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Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report

FOR

PROPOSED

TOWN RENEWAL MASTERPLAN

FOR


Kildare Town


Co. Kildare

ON BEHALF OF

Kildare County Council

Prepared by
Enviroguide Consulting

 *Dublin*
3D Core C, Block 71, The Plaza,
Park West, Dublin 12

 *Kerry*
19 Henry Street
Kenmare, Co. Kerry

 *Wexford*
M10 Wexford Enterprise
Centre, Strandfield Business
Park, Rosslare Road, Wexford

 www.enviroguide.ie
 info@enviroguide.ie
 +353 1 565 4730



Enviroguide
CONSULTING

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1 INTRODUCTION

This Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report has been prepared by Enviroguide Consulting (on behalf of Kildare County Council) for the Proposed Town Renewal Masterplan (TRMP) for Kildare Town, Co. Kildare, hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Masterplan' in this document. The 'Site' refers to the area defined within the Proposed Masterplan, i.e., Kildare Town. 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 Kildare. 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.

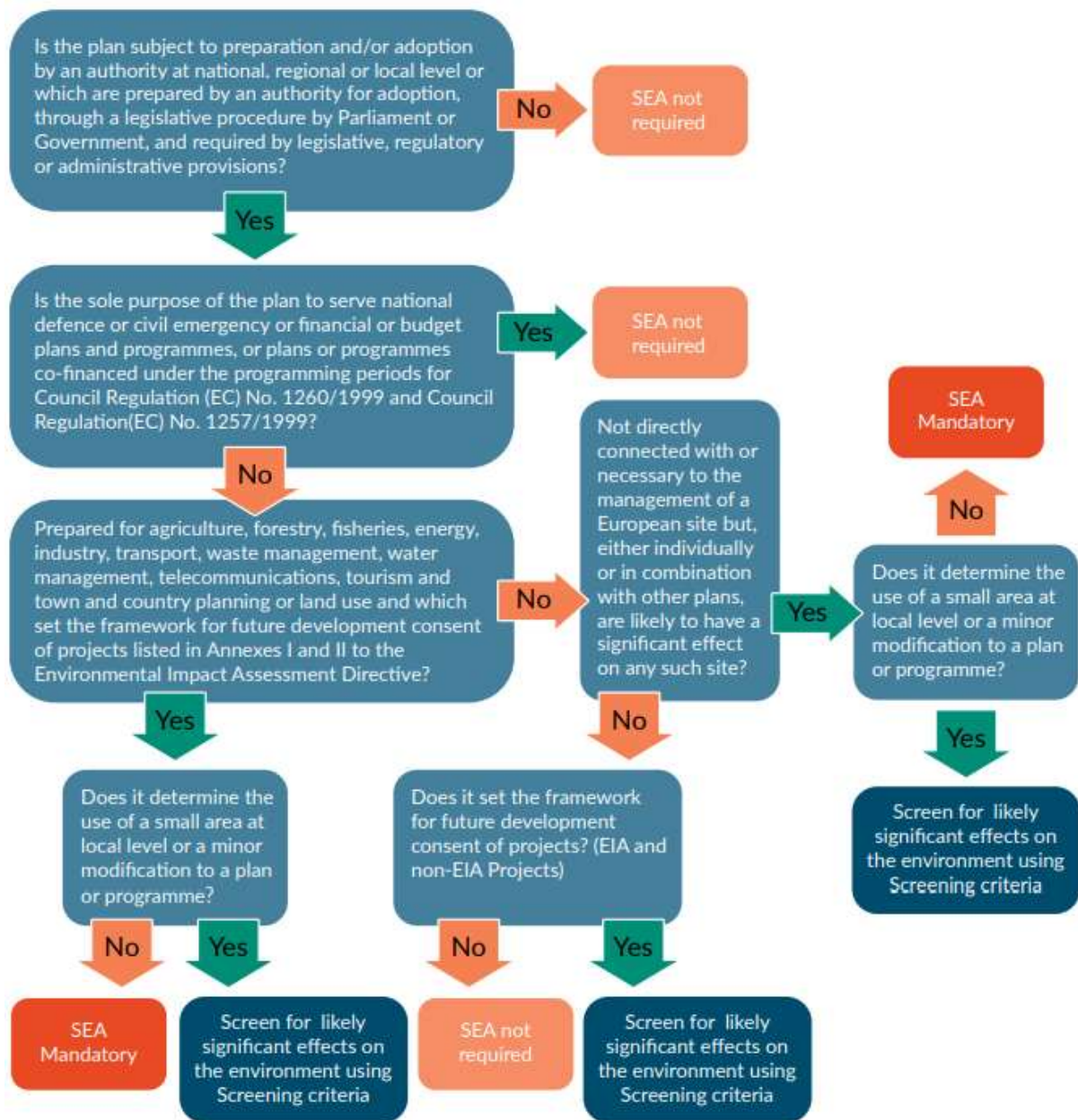


FIGURE 1. DECISION-TREE SETTING OUT REQUIREMENTS FOR SEA UNDER S.I. 435 OF 2004, AS AMENDED (SOURCE: DHLGH, 2022).

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, 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.

Similarly to the NPF, the RSES include Regional Strategic Objectives (RSO). Of particular relevance to town renewal plans for Kildare Town are:

- RSO 2 – Compact Growth and Urban Regeneration which promotes the regeneration of towns by making better use of under-used lands.
- RSO 5 – Creative Places which seeks to enhance and integrate arts, culture and heritage assets to promote creative places and heritage led regeneration.
- RSO 10 – Green Infrastructure.
- RSO 12 – A Strong Economy Supported by Enterprise and Innovation which encourages to build a resilient economic base, while promoting innovation, entrepreneurship and smart specialisation.

The draft RSES uses an asset/potential based criteria approach to the growth strategy for the Eastern Midland Region. For places to reach their potential, a series of criteria was devised so that growth is cognisant of: scale, function, human capital, placemaking, ecosystem enterprise, connectivity, natural capital and infrastructure. 'Placemaking' promotes high quality and vibrant public spaces for enhanced quality of life, focused on access to amenities, facilities arts, culture and heritage as key determinant of placemaking policy. The settlement hierarchy for the Region is broadly split into three distinct areas, Kildare town forming part of the Hinterland.

2.2.2 Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023

The Kildare County Development Plan (KCDP) 2017-2023 includes a comprehensive Settlement Hierarchy, in which Kildare Town is characterised as a 'Moderate Sustainable Growth Town' in the Hinterland Area. Kildare Town is a Secondary Economic Growth town which supports and complements regional growth. Its sectoral strengths include high value-added manufacturing sectors, logistics and internationally traded sectors. The plan recognises that Kildare Town has the opportunity to strengthen its economic base through capitalising as an important tourism destination.

The KCDP includes objectives seeking to stimulate regeneration of its town centres, in particular objective EO 20 which will identify and implement flagship projects for urban renewal. The objective of the renewal projects is to strengthen the economic and social fabric with a view to increase the capacity of towns and villages *'to support the economic and social wellbeing of their rural hinterland'*. As a result, the use of derelict, vacant residential and regeneration sites will be key in towns which are subject of a Local Area Plan (EO 21) and where lands are appropriately zoned. Finally, the Council seeks to utilise the Shop Front / Town Centre Improvement Grant Scheme to assist independent business owners to improve the appearance of the high street (EO 24). An improvement programme of façades and streetscapes is also considered (EO 25).

Tourism forms an integral part of the KCDP 2017-2023 which considers its role in terms of job creation. The upkeep of a clean and attractive environment is essential in achieving sustainable outcomes in the county tourism industry (ECD 30). The expansion and upgrade of existing tourism facilities and infrastructure such as accommodation, restaurants etc. (ECD 33). Importantly, equine and bloodstock industries are important component of the local tourism industry (ECD 42). Facilitation of the development of tourism infrastructure such as accommodation, restaurants, car and coach parking and toilet facilities in the designated hubs throughout the county.

