

Chapter 5:

Economy



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5.0 Introduction

The small area population statistics for Nenagh showed a workforce of 2,428 in 1996, this figure had increased to 2,830 by 2002. In 1991 levels of employment in manufacturing and servicing were 23% and 18% respectively. Manufacturing has increased to nearly 28% while the numbers in commerce has increased to 21%. The growing numbers in manufacturing is well above the county average and the national average at 18.8% and 18.45% respectively. The number in commerce at 21.7% is also above the national average of 15%.

The above figures show the importance of the manufacturing and commercial sector to the economic life of the town. It is therefore important that serviced land is made available in suitable locations for all types of commercial and industrial activity. It is recognised by the Council that some of the land zoned previously is not accessible to those who require it.

Key areas have been identified as needing Town Council intervention to assist the market. These include land and buildings for:

- Small start up industries;
- Commercial businesses requiring a good profile in respect of access and proximity to strategic route corridors;
- Retail warehousing;
- Transport haulage and warehousing storage.

The challenge for this plan will be not only to identify suitable lands for the above but to assist in releasing such lands where barriers exist.

Table 10 in Chapter 2 shows that the number of unemployed between 1991 and 2002 has fallen. However, this fall in unemployment cannot be attributed solely to a significant rise in local employment generation but largely to workers commuting to work outside the Plan area. It is important that the role of Nenagh as county town is reinforced through the creation of new employment opportunities.

5.1 Key economic aims

- (i) To remove barriers to land availability and economic and employment development
- (ii) Strongly foster and protect the viability of the core shopping areas of the town, as delineated and to protect its sustainability and its attractiveness as "Nenagh, the Market Town";
- (iii) Improve the physical environment of the employment areas within Nenagh (including the town centre) through a series of environmental improvement schemes;
- (iv) Require the appropriate location of industrial and commercial development through land zoning, specific objectives and development briefs;

- (v) To facilitate small and medium businesses to acquire suitable land and buildings, and where necessary to acquire land and provide the necessary services.

5.2 Policy on Economic Development

Policy ECON 1: Zoning of land for Employment.
It is the policy of the Council to zone suitable lands to facilitate employment generation, particularly the opportunities for the following:

- (i) *Small start up industries;*
- (ii) *Commercial businesses requiring a good profile in respect of access and proximity to strategic route corridors;*
- (iii) *Retail warehousing;*
- (iv) *Transport haulage and warehousing storage.*

All such development shall be accommodated on lands zoned for development in the Plan. The Council will resist development proposals that are outside land zoned for development.

5.2.1 Master plans for New Industrial Areas

In order to ensure that major greenfield industrial sites are developed with the necessary infrastructure and to a high level of overall finish and design it will be required that masterplans be prepared on an overall basis for these areas as indicated in the Nenagh Development Plan.

Policy ECON 2: Commercial Parks at (a) Drummin Road and south of the N52; (b) Brook Watson Estate.
It is a policy of the Council to seek the development of commercial parks to provide for proper planning and sustainable development of the area in accordance with agreed master plans. The Master Plans shall be prepared in accordance with an agreed brief and will provide for the following:

- a) *the infrastructural requirements to service current and planned development in the area including the provision of new access and distributor roads as identified in Map 2;*
- b) *Provide for a mix of industrial, light industrial, warehousing and retail warehousing where zoning permits, and commercial/office type development;*
- c) *identification of suitable lands for low-intensity, affordable commercial development, including vehicle parking, SME's and start-up employment activity;*
- d) *All new buildings shall be of a high architectural standard or where new warehousing is proposed the façade fronting the site shall be of a high standard;*
- e) *The provision of land for future sports/playing pitch facility within the master plan east of Drummin Road and south of the N52*
- f) *the overall design of the commercial park shall include extensive landscaping, including open space;*
- g) *All boundaries fronting public areas shall be high standard and in any case not palisade fencing.*

These sites are designed to meet the requirements for non-town centre related development requiring access to good quality infrastructure. There is also a demand in Nenagh and across the County for affordable industrial sites to accommodate small-to-medium scale industrial activity. This includes HGV and other vehicle parking, commercial storage, workshops and recycling plants. Because of the nature of such activity promoters are unable to meet the high cost of industrial land within urban areas. This has resulted in such uses being driven out to sites in rural locations without adequate services. It is therefore important that such activity is provided for in and around the town.

