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Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report

FOR
PROPOSED
VILLAGE RENEWAL MASTERPLAN
AT
Straffan
Co. Kildare

ON BEHALF OF
Kildare County Council

Prepared by
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DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET

Client	Kildare County Council
Project Title	Proposed Village Renewal Masterplan at Straffan, Co. Kildare
Document Title	Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report

Revision	Status	Author(s)	Reviewed	Approved	Issue Date
0.0	Draft for internal review	Emma J Devereux <i>Project Ecologist</i>	Dr Sanni Hintikka <i>Ecologist</i>	Ben Lansbury <i>Principal Ecologist -</i>	30.11.2022
1.0	Draft for Client Review	Emma J Devereux <i>Project Ecologist</i>	Dr Sanni Hintikka <i>Ecologist</i>	Ben Lansbury <i>Principal Ecologist</i>	02.12.2022
2.0	Consultation 1 (Environmental Authorities)	Emma J Devereux <i>Project Ecologist</i>	Dr Sanni Hintikka <i>Ecologist</i>	Ben Lansbury <i>Principal Ecologist</i>	06.12.2022
3.0	Final SEA Screening Determination	Emma J Devereux <i>Project Ecologist</i> & Dr Sanni Hintikka <i>Ecologist</i>	Ben Lansbury <i>Principal Ecologist</i>	Ben Lansbury <i>Principal Ecologist</i>	20.02.2023

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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 Village Renewal Masterplan (VRMP) at Straffan, Co. Kildare, hereafter referred to as 'Proposed Masterplan' in this document. The 'Site' refers to the area within the Proposed Masterplan, i.e., the village of Straffan. 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 village of Straffan. 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.