The Plan essentially seeks to influence the way people travel in the county to steer them toward more sustainable modes (MT 3), in particular, within the major towns which continue

to be dominated by private car use (MT 4). Reducing walking and cycling distances through Local Permeability Improvements will be essential to increase the catchment of public transport services (PT 8). To promote cycling and walking, the Council seeks to promote 'safe and convenient routes' in a 'safe street environment' (WC 1 / WC 2). Improved connectivity will be key to maximise access to town centres (WC 3). To stimulate the change from private car use to cycling, the Council requires 'the provision of secure cycle parking facilities in town, at public service destinations' (WC 8) and that notes Cycle Network Studies in the major towns of Kildare should be carried out (WC 01).

A number of policies contained in the plan regard the protection and enhancement of the architectural and archaeological heritage throughout Kildare County. The plan also promotes the appropriate re-use of buildings of architectural, cultural, historic and aesthetic merit (PS 11) and will encourage uses that are compatible.

Issues pertaining to conservation and protection of architectural heritage are particularly significant in Kildare Town due to its status as a former Walled Town, and an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) applies to the town.

The protection and enhancement of natural heritage form part of the CDP. Basic habitat assessments are to be carried out to ensure the protection of biodiversity (NH 2). It is an objective of the Council to designate Local Biodiversity Areas (NHO 1) and to identify, conserve and provide guidance on development in important local biodiversity sites (NHO 4). One large Natural Heritage Area (NHA) is proposed at the Curragh (Site Code 000392), one at Pollardstown Fen (Site Code: 000396) and one at Mouds Bog (Site Code: 000395). Pollardstown Fen and Mouds Bog are also a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (Respective Site Codes: 000396 and 002331).

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 Kildare County Development Plan (KCDP) 2023-2029 also includes a comprehensive Settlement Hierarchy, in which Kildare Town is characterised as a 'Self-sustaining Growth Town'. Together with Newbridge, Leixlip, and Athy, Kildare Town will continue to attract a moderate level of jobs and services through a range of employment types including biotechnology, ICT, high-tech manufacturing and research, bloodstock, tourism and food and beverage products.

As identified in the previous plan, tourism plays a key role in job creation within the county, and a number of attractions are located within the cluster around Kildare Town. The Plan also acknowledges that the environmental sustainability will be central in the development of a viable tourism sector. This is a key consideration in a county where many tourism attractions are located in environmentally sensitive areas and close to historic areas where the quality of the built heritage and environment must be protected from inappropriate development – whether tourism related or not. It is also noted that an ACA still applies to Kildare Town.

The KCDP 2023-2029 contains several policies and objectives that are aimed at protecting both built and natural heritage.

Additionally, the SEA process for KCDP 2023-2029 identified specific aims, policies and objectives within the plan to mitigate any potentially negative effects on the environment that could result from the implementation of the plan.

2.2.4 Kildare Town Local Area Plan 2012-2018

The overall aim of the Local Area Plan (LAP) is ‘To build on Kildare town’s strengths and to provide a focused approach to planning for future growth in a coherent sustainable, spatial fashion. The Plan aims to achieve a more consolidated urban form that facilitates a sustainable economic base and creates sustainable and integrated communities while balancing future development with the conservation and enhancement of the town’s natural and built environment.’

The LAP recognises that the town’s expansion has been limited in comparison to other settlements in Kildare County and faces a number of challenges such as retaining its physical identity for the town by establishing a clear built edge, avoiding sprawl into the surrounding countryside and protecting the Curragh plains. The plan also notes that the Magee Barracks and the lands between the town and the Kildare Village Outlet Centre require a clear vision. The designation of the town as a Heritage Town clearly highlights the town’s unique character.

It sets out the development strategy as follows:

- Regenerating Magee Barracks with a potential for the development of a mix of employment, educational, community and residential uses.
- Enhancing the Historic Town Centre, so that the town can realise its full potential as a heritage town and major tourism destination.
- Planning for Town Centre expansion with a view to create a new vibrant urban area connecting the outlet centre to the town and centred around a well-designed public realm.
- Enhanced linkages to Kildare’s National Tourism Hub, connecting the attractions available in and around the town to make Kildare Town a national tourism destination.
- Development of high density employment areas in three potential sites.
- Phasing of lands.
- Transportation infrastructure and development of linkages to provide for the integration of strategic objectives into an overall urban structure of connected vehicular, cycle and pedestrian routes, organised along key routes around the town. This structure includes inter alia:
 - A new street connection between the Dublin Road, the Tully Road and Grey Abbey Road
 - New streets between the Village Outlet and the Monasterevin Road and St Brigid’s Square
 - An avenue at Magee Barracks connecting the Dublin Road and Mellita Road
 - Connections between Mellita Road, Ruanbeg, Coolaghknock and Magee Barracks
- The creation of a new gateway entrance to the town to provide for character and identity.

Note that the new LAP (Kildare Town Local Area Plan 2019-2025 Issues Paper) is currently being reviewed.

3 PROPOSED MASTERPLAN DESCRIPTION

3.1 Kildare Town – Location & Description

Kildare Town, situated in the centre of the county of Kildare in Ireland's eastern Midlands (Figure 3), was founded in the 5th Century. The Curragh plains are located to the east of the town with pastoral landscapes to the north, south and west and bogland further south. It is situated on a ridge higher than the surrounding lowlands. Over the past 20 years Kildare Town has experienced limited expansion in comparison with other settlements in the county. The majority has been suburban to the North and east of the historic town centre reflecting the role of Kildare Town as dormitory settlement arising from improved rail and road links to Dublin city.

Today the town has a population of 9,874 (2016 census) and has a growth rate of 6% with an average age of 34.2 years old. Kildare Town is accessed by the M7 which is a direct national route to Dublin. Furthermore, it is located on mainline rail and has rapid access to all major seaports and airports. The town is located nearby to other large urban centres in Kildare County, Newbridge is 9km distant and the county town, Naas, is 20km distant. Within its immediate context, the town is situated within easy reach of a variety of amenities.

The most notable of these include the Curragh horse racing venue, which is the centre of horse racing in Ireland and is currently undergoing a large-scale redevelopment. Also nearby are the Japanese gardens and the Irish National Stud farm, an established successful tourist attraction.

Kildare Town is also a former historical Walled Town, and an ACA applies within the majority of the Proposed Masterplan area. Several protected structures are located within the Proposed Masterplan area (Figure 2).

