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# Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report

FOR

PROPOSED

TOWN RENEWAL MASTERPLAN

AT


Castledermot


Co. Kildare


ON BEHALF OF

Kildare County Council

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## DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET

<b>Client</b>	Kildare County Council
<b>Project Title</b>	Proposed Town Renewal Masterplan at Castledermot, Co. Kildare
<b>Document Title</b>	Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report

Revision	Status	Author(s)	Reviewed	Approved	Issue Date
<b>0.0</b>	Draft for internal review	Emma J Devereux <i>Project Ecologist</i>	Dr Sanni Hintikka <i>Ecologist</i>	Ben Lansbury <i>Principal Ecologist</i>	14/12/2022
<b>1.0</b>	Draft for Client Review	Emma J Devereux <i>Project Ecologist</i>	Dr Sanni Hintikka <i>Ecologist</i>	Ben Lansbury <i>Principal Ecologist</i>	20/12/2022
<b>2.0</b>	Consultation 1 (Environmental Authorities)	Emma J Devereux <i>Project Ecologist</i>	Dr Sanni Hintikka <i>Ecologist</i>	Ben Lansbury <i>Principal Ecologist</i>	20/12/2022
<b>3.0</b>	Final SEA Screening Determination	Emma J Devereux <i>Project Ecologist</i>	Dr Sanni Hintikka <i>Ecologist</i>	Ben Lansbury <i>Principal Ecologist</i>	06/03/2023

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

This Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report has been prepared by Enviroguide Consulting (on behalf of Kildare County Council) for the Proposed Town Renewal Masterplan (TRMP) at Castledermot, Co. Kildare, hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Masterplan' in this document. The 'Site' refers to the area within the Proposed Masterplan, i.e., the town of Castledermot. This report considers whether the Proposed Masterplan is likely to cause significant effects on the environment, and whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required.

### 1.1 Legislative context for SEA

An SEA is a process for the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme before a decision is made to adopt the plan or programme. SEA aims to provide a high level of protection to the environment and contribute to the integration of environmental considerations during the preparation and adoption of plans with a view of promoting sustainable development.

The SEA evaluation process of plans and programmes is required by European Directive 2001/42/EC ('the SEA Directive'). For a specific range of land-use plans, this Directive is transposed into Irish law by Statutory Instrument (S.I.) No. 436 of 2004 (the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004), as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011 (the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).

For all other relevant plans and programmes in Ireland (including other types of plans in the land-use planning sector), the SEA Directive is transposed into Irish law by S.I. No. 435 of 2004 (the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004), as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011 (the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011). The Proposed Masterplan presented in this report falls under S.I. 435/2004.

### 1.2 Requirement to carry out SEA – Pre-Screening Checklist

In order to determine if the Proposed Masterplan is considered a plan/programme under Article 3 of the SEA Directive, a pre-screening check is necessary. Figure 1 shows a decision-tree which reflects the SEA Directive and how it may be concluded (using the steps set down in S.I. 435 of 2004, as amended): a) if a plan is exempt from the Directive's requirements; b) if SEA is mandatory or c) if screening for SEA is required.

Following finalisation and publication, the Proposed Masterplan will be adopted by Kildare County Council and will act as a non-statutory guiding document for future urban development in the town of Castledermot. Therefore, the Proposed Masterplan "*sets a framework for future development consent of projects (EIA and non-EIA projects)*", and thus Screening for SEA is required.

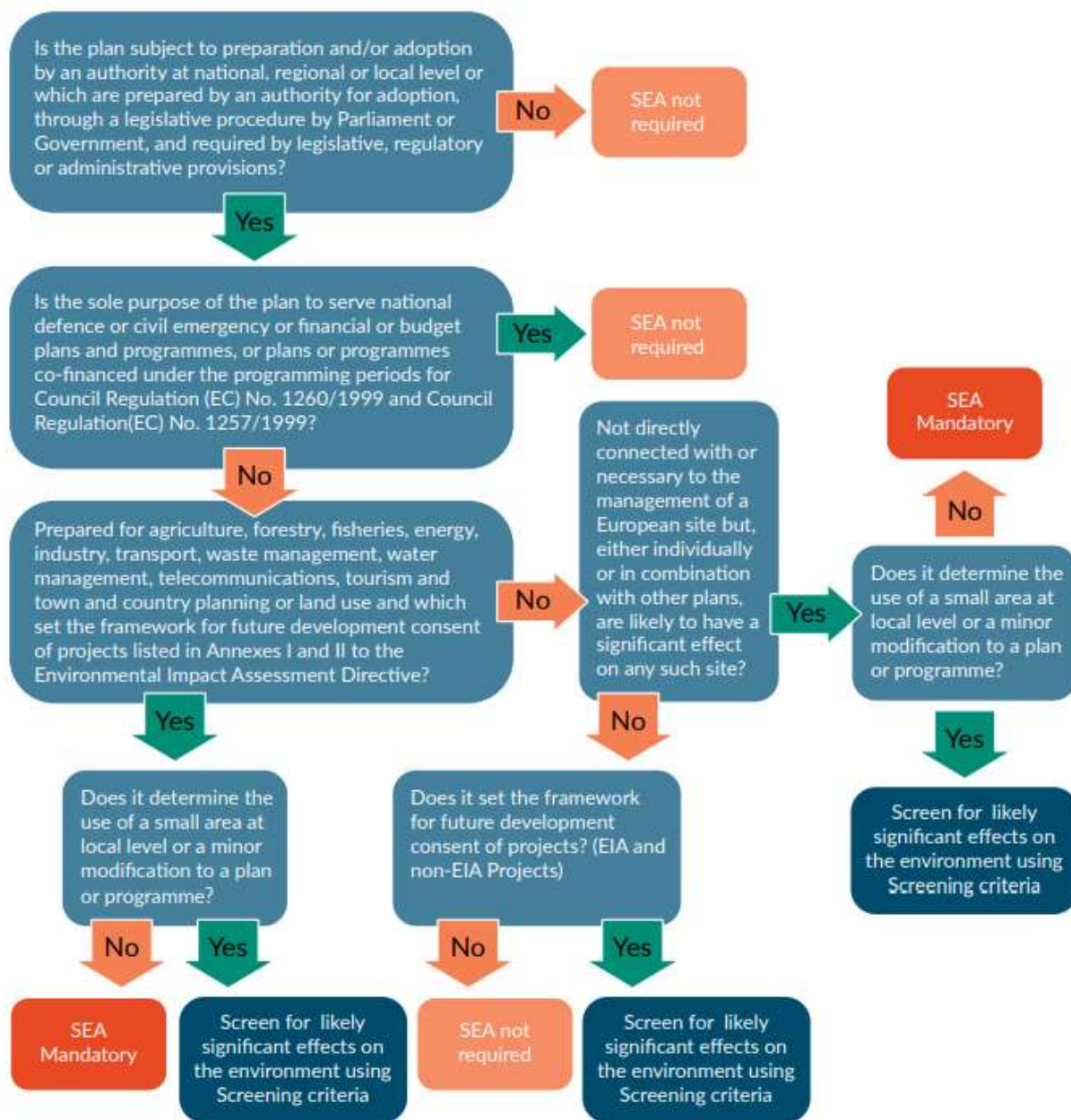


FIGURE 1. DECISION-TREE SETTING OUT REQUIREMENTS FOR SEA UNDER S.I. 435 OF 2004, AS AMENDED (SOURCE: DHLGH, 2022).