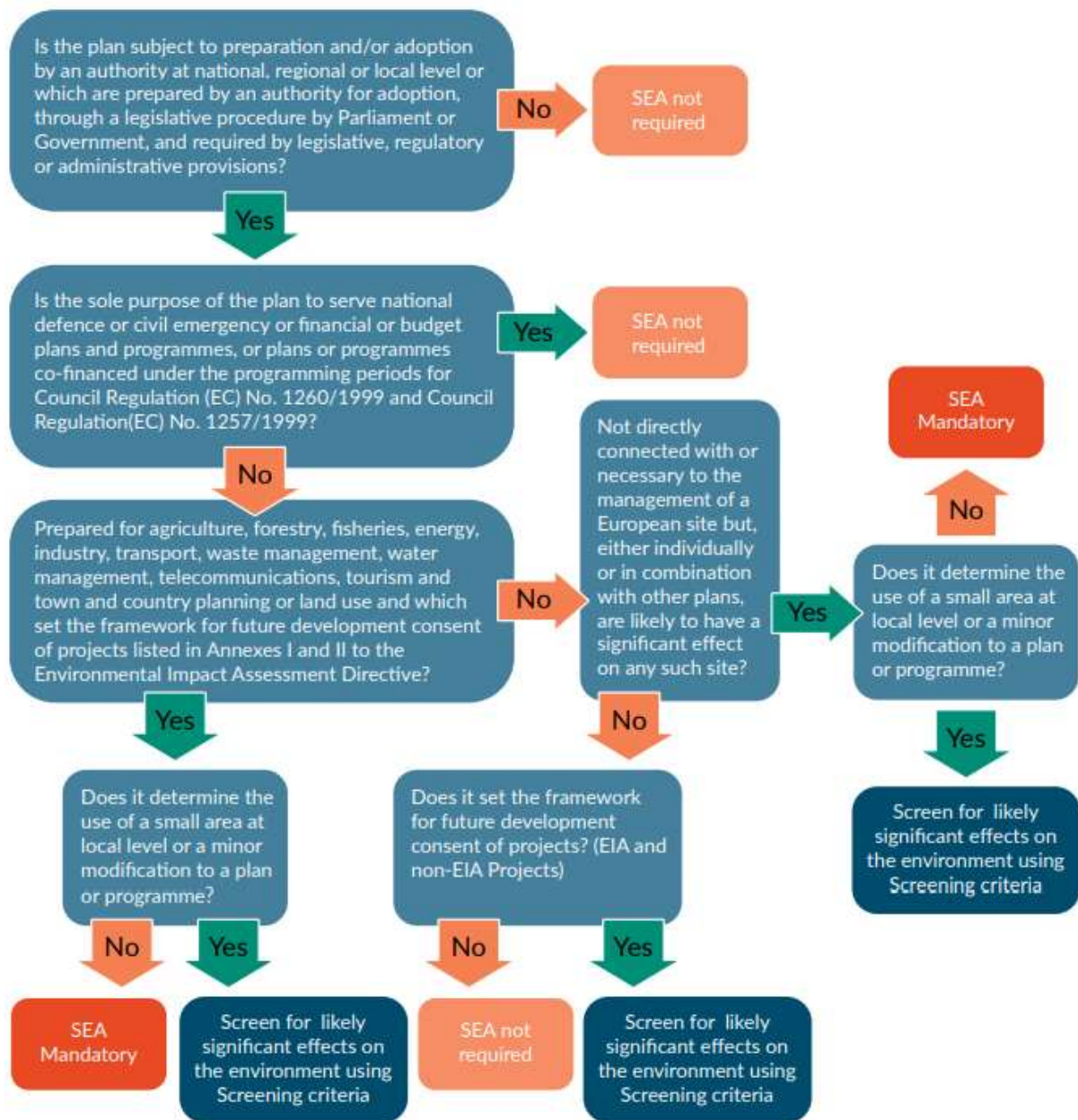


FIGURE 1. DECISION-TREE SETTING OUT REQUIREMENTS FOR SEA UNDER S.I. 435 OF 2004, AS AMENDED (SOURCE: DHLGH, 2022).

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 villages (of which Straffan is one). This equates to up to 25% growth in population for each village over the period of this Plan.

Section 2.5.8 of Volume 2 of the Development Plan sets out a Village Plan for Straffan and consists of specific objectives and a land use zoning map that will ensure the sustainable development of the village over the period of the Plan.

Section 2.5.8.11 of Volume 2 details specific Development Objectives for Straffan, covering the following topics:

- Residential Development;
- Village 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 28th 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 17 designated villages of which Straffan is one.

The settlement strategy in Volume 1, Chapter 2 of the new plan allocates 4.7 % of the overall population growth for the county from 2023-2029 to the designated villages. Similar to the KCDP 2017-2023, the new plan sets out the objectives for development of the settlement core, existing built-up area, settlement expansion areas and serviced sites.

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 Straffan Village – Location & Description

Straffan is a village, located in the north-east part of County Kildare, approximately 20kms to the west of Dublin City (Figure 2). It occupies an attractive setting along the River Liffey and River Morrell.

The village name is the anglicised form of the original Irish, Teach Srafáin, which translates as “Church of St. Srafán”, a saint of the early Irish church who resided in the area at the end of the 7th century. The second Irish name of the village, Cluaníni, means “little meadows.” The current form of the village is linked to the Anglo-Norman invasion of the 12th century. It has developed from a small village to largely become a service centre for its rural hinterland. Today, Straffan village has a population of over 800 people (Census 2016). Straffan is situated close to the larger towns of Celbridge (5km), Maynooth (7km), Clane (5km) and Naas (10km).

The primary land use within the Straffan is residential, with some educational (Straffan National School), commercial (local retail and Straffan Inn), sport (Straffan GAA) and religious land uses (St. Bridget’s Church and Straffan Parish Church), which represent the key destinations to and within the village.

In addition, outside the village boundary is the Kildare County Club (The K-Club) hotel and golf course, 13th century Barberstown Castle hotel and The Steam Museum & Lodge Park Walled Garden, land uses which also attract people to the village of Straffan. In recent years, the K Club has also become synonymous with golf in Ireland, hosting the 2006 Ryder Cup, the European Open from 1991 – 2007 and the Irish Open in May 2016. The Ryder Cup alone, as the third biggest sporting event in the world, brought recognition and crowds to Straffan in equal measure.

