

Chapter 2

Planning and Policy Context

2.1 Introduction and Overview

The motorway system allows much faster journey times between Ireland, the United Kingdom and mainland Europe. The Cork – Dublin – Belfast motorway is a European priority axis (No 13) as part of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). It is part of an improving transport network, along with rail and sea crossings, developing a 1,500km route for goods and passengers to the south-east England ports and onwards into Europe. As part of the axis improvement, individual upgrading schemes are being introduced to target the most significant congestion, safety and environmental issues along the length of the road link.¹

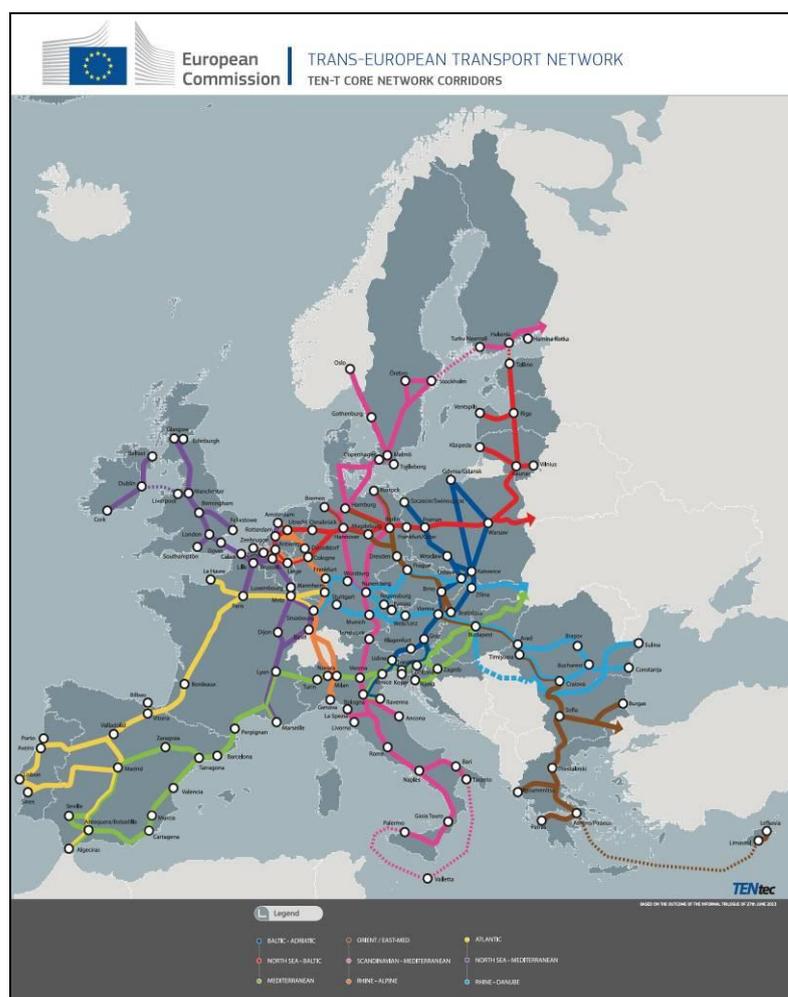


Plate 2.1 TEN-T Core Network Corridors

New EU infrastructure policy was announced on 17th October 2013. EU financing for transport infrastructure will be tripled for the period 2014 – 2020, to €26bn. at current prices. The Cork – Dublin – Belfast motorway is part of one of nine trans-European corridors, shown in Plate 2.1, which will act as a backbone for transportation in Europe's single market. The core network is to be completed by 2030. The aim is to ensure that progressively and by 2050, the great majority of Europe's citizens and

¹ TEN-T Priority Axes and Projects 2005, European Commission, Energy and Transport DG.

businesses will be no more than 30 minutes travel time from this comprehensive network.²

The national motorway system is the primary conduit for transportation of goods and services to large indigenous and foreign markets and facilitates the movement of goods, services and labour between national gateways and major employment centres. Motorways are very important public transport corridors for public bus and coach services.

The M7 motorway, from its interchange with the M9 and extending from there towards the M50 in Dublin is one of the most important and busiest motorway routes in Ireland. The M7 connecting from Great Connell to the M50 carries all traffic with origin and destination in the geographical area extending from the Waterford City Gateway to the Limerick City/Shannon gateway, including the Cork gateway, with traffic between these gateways and the intervening Hub towns travelling in a single corridor along this section of motorway.

The completion of the N8/M8 Dublin to Cork motorway in May 2010 has resulted in the provision of continuous and uninterrupted dual carriageway or motorway links between Dublin and these three gateway cities, other than that the existing signalised Dunkettle Interchange in Cork and the signalised Newlands Cross junction in Dublin.

Permission has been granted and works have commenced for the improvement of the Newlands Cross junction into a free flow grade separated junction. Permission has also been granted for the improvement of the Dunkettle Interchange as a free flow grade separated junction. In Limerick the Shannon Tunnel has been completed. These developments on the arterial motorway network have enhanced connectivity between Dublin and the three southern gateways.

The pressure of traffic northeast of the merge at the M7/M9 interchange now requires an upgrade of that section of motorway extending from Great Connell to Maudlins at Naas north. The section of motorway from Maudlins to Newhall was opened to traffic in 1983 and no alterations to the carriageway capacity have been provided in the intervening 30 years. This section of motorway has now exceeded its predicted design life and requires improvement.

With the increase in capacity and traffic movement on other parts of the motorway system, the restrictions in capacity that are evident on the subject section of motorway indicate a justification for works to provide for an improvement of capacity.

In the original design of this section of dual-carriageway, the grassed central reservation was reserved for future capacity enhancement purposes accommodating additional lanes. It is intended that the proposed development will be carried out substantially by use of this central reservation area along the main motorway carriageway alignment.

The NRA has adopted a 20-year design horizon for national roads, as a basis for traffic capacity requirements.³ The sections of national road under consideration in this proposal have reached the capacity horizon and require review. The section of the M7/N7 under consideration commences at Junction 8, Johnstown and extends to Junction 11, Great Connell, where the M9 merges with the M7 (refer to **Figure 1.1**,

² EC Mobility and Transport News 17/10/2013.

³ Spatial Planning and National Road – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012

EIS Volume 3). The scheme can be considered in three sections in relation to the history of the existing infrastructure:-

- The section between Junction 8, Johnstown and Junction 9, Maudlins follows the historic alignment of the N7 national primary road, which was originally constructed as a dual carriageway approximately 50 years ago. It has evolved over time, the most recent upgrade involving widening from a dual two-lane all purpose road to a dual three-lane all purpose road as part of the Naas Road Widening scheme, completed in 2006. This scheme, which extended from Junction 4, Rathcoole, to Junction 9, Maudlins, included full grade separation of the junctions. While this section remains an all purpose road with a speed limit of 100kph due to the remaining frontage access, it is in all other regards constructed to the same standards as would apply to a motorway.
- The section between Junction 9, Maudlins and Junction 10, Newhall, was constructed under the Naas By-Pass Scheme as a dual two-lane motorway and opened to traffic in 1983. This was the first section of purpose-built motorway constructed in the country and was the subject of a major pavement upgrade in 2006-2007;
- The section between Junction 10, Newhall and Junction 11, Great Connell, was constructed as part of the Droichead Nua By-Pass Scheme as a dual two-lane motorway and opened to traffic in 1994. This section has not been subject to any major maintenance since construction;

The proposed scheme involves widening 13km of the M7 motorway from 2 to 3 lanes between the merge of the M7 and M9, both dual two-lane motorways, and the commencement of the dual three-lane all purpose road at Junction 9 Maudlins (refer to **Figure 1.1, EIS Volume 3**). The scheme will also require some minor reconfiguration of the section of dual three-lane all purpose road between Junction 9, Maudlins and Junction 8, Johnstown, which currently includes the lane gain/lane drop as the road passes through the Maudlins interchange.

Throughout the full length of the scheme all of the widening will be constructed within the existing median. The scheme includes the closure of the existing motorway slip roads at Junction 10 and construction of a new interchange with the R445 Naas to Newbridge road where it crosses the M7 some 700m south of the existing interchange.

Upgrading of the road drainage will require work within the existing verges either side of the road and construction of new attenuation ponds alongside the motorway, some of which will be located in additional lands to be acquired beyond the current road boundary. The widened motorway will follow the alignment of the existing road both horizontally and vertically.