## **2 NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PLANS AND POLICY**

### **2.1 National Context**

#### **2.1.1 Project Ireland 2040**

Project Ireland 2040 is the government's long-term overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all and to build a more resilient and sustainable future. The strategy ensures the alignment of investment plans with the stated National Strategic Objectives for 2040 in a considered, cohesive, and defined manner. This represents a shift from the approach of the past, which saw funding spread thinly across sectors and public investment decisions. Alongside the development of physical infrastructure, Project Ireland 2040 supports business and communities across all of Ireland in realising their potential.

#### **2.1.2 National Planning Framework**

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of the country to the year 2040. The NPF sets out ten National and Strategic Outcomes and 75 National Policy Objectives. The purpose of the NPF is to enable all parts of Ireland, whether rural or urban, to successfully accommodate growth and change, by facilitating a shift towards Ireland's regions and cities other than Dublin, while also recognising Dublin's ongoing key role.

Both the SEA and Appropriate Assessment (AA) processes were undertaken during the preparation of the NPF. The SEA and AA processes have ensured that potential environmental impacts (both positive and negative) associated with the NPF have been given due consideration in the finalisation of the NPF.

The NPF was supported by the publication of the Implementation Roadmap for the National Planning Framework ('Roadmap') which was published on the 3rd of July 2018. This document confirmed that the NPF was adopted as a strategy to replace the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) (2002-2020) and advised that the NPF is of direct relevance to the preparation of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) and County Development Plans.

### **2.2 Regional Context**

#### **2.2.1 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy**

The RSES 2019-2031, prepared by the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA), seeks to determine at a regional scale how best to achieve the shared goals set out in the National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) of the NPF. To this end, the Strategy sets out 16 Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs), which are aligned with international, EU and national policy and which in turn set the framework for city and county development plans. Thus, the RSES can assist local authorities in aligning with EU priorities to leverage funding and partnership opportunities.

The RSES outlines a set of Regional Policy Objectives for rural areas that shall be implemented by the local authorities when preparing and applying their own local Development Plans.

### **2.2.2 Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023**

The settlement strategy in Volume 1, Chapter 3 of the Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (KCDP 2017-2023) allocates 3.7% of the overall population growth for the county to 15 designated towns (of which Castledermot is one). This equates to up to 25% growth in population for each town over the period of this Plan.

Section 1.3 of Volume 2 of the Development Plan sets out a Town Plan for Castledermot and consists of specific objectives and a land use zoning map that will ensure the sustainable development of the town over the period of the Plan.

Section 1.3.7 of Volume 2 details specific Development Objectives for Castledermot, covering the following topics:

- Residential Development;
- Town Centre;
- Public Utilities;
- Flooding;
- Transportation;
- Employment;
- Community and Educational;
- Heritage; and
- Amenity and Recreation.

Furthermore, the SEA process for KCDP 2017-2023 identified specific aims, policies, and objectives within the plan to mitigate any potentially negative effects on the environment.

### **2.2.3 Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029**

The new KCDP 2023-2029 takes effect from the 28<sup>th</sup> of January 2023. As such, although the Proposed Masterplan was originally prepared with cognisance to the old KCDP, it is also aligned with the new plan and the policies detailed for small towns of which Castledermot is one.

The settlement strategy in Volume 1, Chapter 2 of the new plan allocates 0.5% of the overall population growth for the county from 2023-2029 to Castledermot. Like the KCDP 2017-2023, the new plan sets out the objectives for the town under topics of Town Centre, Public Realm, Social and Community Infrastructure, Natural Heritage, New Residential, Movement and Transport, Physical Infrastructure and Surface Water.

The KCDP 2023-2029 underwent the statutory SEA process for county development planning and identified specific aims, policies, and objectives within the plan to mitigate any potentially negative effects on the environment.



### 3 PROPOSED MASTERPLAN DESCRIPTION

#### 3.1.1 Castledermot Town – Location & Description

Castledermot (*Díseart Diarmada*) is a town located in the south of County Kildare and is mainly accessed from M9 which by-passes the town to the west (Figure 2). The town lies 10 km from Carlow Town and 11 km from Athy. Castledermot is a service centre for the surrounding rural hinterland. The town is of ancient walled settlement origin, reaching back to at least the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. It is picturesque, with elements of geographical, archaeological, architectural, historical, and cultural significance.

The River Lerr (a tributary of the larger River Barrow, the second longest river in Ireland) flows through the town.

Castledermot town has a population of 1475 people (Census 2016). The prime land use within Castledermot is residential, retail, commercial with some community, sport, and agricultural land uses.

The key destinations to and within the town include the 2 schools, the health centre, community centre, the retail/ commercial core focused around Market Square. The zoning objectives for Castledermot include new residential, industry and warehousing, enterprise and employment and agriculture.

The R448 is the main road link through Castledermot, connecting the town to Kilcullen in the north and the M9 to the west. The R418 and other local roads connect Castledermot to the wider regional and local road network and rural hinterlands. The M9 provides a connection to Dublin in the north-east and Waterford City in the south.

Castledermot is served by bus route 736 (operated by JJ Kavanagh), providing services to Carlow and Waterford in the south and to Dublin Airport and City Centre. The town is also served by Kildare Local Link route 880 providing services between Carlow and Naas town centre.

#### 3.1.2 Archaeological & Cultural Heritage of Castledermot

The earliest reference to a settlement at Castledermot is associated with the monastic site of *Díseart Diarmada*. It was founded as a hermitage around 600 by Diarmait, the son of the Ulster (*Dál Fiatach*) king Diarmait mac Aedh Róin, who had been given lands in the area by Bradudh, king of Leinster in 594. Typically, the term 'díseart' is used to refer to an isolated hermitage but it appears that *Díseart Diarmada* grew into a significant settlement, and it appears in numerous references in the annals during the early medieval period. The construction of a round tower at the Site and the erection of two high crosses indicate the importance and wealth of the place. This wealth made *Díseart Diarmada* attractive as a raiding site for Viking invaders. The graveyard contains a hogsback grave marker (the only recorded example in Ireland), which provides another indicator of Hiberno-Norse contact with the settlement.

To the north of the church is a 20m high round tower of tenth-eleventh century date. The top of the tower, which is crenelated, was restored in the nineteenth century. A number of early medieval monuments are located within the graveyard surrounding the church including two scriptural high crosses of tenth century date and a number of simpler incised cross-slabs.