5.2.2 Industrial Development

Nenagh is considered to be a traditional “market town”, employment throughout the 19th and 20th Century was predominantly provided by service industry and manufacturing. With current shifting of the Irish economy from manufacturing driven to ‘Knowledge economy’ driven, it is assumed that industrial development in the town may decline and therefore, it is vital for Nenagh to diversify its employment base.

Policy ECON 4: Environmental Improvement of Employment Areas

It is the policy of the Council to ensure a high standard of design, layout and amenity is achieved for new industrial, light industrial and commercial developments (including the town centre) through one or more of the following:

- *Streetscape improvement in the town centre;*
- *Significant Landscaping and boundary treatment in accordance with guidance in development control chapter;*
- *Adequate servicing and turning areas separate from public areas*
- *Improved access for pedestrians, cyclists and people with disabilities;*
- *Appropriate use of signage through coordinated signage at entrances.*

Specific Commercial Objectives

E.1. To seek the redevelopment of ‘Opportunity sites’ identified in Development Briefs and set out in Appendix 3 Opportunity Sites See Map.2.

E.2 To ensure that there is adequate and serviced land available for the anticipated needs of Industry/light industry.

E.3 To provide “incubator units” for small scale and start up businesses

E.4 To seek the redevelopment of derelict and under utilised lands and buildings in the town centre for new commercial and residential development to ensure the long term vitality and viability of the town centre.

E.5 To increase the levels of ASDL (Asynchronous Digital Subscriber Line) broadband throughout the town and encourage more use of the existing network

E.5 To seek the redevelopment of Tyone Mills to provide high quality commercial development and gateway architecture at the entrance to the town.

5.3 Tourism

5.3.1 Introduction

Tourism is a growing sector within the national economy; it is also a sector that has had little impact on Nenagh.

In general terms, North Tipperary tourism is an undeveloped asset. Of the 5,840,000 tourists to Ireland in 2001, only 39,000 came to the county, that equates to only 0.66%. Irelands cultural heritage has been identified as one of the main reasons why overseas tourists chose to visit here and in North Tipperary, Nenagh provides the gateway to Lough Derg and as an employment opportunity tourism can be environmentally sustainable.

Tourism also has the potential to benefit the local community in terms of improving facilities that are available to local people. The key resources on which the tourist industry relies are the identifiable features that make up the natural, built and cultural environment of Nenagh and its surrounding countryside.

North Tipperary County Council adopted a Tourism Strategy in November 2003. The overall aim of the Council is twofold: firstly, to provide a variety of activities for visitors in order to lengthen their stay in the town, and secondly, to improve the quality of the recreational environment of the town for the residents and visitors in the town.

There is an established range of tourist facilities in and adjacent to Nenagh. The town itself, as a traditional market town – not spoiled by dominant multiples, is a tourist attraction for its traditional street frontage, signage, and buildings which are all intact and are a fine example of a rural town of importance. Local family names are still important in Nenagh. Nenagh is noted for good quality food, with excellent Cafes, Restaurants and food shops.

Both the 18 hole golf course and the 18-hole pitch-and-put course provide potential for the more lucrative golfing tourists. The golf club is an under-utilised facility and with the increased number of Irish people taking short breaks, particularly golfers, there is huge potential to exploit the golf market. Short break packages offered by the golf club would entice those golfers looking for a new course to play.

5.3.2 Policy on Tourist Development

New development in the tourism sector should respect the existing character of the town and its surroundings. This will enable tourism facilities to be provided in appropriate locations that will not have a detrimental impact on the town or its inhabitants.

An attractive town centre goes hand in hand with a strong tourism base. The local community has stressed the importance of improving the appearance of the town centre. The Council supports this sentiment, and will seek to improve the appearance of the town centre, by means of including town renewal and the appropriate control of new development, in order to strengthen and improve the character of Nenagh.

Policy ECON 5: Existing tourist facilities

It is the policy of the Council to preserve the viability of existing tourist attractions by not permitting developments in their vicinity that would adversely impact on their setting.