Straffan village is concentrated around the two crossroads, Barberstown Road/The Glebe/Lovers Lane crossroad and Barberstown Road/The Boreen Rd crossroad. Barberstown Road is the main link through the village, connecting Straffan to the R403 and the R406 / Maynooth Road (connecting to the M4 at Junction 7) to the north and to the local road network / N7 to the south. Barberstown Road is a two-way road, comprising a single carriageway (one lane in each direction) through the village. Straffan is served by Bus Éireann route 120 (Dublin to Tullamore, via Straffan, Clane, Derrinturn and Edenderry) and route 123 between Dublin and Newbridge.

3.1.2 Straffan Village Renewal Masterplan – Main Objectives

The central aim of the Proposed Masterplan is to support the renewal of Straffan in order to improve the living environment of its communities with growth levels to cater for local needs at an appropriate scale (Figure 3 & Figure 4). The overall intention is to:

- Increase the attractiveness of the village, and as a result increase its sustainability as a place in which to live and work.
- Enhance the village environment and amenities in the interests of residents and visitors.
- Promote the village 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 Straffan, to ensure it retains its strong identity, to contribute to its enhancement, and to create opportunities which are unique to Straffan for its citizens to identify with. As a village with growth potential, it needs to ensure that its current and future growth areas stitch into the village centre and its community base and draw on its character and sense of place.

The objectives of the 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 Village.
2. Enhance the vitality and vibrancy of Straffan through ensuring future growth areas are woven into the Village and the urban structure is consolidated.
3. Create an enhanced environment for people living, working, and visiting the village 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, prioritizing public over private transport, and creating safe connections and places for people.
5. Enhance landscape quality and positive 'sense of place' in the village which in turn will not only help combat the effects of climate change but also support higher property values and rental yields.
6. Create a Compact Low-Carbon Climate Resilient Village 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 village through blue and green infrastructure developments.

The Proposed Masterplan identifies a number of key priority projects relating to the identified opportunity areas for the regeneration of Straffan (Figure 4), these include:

- **Public realm improvements** i.e., replacing worn out footpaths and road surfaces in disrepair, adding greenery, creation of additional legible and attractive markers around the village centre which create strong 'sense of place' opportunities and provide a distinctive feel to Straffan. There is potential to link this orientation to historical and natural features in the village and introduce interesting walking trail around the village. This proposal seeks to improve the signage and interpretation provision within the Village Centre, to ensure that visitors fully appreciate when navigating the streetscape all that the village has to offer.
- **Transport and Connection projects**, and improved movement in the form of an integrated, safe multi-use network connecting River Liffey, Village Centre, GAA Hub, Steam Museum, Boreen Road, School and all residential areas.
- Define **streetscape** from village centre to GAA entrance, including continuous footpaths and rationalised car parking.
- **GAA grounds** expansion.
- Opportunity Site for **Children's Play Area** / Public Amenity (subject to consultation with existing registered landowners).