Duration and Phasing of Works

It is anticipated that the construction of the proposed road development will be progressed as a single construction contract with the construction phase lasting between 28 - 34 months.

Preferred Option

Construction of the additional lane was selected as the preferred option as it is possible to construct the additional lane within the very large median available and as the provision of a widened carriageway best meets the future traffic needs of the M7.

It was determined that the most efficient junction option at Newhall was the full replacement junction relocated so as to link directly onto the R445 dual carriageway into Newbridge.

2.2 Planning Policy Context

The proposed scheme has been designed as part fulfilment of the delivery of strategic motorway improvement infrastructure identified in EU, national, regional and local planning strategies and policies, and in government initiatives such as Transport 21 and Smarter Travel.

The need for the proposed scheme has been identified in the following national, regional and local policy documents:

- The National Spatial Strategy 2002 - 2020;
- The National Development Plan 2007-2013;
- Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2012-16: Medium Term Exchequer Framework;
- Smarter Travel, 2009;
- Department of Transport — Statement of Strategy (2011 to 20 14) (2011);
- Spatial Planning and National Road – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012;
- The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010 – 2020;
- Greater Dublin Area Draft Transportation Strategy 2011 – 2030;
- Draft Integrated Implementation Plan for the Greater Dublin Area 2013-2018 (2013);
- Kildare County Development Plan 2011 – 2017;
- Naas Town Development Plan 2011 – 2017.

2.3 Strategic and National Planning Policy

The National Spatial Strategy 2002 – 2020

The National Spatial Strategy for Ireland 2002 – 2020 (NSS) sets out the primary land use structure for an increasingly urbanised regional settlement pattern. The NSS is a twenty-year planning framework designed to achieve a better balance of social, economic, physical development and population growth between the 8 regions, with emphasis upon consolidated urban settlements of a scale capable of providing good 'quality of life' amenities.

The Strategy is;

- national – it provides a national framework to guide policies, programmes and investment
- spatial – it is concerned with the location of people, their work and other activities and with how different places relate to each other
- strategic - it offers a long-term, comprehensive twenty-year view for achieving more balanced patterns of development

Having regard to the existing Road Network, the NSS states that "Improvements will be needed in the quality of connections between cities and towns which are developing as linked-centre gateways or development hubs." The need for the improvement of the M7 forms part of the Government's stated objectives. The M7-

M9 section of motorway is a critical element of this strategy, as it provides the principal strategic access to Waterford, Cork and Limerick/Shannon.

The NSS identifies Dublin as the primary national gateway with other cities as regional Gateways, supported by a larger number of 'Hub' towns. This structure of Gateways and Hubs as shown in Plate 2.2 will facilitate significant population and economic growth to 2020, with improved connectivity, ultimately creating nationally balanced growth outside of the Greater Dublin Area.

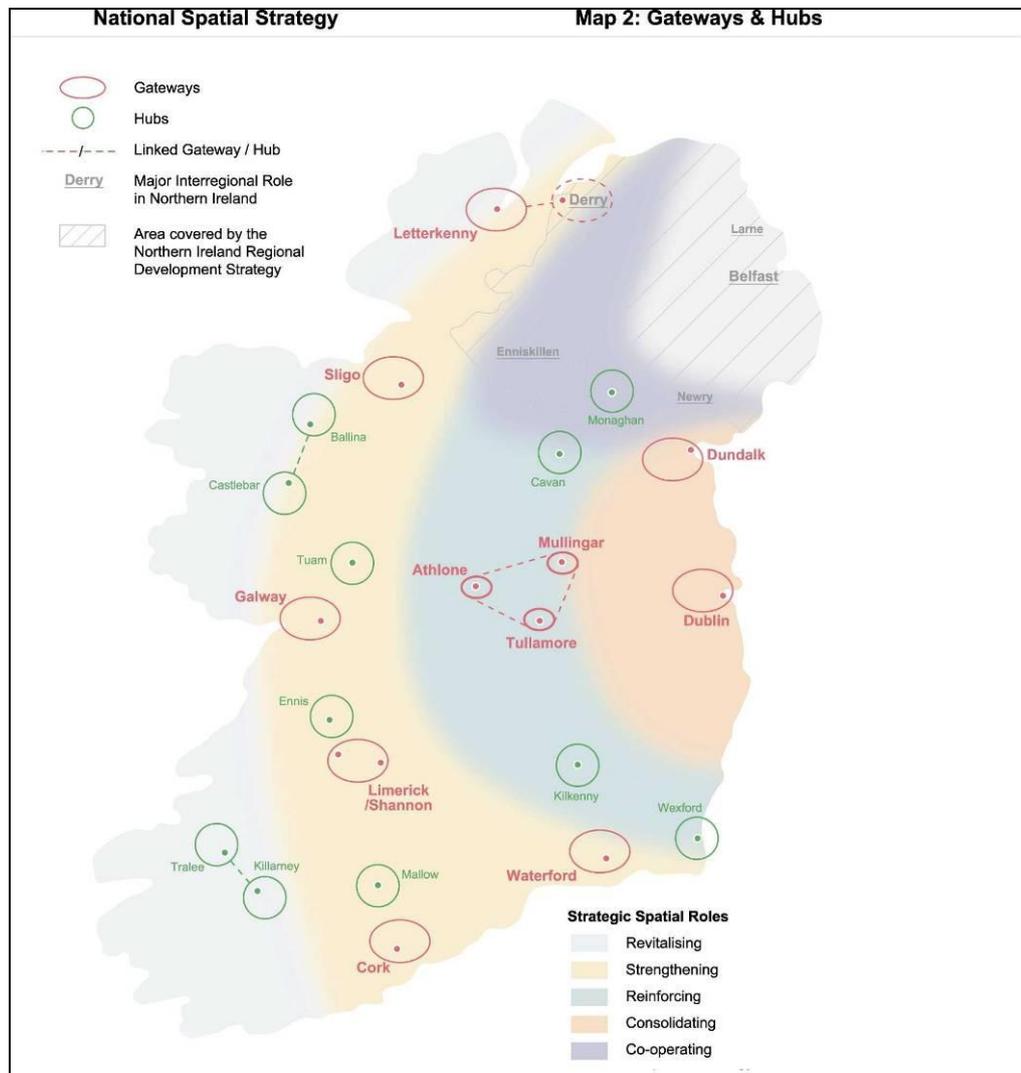


Plate 2.2 National Spatial Strategy - Gateways and Hubs

The NSS identifies linkages – including transport linkages – between urban gateways and hubs as a critical component of the strategy.

The NSS established the requirement for the preparation of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the identified regions. In general Regional Planning Guidelines give effect to the NSS and inform the preparation of County Development Plans and lower-order statutory Local Area Plans, which must be consistent with the provisions of the regional planning guidelines.

The NSS “supports Dublin’s pivotal role in national economic success. It is essential for balanced regional development that the performance of the Greater Dublin Area be built upon and physically consolidated”.

The NSS states that “development in the hinterland of the metropolitan area is to be concentrated in strategically placed, strong and dynamic urban centres i.e. the ‘Primary Development Centres’ identified in the Strategic Planning Guidelines. These development centres have a unique role given the scale of the Dublin City region and the need for internal balance between the city and its surrounding counties”.