Specific tourism objectives:

TM 1: The removal of unsightly elements at historically sensitive locations within the town such as inappropriate advertising, poles and wirescapes.

TM 2: To seek the redevelopment of the area around the Castle, including the park, adjoining lands and buildings facing on to Pearse Street in accordance with a development brief.

5.4 Retail and Commercial Development

5.4.1 Background

The North Tipperary County Retail Strategy has been prepared in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines. Proposed Retail Development in the town will need to take account of the guidelines and objectives contained in the Retail Strategy. This plan incorporates the recommendations of the 2003 Retail strategy in its proposals to improve retailing in the town.

There is a vibrant commercial sector in Nenagh, and the number employed in the sector has been steady at 21% since 1991. Future growth is predicted to be strong in the commercial sector as Nenagh becomes a predominantly service town. New developments such as Stereame, Quentin's Way and proposed redevelopment of Kenyon Street backlands will serve to further strengthen the commercial role of the town. The development of tourism in Nenagh would also have a positive knock on effect for all retail outlets.

Nenagh is one of the County's two Hinterland Area **Level 2 Tier 2 Major Town Centres** in the Regional Retail Hierarchy. It is the fastest growing town in the County and is a busy and vibrant centre. The town's growth and attraction can largely be attributed to its proximity to the Limerick Metropolitan Area which also results in a high level of expenditure leakage to that conurbation. There is scope to increase both convenience and comparison floorspace to help reduce this leakage. There is considerable market interest in the town and a range of town centre, edge of centre and out of centre sites that will be able to accommodate demand.

The strategy for the development of future retail development in Nenagh will need to accord with the County Retail Strategy and will take account of the following:

- (i) **Core Retail Area:** The Core Retail Area includes part of Kenyon Street, Pearse Street, Silver Street and Kickhan Street;
- (ii) **Sequential Approach:** policies and proposals in respect of the location of retail development must be in accordance with the principles set by the sequential approach. The Core Retail Area is thus an important determinant in the approach;
- (iii) **Spatial Distribution of New Retail Development:** the emphasis of the Strategy is related to the spatial distribution of the quantum of convenience and comparison floorspace. Major new floorspace will be primarily distributed within the centre with bulky goods allowed on the periphery of the town;
- (iv) **Consideration of Need:** The broad assessment of expenditure capacity for additional floorspace indicates a need for a substantial amount of convenience and comparison floorspace in Nenagh, particularly retail warehousing, to improve the attraction of Nenagh and reduce expenditure leakage from the town to Limerick.

Proximity to Limerick and the restricted range and quality of the town's retail offer are factors that are resulting in expenditure leakage from the town to the Limerick Metropolitan Area for both convenience and comparison shopping, including bulky goods. The household survey (as part of the County Retail Strategy) found that there was of the order of 12% of convenience expenditure and 30% of comparison expenditure leakage from the County. Almost all of this, both convenience and comparison, was from the Nenagh area.

As the population of the town and its hinterland expands there is scope to further enhance provision quantitatively and qualitatively in and around this key centre. There is potential for this to be redressed in Nenagh, particularly in respect of retail warehousing. This potential is confirmed by the market interest in the town for the development of convenience and retail warehousing floorspace. Currently, the balance in the town's floorspace is 47% convenience and 51% comparison.

A number of opportunities exist in the town for improving the retail offer and attraction of Nenagh over the timescale of the Retail Strategy and beyond. These include:

Backlands behind Kenyon Street;

Urban Renewal Sites:

- (i) **Sheehan's Site 1** Cinema and buildings south of Emmet Place (See Development Brief);
- (ii) **Sheehan's Site 2** Martyrs Road Site (See Development Brief);
- (iii) **Lands on Limerick Road:** The Stereame development;

- (iv) Land to the rear of the Abbey Court Hotel, Dublin Road;
O'Connor's Shopping Centre and surrounding lands, Dublin Road;
- (vi) Castle Brand Site and adjacent lands
- (vi) St. John's Lane Car Park (See Development Brief);
and
- (vii) Tyone Mills, Thurles Road.