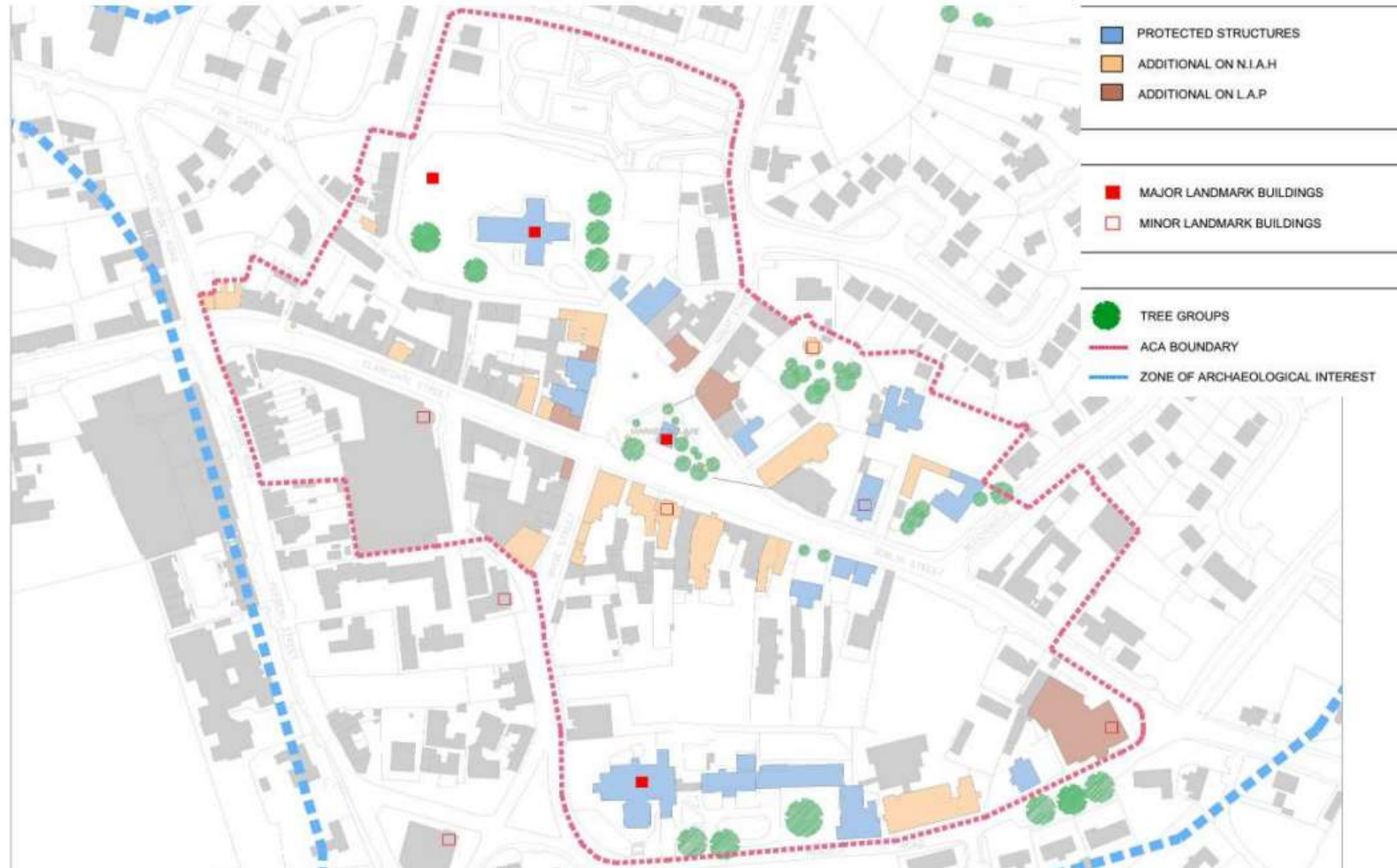


FIGURE 2. KILDARE'S PROTECTED STRUCTURES, NIAH STRUCTURES AND PROPOSED PROTECTED STRUCTURES. IMAGE EXTRACTED FROM KILDARE TOWN ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION AREA STATEMENT OF CHARACTER.

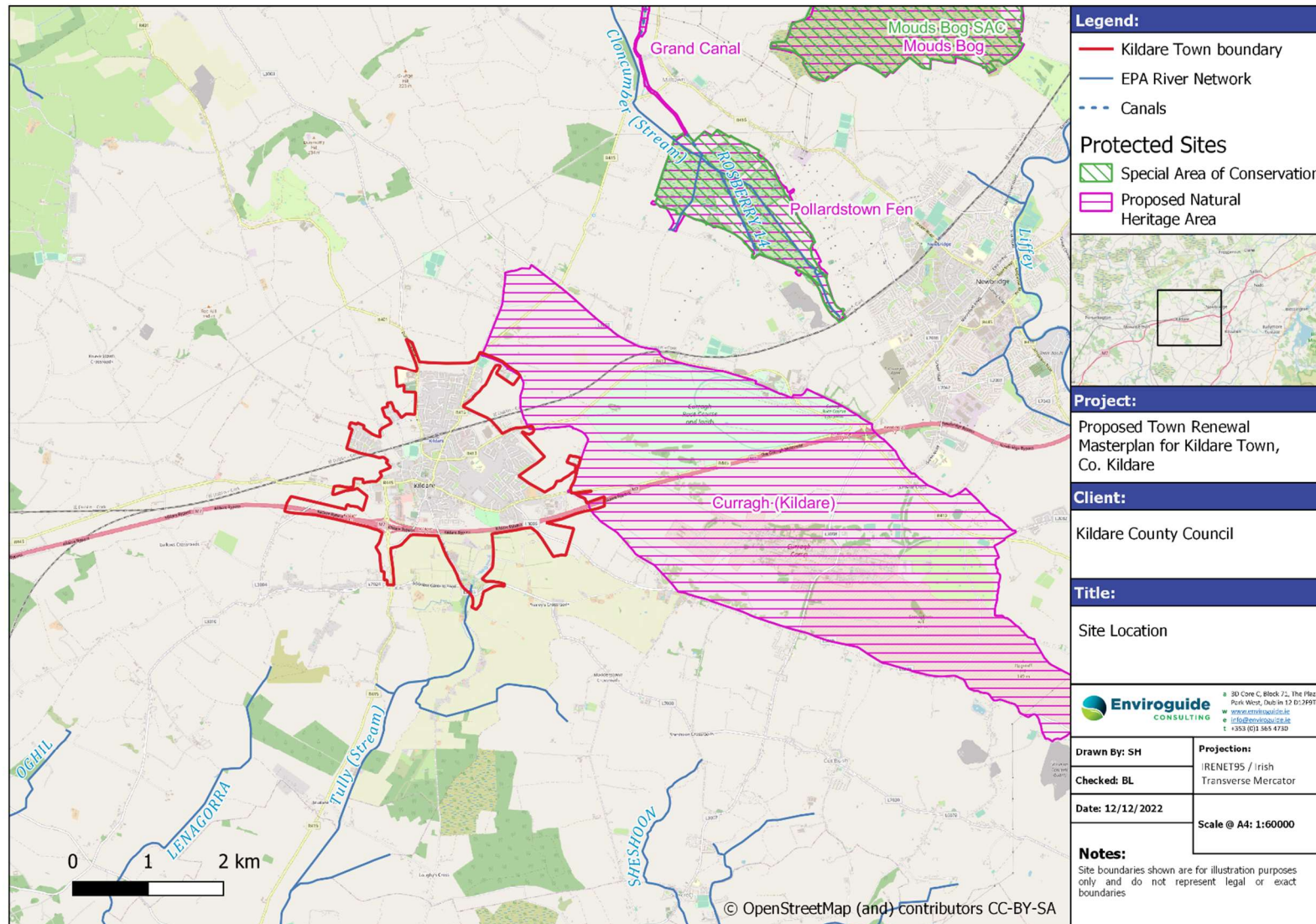


FIGURE 3. SITE LOCATION.

3.2 Kildare Town Renewal Masterplan

3.2.1 Background

Under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme launched in 2016, Kildare County Council's in-house team was successful in securing funding from the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. As part of the implementation process of this project, KCC are required to complete the following steps:

- **Step 1:** Conduct a town 'Health Check' to assess the vitality and viability of the town centre;
- **Step 2:** Establish a Town Renewal Masterplan Committee with the involvement of the Local Authority, Local Business representatives, residents and the wider community;
- **Step 3:** Prepare a Town Renewal Masterplan on the basis of the results of the Health Check, setting out in detail the measures to be taken to support the renewal and revitalization of the town; and
- **Step 4:** Implement the Town Renewal Masterplan.

The TRMP includes a masterplan and an implementation strategy for the town with several projects designed and ready to be developed to Part 8 approval stage. Identification of key 'delivery projects' in the town were informed by the 'Health Check' and 'Urban Design Analysis' as well as an extensive consultation process ranging from public events through to discussions / workshops with the Town Committee and in-house KCC project team. These delivery projects are described in the Proposed Masterplan document

During the Urban Design Analysis and Public Consultation process the study area focused on the wider Kildare Town, not just the town centre itself. This study area has been continued into the development of delivery projects whereby sites and areas have been identified across the town for further consideration. The projects are aligned with the Council's vision, and work with Kildare's current planning policy. These also respond to public consultation held upon the completion of the Urban Design Analysis.

