbourhood centres are provided in Section 12.2.4.2/3 of ‘Chapter 12: Development Control Standards and Guidelines’.

4.4.6 Shopfronts

It is the policy of the Council to facilitate and promote the visual appearance of shopfronts in the town centre, and in G and G1 zoned local neighbourhood centres.

The Council considers that the quality of shopfronts in the town centre and in local neighbourhood centres, such as the Vevay Road and Dublin Road, need to be improved. Improving the quality of shopfronts will significantly contribute to improving the quality of the towns shopping environment and to enhancing its image. In turn, this will ensure that trade in the town flourishes.

Bray contains a number of traditional shopfronts, which contribute to the distinctive character of the town. The Council will encourage the preservation and refurbishment of existing traditional shopfronts and name plates, and the development of new shopfronts in traditional designs. Non-traditional designed shopfronts will be considered. However these must be designed to the highest standards.

Modern shopfronts can interpret traditional design principles in innovative ways so as not to detract from the property or area. It is accepted that retailers wish to trade on the basis of house colours and styles. However a retailer’s corporate identity should be balanced against the need to enhance the quality of an individual property or shopping area. Compatibility with individual buildings and with the street scene will be considered more important than uniformity between the branches.

The development of a new shopfront requires planning permission. Proposed developments will be assessed according to the criteria laid down in Section 12.5 of ‘Chapter 12: Development Control Standards and Guidelines’. In addition, the ‘Bray Main Street Shopfronts Study’ (1991) provides useful design guidelines for the refurbishment and upgrade of shopfronts.

4.4.7 Laneways

It is the policy of the Council to promote the development of laneways in the town centre.

The main streets of Bray Town Centre are intersected at numerous locations by a number of laneways. The Council considers that these laneways are an under-utilised resource as they offer enormous development potential for the expansion of retail and service outlets. The development of laneways can offer potential benefits in terms of enhancing the permeability of the town centre, and in the development of attractive, unique and pedestrian friendly urban spaces.

4.4.8 Large Foodstores

It is the policy of the Council to facilitate the provision of a wide distribution of large foodstores in appropriate locations, where the appropriate criteria are satisfied.

Large foodstores comprising supermarkets, superstores or hypermarkets are an accepted component of the retail hierarchy. They serve mainly the large weekly convenience goods² shopping requirements of families. They require large clear areas of floorspace together with adjacent car parking as the majority of families undertake their weekly bulk convenience shopping by car.

Large foodstores will only be permitted in locations that are accessible by car and where the road network has the capacity for additional traffic and service vehicles. Priority will be given to places that are serviced by good public transport.

In accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines (DoELG, 2000), the size cap on sales floorspace for large foodstore developments within the town is set at 3,500 square metres. This floorspace cap applies to new development or extensions to existing schemes which will result in an aggregate increase in the sales floorspace.

The Council will permit the development of a supermarket on G1 zoned land (Southern Cross), in conjunction with appropriate local based retail and service outlets.

4.4.9 Discount Foodstores

It is the policy of the Council to permit the development of a discount foodstore³ in the G1 zoned solely local service area.

² Convenience goods include food, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, tobacco and other non-durable goods.

³ A Discount Foodstore is defined as a single level, self-service store normally of between 1,000-1,500m² of gross floorspace selling a limited range of goods at competitive prices, often with adjacent parking.

4.4.10 Local Convenience Shops

It is the policy of the Council to facilitate the provision of small local convenience shops and other suitable locally based service outlets in appropriate residential areas, providing that the relevant criteria are satisfied.

Local convenience shops and service outlets play a vital economic and social role in communities and are important for essential day to day needs, with their accessibility to the less mobile sectors of the community of particular importance.

Local convenience shops will only be permitted in locations where:

- there is no significant damage to residential amenity;
- increased traffic, pedestrian and cycle flows can be accommodated, with particular priority being given to pedestrian movement for areas within its walking catchment;
- it can be demonstrated that there is a deficiency of retail provision in the area.

4.4.11 Retail Warehouses

It is the policy of the Council to permit the development of retail warehouses⁴ at appropriate locations in C1 zoned employment areas.

The Council will require applications for retail warehouses to include information on the type and range of goods to be sold in the proposed development. The Council will not favourably consider developments where the majority of goods proposed to be sold are non-bulky items that could be sold as easily in the town centre, and would add to the shopping experience, vitality and viability of the town centre.

⁴ A Retail Warehouse is defined as a large single-level store specialising in the sale of bulky household goods such as carpets, furniture and electrical goods, and bulky DIY items, catering mainly for car-borne customers.