The town was walled in the 13th century, by which time two important ecclesiastic centres had been established, St. John's Priory and the Franciscan Monastery. The town grew in size and importance during the fourteenth century in part due to its strategic location on the main route from Dublin to the southeast. However, this period of prosperity was short lived as the friary, and probably the town, were sacked by Edward the Bruce in 1316, and suffered repeating sackings by Crown forces (or as part of rebellions against the Crown settlers such as that of Art MacMurrough in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century) thereafter.

The dissolution of the monasteries saw the role of Castledermot decline. From being an important religious centre, it became a service centre for the surrounding rural hinterland, a role it retains to this day.

Appendix 1 considers the potential impacts on archaeological and cultural heritage associated with the Proposed Masterplan.

### **3.1.3 Castledermot Town Renewal Masterplan – Main Objectives**

The central aim of this study is to support the renewal of Castledermot in order to improve the living and working environment of its communities and increase its potential to support economic activity into the future (Figure 3 & Figure 4). The overall intention is to:

- Increase the attractiveness of the town as a local commercial and social centre, and as a result increase its sustainability as a place in which to live and work.
- Enhance the town environment and amenities in the interests of residents, businesses, and visitors.
- Promote the town potential for tourism and as a centre for culture and local heritage, thus enhancing the sense of identity -physically and socially.

The renewal plan seeks to build on the very strong asset base of Castledermot, to ensure it retains its strong identity, to contribute to its enhancement, and to create opportunities which are unique to Castledermot for its citizens to identify with. As a town with growth potential, it needs to ensure that its current and future growth areas stitch into the town centre and its community base and draw on its character and sense of place. The objectives of Renewal Plan are to:

1. Create the opportunities for enabling strategies that the local community, stakeholders, and Kildare County Council can support and sustain for the future development of the town.
2. Enhance the vitality and vibrancy of Castledermot through ensuring vacant/derelict buildings and future growth areas are woven into the town and consolidated.
3. Create an enhanced environment for people living, working, and visiting the town through public realm interventions, encouraging, and sustaining economic growth.
4. Re-balance the movement network ensuring accessibility for all, to further enhance the walking and cycling environment, prioritising public over private transport and creating safe connections and places for people.
5. Enhance landscape quality and positive 'sense of place' in town which in turn will not only help combat the effects of climate change but also support higher property values.
6. Create a Compact Low-Carbon Climate Resilient Town including strategic regeneration proposals incorporating best practice in low-carbon placemaking and design, the promotion of sustainable transport modes and the enhancement of biodiversity in the town through blue and green infrastructure developments.

These objectives are driven by the specific characteristics of Castledermot and also by what are considered to be the essence of a successful town.

The Proposed Masterplan identifies nine key priority projects for the regeneration of Castledermot (Figure 4):

1. **Castledermot Heritage:** Celebrating the rich heritage of Castledermot can be achieved through the development of a signage strategy, which caters specifically to the needs of Castledermot, elevating the status of several historic sites throughout the town, development of a dedicated heritage trail, development of an interactive tourist map, Improved wayfinding signage, establishment of a small museum/information centre in one of the vacant buildings to highlight the heritage and history of the Town with regular presentations from local historians to inform visitors to the Town.
2. **Vacancy & Dereliction:** Establishing a centralised database on all vacant and derelict properties throughout the town, including brownfield sites and partially completed development sites. This will then enable a cohesive and 'joined up' approach to tackling the issue, based on dialogue with property owners. Priority would be placed on achieving 'quick wins' in the most problematic cases such as the painting of facades, while exploring the potential of 'meanwhile' uses and longer-term solutions. Re-Purposing vacant buildings i.e., the introduction of residential accommodation to the Town Centre, co-working hubs etc., utilising backland areas or attracting outside investment from large companies by making Castledermot more attractive.
3. **Public Realm Design Guidelines:** Particular attention to be paid to the design of new and replacement footpaths, pedestrian crossings, use of storefront displays and merchandising to promote pedestrian traffic, and provision of outdoor dining areas.
4. **Market Square:** Projects include an upgrade to main square area with new paving, mature trees, new planting, streetlamps and high-quality seating and street furniture to mark an importance of this area as a heart of town centre. Encourage restoration and re-use of vacant, derelict and underutilised buildings around the square. Provide additional landscaping at junction corners which would soften the area, collect rainwater, and improve village look and feel.
5. **Main Street:** Regeneration including improved paving, lighting, footpath widening and greening.
6. **St James' Church / Church Lane:** Footpath widening, establishment of traffic management, improved lighting plans.
7. **Walking/cycling potential at the Green and River Lerr:** Explore options for walking/cycling green route along The Green and River Lerr, the option of 1-way traffic management or low traffic/limited vehicular access shared street environment.
8. **Fairgreen Town Park:** Provision of safe access to the park from the town by providing appropriate footpaths and street lighting along Keenans Lane, linking to The Green. Potential for traffic calming and dedicated pedestrian crossings. Enhance/expand town park as a multi-use passive recreation, sports, activity, and event hub with programme of events (i.e., weekly farmer & craft market with contributors from the surrounding area).
9. **Scoil Diarmada School Zone:** Introduction of school zone treatment with pencil bollard protection, change in road surface, enhanced main school crossing. Proposed school zone gateway with improved signage and traffic calming. Upgraded existing footpath along school boundary. Reduced carriageway width.