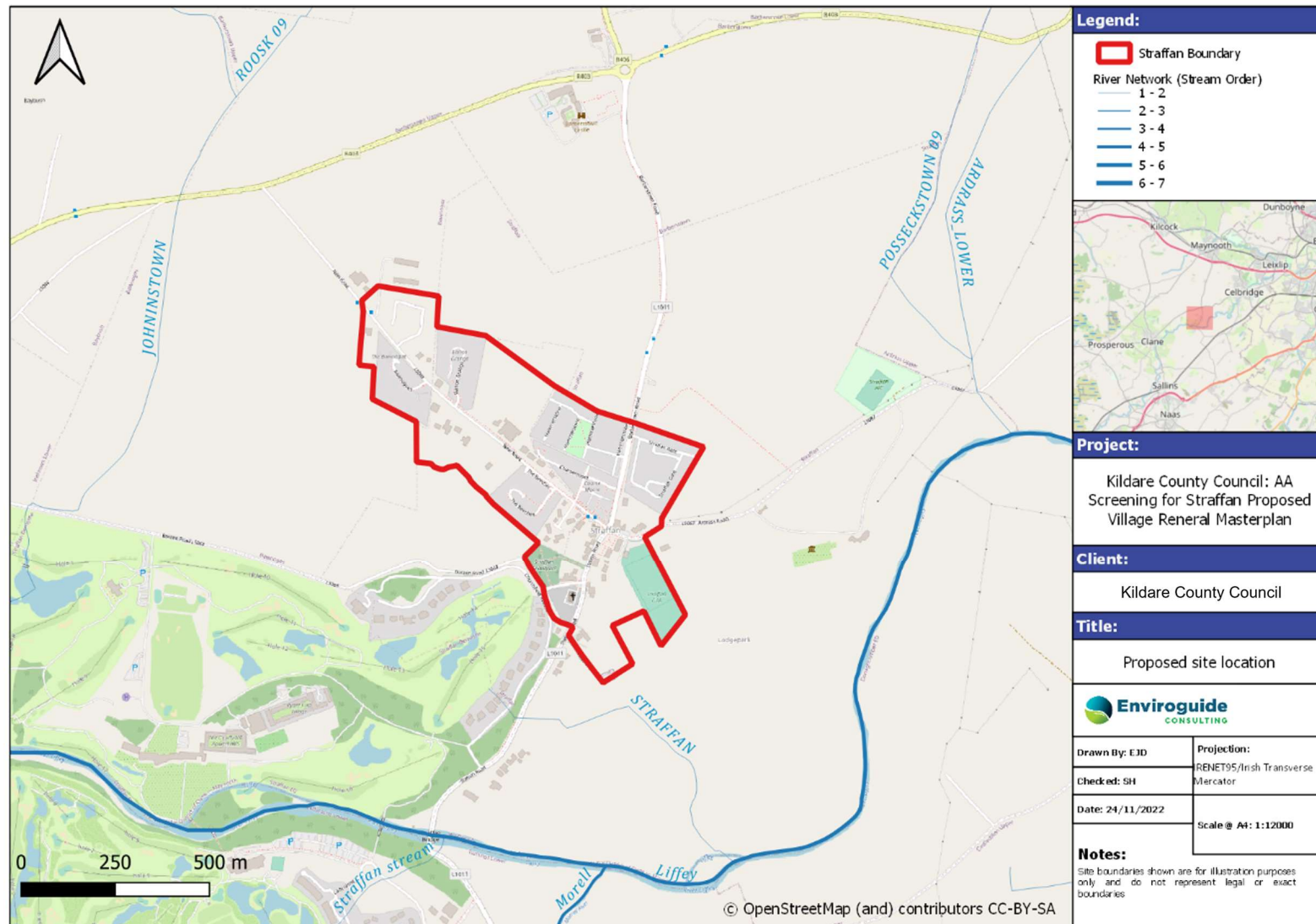


FIGURE 2. SITE LOCATION

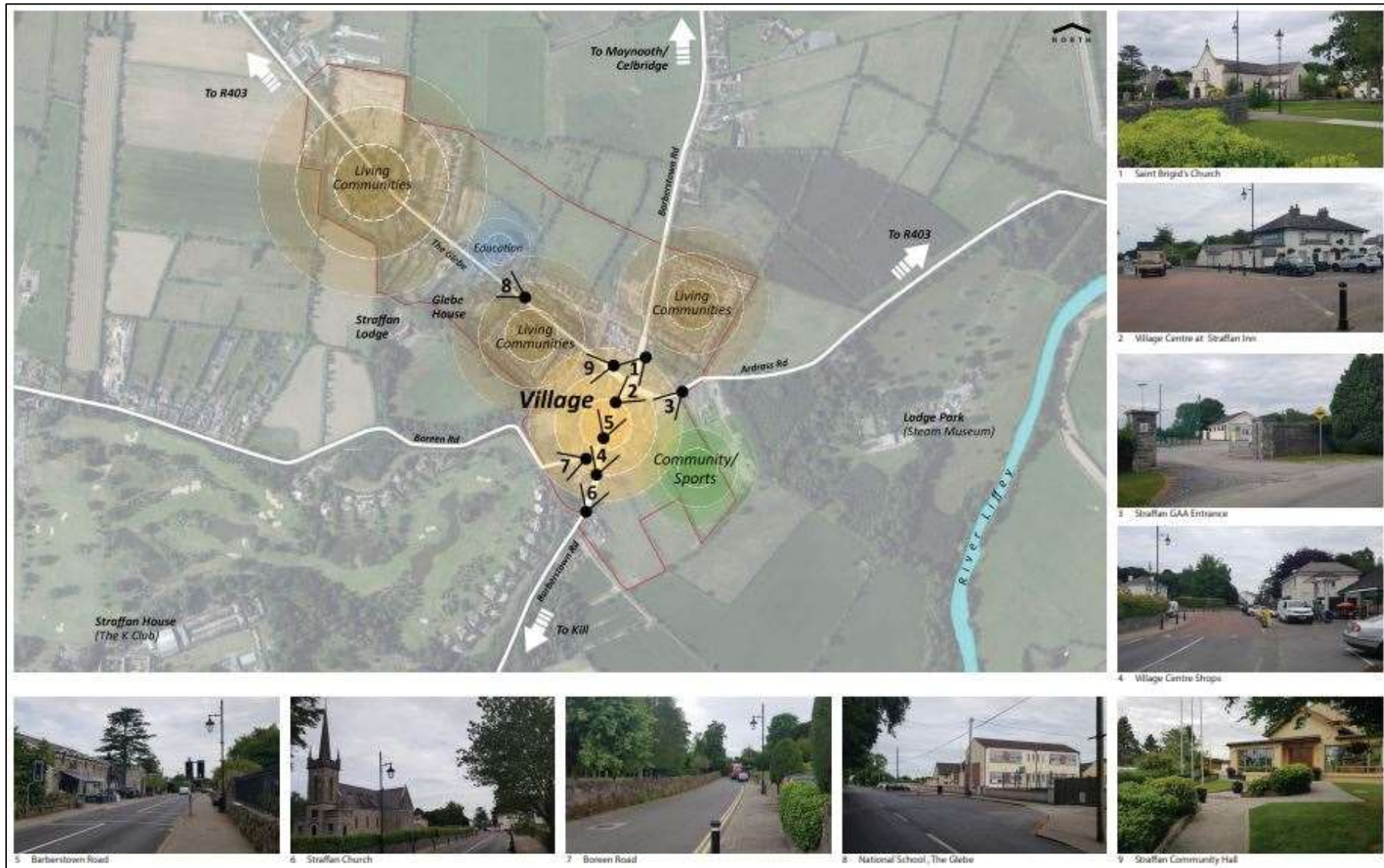


FIGURE 3. STRAFFAN VILLAGE EXISTING LAYOUT (SOURCE: STRAFFAN VRMP (KCC 2022)). NOTABLE LOCATIONS INCLUDED IN INSET [1 – 9]