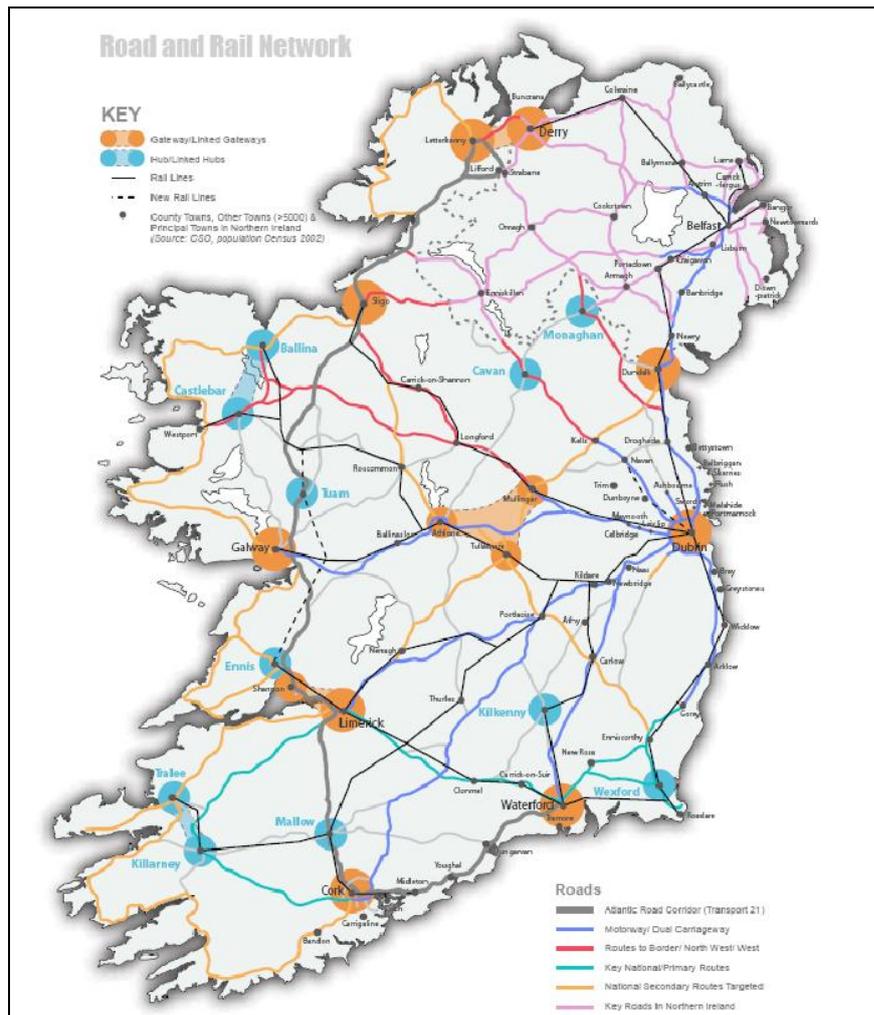


Plate 2.3 National Spatial Strategy – Road and Rail Networks

Plate 2.3 shows the Road and Rail networks contained in the NSS and highlights the importance of the M7 corridor which provides a connection between Dublin and 3 of the Gateway cities (Cork, Limerick and Waterford), a larger number of Hub towns and several Primary Development Centres.

While the NSS is under review, until such time as that review is complete, it remains the most comprehensive national planning strategy available. The proposed scheme supports the NSS in terms of improved connectivity between key economic centres.

The National Development Plan 2007-2013

In January 2007, the Government published Ireland National Development Plan 2007 – 2013 (NDP) as a strategic infrastructure investment programme. Strategic planning and investment in infrastructure have a long-term perspective for change. In strategic land use planning terms a longer perspective is required regardless of any short-term trends in an economic cycle. Even though State investment may be delayed the strategy remains the same, to be delivered over a longer time frame.

The NDP seeks to achieve the objectives set out in relation to National Roads in the National Spatial Strategy.

Among the General Goals of the NDP are:

- Decisively tackle structural infrastructure deficits that continue to impact on competitiveness, regional development and general quality of life and to meet the demands of the increasing population;
- Integrate regional development within the National Spatial Strategy framework of Gateway cities and Hub towns to achieve the goals of economic growth in the regions and provide for major investment in the rural economy.

The NDP also states “Investment in national roads will be utilised to implement the objectives of the NSS. Particular focus will therefore be on investment in road routes which link the Gateways”.

Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2012-16: Medium Term Exchequer Framework

In November 2011, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform presented the findings of a Government-wide review of National Development Plan 2007 - 2013 infrastructure and capital investment policy, which, attempts to ensure that Ireland's stock of Infrastructure is capable of facilitating economic growth given the context of tight fiscal constraints.

In this regard, it highlights that sharp prioritisation of investment is paramount, with 2 of the main infrastructure priorities of the framework being;

- Ensuring adequate maintenance of the National Road network in order to protect the value of previous investments
- Targeting the improvement of specific road segments where there is a clear economic justification

In relation to the first point above, the existing Naas Bypass section was originally designed in the 1980's. The local and national traffic flows associated with that design and the growth predictions did not anticipate the unprecedented development growth in the Greater Dublin Area and nationally in the intervening period. The proposed improvement scheme is required to protect the value of the investment associated with the other developments and improvements of the national motorway network.

In relation to the second point, the upgrade of the existing Naas Bypass section is very much a targeted improvement initiative.

With regard to investment in the Road Network, the 2011 Framework Document, at page 14 states:

“The key challenge in current circumstances is to ensure adequate maintenance of the National Road Network in order to protect the value of previous investments and

to target the improvement of specific road segments where there is a clear economic justification. The focus of the Exchequer funding to be made available to 2016 will be on pursuing these objectives.” In addition, page 15 of the document suggests “should investment prospects pick up over the medium-term, there are further road projects which can serve to enhance competitiveness and improve enterprise conditions and which will be progressed by the NRA in the event of additional resources becoming available.”

The proposed M7 Naas – Newbridge Bypass Upgrade Scheme will help protect the value of previous investments along the M7/N7 route network, by relieving existing motorway congestion in the vicinity of Naas and providing an improved connection from the motorway network to the existing and proposed employment areas in Naas, Newbridge and beyond.

Therefore, the proposed improvement of the Naas Bypass section of motorway is consistent with the National Development Plan 2006 – 2013 and the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Framework published in November 2011.

Smarter Travel, 2009

Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future, is described as the transport policy for Ireland for the period 2009-2020.

Chapter 3 of the policy document outlines the Key Goals of the initiative as follows:

- Improve quality of life and accessibility to transport for all and, in particular, for people with reduced mobility and those who may experience isolation due to lack of transport
- Improve economic competitiveness through maximising the efficiency of the transport system and alleviating congestion and infrastructural bottlenecks
- Minimise the negative impacts of transport on the local and global environment through reducing localised air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions
- Reduce overall travel demand and commuting distances travelled by the private car
- Improve security of energy supply by reducing dependency on imported fossil fuels.

The second Key Goal as defined within the policy document, in relation to maximising the efficiency of the transport system and alleviating congestion and infrastructure bottlenecks aligns entirely with the ambitions of the subject improvement scheme.

Chapter 5 of the document highlights that roads will continue to be the main source of transport for people and goods. There is a focus on the need to improve the efficiency of motorised means of transport with a view to “limiting the development of traffic jams with their associated negative consequences for fuel consumption and emissions” (page 51). There is also recognition that the “efficient movement of goods is vital to our competitiveness and economic welfare” (page 36). Transport by roads is vital to the efficient movement of goods and people. Therefore continued investment in roads will remain an important element of sustainable travel to 2020 while relieving congestion problems.

Department of Transport — Statement of Strategy (2011 to 2014)

The Strategy focuses on the Department of Transport's highest priority transport objectives as agreed with the other Government Departments. The high level goal outlined at page 3 of the strategy is:

“to provide for the maintenance and upgrade of the transport network and ensure the delivery of public transport services with particular regard to economic competitiveness, social needs, sustainability and safety objectives”. In addition, the strategy indicates that transport infrastructure is important to the country's economic recovery and states (page 4) that the Department “must seek, where possible to deliver network improvements in support of competitiveness and economic recovery”.

Some of the key focus areas will include:

- Maintaining road and public transport infrastructure and implementing improvements where funding is available;
- Encouraging more people out of their cars by improving their experience of public transport, safe cycling and attractive walking;
- Maintaining the downward trend in road fatalities and injuries.

The proposed M7 Naas to Newbridge Bypass Upgrade Scheme will support these focus areas by improving the network and relieving congestion along the route.

Spatial Planning and National Roads – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012

These Guidelines were issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) and relevant authorities are obliged to have regard to them in the performance of their duties under the Planning Acts.

The primary purpose of the national road network is to provide strategic transport links between the main centres of population and employment, including key international gateways such as the main ports and airports and to provide access between all regions.

Strategic traffic, in the context of national roads, primarily comprises major inter-urban and inter-regional traffic, whether HGV, car, public transport, bus services or other public service vehicles, which contribute to socio-economic development, the transportation of goods and products, especially traffic to and from main ports and airports, both freight and passenger related.

Key principles include:-

- Land use and transportation policies are highly interdependent;
- Proper planning is central to ensuring road safety;
- Development should be plan-led;
- Development management is key to Plan Management;
- Planning Authorities and the National Roads Authority and other public transport providers must work closely together.

In establishing the principle that development should be plan-led, the Guidelines indicate:-

“The planning process for national roads has taken account of appropriate future development patterns and requirements, including the implications of the National

Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines, as the NRA has adopted a 20 year design horizon as a basis for traffic capacity requirements”.