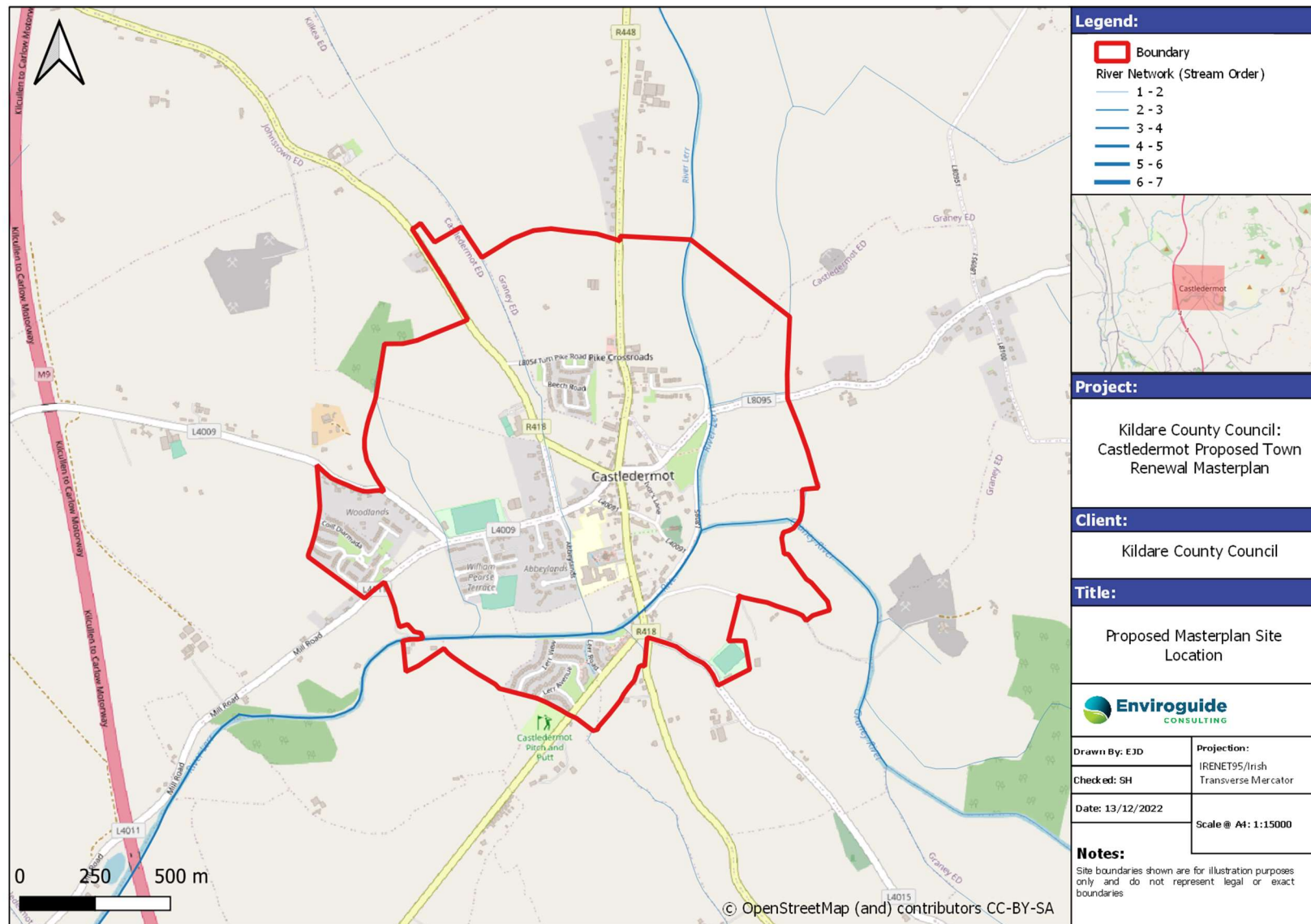


FIGURE 2. SITE LOCATION





FIGURE 4. KEY PROJECTS (SOURCE: CASTLEDERMOT TRMP (KCC, 2022))

## 4 SEA SCREENING

### 4.1 Screening Criteria

The Proposed Masterplan is a non-statutory land use plan and is being screened for the requirement for SEA in accordance with the requirements of:

- Directive 2001/42/EC (SEA Directive) and particularly Articles 3(3), 3(4) & 3(5) relate to 'Screening' for the requirement for SEA.
- S.I. No. 435 of 2004 European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011 - European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011.

The Proposed Masterplan for Castledermot is therefore screened using the criteria contained in Schedule 1 of S.I. No. 435/2004 - European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004. Table 1 details the screening assessment using the *criteria for determining the likely significance of effects* as set out in Schedule 1.

**TABLE 1. SCREENING DETERMINATION FOR DETERMINING THE LIKELY SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS AS PER SCHEDULE 1 OF S.I. NO. 435/2004.**

#### 1. The characteristics of the plan having regard, in particular, to *(the following criteria)*:

*The degree to which the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.*

The Proposed Masterplan document will act as a guidance document for projects and other activities for Castledermot town. It sets a non-statutory framework for projects for the enhancement of Castledermot Town, including recommendations related to enhancing the public realm via: creation of a public realm design guide that would establish rules for building frontages and advertisements; a rebalancing of the town centre pedestrian and vehicular space; provision of a safe multi-use network connecting River Lerr, Fairgreen, The Abbey, Town Centre, Schools, GAA, St. James Church, and all residential areas; reduction of speed limits in the town and increased traffic calming; utilizing and renovating derelict buildings and sites; and enhanced landscaping/greening in the town. Interventions can be locally delivered through community projects, with strong commitment required from public funding to target more permanent interventions that deliver on a common vision.

The TRMP does not propose direct works but puts forward key recommended projects and proposes design guidelines for the town to ensure development is conducted in a unified way. The Design Guidelines, once prepared, will likely have an impact on the design of future development projects in the town, as the planning authority is likely to place some consideration on how development applications have incorporated/addressed the guidelines in their designs to ensure unity in the sustainable development of the town.

Future individual development within the Site of the Proposed Masterplan will be considered under the SEA, EIA and/or AA processes as appropriate.

*The degree to which the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, influences other plans including those in a hierarchy.*

The Proposed Masterplan will be a non-statutory plan that provides detail and clarity with regard to the existing land use objectives for the town. The principles at the core of the Proposed Masterplan were informed by the policy and key objectives in the KCDP 2017-2023, as well as the strong idea of retaining and enhancing the character and identity of Castledermot town, and to improve the living and working environment of its communities and increase its potential to support economic activity into the future. Although prepared under the KCDP 2021-2023, the TRMP also aligns with the policies and objectives set out for Castledermot in the current KCDP 2023-2029. Therefore, future development will continue to accord with the objectives and policies, including the environmental requirements of the KCDP 2023-2029.

The Proposed Masterplan will not have significant influence on other plans in the hierarchy, instead it will be led by those higher up in the process. As a Masterplan, it is compatible and complementary with the vision and objectives of the KCDP 2023-2029 and will be led by the higher-level plans such as the RSES and the NPF.

Additionally, future individual development projects within the town and Proposed Masterplan area must be considered under the SEA, EIA and/or AA processes as appropriate.

*The relevance of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.*

The Proposed Masterplan Site is envisioned to support the renewal of Castledermot in order to improve the living and working environment of its communities and increase its potential to support economic activity into the future (Figure 3 & Figure 4). The overall intention is to:

- Increase the attractiveness of the town as a local commercial and social centre, and as a result increase its sustainability as a place in which to live and work.
- Enhance the town environment and amenities in the interests of residents, businesses, and visitors.
- Promote the town potential for tourism and as a centre for culture and local heritage, thus enhancing the sense of identity -physically and socially.

These recommendations are consistent with the objectives for Castledermot as detailed in the KCDP 2023-2029 (Volume 2, section 2.2), by reinforcing the town centre (i.e., settlement core) as the service centre and enhancing its character, as well as improving the interconnectedness of the existing residential areas and the amenities of the town.

The KCDP 2023-2029, which underwent full SEA AA, integrated the findings of these processes into the Plan, contributing towards both environmental protection and management and sustainable development within the County.

*Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme.*



The Proposed Masterplan is not prepared in response to a particular environmental problem, nor are any major environmental problems known from the Site of the plan.