The Delivery Plan identifies discrete projects that are realistic and achievable that will change perceptions and create confidence. Some projects relate to major transformative sites that already have a clear trajectory but provide additional focus with the aim of accelerating delivery, while others suggest the development of supporting development briefs or strategy to enable investment and development.

Others suggest direct intervention by the council, or by public/private partnership vehicles. There are also a range of 'early wins' and catalytic temporary projects to help ignite interest and change perceptions which could establish discussion for further enhancement as part of a longer term strategy.

This report is prepared as part of Step 3, prior to implementation of the Proposed Masterplan. The implementation step will involve bringing the identified delivery projects forward to design and planning stages for Part 8 applications. Each of these applications will be subject to the appropriate environmental assessments, including the AA process.

3.2.2 Delivery Projects

It is recognised that the delivery of comprehensive projects such as those detailed within the Proposed Masterplan is reliant upon the availability of funding which is likely to be limited or spread over time. Nonetheless, the strategies contained within the Proposed Masterplan document could be used as the basis for further funding bids such as the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF).

The following sections describe the delivery projects included in the Proposed Masterplan (Figure 4). A Project Delivery Plan has also been provided in the Proposed Masterplan, showing phasing, comments about inter-relationships between the delivery projects, and importance to town growth (Figure 5).

3.2.2.1 Market Square and Environs

a) Market Square Public Realm Improvements

Improvements to the Market Square to create a pedestrian friendly experience, celebrating the heritage both in and around the square as part of a renewed more usable town square with a rebalancing of pedestrian and car movement. This will enhance the capacity for usage of the town square, improving its cultural offer and creating a significant improvement for town centre living. This acts as a trigger for further projects in and around the square which build on and are informed by this proposal.

b) Nugent Street Car Park Upgrade

Public realm improvements in Nugent Street car park aim to improve navigability to Market Square and increase perception of safety through improved lighting signage and landscaping. A minor lane connects the public car park to the north of the Market Square which also interconnects to Nugent Street. Activation of this route for more frequent usage form an important development as part of this area's renewal.

c) Old Burgage Plots Development

A proposal for the public realm that seeks to utilise the backlands site of the former burgage plots. The initial public realm proposal leverages the loss of parking from Market Square while creating a new landscaped pedestrian route from Bride Street to Market Square. In the longer term, the site could be developed for cultural/commercial uses which reinterpret the original burgage plots.

d) Streetscape Regeneration

A strategy that investigates the potentials for shopfronts to be reconsidered to meet and adapt to the regulations of an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) including Market Square, Nugent Street, Claregate Street and Shraud Street.

3.2.2.2 Cycle & Pedestrian Network Study

Despite the fact that Kildare Town is a walkable town it currently offers a poor pedestrian experience and little or no cycling infrastructure. There are no cycle lanes in place despite the vision of the Government's National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020, which formed part of their policy document '2009- 2020 Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future'.

In order to direct and prioritise investment in cycle infrastructure, it will be deemed necessary to develop a Cycle Network Study, to be undertaken by KCC. The Kildare Cycle Network Study will be prepared in accordance with Steps 1 – 5 of the National Cycle Manual's Seven Steps to Planning a Cycle Network, which are shown in bold below:

Step 1: Inventory of Existing Cycling Regime

Step 2: Understanding Trip Demand and the Potential for Cycling Trips

Step 3: Trip Assignment to the Network

Step 4: Trip Forecast

Step 5: Urban and Transport Planning

Step 6: Prioritising Improvements

Step 7: Programme, Consultation, Budgets

The provision of a bike hire scheme to connect Kildare Town Train station - Market Square - Cherry Avenue (when completed) and to historic sites should be investigated as part of this study.

3.2.2.3 Public Realm Enhancements

a) Kildare Town Gateways

A public realm proposal which seeks to signify and recognise the old town gateways through a series of signifiers and moments integrated within the streetscape which recognise an important piece of Kildare Towns history and development. Areas included cover Bride Street, Claregate Street, Fire Castle Lane, Nugent Street, Dublin Street and Silken Thomas Accommodation.

b) Kildare Town Laneways Strategy

A public realm proposal which seeks to signify and recognise the old town gateways through a series of signifiers and moments integrated within the streetscape which recognise an important piece of Kildare Towns history and development. Areas included cover Chapel Hill, Fire Castle Lane, Bang-up Lane, Market Square - Nugent St Passage, Market Square - Water Tower Lane, Malones Lane and Heffernans Lane.

A common design strategy in tandem with the overall enhancement of the ACA would create an overall coherence to the legibility of the ACA.

c) CMWS Hall Entry

A project seeking to signify the entry into Kildare through a public art commission on the face of the Catholic Men and Women's Society (CMWS) hall. This face is the current first sight for visitors from KVOC/National Stud/Japanese Gardens and St Brigids Well.

d) Kildare Town Wayfinding

A town wayfinding project to create a common strategy for branding and public art to identify routes and locations of significant town offerings while being integrated into public realm rather than creating town clutter.

3.2.2.4 Kildare Town Train Station

e) Iarnoid Eireann Vacant Site Development

A public realm strategy to investigate the potential to open up the site as parking and enable an access to the train station from the North of the tracks from the (West Dunmurray) Road and east (Rathbride Road). This could be of particular benefit with the proposed future development of the South Green Area.

The site also has future development opportunities being located at an important location in close proximity to the train station. Potential investment and tenancy could be sought after initial improvements.

f) Train Station Forecourt & Fairgreen Road Improvements

A public realm improvements strategy to enhance the train station forecourt with a formalised parking strategy and animation of the edge condition between the Fair Green Road and station grounds.

3.2.2.5 Kildare Village link and Schools Consolidation

The area is currently occupied by a single storey dwelling and garages. The site is in close proximity to Kildare Village Outlet (KVO) to the West and is a 2-minute walk from Kildare Market Square. To the east the site benefits from frontage to what was historically the towns Fairgreen, an area with a lot of vehicular access and in which now stands the community centre but has the potential to be regenerated. On the opposite side of the old Fairgreen is St. Brigids Parish Church and carpark occupying what is known as St. Brigids Square.

A pedestrian link from the Church to the KVO would improve the flow of pedestrian footfall to the area together with the old Fairgreen site these areas could greatly benefit from being regenerated as part of the improved link between KVO and the town centre.

The North perimeter of the site is bound by St. Brigids Primary school and playing yards which currently run along the west boundary of the site to which the pedestrian link is proposed. The southern boundary is shared with another single dormer dwelling with garage.

3.2.2.6 Old Town Courthouse & Water Tower Site Improvements

a) Old Town Courthouse Renovation

Renovation and restoration of the old courthouse as a community building to enhance a building of significant identity and heritage value. This study will propose potential uses and tenants for the building while also proposing improvement to its surrounding lands increasing the prominence of a significant town block.

b) Water Tower Site Improvements

The free-standing cast-concrete water tower was constructed in the latter half of the 20th Century within the bawn of Kildare Castle. The tower has a polygonal plan and reflects the challenges which have historically faced Kildare Town in terms of providing a water supply. It is of technical and engineering interest and adds to the streetscape of Nugent Street.

The site can offer a point of interest, at height, along the laneways linking Market Square to St. Brigids Cathedral. The water tower could be up-lit as a memory of Kildare's industrial heritage. There is potential for the base to be converted for interpretive use to support the tourist office and overlook a new public space and cathedral beyond.