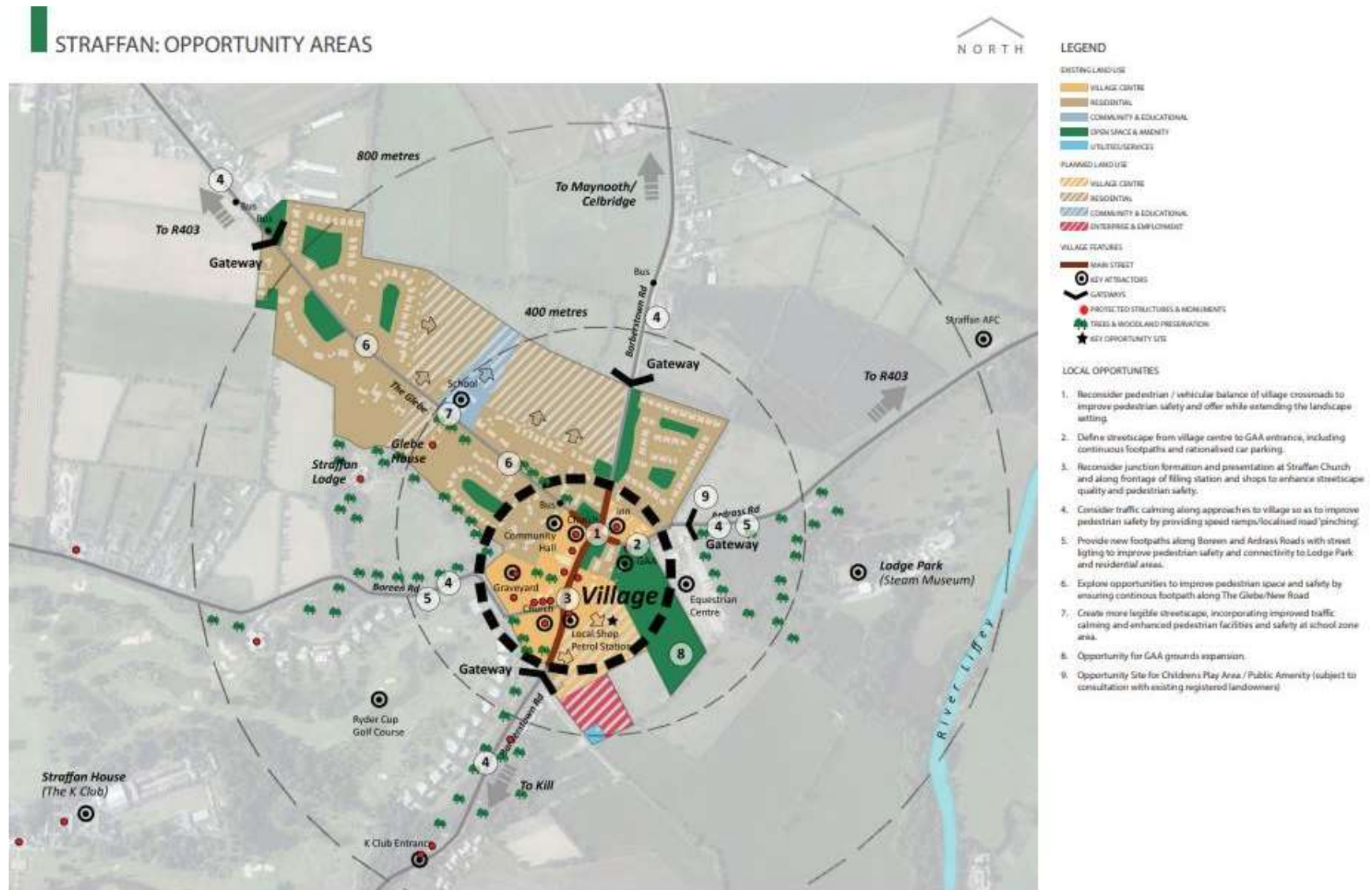


FIGURE 4. PROPOSED OPPORTUNITY AREAS (SOURCE: STRAFFAN TRMP (KCC, 2022))

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 Straffan 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 Straffan village. It sets a non-statutory framework for projects that focus on delivering the policy objectives for the village of Straffan, as detailed in the KCDP 2023-2029, with a strong focus on establishing connections between the village and the wider area for all transport modes, and improving movement in the form of an integrated, safe, multi-use network connecting the River Liffey, Village Centre, GAA Hub, Steam Museum, Boreen Road, School and all residential areas. Improvements within the public realm include replacing road surfaces in disrepair and adding greenery and new footpaths. 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 VRMP does not propose direct works but puts forward key recommended projects and proposes design guidelines for the village 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 village, 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 village.

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 village. The principles at the core of the Proposed Masterplan are informed by the existing policy and key objectives in the current KCDP 2017-2023, as well as the strong idea of retaining and enhancing the character and identity of Straffan village. 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 village 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 is envisioned to improve on the quality of life of those living in Straffan, by recommending improvements to the existing traffic flows via establishing more public transport links, undertaking road improvements, developing new green spaces for people and biodiversity, and public spaces with better linkages to existing amenities and residential areas that are accessible and safe for all. In particular the Masterplan states that the River Liffey shall be protected and enhanced in terms of its recreational and ecological potential.

These recommendations are consistent with the objectives for Straffan as detailed in the KCDP 2023-2029 (Volume 2, section 3.21), by reinforcing the village 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 village.