The SEA process for the KCDP 2017-2023 identified the majority of the county as low environmental sensitivity, with the level of environmental sensitivity increasing towards the centre of the county, concentrated between the areas of Kildare Town, Kilcullen and Newbridge. This is due to a variety of overlapping and related factors including soil type (peat), groundwater status (bad), landscape value (exceptional), ecological designation (proposed Natural Heritage Area) and geological designation (County Geological Heritage Area). Elevated levels of sensitivity are also found in the foothills to the west of the Kildare / Wicklow County boundary. The new KCDP 2023-2029 also underwent the full statutory SEA process, with the sensitivity mapping showing the same results.

*The relevance of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g., plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).*

The EU has a wide range of environmental legislation, dealing with such issues as tackling climate change, sustainable development, waste management, air pollution, water protection, nature and biodiversity, soil protection and noise pollution:

- EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC),
- EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC),
- EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) (2006/60/EC),
- EU Groundwater Directive 92006/118/EC),
- European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2014 S.I. 350 of 2014
- Wildlife Act 1976, as amended,
- Flora Protection Order 1999, and
- EU Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC).

The Proposed Masterplan will be a non-statutory framework document which outlines potential development arrangements for Castledermot town in a manner which is entirely consistent with the specific policies and objectives for the town as established in the KCDP 2023-2029. By its nature as a guiding document, it is not directly linked to the implementation of any of the aforementioned legislation, however, all recommendations made within the Proposed Masterplan will have cognisance of the international legislation related to the protection of the environment.

## **2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:**

*The probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of the effects*

The probability that the Proposed Masterplan will result in significant, long-term environmental impacts is moderate. It is expected that the effects will be largely positive, since additional pedestrian routes and greenspaces, promoting sustainable energy sources and modes of travel, as well as increasing public transport links, will likely enhance and improve various environmental aspects of the town. These positive impacts are reversible to an extent, for instance via the degeneration of the new recommended greenspaces, however, are envisioned to provide lasting, positive impacts on the town.

There is also a low probability of negative effects associated with the construction of any future developments under this Proposed Masterplan, however, due to the scale of the Proposed Masterplan, these are not considered to be of significant magnitude. It is also likely that any negative impacts (e.g., from construction activity) are of a temporary nature.

The implementation of the Proposed Masterplan could result in a slight long-term increase in human activity along the River Lerr, however this is not considered to result in significant negative effects on the river or its habitats and species it supports.

Final decisions relating to architectural detail and public realm and other issues will be determined through the development management process, and any individual future developments under this Proposed Masterplan will be subject to the appropriate environmental assessments.

*The cumulative nature of the effects*

There are no specific development proposals arising from the Proposed Masterplan and no changes to the Core Strategy which could potentially lead to cumulative effects with the KCDP 2023-2029.

The preparation of the Proposed Masterplan has been undertaken with consideration to the overall balanced development strategy of Kildare County Council, and the specific objectives for Castledermot town, as set out in the KCDP 2017-2023 and which also align with the current KCDP 2023-2029.

As a small section of the European site *River Barrow and River Nore* SAC is located within the boundary of the Proposed Masterplan, any future proposed developments put forward with cognisance to the Proposed Masterplan will need to be carefully assessed with regards to significant in-combination effects on any European sites in line with the KCDP 2023-2029 Development Standards. However, it is considered that the key projects identified in the Proposed Masterplan together with any current plans / projects within the town are not likely to result in significant negative cumulative effects on any environmental sensitivities.

*The transboundary nature of the effects*

The Site of the Proposed Masterplan is entirely within Kildare County Council's administrative area and is not expected to have any effects (negative or positive) on areas outside of the county boundaries.

*The risks to human health or the environment (e.g., due to accidents)*

No risks to human health or to the environment due to accidents or other considerations due to the preparation of the Proposed Masterplan have been identified.

*The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).*

The area of the Proposed Masterplan Site encompasses the Castledermot town centre and the immediate residential areas adjacent to the settlement core. Any potential environmental effects are expected to be largely confined to the area within and in the immediate vicinity of the Site of the Proposed Masterplan. The current population within the Site of the Proposed Masterplan is estimated to be approximately 1475 as of the 2016 Census.

*The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:*

- (a) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,*
- (b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,*
- (c) intensive land-use*

Several features of archaeological/cultural heritage significance are within the boundary of the town and the Proposed Masterplan and are detailed in Appendix 1. Any works that arise on the recommendation of the Proposed Masterplan are subject to the appropriate environmental assessments, including consideration for impacts on cultural heritage. KCDP 2023-2029 contains the following policies and objectives that will govern any detailed development proposals that may have an impact on the items listed in Appendix 1:

- **Objective GO 17:** *“Preserve and protect the structures and items listed in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) identified in the County Development Plan and as may be amended during the lifetime of the Plan; and ensure an Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment Report prepared by an accredited conservation architect or equivalent accompany planning applications for works to protected structures.”*
- **Objective GO 18:** *“Require archaeological impact assessment, prepared by a suitably qualified archaeologist for any development within or in close proximity to Zones of Archaeological Potential.”*
- **Policy AH P2:** *“Protect and enhance archaeological sites, monuments and where appropriate and following detailed assessment, their setting, including those that are listed in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) or newly discovered archaeological sites and/or subsurface and underwater archaeological remains.”*
- **Objective AH O3:** *“In co-operation with the National Monuments Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage require archaeological impact assessment, surveys, test excavation and/or monitoring and/or underwater archaeological impact assessments for planning applications in areas of archaeological importance and where a development proposal is likely to impact upon in-situ archaeological monuments, their setting and archaeological deposits, based on recommendations of a suitably qualified archaeologist and the Council will seek and have regard to the advice and recommendations of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.”*
- **Objective AH 023:** *“Require an Architectural Heritage Assessment Report, as described in Appendix B of the Architectural Heritage Protection, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011), to accompany all applications with potential for visual or physical impacts on a Protected Structure, its curtilage, demesne and setting. This report should be prepared by a*

*person with conservation expertise that is appropriate to the significance of the historic building or site and the complexity of the proposed works.”*

As the Proposed Masterplan does not propose direct works or development, no impacts on any protected structures are anticipated as a result of the preparation of the Proposed Masterplan. However, any future development proposal that is considered to have potential for impacts (both positive and negative) on recorded or previously unknown archaeological heritage within the Town Renewal Masterplan area should be subject to project specific Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) as per Development Management Standard (DMS) 17.15.5 of the KCDP 2017-2023 (DMS 15.16.3 of the KCDP 2023-2029) and Section 3.6.2 of ‘Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage’ (Government of Ireland 1999).

Furthermore, Castledermot town is located adjacent to the River Lerr. The River Lerr is one of the larger tributaries of the River Barrow, and flows south to meet the Barrow north of Carlow Town. The River Lerr is noted by the NPWS as follows: “Nitrates are high due to intensive tillage in South Kildare - recent data indicates that nitrate levels are levelling off. Biological data indicates borderline conditions. Overall quality is mediocre.” The River Lerr has been assigned a *Poor* ecological status based on monitoring, and it is *At Risk* of not achieving its WFD objectives (EPA, 2022)<sup>1</sup>. *River Barrow and River Nore SAC* is connected to the site via the River Lerr.