FIGURE 4. PROPOSED DELIVERY PROJECTS FOR KILDARE TOWN (SOURCE: KILDARE TRMP (METROPOLITAN WORKSHOP, 2022))

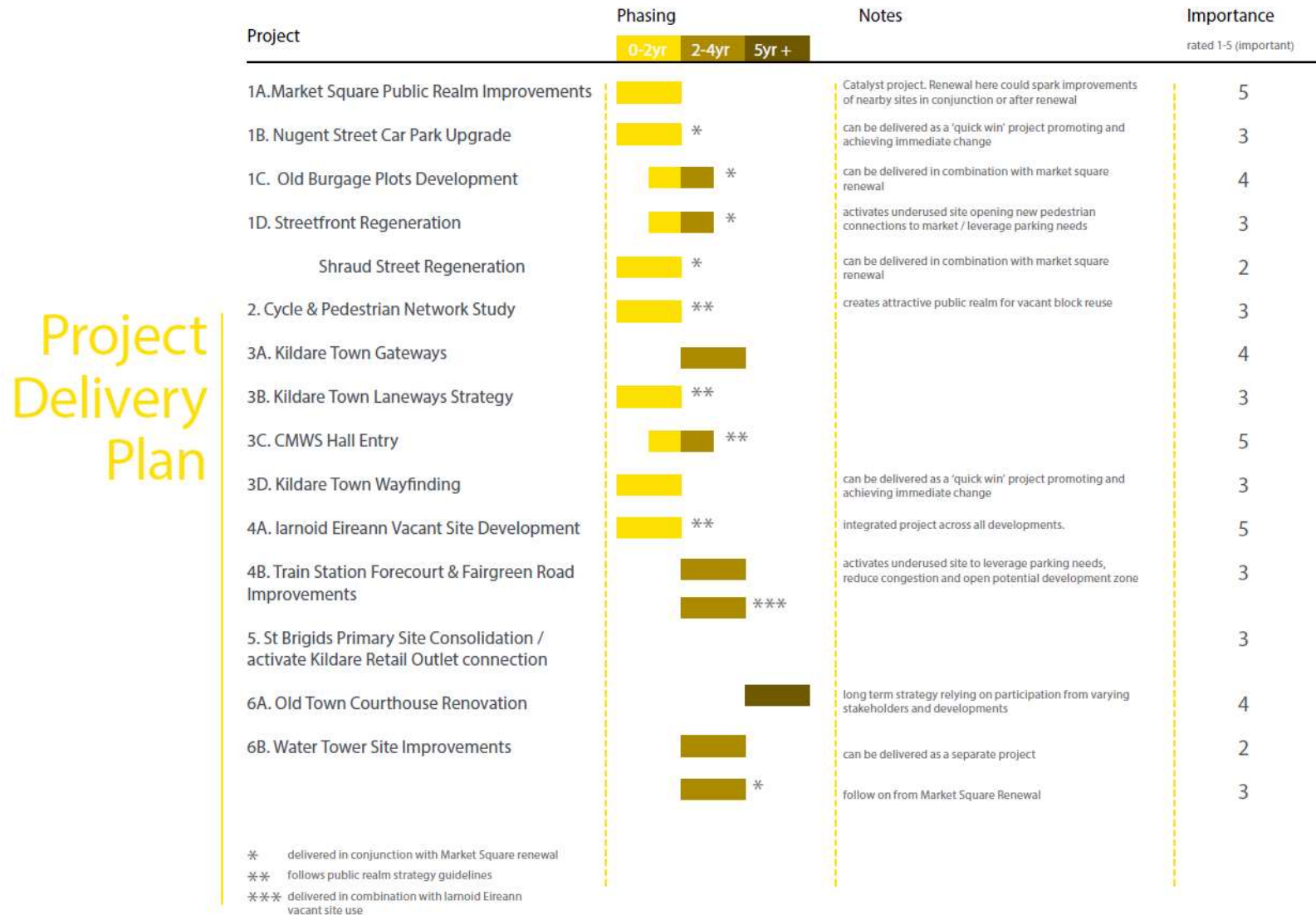


FIGURE 5. PROJECT DELIVERY PLAN FOR DELIVERY PROJECTS INCLUDED IN THE PROPOSED MASTERPLAN (SOURCE: KILDARE TRMP (METROPOLITAN WORKSHOP, 2022))

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 Kildare Town 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 land use zoning objectives and activities for lands in Kildare Town are set out in the Kildare Local Area Plan 2012-2018 and the KCDP 2023-2029. The preparation of the Proposed Masterplan aligns with the objectives set out in these documents, particularly with LAP strategy for regeneration of Kildare Town. The focus is on enhancing both pedestrian and cycling links within the town to connect hubs of activity, such as the Market Square and the KVO area, while also proposing rejuvenating projects for areas currently underutilised such as the Old Burgage Plots. The LAP was subject to an SEA, and the AA Screening of the LAP found no indication of potential significant effects on any European sites as a result of the plan, and thus Stage II AA was not required.

The KCDP 2023-2029 sets out the proposed vision and objectives for the development of the county over a six-year period. The Development Plan aims to plan for and support the sustainable long-term development of Kildare County and provide for the creation of sustainable and integrated communities. All planning proposals are assessed against the objectives of the Development Plan and all lower plans must be consistent with the County Development Plan.

The Core Strategy which defines the settlement hierarchy identifies housing and population targets and provides a rationale for the land proposed to be zoned for residential development, together with the associated zoning this will not be altered as a result of the Proposed Masterplan. Should the KCDP or the LAP be varied in the future to take onboard the Proposed Masterplan then and only then will zoning changes be reviewed and taken into consideration as part of the statutory process.

The Proposed Masterplan document will act as a guidance document for projects and other activities for rejuvenation and enhancement of Kildare Town. It sets a non-statutory framework for projects that focus on delivering the policy objectives for the town in accordance with the policy objectives of the KCDP 2023-2029 and the LAP. There is a strong focus on improving the connectivity and safety within the town to make it into a more welcoming and safer place for both residents and visitors alike.

It is important to note that any 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 Kildare Town. The principles at the core of the Proposed Masterplan are informed by the existing policy and key objectives in the current KCDP 2017-2023. 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 LAP and 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 outlines potential future arrangements for Kildare Town in a manner which is entirely consistent with the land use zoning objectives for the lands as established in the KCDP 2023-2029 and arising from the LAP (as amended). The KCDP was subject to a full SEA and AA. The Proposed Masterplan takes account of the existing requirements of the KCDP 2023-2029 to avoid effects on European Sites:

- The Proposed Masterplan has been subject to Screening for the requirement for AA;
- Avoid giving rise to adverse flooding effects, or effects on existing flood patterns;
- The Proposed Masterplan has been cognisant of the SFRA prepared as part of the KCDP 2017-2023 (as varied);
- Ensure adequacy of critical infrastructure including, wastewater treatment, potable water supply, sustainable transport corridors; and
- Provide for sustainable development, in terms of meeting the needs for balanced population growth, enhanced biodiversity, promotion of green infrastructure, positive climate action and protection of heritage.

As the Proposed Masterplan will not lead to the alteration of existing protective objectives within the KCDP 2023-2029, and it will be subject to the high-level protective objectives with which it must comply together with the SEA Strategic Environmental Objectives associated with the KCDP.

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 NHA) and geological designation (County Geological Heritage Area). Details of these areas together with aims and policies for their protection is set out in the KCDP 2017-2023, as varied, as well as the accompanying SEA and AA. Elevated levels of sensitivity are also found in the foothills to the west of the Kildare / Wicklow county boundary. The sensitivities near Kildare Town relate largely to the Curragh proposed NHA and groundwater vulnerability in and around Kildare Town. The SEA process for the KCDP 2023-2029 came to the same conclusions.