The planning system must ensure that the strategic traffic function of national roads is maintained by limiting the extent of development that would give rise to the generation of short trip traffic on national roads or alternatively by ensuring that the trip demand from future development will be catered for on the non national network.

The Guidelines acknowledge that in certain circumstances, additional junctions or enhancements to existing junctions on national roads may become necessary to service development needs of national and strategic importance. In such circumstances, the NRA will support such capacity enhancements.

The Guidelines indicate that the NRA adopts a 20 year design horizon as the basis for capacity design requirements in order to optimise the economic return on the investment and take account of local authority supplied estimates regarding future population and development patterns, local trends and the aims of achieving compact, sustainable urban development. In planning future new routes, the NRA will work with planning authorities in basing new design on robust and reasonable assumptions with regard to future development and the extent to which, if any, traffic generated by such development should be appropriately catered for on the national road network. A development or local area plan should identify any land required for future national road projects including objectives that:

- Retain required lands free from development; and
- Ensure that measures are put in place so that any adjacent development of sensitive uses, such as housing, schools, nursing homes are compatible with the construction and long term operation of the road.

Development objectives, including the zoning of land, must not compromise the route selection process, particularly in circumstances where road scheme planning is underway and potential route corridor or upgrades have been identified and brought to the attention of the planning authority.

Implementation of the Guidelines by Planning Authorities, the National Transport Authority, the National Roads Authority and An Bord Pleanála will ensure that the states considerable investment in national roads is harnessed in a manner that is sustainable in economic, social and environmental terms.

2.4 Regional Planning Policy

Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010–2022 (RPGGDA)

The proposed scheme is located in the Dublin & Mid-East Region (the Greater Dublin Area) of the National Spatial Strategy (NSS), which covers the counties of Dublin, Kildare, Meath, Wicklow and south Louth. The region is shown in Plate 2.4. The RPGGDA contain policies to guide sustainable and balanced growth throughout the Greater Dublin Area.

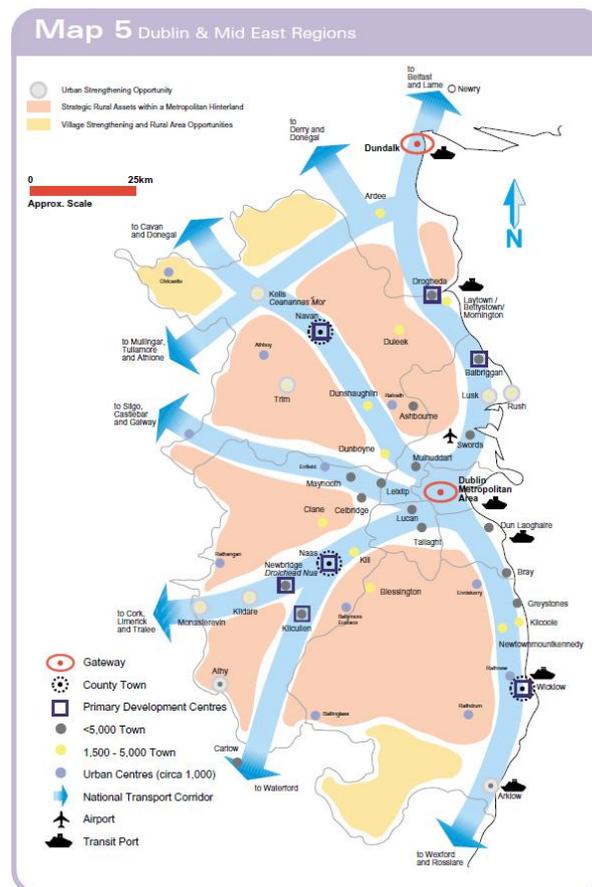


Plate 2.4 National Spatial Strategy, Dublin & Mid-East Region

The sections of motorway extending from Maudslins to the M9 run through an important urban economic cluster identified in the NSS and confirmed in the RPPGDA, including the towns of Naas, Newbridge and Kilcullen, which are to develop as a linked 'Primary Development Centre' within south county Kildare. The RPPGDA state at page 72 that the 'locational advantages of the Naas/Newbridge Core Economic Area include its location on a multi-modal corridor including the N7/M7'.

A 6-tier urban hierarchy is described in the regional planning context, as follows with the relevant towns local to the subject scheme shown at the appropriate level:-

- Gateway Core - Dublin City;
- Metropolitan Consolidation Towns;
- Large Growth 1 – Naas;
- Large Growth 2 – Newbridge;
- Moderate Sustainable Growth Town – Kilcullen;
- Small Towns – Sallins.

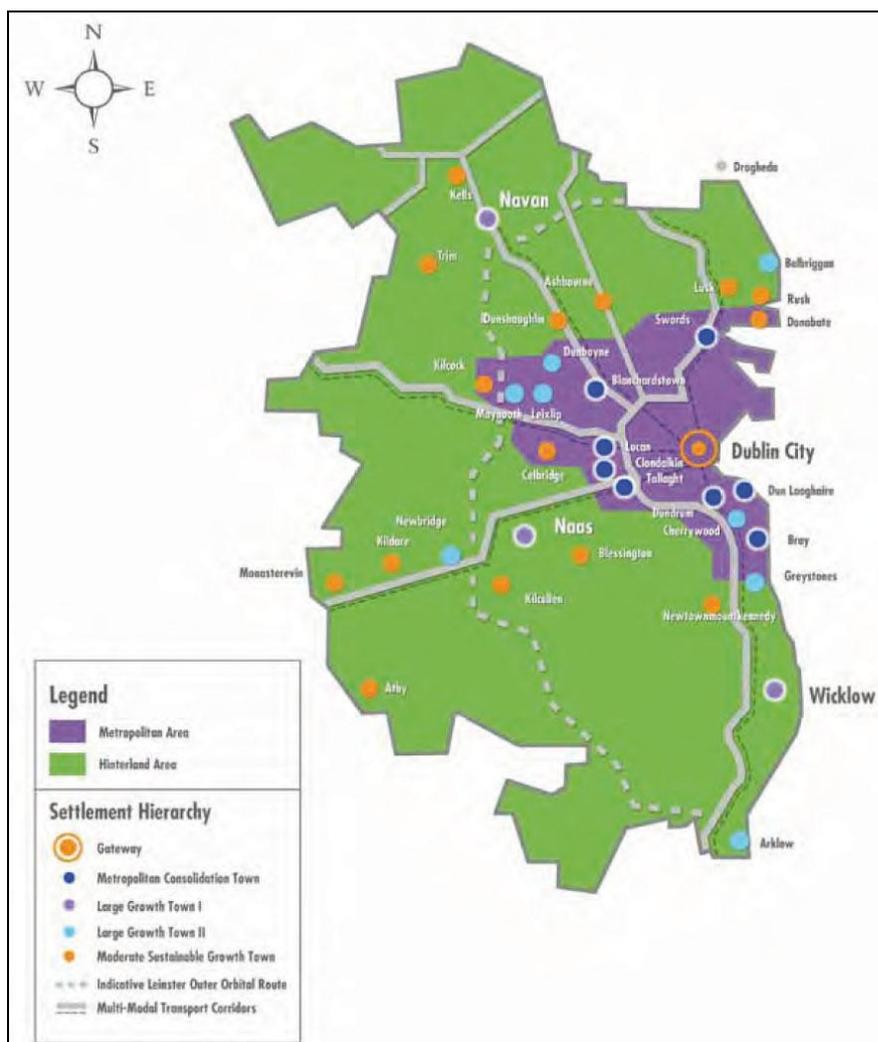


Plate 2.5 RGGDA Settlement Strategy

Key Planning and development issues in the GDA (Ch 1.6) include the economic imperative to link future locations of growth with investment in public infrastructure, particularly through land use & transport integration.

It is policy (Ch 3.1) to promote balanced economic development within the Region. Connectivity and investment in linkages between centres of economic activity, ports and airports is important (Ch 3.5.6) has benefits to outputs, costs and productivity, with radial routes and multi-modal corridors offering access to larger indigenous and foreign markets and allowing movement of goods, services and labour between Gateways and major employment centres.

Barriers to enterprise include urban sprawl, congestion and long travel times. Priority targets for investment in transport infrastructure are essential to the economic success of the Region. Local congestion in the GDA represents the biggest road transport issue for the area. A range of possible solutions is suggested including maximising the use of existing road infrastructure.