- The Proposed Masterplan envisions to maximise the potential of the River Lerr as an amenity area, seeing opportunity to create a cycling and walking route along the River Lerr from Doyles Bridge to John’s Bridge. The Proposed Masterplan states that the River Lerr is a valuable amenity resource in the town and should be protected and enhanced. Hence any projects designed to increase footfall along and use of the River Lerr must be assessed for their impact on water quality at detailed design stage.
- The Proposed Masterplan states that a 10m buffer zone will be established and adhered to between any key projects and the European site in order to protect its sensitivities.
- Such works to improve public access to the River Lerr potentially increases the anthropogenic pressures felt on the river from the baseline. However, it is unlikely that any increases in the intensity of use of this amenity arising from the Proposed Masterplan will be of sufficient scale to result in significant adverse impacts on the species and habitats of the river.
- The River Lerr has been assigned an ecological status of *Poor* by the WFD. As the Proposed Masterplan does not propose any specific works that could lead to emissions into the river, but rather puts forward a suite of recommended key projects to bring forward to further development stages, it is not anticipated that any environmental quality standards will be worsened as a result of the Proposed Masterplan itself.

*The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status*

The Site contains a small section of the River Lerr, within the catchment of the River Barrow, which is part of the *River Barrow and River Nore SAC*. Hence this SAC is partly located within the Proposed Masterplan boundary.

In the case of *River Barrow and River Nore SAC*, qualifying interests for this SAC include; [1029] Freshwater Pearl Mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*), [1092] White-clawed Crayfish

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.catchments.ie/data/#/waterbody/IE\\_EA\\_09L011700?\\_k=f134cz](https://www.catchments.ie/data/#/waterbody/IE_EA_09L011700?_k=f134cz) [Accessed: December 2022]

(*Austropotamobius pallipes*), [1095] Sea Lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*), [1096] Brook Lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*), [1099] River Lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*), [1103] Twaiter Shad (*Alosa fallax*), [1106] Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*), [1355] Otter (*Lutra lutra*), [1421] Killarney Fern (*Trichomanes speciosum*), [1990] Nore Freshwater Pearl Mussel (*Margaritifera durrovensis*), as well as Floating River Vegetation [3260].

It is considered that due to the nature of the Proposed Masterplan, i.e., the fact it does not put forward any detailed development proposals nor does it propose any direct works, the Proposed Masterplan is not anticipated to result in any emissions of pollutants, noise or dust into the SAC. However, one of the key projects identified proposes improved cycling and pedestrian access to the River Lerr for the public. Thus, a slight increase in human activity that could lead to disturbance of protected species, namely Otter, is likely as a result of the Proposed Masterplan. A survey to determine the presence of Otter in the River Lerr within the Town was carried out in respect of the AA Screening of the Proposed Masterplan and concluded that no significant impacts on Otter are likely as a result of the Proposed Masterplan.

Furthermore, any future individual developments within the Site of the Proposed Masterplan will be considered under the SEA, EIA and/or AA processes as appropriate and as required under the Development Standards set out in the KCDP 2023-2029.

## 4.2 Appropriate Assessment and relationship to Screening for SEA

The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) requires an AA to be carried out where a plan or project is *likely to have a significant impact* on a European site. European sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). The first step in the process is to establish whether AA is required for the particular plan or project. This first step is referred to as Screening for the requirement for AA and the purpose is to determine, on the basis of a preliminary assessment and objective criteria, whether a plan or project, alone and in combination with other plans or projects, could have significant effects on a European site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

As set out in Department Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/084 (15th February 2008), Screening for AA is of relevance to screening for SEA in that ***“where following screening, it is found that the draft plan or amendment may have an impact on the conservation status of a Natura 2000 site or that such an impact cannot be ruled out, adopting the precautionary approach:***

- *an AA of the Proposed Masterplan must be carried out, and*
- *in any case where a SEA would not otherwise be required, it must also be carried out.”*

Hence, where the Proposed Masterplan *requires AA* it shall *also require a SEA*.

### 4.2.1 Appropriate Assessment Screening Conclusion

The Proposed Masterplan was screened for the requirement of AA to determine the potential for significant effects on relevant European sites. The conclusion from the AA Screening Report accompanying this SEA Screening Report under separate cover is reproduced below:

*“The Proposed Town Renewal Masterplan for Castledermot, Co. Kildare, has been assessed taking into account:*

- *the nature, size and location of the proposed works and possible impacts arising from the construction works.*
- *the qualifying interests and conservation objectives of the European sites.*
- *the potential for in-combination effects arising from other plans and projects.*

*In conclusion, upon the examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information and applying the precautionary principle, it is concluded by the authors of this report that, on the basis of objective information; the possibility **may be excluded** that the Proposed Masterplan will have a significant effect on any European sites.*

*As such, no further assessment is required. In carrying out this AA screening, mitigation measures have not been taken into account. Standard best practice construction measures which could have the effect of mitigating any effects on any European Sites have similarly not been taken into account.”*

Thus, it is determined that Stage 2 AA is not required for the Proposed Masterplan.

## 5 CONSULTATION

### 5.1 Statutory Consultation

#### 5.1.1 Environmental Authorities

Unless it has been determined that SEA is mandatory for the Proposed Masterplan concerned, a formal ‘screening notice’ must be issued to the relevant environmental authorities (including the adjacent planning authorities), consulting them on whether they consider significant effects on the environment are likely to arise.

Under S.I. 435 of 2004, as amended, SEA may be required for all sectoral plans, including land-use plans (except for those specific land use plans covered by SI 436 of 2004, as amended).

The following environmental authorities have been notified of this SEA Screening for comments on the Proposed Masterplan:

- Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) – *Required for all cases.*
- Development Applications Unit (“DAU”), Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage – *Required where there might be significant effects on architectural or archaeological heritage or nature conservation.*
- Department of Environment, Climate and Communications – *Required where there might be significant effects on climate or inland fisheries.*
- Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine – *Required where there might be significant effects on sea fisheries or the marine environment.*

#### 5.1.2 Consultation Responses

The EPA responded to the Screening Notice on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January 2023. The EPA noted the Proposed Determination of the Proposed Masterplan and provided a number of guiding

comments, focusing their efforts on reviewing and commenting on key sector plans. While noting the nature of the Straffan TRMP, the EPA recommend that guidance document '*SEA of Local Authority Land Use Plans – EPA Recommendations and Resources*' should be taken into account in the finalisation of the Proposed Masterplan, and relevant recommendations be incorporated as appropriate to the Plan.

No changes to the Proposed Masterplan in response to the EPA's submission are anticipated that would require a renewed SEA Screening.