As already stated, the Proposed Masterplan will act as a non-statutory guidance document and has been prepared in accordance with the policies and objectives of the KCDP 2023-2029. Any 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 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 Kildare 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 and cyclist routes, as well as promoting sustainable modes of travel, will likely enhance and improve various environmental aspects of the town (incl. human health, air, etc.). These positive impacts are reversible to an extent, for instance via the degeneration of the new recommended spaces, 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 prepared with reference to this Proposed Masterplan, however, due to the scale of the Proposed Masterplan, these are not considered to be of significant duration. It is also likely that any negative impacts (e.g., from construction activity) are of a brief or temporary nature.

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

No cumulative effects are identified for the Proposed Masterplan. 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 set for Kildare Town, as set out in the KCDP 2017-2023 and in the KCDP 2023-2029.

The transboundary nature of the effects

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 Kildare Town as shown on Figure 3. Any potential environmental effects are expected to be largely confined to the area within and in the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Masterplan.

The KCDP 2023-2029, contains objectives to facilitate population and economic growth. The purpose of the Proposed Masterplan is to set out the Spatial Framework within which the Town Centre can become more integrated, create pedestrian and cycling connections between key activity centres, provide better traffic flows through the town and improve and enhance the experience of visitors and locals alike. Therefore, the Proposed Masterplan itself is not envisaged to lead to any negative effects and will not go beyond or over and above the effects arising from the KCDP 2023-2029. The current population within the Site of the Proposed Masterplan is estimated to be between 8,000 - 9,000.

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*

There are no European sites or Natural Heritage Areas within the geographical extent of the Proposed Masterplan.

The Curragh, located adjacent to the northeast of Kildare Town, is the largest area of unenclosed natural grassland in the country and provides a valuable amenity area for the surrounding towns of Kildare, Newbridge and Kilcullen. The Curragh Camp and the Curragh Racecourse are located within the plain. The Curragh is of conservation value for a number of reasons. It is most unusual in an Irish and European context, in that it is an extensive open plain area of lowland acidic grassland, succeeding to dry heath in places.

The nearest European site is Pollardstown Fen SAC, situated on the northern margin of the Curragh, approximately 3km northwest of Kildare Town. It lies in a shallow depression, running in a north-west/south-east direction. Pollardstown Fen is the largest remaining calcareous spring-fed fen in Ireland. Covering an area of 220 ha, it is recognised as an internationally important fen ecosystem with unique and endangered plant communities.

Additionally, as detailed in preceding sections, an ACA applies within Kildare Town, and the Proposed Masterplan area contains several protected structures (full list provided in Appendix I). However, as the nature of the Proposed Masterplan is conceptual, with no detailed designs or development proposals put forward at this stage, the probability of significant impacts on these protected structures arising from the Proposed Masterplan is negligible. Furthermore, any of the key projects and deliverables put forward within the Proposed Masterplan will be subject to higher level policies and standards at detailed design stage. Specific policies and objectives within the KCDP 2023-2029 that will serve to conserve and protect the listed protected structures, monuments and places, include:

- **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 03:** *“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.”*

The KCDP 2023-2029 also contains protective objectives with respect to the special natural characteristics of the area. The Proposed Masterplan will not alter, remove or change these protective objectives which will ensure the continued protection of these sites and features.

As the Proposed Masterplan and any works arising from it must be consistent and compliant with the KCDP 2023-2029 including specific provisions regarding environmental quality standards such as those contained in the WFD and other environmental standards it is not anticipated that any environmental quality standards will be exceeded.

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

The Site of the Proposed Masterplan does not contain any land associated with European sites, i.e., Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds, Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) for habitats and species, Ramsar wetland sites or European marine sites.

The Curragh pNHA as stated before is located adjacent to the Proposed Masterplan area, however the delivery projects and key recommendations made within the Proposed Masterplan are not anticipated to have the capacity to cause significant impacts (negative or positive) on this recognised site due to the nature of the Proposed Masterplan. Additionally, any individual development arising as a result of the Proposed Masterplan is subject to the appropriate environmental assessments in accordance with 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 SACs and 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 Kildare Town, 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 QIs [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 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.

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.*

5.1.2 Consultation Responses

All received consultation responses are included in full in Appendix II.

The EPA responded to the Screening Notice on the 19th of December 2022. 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 Kildare Town Masterplan, 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 27th of January 2023 noting particularly the Archaeological and Architectural Heritage within Kildare Town. The submission and notable comments have been summarised below:

Archaeological Observations/Recommendations

- Kildare Town represents a significant area of archaeological heritage and is afforded statutory protection in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994. Any sub-surface works within the Zone of Archaeological Notification associated with the historic town must be notified in advance to the Department under Section 12 (3) of the Act.
- The known and presumed alignment/s of historic town walls are considered to be National Monuments under the provisions of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1930-2014. Any works that are considered to have potential to impact on the location of and, in the case of upstanding remains, the setting and amenity of town walls must be carried out under Ministerial Consent in accordance with Section 14 of the Act.
- The following identified delivery projects have potential to have significant impacts (both positive and negative) on the archaeological heritage of Kildare Town & Environs:
 - ‘Market Square and Environs’ – Proposals (a) to (d);
 - ‘Public Realm Enhancements’ – Proposals (a), (b) & (d);
 - ‘Old Town Courthouse Renovation’ – Proposal (a).
- Any development proposal with potential to impact on both recorded and previously unknown archaeological heritage within the SEA Screening area should be subject to project specific Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) as per Development Management Standard of the KCDP 2023-2029.

Architectural Observations/Recommendations

- The Screening does not make reference to protected structures or architectural conservation areas in Table 1.

- It is recommended that the report is revised to include an assessment of architectural heritage.
- Additionally, the DAU recommends the following matters are given due cognisance:
 - The definition of a Protected Structure as per the Planning and Development Act which includes, (i) the interior of the structure, (ii) the land lying within the curtilage of the structure, (iii) any other structure lying within the curtilage and their interiors, and (iv) all fixtures and features which form part of the interior or exterior of any structure or structures referred to in subparagraph (i) or (iii).
 - The presence of historical, urban and planned landscapes, which may form part of a protected structure and/or may contribute to the landscape characterisation of an area which may be of importance to an area/region.
 - The Heritage Council in conjunction with numerous partners has developed a trans-disciplinary Collaborative Town Centre Health Check Programme. The Health Check will establish an innovative baseline which can be employed to monitor and plan for the future of Irish Towns.

In addition, the DAU makes general recommendations for the preparation of this and future Masterplans. These recommendations include seeking the advice and inputs of Kildare County Council's Architectural Conservation Officer (ACO). It should be noted that KCC confirmed the ACO has been actively involved in the preparation of the Proposed Masterplan.

As such, considering the above submission from the DAU, the following amendments and updates were made to this SEA Screening Report:

- The description of Kildare Town was updated to include a map from the ACA Statement of Character for Kildare Town. This shows the locations of protected archaeological and architectural structures within the town.
- Table 1 was updated with clarification of sensitive cultural heritage features within the Proposed Masterplan area.
- It was further clarified that the Proposed Masterplan is a conceptual plan providing a vision for the future development of Kildare Town and does not put forward detailed development proposals or applications.
- Details of policies and objectives in the KCDP 2023-2029 that ensure all development proposals, including those arising as a response to the Proposed Masterplan are subject to the appropriate environmental assessments, were added to Table 1. These include where necessary an Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) in line with the KCDP 2023-2029.

Therefore, due to the high-level vision that the Proposed Masterplan provides for Kildare Town, 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 deliverables identified within the Proposed Masterplan.

6 SCREENING DETERMINATION

The Proposed Town Renewal Masterplan for Kildare Town, 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 Directive¹.
- All individual planning applications made with consideration of the Proposed Masterplan framework are subject to the appropriate environmental assessments (i.e., AA, SEA, EIA) 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).