Outside the Gateway Core (Ch 3.7.1), Primary Economic Growth Towns including Naas should be promoted as anchors for regional enterprise. They are important in delivering balanced regional development and should be prioritised for economic development and investment.

Opportunities exist for Planning Authorities, Enterprise Agencies and relevant stakeholders to take a pro-active role in identifying appropriate locations for strategic development zones for employment and develop planning schemes for employment and develop planning schemes to deliver these areas for economic development supported by multi-modal public transport infrastructure.

Within the Naas/Newbridge Core Economic Area, the Tougher Business Park and Millennium Park are being developed as areas for commercial, logistical and industrial enterprises. A significant agri-food sector development is being constructed in Millennium Park for Kerry Group.

The RPPGDA (Ch 6.3.2) require a holistic approach in the design and retro-fitting of the existing road network to:-

- Cater for sustainable transport modes;
- Provide contingencies for such provisions as green bridges/ecoducts, connections for communications infrastructure and services which may be required over the next 10-20 years;
- Provide high quality layout, safety and design.

It is further stated (Ch. 6.3.2) that 'investment in public transport development is the main priority in the GDA, it is recognised that future transport demands cannot be delivered solely by the public transport rail system, and that the road network will continue to be critical to transport management and the efficient movement of buses, people, goods and other services in the GDA and beyond'.

Sub – Regional Context

Naas, the County town, is designated as a 'Large Growth Town I', a primary growth town and it is the principal economic growth town in the Core Economic Area. This category of town will accommodate significant new investment in transport, in economic and commercial activity and in housing. Large Growth Towns act as important self-sustaining regional economic drivers for the GDA, capitalising on their international connectivity and high quality connections to Dublin City Centre, whilst also supporting and servicing a wider local economy'. Such town should plan for growth up to 50,000 persons in scale.

Newbridge is designated as a 'Large Growth Town II', recognising the lower population base and function. Such towns should plan for growth to 15,000 – 30,000 persons.

Kilcullen is designated as a Moderate Sustainable Growth Town with a supporting role in terms of linked economic activity and labour force.

Sallins is a Small Town located on the suburban rail commuter system.

These growth centres are to be prioritised for economic development and investment to redress the imbalance of residential development and jobs and the emergence of dormitory areas and to exploit sectoral opportunities in high-tech manufacturing, ICT, food production, tourism and bloodstock, including private healthcare in Naas.

Greater Dublin Area Transportation Strategy (Draft 2011 – 2030)

The National Transport Authority (NTA) draft GDA Transportation Strategy 2011 – 2030 represents a 20 year Strategic Transport Plan for the GDA. It outlines a number of high level strategic objectives for the GDA:

- Improve accessibility to work, education, retail, leisure and other activities;
- Improve links between communities within the region;
- Improve link to the rest of the island of Ireland;
- Improve journey time reliability for business travel and the movement of goods;
- Reduce overall journey times for business travel and the movement of goods;
and
- Improve access to GDA ports and Dublin airport.

The report states that “a network of strategic roads for the GDA will provide reliable journey times for longer distance travel by road, particularly for goods and freight movements. The key elements of this network will be the motorways and national primary roads outside of the M50”.

Each of the Planning Authorities in the region must ensure that their Development Plans are consistent with the transport strategy of the Authority.

The Strategy aims to meet:

- Economic objectives by reducing delays and improving journey time reliability, particularly for business travel and the movement of goods, and by improving access to and within town centres;
- Social objectives by improving safety, reducing travel related stress and reducing the adverse impacts of traffic on neighbourhoods and centres whilst enabling all sectors of society to travel to the destinations they need to reach;
and
- Environmental objectives, by giving priority to those means of travel that are less damaging to our natural and built environment.

Particular measures related to roads and traffic management include:

- Future road development in the GDA should support Strategy objectives and the Government’s Smarter Travel policies and targets;
- Development of traffic management arrangements that protect the role of the strategic road network;
- The preservation of the Eastern Bypass corridor and the finalisation and protection of a Leinster Orbital Route corridor, with possible incremental implementation of this road;
- Local accident remedial measures at locations with a poor road safety record;
and
- Increased coordination and monitoring of roadworks, and a roadworks permit system.

Whilst the preferred line of the Leinster Outer Orbital Route has yet to be formally established, the proposed M7 Bypass Upgrade Scheme including its widening to three lanes and improvements to the Newhall Interchange is compatible with the measures outlined above.

Draft Integrated Implementation Plan for the Greater Dublin Area 2013 - 2018

The National Transport Authority (NTA) prepared a draft Integrated Implementation Plan 2013 - 2018 for the Greater Dublin Area. This consultation document outlines

proposals for the Greater Dublin Area in the areas of infrastructure investment, integration of public transport, integrated service, and other matters.

The general objectives of the integrated implementation plan have been categorised under economic, social and environmental headings.

Economic Objectives

- Improve travel time and reliability for the movement of people and goods;
- Appropriately allocate financial resources to achieve economically efficient sustainable transport solutions; and
- Improve access to key regional destinations, such as the ports, Dublin Airport, hospitals and colleges.

Social Objectives

- Improve internal connections between communities and external links to/from areas outside the GDA;
- Provide for an improved quality of public realm for the movement of people;
- Improve the quality of travel information and access to this information;
- Advance the user-friendliness of the public transport system including easy transfer across the various modes and operators; and
- Improve personal security and more comfortable travel experience.

Environmental Objectives

- Reduce the impact of transport on air and water quality;
- Reduce transport related greenhouse gas emissions;
- Reduce the impact of noise and vibration;
- Promote energy efficiency and focus on reducing dependence on non renewable resources; and
- Reduce impact on biodiversity and natural amenities.

The strategic transport function of national roads, including motorways, should be maintained by limiting the extent of development that would give rise to the generation of local car-based traffic on the national road network.

The proposed M7 Naas-Newbridge Bypass Upgrade Scheme is compatible with these objectives as it has the potential to provide an improvement, particularly at peak periods, to congestion along the M7. The improvements to the Newhall Interchange coupled with other infrastructural improvements in the area will serve to reduce local car based traffic from the motorway network.

2.5 County and Local Planning Policy

Kildare County Development Plan 2011 - 2017

The current development plan for Kildare is the Kildare County Development Plan 2011 – 2017 (CDP). The CDP is the statutory planning policy document which guides development within the County over the period 2011-2017 and beyond to the horizon year of 2022. It has been informed by the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010-2022, which aims to direct the future growth of the GDA.

It incorporates a 'Core Strategy', shown in Plate 2.6, which sets out how the development objectives in the CDP are consistent with the objectives of the NSS and RPGs. It identifies an evidence based settlement hierarchy which defines and shapes the target population distribution, preferred growth locations and consequent land use zonings which will be implemented through Local Area Plans.