The DAU responded on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January 2023 noting particularly the Archaeological and Architectural Heritage within the village of Derrinturn. The submission has been summarised below:

- The DAU noted Appendix 1 and welcomed its details to the cultural and archaeological heritage of Castledermot, but asked to ensure the Appendix makes reference to both the RPS and RMP
- That 8 of the 9 key projects identified may have the potential to have significant archaeological implications (both positive and negative) and should be individually assessed and informed by a suitably qualified Archaeologist at the early stages of design.
- That the SEA process should take cognisance of national policy as set out in the publication 'Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage' (Government of Ireland 1999), and include provisions for AIA on any projects that may have positive or negative impacts on archaeological heritage (recorded and previously unknown).

The following updates to the SEA Screening Report were made as a result of the DAUs comments:

- Appendix 1 updated to include reference to RMP
- Screening Criteria Table 1 was updated to clarify the following:
  - Although the Proposed Masterplan identifies key projects, these do not constitute final or advanced design stages, nor do they put forward any works at this stage.
  - Any future development within the Proposed Masterplan area will be subject to the DMS of the KCDP 2023-2029, which will ensure that both archaeological and cultural heritage is protected.

Thus, due to the high-level vision that the Proposed Masterplan provides for Castledermot, the lack of detailed development proposals within the Proposed Masterplan, and the existing policies in the new KCDP 2023-2029 to protect cultural and built heritage, it is deemed that the concerns expressed by the DAU are covered higher in the planning hierarchy and will therefore be addressed appropriately at detailed design stages for any key projects identified within the Proposed Masterplan.

## 6 SCREENING DETERMINATION

The Proposed Masterplan for Castledermot Town Renewal Masterplan, Co. Kildare, is a non-statutory development framework which translates and implements the statutory policies and objectives of the relevant national and regional development plans and frameworks.

Considering the objectives, scale, and nature of the Proposed Masterplan, and with due regard to the screening criteria as set out in Schedule 1, it is at this stage determined that the Proposed Masterplan **does not require an SEA**.

The principal reasons the Proposed Masterplan does not require an SEA are as follows:

- The Proposed Masterplan does not provide a framework for plans/projects listed on Annex I or Annex II of the EIA Directive.
- All individual planning applications made with consideration of the Proposed Masterplan framework are subject to the appropriate environmental assessments (i.e., AA, SEA, EIA, AIA) where required under the KCDP 2023-2029.
- The Proposed Masterplan does not require Stage 2 AA (see AA Screening Report accompanying this report under separate cover).



## References

DHLGH (2022). Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidelines for Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities. Prepared by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, March 2022.

EPA (2021). '*Good Practice Guidance on SEA Screening*', prepared by RPS Consultants, with input from A&L Goodbody, on behalf of the EPA. Published December 2021

Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023: Volume 1

Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023: Volume 2

Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023: Strategic Environmental Assessment

Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework

Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework: SEA Statement

East and Midlands Regional Assembly, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031

EMRA RSES 2019-2031: SEA Statement

Horner, A., 2017. Retrieving The Landscapes of Eighteenth-Century County Kildare: The 1755–60 Estate Maps of John Rocque. *Archaeology Ireland*, 31(2), pp.19-23.

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Mooney, C., (1955). Franciscan Architecture in Pre-Reformation Ireland (Part I). *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 85(2), pp.133-173.

## APPENDIX 1: ARCHAEOLOGICAL & CULTURAL HERITAGE

### Kildare County Development Plan Objectives: Archaeology & Built Heritage

The Kildare County Development Plan (CDP) 2017-2023 outlines several policies and objectives relating to archaeology and built heritage, those of relevance being listed in Table 2. The principal aim of Chapter 12 of the development plan is to:

*‘To protect, conserve and manage the archaeological and architectural heritage of the county and to encourage sensitive sustainable development so as to ensure its survival and maintenance for future generations.’*

This aim follows the oft applied Burra Charter on conservation and heritage management, published by ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) in 1999, updated 2013, which provides a model for the conservation and management of places of cultural significance. A fundamental principle of the Burra Charter is that places of cultural significance should be conserved for the benefit of both present and future generations – a theme consistent with that of environmental conservation. It defines conservation as *all of the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance*.

The Kildare CDP states that the county has a wealth of structures of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social, or technical interest. Such features are contained in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP).

Table 2 Kildare County Development Plan (2017 - 2023) Policies & Objectives Relating To Archaeology & Built Heritage

Kildare CDP Policy	Policy Objectives
Protected Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– PSO 1 Review and amend on an ongoing basis the Record of Protected Structures and make additions, deletions, and corrections as appropriate over the period of this Plan.</li> <li>– PSO 2 Prepare a Buildings at Risk Register to prevent the endangerment of Protected Structures, historic or vernacular buildings.</li> <li>– PSO 6 Ensure that in the event of a planning application being granted for development within the curtilage of a protected structure, the proposed works to the protected structure should occur in the first phase of the development to prevent endangerment, abandonment, and dereliction of the structure.</li> <li>– PSO 8 Carry out an audit and assess the condition of all protected structures within the Council’s ownership and devise a management plan for these structures</li> </ul>
Vernacular Architecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Vernacular architecture is generally classified as the homes and workplaces of the general population built by local people using local materials. This is in contrast to formal architecture, such as the grand</li> </ul>

	<p>estate houses of the gentry, churches and public buildings, which were often designed by architects or engineers. The majority of vernacular buildings are domestic dwellings. Examples of other structures that may fall into this category include shops, outbuildings, mills, limekilns, farmsteads, forges, gates and gate piers. Policies in relation to vernacular architecture include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- VA 1 Encourage the protection, retention, appreciation, and appropriate revitalization of the vernacular heritage of the county.</li> <li>- VA 2 Resist the demolition of vernacular architecture, in particular thatched cottages and farmhouses and to encourage their sensitive reuse having regard to the intrinsic character of the structure.</li> <li>- VA 4 Preserve the character and setting (e.g. gates, gate piers, courtyards etc.) of vernacular buildings where deemed appropriate by the planning authority.</li> </ul>
<p>Archaeological Heritage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Archaeological heritage includes structures, groups of buildings, developed sites, all recorded monuments as well as their contexts, and moveable objects. There is an abundant and diverse archaeological heritage within the county, monuments and artefacts that represent all periods. Development Plan policies relating to archaeological heritage include:</li> <li>- AH 1 Manage development in a manner that protects and conserves the archaeological heritage of the county, avoids adverse impacts on sites, monuments, features, or objects of significant historical or archaeological interest and secures the preservation in-situ or by record of all sites and features of historical and archaeological interest. The Council will favour preservation in – situ in accordance with the recommendation of the Framework and Principals for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage (1999) or any superseding national policy.</li> <li>- AH 2 Have regard to the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), the Urban Archaeological Survey and archaeological sites identified subsequent to the publication of the RMP when assessing planning applications for development. No development shall be permitted in the vicinity of a recorded feature, where it detracts from the setting of the feature, or which is injurious to its cultural or educational value.</li> <li>- AH 3 Secure the preservation (in-situ or by record) of all sites, monuments, and features of significant historical or archaeological interest, included in the Record of Monuments and Places and their settings, in accordance with the recommendations of the Framework and Principles for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage, DAHG (1999), or any superseding national policy document.</li> <li>- AH 4 Ensure that development in the vicinity of a site of archaeological interest is not detrimental to the character of the archaeological site or</li> </ul>