¹ Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 amending Directive 2011/92/EU

7 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

Kildare Town Architectural Conservation Area Statement of Character 2012

Kildare Town Local Area Plan 2012-2018

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

APPENDIX I – RECORD OF PROTECTED STRUCTURES WITHIN KILDARE TOWN

RPS Ref.	Location	Description	Image ²
B22-18	Leinster Lodge, Chaplin's Lane	House (former)	
B22-19	Virginia Lodge, Market Square	House	
B22-21	No. 19 Fairview Cottages	House	
B22-23	Bungalow One, Dunmurray Road	House (former now a childcare facility)	
B22-24	The Cottage, Tully Road	House	
B22-26	Aisling House, Dublin Road	House	
B22-27	Abbey View House, St Brigid Square	House	
B22-28	White Abbey Road	House (former)	

² The images are included for information purposes only.

B22-29	Firecastle Lane	House	
B22-30	Verger's House, Market Square	House	
B22-31	Kilcumney House	House	
B22-32	Valetta House	House (former)	
B22-33	Ulster Lodge, French Furze Road	House	
B22-34	The Nook, French Furze Road	House	
B22-35	Mons Lodge, Leinster Walk	House	
B22-37	Saint Jude's House, Hospital Street	House (former)	
B22-38	Beech Grove House, Dublin Street	House	

B22-38A ³	Beech Grove House, Dublin Street	Gates/railings/wall	
B22-39	Lislee House, Dublin Street	House	
B22-41	M.J. McEnerney, White Abbey Road	House with Public House	
B22-42	Kildare Market House (former), Market Square	Market House (former)	
B22-43	Market Square	Lamp Standard	
B22-44	Nolan's/Seeta, Market Square	Public House	
B22-45	St. Brigid's Cathedral, Market Square	Cathedral	
B22-47	The Vatican, Market Square	Public House	

³ This reference number A was created for mapping purposes and is not represented in the actual Record of Protected Structures.

B22-48	Southwell's, Market Square	Shop	
B22-49	St Brigid's Catholic Church, St Brigid's Square	Church	
B22-50	Presentation Convent, Meadow Road	Attached nine-bay two-storey over part-raised basement convent (former)	
B22-51	Kildare Convent National School, Meadow Road	School (former)	
B22-52	Kilgowan Lodge, Meadow Road	House	
B22-53	Kildare Post Office, Dublin Street	Post Office (former)	
B22-54	Kildare Courthouse, Dublin Street	Courthouse (former)	
B22-56	Kildare Carmelite Catholic Church	Church	
B22-58	Kildare Railway Station, Station Road	Foot Bridge	

B22-59	Kildare Railway Station, Station Road	Railway Station	
B22-60	Presentation Convent, Meadow Road	Thirteen-bay two- storey over base- ment convent (for- mer)	
B22-61	Grey Abbey	Fransican Friary ruins RMP	
B22-62	Kildare Castle Gatehouse	Castle gatehouse	
B22-63	Grace's Public House	House /Former pub	

APPENDIX II – STATUTORY CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Dr Sanni Hintikka
Enviroguide Consultancy
The Plaza
Park West
Dublin 12
D12 F9TN

19th December 2022

Our Ref: 221203.1

Re. SEA Screening Report for the Proposed Kildare Town Renewal Masterplan

Dear Dr Hintikka,

We acknowledge your notice, dated 16th December 2022, in relation to the Proposed Kildare Town Renewal Masterplan (the 'Plan') and associated Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening.

The EPA is one of the statutory environmental authorities under the SEA Regulations. In our role as a SEA environmental authority, we focus on promoting the full and transparent integration of the findings of the Environmental Assessment into the Plan and advocating that the key environmental challenges for Ireland are addressed as relevant and appropriate to the plan. Our functions as an SEA environmental authority do not include approving or enforcing SEAs or plans.

Proposed SEA Determination

We note your proposed determination that SEA is not required for the Plan. As a priority, we focus our efforts on reviewing and commenting on key sector plans. For land use plans at county and local level, we provide a 'self-service approach' via our guidance document ['SEA of Local Authority Land Use Plans – EPA Recommendations and Resources'](#). While noting the nature of the Kildare Town Masterplan, we recommend nevertheless, that you take this guidance document into account and incorporate the relevant recommendations as relevant and appropriate to the Plan.

Environmental Sensitivity Mapping (ESM) WebTool

This new tool was launched recently by the EPA. It is a new decision support tool to assist SEA and planning processes in Ireland. It is available at www.enviromap.ie. The tool brings together over 100 datasets and allows users to create plan-specific environmental sensitivity maps. These maps can help planners examine environmental considerations, anticipate potential land-use conflicts, and help identify suitable development locations while also protecting the environment.

EPA SEA WebGIS Tool

Our SEA WebGIS Tool has been updated recently and is now publicly available at <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/SEA>. It allows public authorities to produce an indicative report on key aspects of the environment in a specific geographic area. It is intended to assist public authorities in SEA screening and scoping exercises.

EPA WFD Application

Our WFD Application provides access to water quality and catchment data from the national WFD monitoring programme and is available through EPA Maps. It is also publicly available data can be accessed via the www.catchments.ie website.

EPA AA GeoTool

Our AA GeoTool application has been developed in partnership with the NPWS. It allows users to select a location, specify a search area and gather available information for each European Site within the area. It is available at: <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/AAGeoTool>

SEA Determination

As soon as practicable after making your determination as to whether SEA is required or not, you should make a copy of your decision, including, as appropriate, the reasons for not requiring an environmental assessment, available for public inspection in your offices and on your website. You should also send a copy of your determination to the relevant environmental authorities consulted.

If you have any queries or need further information in relation to this submission, please contact me directly. I would be grateful if you could send an email confirming receipt of this submission to: sea@epa.ie.

Yours sincerely,



David Galvin

SEA Section

Office of Evidence and Assessment



Ref: **LAP00032/2022**
(Please quote in all related correspondence)

25 January 2023

Dr Sanni Hintikka
Enviroguide Consulting
Head Office, 3D, Core C, Block 71,
The Plaza,
Park West,
Dublin 12,
D12F9TN

Via email: shintikka@enviroguide.ie

Re: SEA Screening Notice in accordance with the SEA Regulations (S.I. 435 of 2004, as amended)

Re: Consultation regarding the Draft SEA Screening Report and AA Screening Report in respect of a Proposed Town Renewal Masterplan for Kildare Town, County Kildare.

A chara

I refer to correspondence on 16 December received in connection with the above.

Outlined below are archaeological observations/recommendations co-ordinated by the Development Applications Unit.

Archaeology

The Department welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the aforementioned referral. The following are the observations of the Department in respect of the continued protection and enhancement of the archaeological heritage of Kildare Town & Environs. The Department notes, at time of writing, that the new Kildare County Development Plan (2023-2029) is due to come into effect on 28/01/2023 and appreciate that this may necessitate some reference amendments to the Draft SEA Screening Report.

The Department acknowledges the inclusion in the Kildare Town Renewal Masterplan Draft SEA Screening Report of reference to the relevant policies of the Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023 pertaining to the protection and enhancement of the architectural and archaeological heritage throughout County Kildare together with reference to the promotion of the appropriate and compatible re-use of buildings of architectural, cultural, historic and aesthetic merit. It is noted that the draft SEA Screening Report makes particular reference to issues pertaining to conservation and protection of architectural



heritage in Kildare town due to *'its status as a former Walled Town'* (section 2.2.2, paragraph 6).

Please be advised that the historic town of Kildare additionally represents a significant area of archaeological heritage and is afforded statutory protection in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994. There is an established and defined Zone of Archaeological Notification associated with the historic town; within which any proposed sub-surface works must be notified in advance to the Department under Section 12 (3) of the Act.

Additionally, the known and presumed alignment/s of historic town walls are considered to be National Monuments under the provisions of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1930-2014. Any works that are considered to have potential to impact on the location of and, in the case of upstanding remains, the setting and amenity of town walls must be carried out under Ministerial Consent in accordance with Section 14 of the Act.