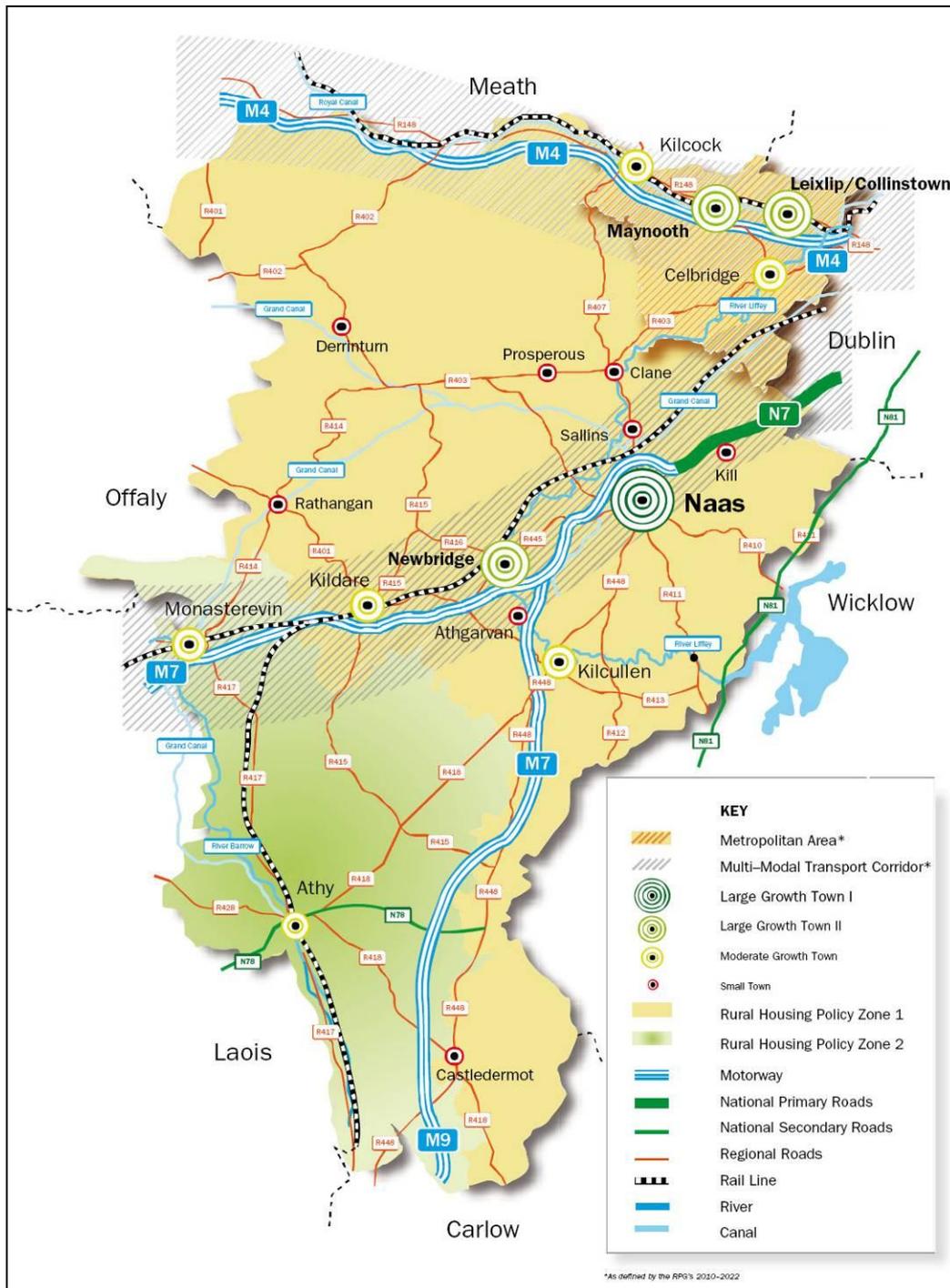


Plate 2.6 Kildare County Core Strategy Map

The CDP's Settlement Strategy, which emanates from the CDP's Core Strategy, confirms the future urban structure established in the RPGs. The Settlement Strategy has confirmed Naas as the only Large Growth Town I in the County's settlement hierarchy (as referenced in the RPGs). In this regard, Naas is targeted for

12.9% of the overall population growth of the county up to 2017. This requires the town to act as an important self-sustaining regional economic driver, accommodating significant new investment in transport, housing, economic and commercial activity, while capitalising on international connectivity and high quality connections to Dublin. Newbridge is identified as a Large Growth Town II along with Maynooth and Leixlip and is targeted for 10.1% of the overall population growth up to 2017.

The Transport Strategy for the county is focused on “the improvement, protection and development of the local, regional and national road network, including motorways will continue during the period of this Plan”. The strategy also “seeks to improve the safety, capacity and efficiency of the transportation infrastructure within County Kildare in accordance with national / regional policy.

The CDP takes cognisance of the role of the national road network in the county stating “the national road network primarily serves long and middle distance traffic originating in or passing through the county. These routes have an important role to play in the economic development of the county.”

The CDP outlines the policy of the Council in relation to National Roads. The key points are:

- To upgrade and improve the national road network in accordance with national transport policy, in co-operation with the National Road Authority, the Department of Transport and the NTA (6.4.2 NR2); and
- To identify the future needs of the national route network and co-operate in fulfilling these needs with the National Roads Authority (6.4.2 NR7).

The CDP contains a number of policies of relevance to the proposed bypass upgrade scheme including:

NR2: To upgrade and improve the national road network in accordance with national transport policy, in co-operation with the National Roads Authority, the Department of Transport and the NTA.

NR3: To identify areas at interchanges which may be required for future upgrading and improvement in the medium to long term and when identified to restrict development within these areas and preserve them free of development for those future upgrades.

NR7: To identify the future needs of the national route network and co-operate in fulfilling these needs with the National Roads Authority.

NR8: To improve connectivity between the local road network and the national / regional road network.

NR10: To ensure the county’s national roads system is planned for and managed in an integrated manner enabling sustainable economic development of the county and wider area while encouraging a shift towards more sustainable travel and transport in accordance with the Draft Spatial Planning and National Road Guidelines (DoEHLG 2010), as may be amended.

In terms of objectives, the CDP contains the following:

RP1: To proceed with development of the third lane in each direction along the M7/N7 including improvement of interchanges as the need arises;