The nature and extent of the retail development allowed on the above sites would also need to be assessed against the impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre and the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities. (DoEHLG, 2005)

5.4.2 Retail Policy

Policy ECON 6: New Retail Development within or on the edge of the town centre

The Council supports proposals for new retail and other mixed use development in or on the edge of the town centre where the proposal:

- (a) *itself, or cumulatively with other development, will not cause detriment to the vitality or viability of the established centre;*
- (b) *is well located and convenient, attractive and has safe pedestrian linkages;*
- (c) *can provide or is in close proximity to adequate parking; and provides adequate facilities for the recycling of waste packaging generated by the proposal, including a bring centre where required.*

Policy ECON 13: Non Retail Uses

It is the policy of the council to strengthen the shopping function of the town. In this regard the Council will resist the provision of non-retail uses at ground floor within the area designated on 'town centre core map' in order to protect the vitality and viability of the primary retail area.

46% of the properties in Kenyon and 41% on Pearse Streets are occupied by retail uses, a further 10% are pubs and restaurants and the remainder are offices, residential and vacant properties. It is crucial to the economic competitiveness of the town that the overall retail function of the town centre, particularly Pearse and Kenyon Streets, is strengthened. To continue the trend of losing retail on these streets would undermine the attractiveness of Nenagh as a shopping centre. The Town Council will, therefore, resist further development of office and other uses that detract from the town centre as a vibrant shopping centre.

Policy ECON 7: Commercial Retail Development beyond the edge of the town centre

It is the policy of the council to support the provision of retail and other commercial development provided that:

- (a) *The proposal is on land that has been designated for such development in the Plan;*

- (b) *it does not detract from the vitality and viability of the town centre;*
- (c) *the proposed development accords with the County Retail Strategy and the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2005); and*
- (d) *the proposal accords with the design standards set out in Chapter 7 of this plan*

5.4.3 Neighbourhood Centres

Retail and commercial activities should also be located sporadically around the rest of the town providing local and neighbourhood retail / commercial facilities. Local centres will therefore be designated adjacent to new and existing residential neighbourhoods.

The most suitable locations for the provision of Neighbourhood centres are within master plan areas identified on the revised zoning map. Neighbourhood centres should be located along or just off key distributor routes, and can readily be accessible by a range of transport options including private car, public transport, walking and cycling. Neighbourhood centres will not be located within areas that have restricted access to the surrounding streetscape, for example within cul de sac routes.

In principle, the appropriate uses at Neighbourhood centres are as follows: general stores, food stores, newsagents, pharmacies, post offices, restaurants, take-away, video/DVD rental, laundry facilities, hairdresser/barbers, public houses, dental/medical surgery, place of worship, credit union, crèche or childcare facilities. However it is important to have further consideration for issues relating to urban design and scale before such uses gain approval.

In order to preserve the local nature of the designated neighbourhood centres, a size threshold of 1,500square meters should normally be applied to a large unit or a total of 1,500square meters to the whole centre with one anchor of minimum 1,000 sq.m. Beyond these limits on retail unit sizes, shops are unlikely to serve a purely local market and thus would be more suitably located within the town centre or on the edge of the town centre if no central sites are available. Retail warehousing will be considered adjacent to the neighbourhood centre.

Future applications for retail or service outlets in Nenagh suburbs will generally not be considered unless they are within identified neighbourhood centres zoned for such development. However, a residential area may emerge over the plan period which has relatively poor accessibility to one of the identified Neighbourhood Centres. This would constitute exceptional circumstances, but if such a situation arises, it may be appropriate to allow development of a single convenience outlet to service such an area. Conditions should ensure that the outlet is restricted to daily convenience items and is no larger than 100 square meters (gross).

An emphasis on quality urban design will be sought in neighbourhood centres. Buildings comprising the

neighbourhood centre, or in the immediate vicinity, may be permitted to increase their heights to three storeys to reflect their prominence, subject to a high design requirement. A mix of uses will be encouraged at the centres, with residential and office uses promoted above first floor levels.

Where commercial developments are proposed, the Planning Authority may require appropriate mixes of use, in accordance with the uses of the surrounding area. In general, the Planning Authority will encourage a mix of uses on upper floors in shopping/ neighbourhood centres.

5.4.4 Discount Stores

Discount food stores of up to 1,500 sq.m. gross floor area have a potential role in extending the choice and range of retailing in the town. However, such facilities are not suitable as neighbourhood shops because of the selected range of goods available.