	<p>its setting by reason of its location, scale, bulk or detailing and to ensure that such proposed developments are subject to an archaeological assessment. Such an assessment will seek to ensure that the development can be sited and designed in such a way as to avoid impacting on archaeological heritage that is of significant interest including previously unknown sites, features, and objects.</p>
<p>World Heritage</p>	<p>– The CDP outlines the State’s commitment to the identification, protection, conservation, presentation, and transmission of its World Heritage Sites to future generations in accordance with Article 4 of the World Heritage Convention.</p>

### Castledermot Town: Archaeology

Within the boundary of the Proposed Masterplan, numerous archaeological and cultural heritage features are identified, including ecclesiastical buildings, rare and folk gravestones, vernacular architecture, and sites of archaeological excavation. Further significant sites, such as holy wells, barrows and raths (likely Neolithic) are found within a 1km radius of the Proposed Masterplan Site (Figure 5).

As one of Ireland’s ‘Walled Towns’, Castledermot is a place of important cultural significance. The Heritage Council established the Irish Walled Towns Network (IWTN) in April 2005 to unite and coordinate the strategic efforts of Local Authorities involved in the management and conservation of historic walled towns in Ireland. It is formally linked to the European Walled Towns for Friendship and Professional Co-Operation (formerly the Walled Town Friendship Circle) which is the international association for the sustainable development of walled towns, walled cities and fortified historic towns.

The walled town of Castledermot covers an area of fifteen hectares, which makes it larger than many comparable Irish walled towns of similar date and importance. Archaeological excavations have revealed a wealth of medieval and post-medieval material in recent years and indicate areas of archaeological potential within the town of Castledermot. The medieval street pattern has largely been retained, and its distinctive lozenge-shaped plan form remains legible from above through isolated fragments of the original and later boundary walls. There are only four main stretches of wall visible above ground, other sections may be buried underground, or have been partially rebuilt along subsequent property boundaries. Eachtra Archaeology have published an extensive report on the findings<sup>2</sup> from excavations associated with a proposed sewerage system, commissioned by Kildare County Council, which revealed significant Medieval and post-Medieval stratigraphy and insights into the life, diet, economy, and society of Ireland’s Walled Towns.

<sup>2</sup> <http://eachtra.ie/index.php/journal/04e0750-castledermot-town-co-kildare/>

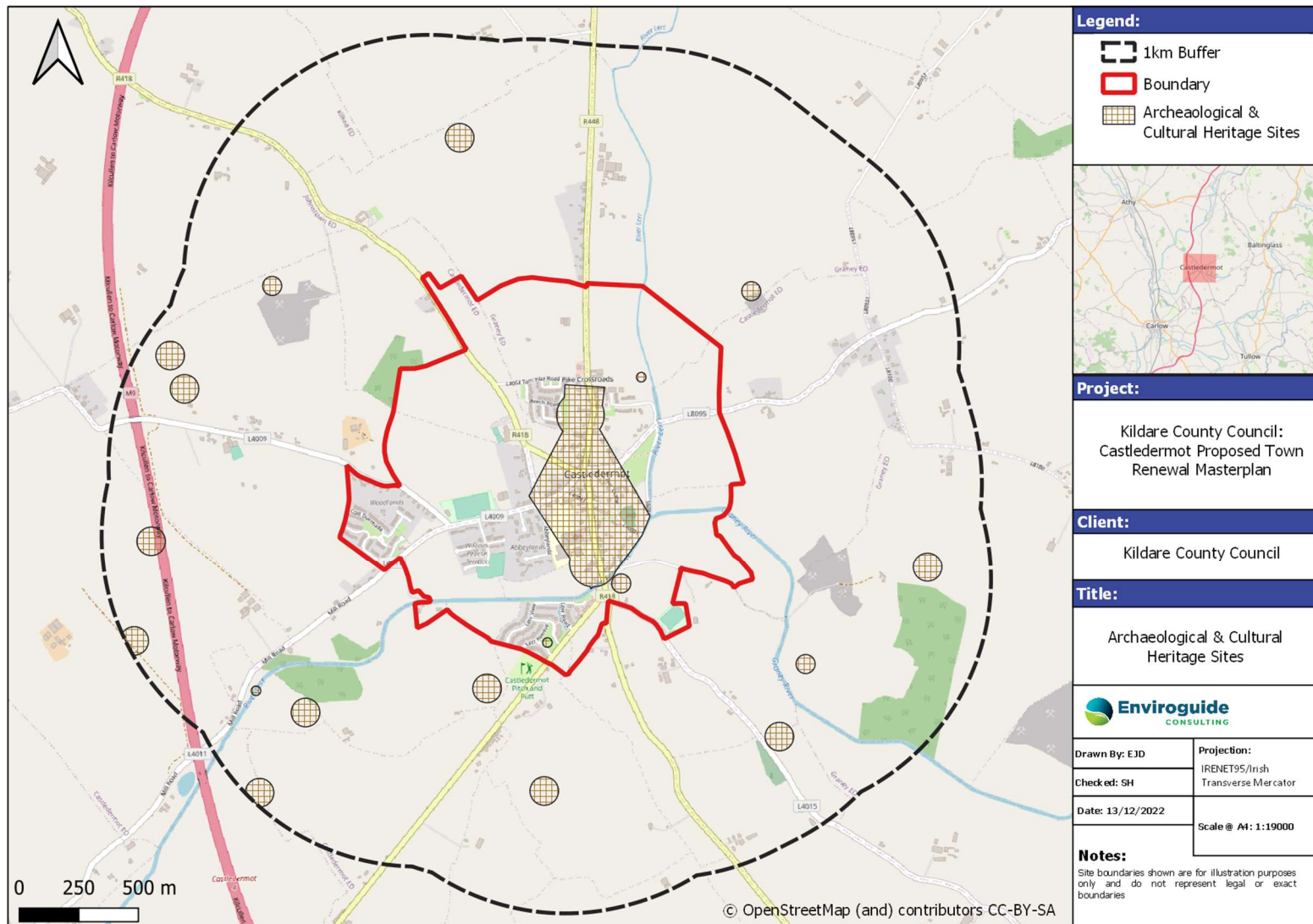


Figure 5 SITES OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL & CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE WITHIN 1KM OF CASTLEDERMOT

Any future Proposed Developments, as part of the Proposed Masterplan, must consider archaeological and cultural impact at all phases (pre-construction, construction, and operational phases) to prevent accidental damage to the archaeological and heritage landscape, including any potential sub-surface archaeological finds or features.