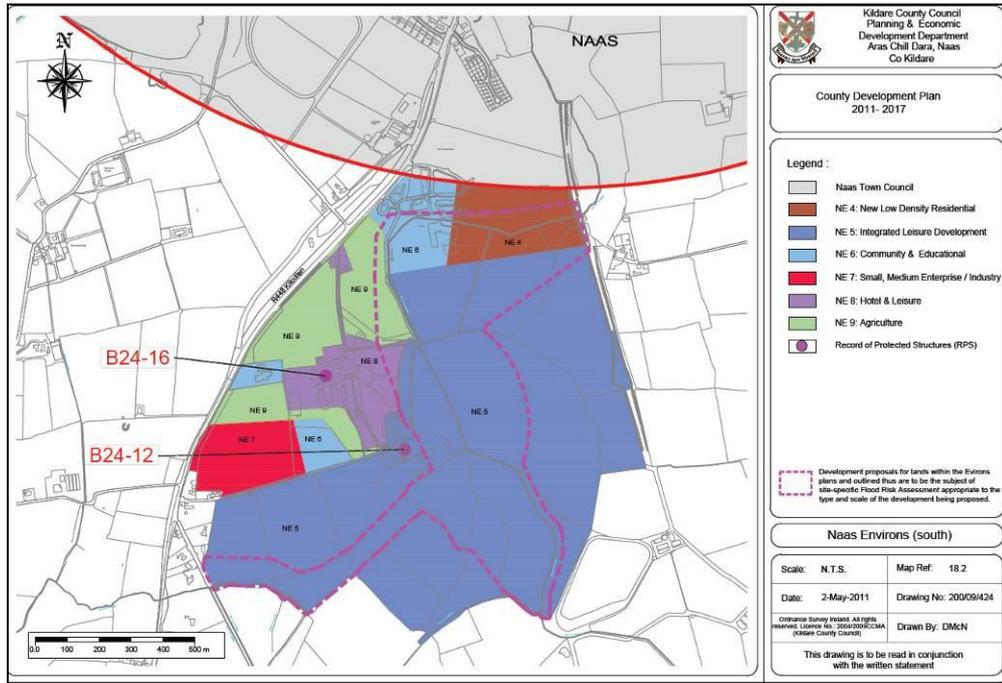


Plate 2.8 Naas Environs (South) Map 18.2

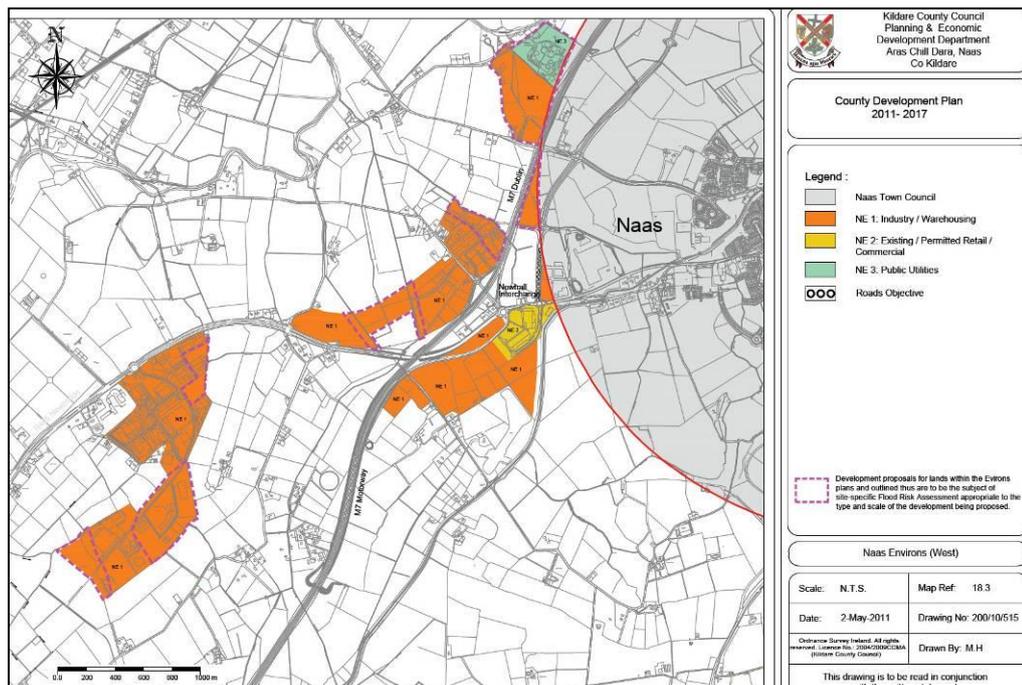


Plate 2.9 Naas Environs (West) Map 18.3

NE 1: Industry/Warehousing

The purpose of this zone is to provide sites for industrial and in particular warehousing uses, at locations which are outside the built-up area of Naas, and which are, or could be made with appropriate road improvements, readily accessible to the national road network. Lands zoned for this purpose are located at the following areas:

- Adjoining the M7 junction to the west of Naas at Newhall;
- Ladytown / Red House adjoining the former N7 between Naas and Newbridge;

- Between the M7 and Monread Road (The Monread Road is located within the Naas Town Council boundary);
- Ladytown to the south of the M7 Motorway;
- Ladytown to the north of the R445;
- Newhall along the R445;
- Newhall;
- Osberstown.

NE 2: Existing / Permitted Retail / Commercial

The purpose of this zone is to identify existing and permitted retail and commercial activities, serving Naas Town Environs. Future development within this zoning must be in accordance with the County Retail Strategy and the County Retail Policy. Any specific development proposal must have due regard to the location of the site within the wider town context and be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. Lands zoned for this purpose are located at:

- Monread Road;
- Lands adjoining the M7 to the north of Johnstown. It is the policy of the Council that development of this site will be restricted solely for use as a retail garden centre;
- Newhall Interchange.

NE 3: Public Utilities

The purpose of this zone is to provide for and preserve land in the ownership of the Council for the provision of wastewater treatment facilities at Osberstown, which serves the town and county.

NE 4: New Low Density Residential

This zoning provides for low-density residential development. Generally no less than 15-20 houses per hectare (6-8 per acre) will be acceptable in this zone. Lands zoned for this purpose are located at the following areas: Plans

- North East of Naas (map 18.1 refers);
- South of Naas, along the Kilcullen road (Map 18.2 refers). No development shall be permitted within this zoning in advance of the necessary physical and community infrastructure, including the provision of the secondary level school within the education campus as required under policy NE 6(a). The development of these lands will also be contingent on the prior provision of road improvements to the Kilcullen Road and of the direct connection of this road with the Newbridge Road, and improvements from that connection point onto the Newbridge Road to the M7 junction. In addition, the development of the lands in question will be contingent on the prior provision of piped water, sewerage and surface water services and on adequate treatment capacity in the case of sewerage services at Osberstown Treatment Plant.

NE 5: Integrated Leisure Development

These lands located to the south of Naas (See Map 18.2) have been zoned to facilitate the provision of an Integrated Leisure Development including a golf course, hotel / tourist accommodation, conference and leisure facilities and equestrian centre. Any housing units shall be for tourist accommodation only.

NE 6: Community & Educational

This zoning provides for community and educational development: -

- a) South of Naas, along the Kilcullen Road (map 18.2 refers). These lands have been specifically zoned to reflect the existing use of the recently completed educational campus.
- b) South of Naas, along the Kilcullen Road (map 18.2 refers). These lands have been specifically zoned to facilitate the provision of a nursing home.

NE 7: Small, Medium Enterprise / Industry (map 18.2 refers)

This zoning provides for enterprise development, workshops and the 'small medium enterprise' sector. The focus of development at this location should be on small workshops, craft industries and starter businesses. Heavy industry will not be acceptable. No development shall be permitted within this zoning in advance of the necessary physical and community infrastructure, including the provision of the secondary level school within the education campus as required under policy NE 6(a).

In particular, the development of these lands will also be contingent on the prior provision of road improvements to the Kilcullen Road and of the direct connection of this road with the Newbridge Road and improvements from that connection point onto the Newbridge Road to the M7 junction.

NE 8: Hotel & Leisure

The purpose of this zone (map 18.2 refers) is to identify an existing and established hotel and leisure use. Any specific development proposal within this zoning must have due regard to the location of the site within the wider town context and be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. This zoning is to facilitate development compatible with the primary use of the site, which is as a prestige hotel and leisure complex.

NE 9: Agriculture

The purpose of this zoning is to ensure the retention of agricultural uses and protect them from urban sprawl and ribbon development. Uses which are directly associated with agriculture or which would not interfere with this use are open for consideration. This includes limited housing for members of landowners' families or persons who can demonstrate a need to live in the agriculture zone.

NE 10: Enterprise and Employment

To facilitate opportunities for employment and enterprise uses, including manufacturing, research and development and light industry within a high quality campus type development. It is intended these lands will be used for enterprise and employment uses, therefore it is intended to redirect other uses that are considered to be more appropriate on other land zoning categories away from this land zoning to other suitable land use zonings. Heavy industrial proposals more suitable to Industrial and Warehousing zoned land and retail proposals more suitable to Town Centre zoned land will not normally be permitted.

NE 11: Garden Centre

Future development of the Garden Centre must be in accordance with the Retail Policies and objectives set out in Chapter 9 of this Plan. Any specific development proposal must also be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Naas Town Development Plan 2011 – 2017

The route of the motorway passes through the administrative area of Naas Town Council, as shown in the Core Strategy map extract from the Naas Town Development Plan 2011 – 2017, shown in Plate 2.10 below.

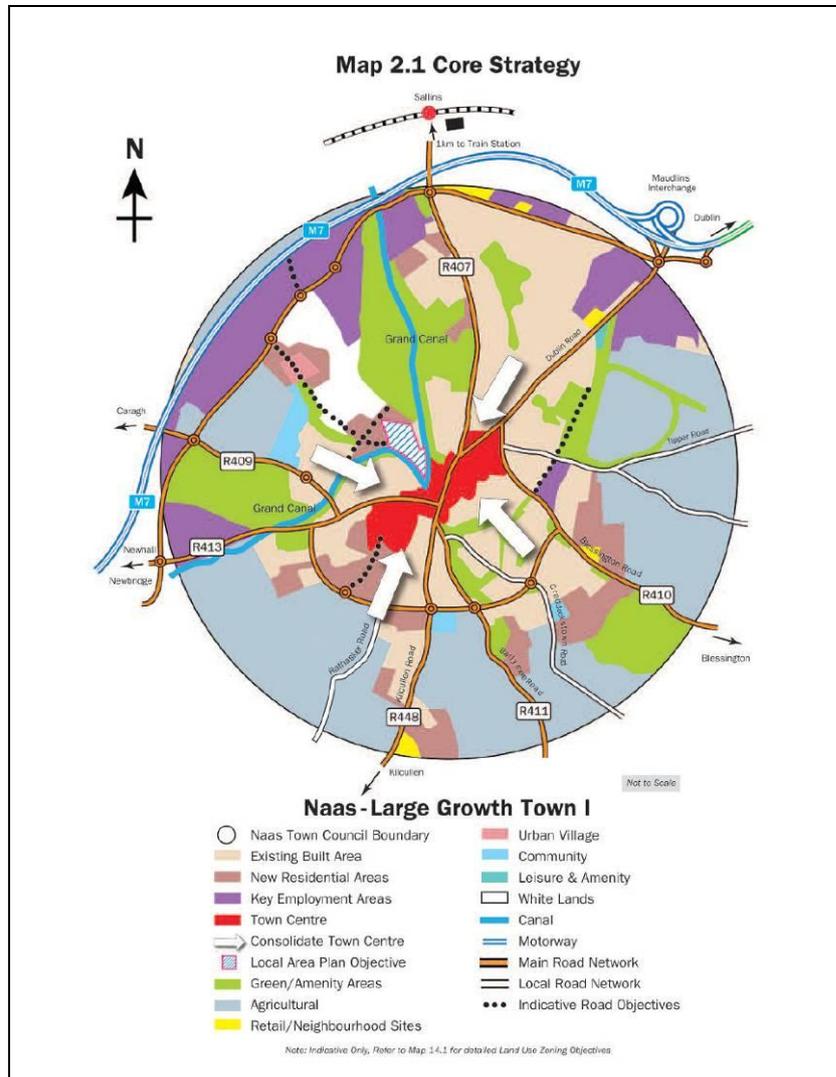


Plate 2.10 Naas Core Strategy Map

The zoning of lands to the south-east side of the motorway and extending to the town boundary adjacent to the Monread Road is shown in this plan map and reflects the zoning contained in the Naas Environs Plan contained in the Kildare County Development plan.