An emphasis on quality urban design will be sought in planning applications for Discount Stores. Buildings may be permitted to increase their heights to three storeys to reflect their prominence, subject to a high design requirement. A mix of uses will be encouraged at the centres, with residential and office uses promoted above first floor levels.

5.4.5 Town Market

Nenagh is historically a market town and it is an objective of this plan to protect and enhance that market tradition. The Council support the farmers market and other such markets that are deemed appropriate to enhance the diversity of the retail offer in the town centre. Markets can provide colour and human interest in town centres in a manner that supports the overall attractiveness of the town. To this end the Council will seek a permanent location for markets as part of the development of key sites within the town centre.

5.5 Take-away outlets

'Take-aways' can generate noise, odour and litter, and can cause disturbance to nearby residents, particularly late at night.

Policy ECON 10: Take-away outlets

It is the policy of the Council to fully resist any further take away outlets in Nenagh due to their negative impact on the surrounding environment. Proposal for 'take away' food as part of a sit down restaurant will be considered against the likely impact on local amenity, litter generation and noise. Opening hours of these premises will be strictly controlled.

5.6 Advertising

Certain types of advertisements can cause particular harm to the appearance of buildings and the street scene.

Policy ECON 8: Advertising

It is the policy of the Council to discourage the following:
a) Free-standing advertisements on forecourts and the public footpath.

- b) Signs or advertisements above fascia level.**
- c) More than one projecting sign per unit.**
- d) The use of back illuminated box fascias and illuminated projecting box.**

Policy ECON 9: Advertising in the Conservation areas and on protected structures

It is the policy of the Council to exercise firm control over advertisements in the Conservation Area and on Protected Structures. Illuminated box signs are particularly inappropriate in this area and on such buildings (Refer to Conservation Area Design Statement)

The Architectural Conservation Area Design Statement provides guidelines for the type of shop front advertisements that the Council will encourage, notably.

- (i) The use of hand painted lettering in bold colours on contrasting backgrounds. The use of solid block individual lettering, which is externally illuminated, by the use of spotlighting or floodlighting fixed directly to fascia boards or facades. In such cases care must be taken to ensure such fixtures are modest in scale and will not endanger traffic safety.
- (ii) The painting of stall risers and other features to enhance the design of the shop front, using appropriate colours.
- (iii) Restrict the use of traditional timber or wrought iron hanging signs to be limited in size and projection and restricted to one sign per building. In narrow streets, projecting signs may not be permitted where they give rise to visual clutter. Such signs must not pose a danger to pedestrian safety
- (iv) Remove Poster boards which constitute one of the most obtrusive elements of all forms of advertisements. They rely for their impact on size, scale and location and these are usually detrimental to the character of the area in which they are situated.
- (v) Ensure that the environment is protected from the possible adverse effects of these displays, the Council has prepared detailed guidance in Chapter 7 (Development Control) and in the Conservation Area Design Statement.

5.7 Specific Town Centre, Retail and Commercial Objectives

R.1 To strengthen the central area of Nenagh as a vibrant, attractive and successful commercial centre.

R.2 It is an objective of the Council to prepare a town centre urban master plan in conjunction with the various stakeholders in the town which will indicate in detail proposals for:

- (i) Traffic calming;
- (ii) Pedestrian improvements; and
- (ii) Environmental enhancements.

R.3 To provide multi-storey car parking as part of the redevelopment of key town centre sites

R.4 It is a specific policy of the Council that all inappropriate and unauthorised advertising signs, satellite dishes and shopfront shutters will be removed from buildings within the town centre.

R.5 To seek the removal of all unauthorised advertising/satellite dishes from the approach roads and central area streets in order to improve the

appearance of the “Gateways” and town centre of Nenagh.

R.6 To provide industrial/commercial activity on land made up of rear gardens at Gortlandroe provided that such activity does not detract from the residential amenities of the adjoining residents.

R.7 To support the relocation of the mart to a more suitable location outside the town and to seek the redevelopment of the mart site.

R.8 To prepare a retail strategy for Nenagh in accordance with the County Retail Strategy and to take account of the changing needs of the town.