It is further noted that Section 3.2.2 and Figure 3 of the Draft SEA Screening Report sets out *'Delivery Projects'* to be included in the Proposed Renewal Masterplan. Of these Delivery Projects, those detailed under the following headings have potential to have significant impacts (both positive and negative) on the archaeological heritage of Kildare Town & Environs:

- Section 3.2.2.1: *'Market Square and Environs'* – Proposals (a) to (d);
- Section 3.2.2.3: *'Public Realm Enhancements'* – Proposals (a), (b) & (d);
- Section 3.2.2.6: *'Old Town Courthouse Renovation'* – Proposal (a).

In this regard, the SEA process for the Kildare Town Renewal Masterplan 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). Due regard should also be had to the *'Kildare Town Conservation Management Plan'* (2014) which sets out the objectives and best practice principles for the conservation and management of the historic town core and associated town walls. Any development proposal with potential to impact on both recorded and previously unknown archaeological heritage within the SEA Screening area should be subject to project specific Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) as per Development Management Standard 17.15.5 of the Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (DMS 15.16.3 of the upcoming KCDP 2023-2029) and Section 3.6.2 of *'Framework and Principles'* as previously referenced.

The Department would be happy to provide future advice and observations regarding protection and enhancement of the archaeological heritage during the progression of the SEA process and the development of the Kildare Town Renewal Masterplan.



You are requested to send any further communications to this Department's Development Applications Unit (DAU) at manager.dau@npws.gov.ie, where used, or to the following address:

The Manager
Development Applications Unit (DAU)
Government Offices
Newtown Road
Wexford
Y35 AP90

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A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sinéad O'Brien". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Sinéad O' Brien
Development Applications Unit
Administration



Ref: **LAP00032/2022**

(Please quote in all related correspondence)

26 January 2023

Dr Sanni Hintikka
Enviroguide Consulting
Head Office, 3D, Core C, Block 71,
The Plaza,
Park West,
Dublin 12,
D12F9TN

Via email: shintikka@enviroguide.ie

Re: SEA Screening Notice in accordance with the SEA Regulations (S.I. 435 of 2004, as amended)

Re: Consultation regarding the Draft SEA Screening Report and AA Screening Report in respect of a Proposed Town Renewal Masterplan for Kildare Town, County Kildare.

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I refer to correspondence on 16 December received in connection with the above.

Further to the archaeological observations/recommendations that issued to you yesterday please find outlined below the architectural observations/recommendations co-ordinated by the Development Applications Unit.

Architectural Heritage

The Department welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the aforementioned 'Draft Environmental Assessment Screening Report for the Proposed Town Renewal Plans' at Kildare Town, County Kildare. Kildare County Council are commended for their approach to undertaking Master Plans for the renewal and enhancement of their towns.

For what pertains to the specifics of the 'Draft Environmental Assessments Screening Report for the Proposed Town Renewal Plans', the Department's observations are as follows;

1. The screening report does not include reference to protected structures or architectural conservation areas under the 'Screening Determination for Determining the likely Significance of Effects' as per Schedule 1 of S.I. NO. 435/2004.
2. Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas are subject to statutory protection under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).



Architectural Heritage does form part of the wider definition of cultural heritage which is to be given consideration as part of the screening determination.

3. It is therefore recommended that in the interest of consistency and the compilation of a robust screening determination, the existing report is revised to include an assessment of the architectural heritage that is subject to statutory protection, as part of the screening determination process.
4. In respect of the above the consultants are advised to give due cognisance to the following matters;
 - The definition of a Protected Structure as per the Planning and Development Act which includes, (i) the interior of the structure, (ii) the land lying within the curtilage of the structure, (iii) any other structure lying within the curtilage and their interiors, and (iv) all fixtures and features which form part of the interior or exterior of any structure or structures referred to in subparagraph (i) or (iii).
 - The presence of historical, urban and planned landscapes, which may form part of a protected structure and/or may contribute to the landscape characterisation of an area which may be of importance to an area/region.
 - The Heritage Council in conjunction with numerous partners has developed a trans-disciplinary Collaborative Town Centre Health Check Programme. The Health Check will establish an innovative baseline which can be employed to monitor and plan for the future of Irish Towns. Further information is available at <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/projects/town-centre-health-check-programme>.
5. Please refer to/seek the input of suitably qualified persons in respect of matters that relate to the architectural heritage.

Built Heritage Policy notes that individual projects outlined in the final Master Plans will be subject to relevant statutory provisions under the Planning and Development Act.

General Observations/Advice for Consideration in the Preparation of Master Plans:

In respect of the general protection and enhancement of the architectural heritage, Built Heritage Policy would like to take this opportunity to provide general observations as outlined below that may be of assistance in the preparation of the respective Master Plans as well as the delivery of architectural heritage related projects. The Department remains available to Kildare County Council, their officers and appointed agents to provide any future assistance/advice or observations that may be required.

Appropriate Personnel:

It is recommended that the input of the Architectural Conservation Officer (ACO) of Kildare County Council is sought as part of the preparation of the proposed Town Renewal Plans.



The ACO is ideally placed to provide the necessary technical and developmental advice, policy analysis and funding activation advice.

Where consultants are required for design and delivery of specific projects it is recommended that the multidisciplinary team include suitably qualified conservation architects/engineers and/or built heritage professionals. The ACO will be in a position to advise on the skills set required for each project to ensure a competent creative team as well as providing continued advice to allow for an agile and informed decision making process in planning and developing the respective historic built environments.

Architectural Heritage Assessments, Character Assessments and Town Centre Health Checks:

Certain projects will require individual Architectural Heritage Assessments. It is recommended that the ACO is consulted regarding the compilation of the same. The ACO will be in a position to advise on the practicalities of these assessments including the extent of the assessment and survey, the required content and the appropriate persons to undertake the same.

It is recommended that Character Assessments are carried out for historic areas, architectural conservation areas and/or historic landscapes. Character Assessments are an effective tool in assessing the historic environment, understanding its unique and authentic character and the significance and value of the same.

Character Assessments, are a multi-functional and collaborative tool as they help to inform and direct frameworks, policies and strategies for the delivery of other essential services such as public realm schemes, strategic infrastructure, addressing dereliction and vacancy, urban and rural regeneration and integrated land use solutions.

The Heritage Council in conjunction with numerous partners has developed a trans-disciplinary, Collaborative Town Centre Health Check Programme which aims to raise awareness, understanding and appreciation of the critical role that historic town centres play and the wide-ranging impacts that their vitality and viability have on overall socio-economic, environmental and cultural growth and development, and on quality of life for citizens and visitors alike. The Health Check is a highly developed tool that can establish an innovative baseline which will be employed to monitor and plan for the future of Irish Towns.

Legislative and Policy Framework:

The preparation of any Master Plan and the subsequent delivery of architectural heritage related projects or projects with an architectural heritage related component shall give due regard to the following legislation and policy frameworks;

1. Statutory designations under Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).



2. Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, '*Architectural Heritage Protection: Guidelines for Planning Authorities*' (Dublin, The Stationary Office, 2011).
3. Development Management Policies and Objectives for Architectural Heritage, Kildare County Development Plan 2023.
4. The 'Principles Governing Future Development of the Town', as outlined in the relevant Small Town and Environs Plans, Kildare County Development Plan 2023.

There are a number of National policies that may be relevant in setting out a national context for the framework and delivery of the proposed Town Renewal Plans, these include;

1. Project Ireland 2040
2. Places for People: National Policy on Architecture
3. Climate Action Plan 2023,
4. Housing for All (of which Town Centres First is an objective)
5. Heritage Ireland 2030,
6. Our Rural Future and
7. A Living Tradition; A Strategy for Enhancing the Understanding, Minding and Handing on of Our Built Vernacular Heritage.

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Sinéad O' Brien
Development Applications Unit
Administration