4.4.12 Local Neighbourhood Centres

It is the policy of the Council to facilitate the provision of appropriate local based retail and service outlets in G zoned local neighbourhood centres, subject to the protection of residential amenity.

Local neighbourhood centres, which cater particularly for the daily needs of nearby residents and those passing by, perform an important function in local urban areas. They are aimed at ensuring that all residential areas are adequately serviced by local facilities and services, and comprise retail and commercial outlets, such as foodstores, pharmacies and hairdressers. Since they reduce the need to travel, foster community development and encourage local economic enterprise, they are sustainable and successful nodes for the local community.

Retail and service outlets will only be permitted in G zoned locations where:

- there is no significant damage to residential amenity;
- increased traffic and pedestrian flows can be accommodated;
- the economic viability and vitality of the primary retailing role of the town centre is not compromised.

The Council will promote the use of space over retail premises for offices and for conversion into residential accommodation.

4.4.13 Opportunity Sites

It is the policy of the Council to promote the re-development and intensification of use of opportunity sites.

The Council considers that there are a number of prime sites in the town centre and adjoining residential areas, which are under-utilised in terms of their development potential, and as such they should be upgraded and revitalised. These sites are capable of being marked by the presence of business or residential development with a notable architectural input and of a scale befitting their location.

The sites are located at critical gateways or entry points to the town, and as such are highly visible and are suitable for ‘landmark buildings’⁵. As the development of these sites will help set the tone for the town, and influence the public perception of it, a high quality of urban design and innovative architectural design solutions will be sought at these locations.

In assessing re-development proposals for Opportunity Sites, the Council shall have regard to the general development standards and guidelines outlined in Chapter 12.

The Council will prepare an Area Action Plan for the Herbert Road Car Park.

⁵ The term ‘landmark building’ refers to a building, which provides a strategic gateway point. It is intended that they will close vistas and mark important corners or new civic spaces. They should be of exceptional architectural quality, and bring benefits in terms of re-vitalising, regenerating and enlivening areas. The height of a landmark building shall be considered with regard to the context of the site and in accordance with the relevant height standards, in particular those set out in Section 12.2.4 and Section 11.2.1.

Table 4.1: Opportunity Sites

Site No.	Location	Zoning	Acceptable Use
1	Herbert Road Car Park	B1- Primarily Town Centre Uses	Mixed-use development comprising multi-storey car park, town centre uses on ground floor and above, and residential units on upper floors.
2	Fatima House, Quinsborough Road	B1- Primarily Town Centre Uses	Office type development with commercial recreation/leisure/public house/restaurant/cafe at ground floor to link with use of Carlisle Grounds as a recreation facility. This site would be suitable for the development of a hostel.
3	The Value Centre, opposite Bray Dart Station	B1- Primarily Town Centre Uses	Office type development or mix of office with upper floors of residential. Commercial on ground floor
4	Bray DART Station Carpark	B2- Primarily Seafront Uses	Mixed-use development comprising multi-storey car park, commercial units on ground floor and residential units on upper floors
5	Health Centre, Killarney Road	B1- Primarily Town Centre Uses	A public car park including development with ground floor- commercial/community/ cultural use, and upper floors-office/residential
6	Heitons, Dublin Road	B1- Primarily Town Centre Uses	Mixed-use development comprising commercial units on ground floor and office/residential units on upper floors.
7	Central Garage, Main Street	B1- Primarily Town Centre Uses	Mixed-use development comprising commercial units on ground floor and office/residential units on upper floors.
8	Bray Head Hotel	B2- Primarily Seafront Uses	Mixed-use development comprising commercial tourist/recreational uses at the north of the existing building and residential uses at the south of the existing building. Commercial tourist/recreational uses shall comprise a minimum of 25% of the total gross building floor area of the development. The height shall be limited to 4 storeys
9	Star Leisure/ Dawson's Amusement	B2- Primarily Seafront Uses	Mixed use development comprising commercial tourist/recreational uses at the east of the site and residential uses at the west of the site. Commercial tourist/recreational uses shall comprise a minimum of 60% of the total gross building floor area of the development site area. This land-use ratio shall be maintained at all phases of development. Any development proposal shall include the removal of the existing buildings. The height shall be limited to 4 storeys.

4.4.14 Derelict Sites

It is the policy of the Council to prepare a register of derelict land and buildings and to secure the improvement/redevelopment of such sites.

The Council shall acquire derelict areas within the town or so much of such areas as may be necessary to secure the satisfactory redevelopment of the areas using their powers under the 1990 Derelict Sites Act. The Council will impose a levy charge on the owners of Derelict Sites if it is considered necessary.