The zoning of lands in the northwest quadrant of Naas is shown in the Plate 2.11 below. The most relevant zoning objective is ‘Q’ Enterprise and Employment located adjacent to the motorway on the south-east side of the motorway, which reflects the employment core of the Northwest Quadrant lands.

An indicative Road Objective shows the link to the proposed Osberstown Interchange from the existing distributor road system, which reflects the Roads Programme Objective RPO 6 ‘to facilitate provision of an additional motorway interchange along the M7 Naas by-pass, subject to NRA agreement. The Interchange shall be

appropriately designed and scaled to provide access to the Millenium Park and the Northwest Quadrant Masterplan Lands’.

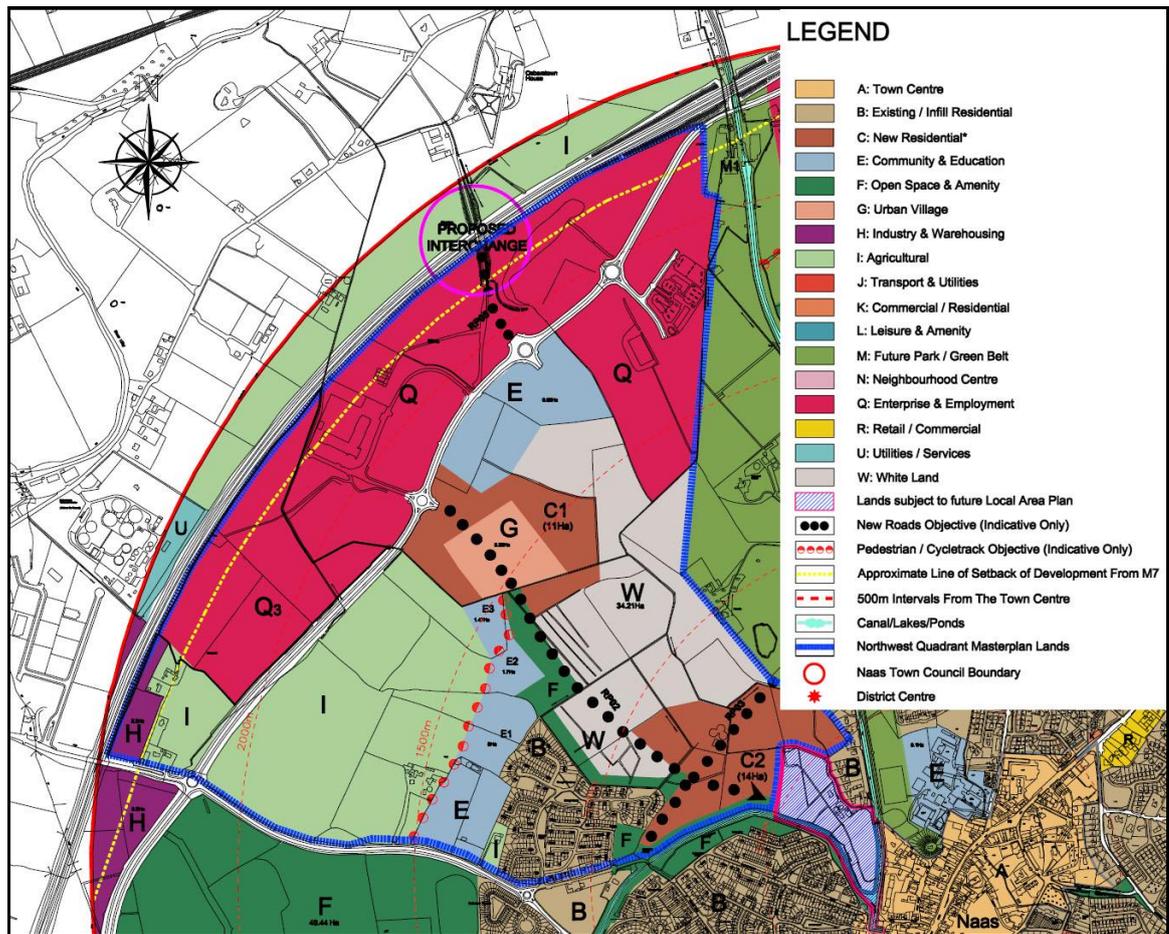


Plate 2.11 North West Quadrant of Naas

General Movement and Transport policies are included in the statutory plan, including: -

GT4 *To promote and encourage development and growth of Naas in line with the principles of sustainable development and to continue to support the policies and recommendations as outlined in the Integrated Framework Plan for Land-Use for Naas and the Naas Traffic Plan;*

GT 15 *To ensure that the national roads system is planned for and managed in an integrated manner enabling economic development of Naas and the wider area while encouraging a shift towards more sustainable travel and transport in accordance with the Draft Spatial Planning and National Road Guidelines (DoEHLG, 2010) and as subsequently amended.*

Local Area Planning

The Newbridge LAP 2013 - 2019 and the Sallins Local Area Plan 2009 – 2015 (under review) are subsidiary statutory plans that are consistent with and support the provisions of the higher-order statutory development plans. They incorporate more specific local objectives for movement network and roads improvements.

2.6 Conclusion

Policy at all levels recognises the strategic importance of the motorway system, its protection and improvement. Strategic planning is about making provisions for the long-term future in a reasoned and coordinated way. In strategic land use planning terms the need for a longer perspective is recognised and, even in a recession, plans continue to be formulated for infrastructural improvements

Policy support for the M7 Naas to Newbridge By-Pass Upgrade Scheme filters down from National level through to statutory planning at county level and to local area planning. The scheme proposed in the Motorway Order application is submitted as part fulfilment of the delivery of infrastructure improvement identified in national, regional and local planning strategies and policies and in Government initiatives such as Transport 21 and Smarter Travel.

In conjunction with other future proposed infrastructure improvements such as the proposed Osbertown Interchange and Sallins By Pass, the proposed M7 Naas to Newbridge By-Pass Upgrade Scheme will provide: -

- Relief to existing motorway congestion along the route;
- A more balanced distribution of traffic movements between the regional and national road network on the M7; and
- An improved connection from the motorway network to the existing and proposed employment areas in Naas, Newbridge and beyond.

The M7 Osbertown Interchange and the R407 Sallins Bypass Scheme together with the Sallins Link Road are separate, additional proposals that have potential to have cumulative impacts upon the receiving environment. These separate proposals will provide the opportunity to improve connectivity for the areas in the north-west quadrant of Naas designated for economic development to link to Sallins train station and to the motorway network.

Relieving congestion that negatively affects performance and economic utility of the subject section of motorway is a standalone project that is required and justified in the context of national spatial planning, regional planning guidelines, Government guidance and infrastructure investment programmes. The proposed M7 Naas to Newbridge By-Pass Upgrade Scheme will be carried out notwithstanding the existence of other contemporary proposals for a new interchange at Osbertown north of Naas and the Sallins western bypass. Therefore, it is appropriate that the proposed M7 Naas to Newbridge By-Pass Upgrade Scheme be separately described and assessed.

The overall development must be considered in relation to the potential significant impacts on the environment and with the overall benefits weighed against the impacts and localised effects.

In strategic planning terms, the cumulative effect of the schemes has been anticipated and the proposed developments are plan-led. The impacts of the proposed development, singularly or cumulatively will be long-term and positive in the context of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in the interests of the common good.

The evaluation, mitigation and design responses contained in the EIS are appropriate for the context conditions encountered in the vicinity, including cumulative effects.

Having regard to the foregoing, the construction of the proposed M7 Naas to Newbridge By-Pass Upgrade Scheme will be in accordance with Government policy, with National strategies, with the policies of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area, the Kildare County Development Plan, and the Naas Town Development Plan and will be consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.