The KCDP 2023-2029, which underwent full SEA and 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. Straffan village does not have any perceived high environmental sensitivities. The SEA process for the KCDP 2023-2029 came to the same conclusions.

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 Straffan village in a manner which is entirely consistent with the specific policies and objectives for the village 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 village. 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 village.

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.

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 for Straffan village, as set out in the KCDP 2017-2023 and KCDP 2023-2029.

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 Straffan village 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 below 1000.

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 village and the Proposed Masterplan, being within or scheduled for inclusion in the Record of Monument &

Places¹. The historic character of the village is exemplified in the 18th and 19th century buildings lining Station Road and Boreen Road. These include for example Saint Brigid's Catholic Church² and The Old Barracks³. The 13th century (estimated first phase of building) of St. Patricks Church and the adjoining graveyard are of particular heritage significance. Encircling the village are archaeological sites consisting of Rath's (ringforts), Bawns, Tower Houses, and a series of ditch-barrows, which are funerary monuments dating to the Neolithic period (c. 4000 – 2400 BC), and also the Bronze Age (2400 BC – AD 400). No specific works or projects that could have the potential to affect these structures are put forward by Proposed Masterplan. However, should any such works arise on the recommendation of the Proposed Masterplan, they will be 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 aforementioned items:

- **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 O23:** *“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.”*
- **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.”*

In addition, Straffan village is located adjacent to the River Liffey. The River Liffey rises between Kippure and Tonduff in the Wicklow mountains and flows for approximately 125 km through counties Wicklow, Kildare and Dublin before entering the Irish Sea at Dublin Bay. The River Liffey is a

¹ <https://maps.archaeology.ie/HistoricEnvironment/> Accessed: November 2022

² <https://www.buildingsofireland.ie/buildings-search/building/11809014/saint-brigids-catholic-church-straffan-straffan-kildare>. Accessed: November 2022.

³ <https://www.buildingsofireland.ie/buildings-search/building/11809013/the-old-barracks-straffan-straffan-kildare> Accessed: November 2022.

controlled river that has a regulated flow for the final 80 km of its journey, due to three hydroelectric power stations, at Poulaphouca, Golden Falls and Leixlip, as well as several minor private installations and historical weirs. The Liffey is an important habitat for a variety of birds and fish, particularly salmon (*Salmo salar*) and eel (*Anguilla anguilla*). Each year, salmon enter the Liffey from the sea and swim upstream to spawn in the upper reaches of the river and its tributaries. Eels undertake the same migratory process in reverse.

The KCDP 2017-2023 (Volume 2, Section 2.5.13) describes Straffan's form, context and objectives for future development such as Residential Development, and explicitly stated that the River Liffey shall be protected and enhanced in terms of its recreational and ecological potential. The Proposed Masterplan envisions to improve access to this amenity from the village, thus potentially increasing 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.

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 Proposed Masterplan also supports an overhaul of the GAA grounds, to include a new >5-acre addition, described as a 'New Community Hub and Sports Grounds Expansion', to the south of the current pitches, which is currently a green field site. Such future individual developments within the Site of the Proposed Masterplan will be considered under the SEA, EIA and/or AA processes as appropriate.

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- or pathways, either direct or indirect to- European sites, i.e., Special Protection Areas for birds, Special Areas of Conservation for habitats and species, Ramsar wetland sites or European marine sites, nor is adjacent (<1km) to such sites.

The projects and key recommendations made within the Proposed Masterplan are not anticipated to have the capacity to cause significant impacts (negative or positive) on these protected sites due to the distance between the Site and these sites. Any individual developments within the Site of the Proposed Masterplan will be considered under the SEA, EIA and/or AA processes as appropriate.

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 Village Renewal Masterplan for Straffan, 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 Development 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 a 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 climate or inland fisheries*

5.1.2 Consultation Responses

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 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 16th of February 2023 stating they have no comments at this stage but may submit comments at a later stage in the planning process.

No responses were received from DAFM or DECC.

6 SCREENING DETERMINATION

The Proposed Masterplan for Straffan Village 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 Directive⁴.
- 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).

⁴ 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 County Development Plan 2023-2029

Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029: 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