

1. INTRODUCTION & STRATEGIC CONTEXT



AIM

To build on the strengths of the county by facilitating sustainable development, through the provision of high quality employment opportunities and residential developments supported by quality urban and rural environments with physical and social infrastructure to support communities throughout the county.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The County Development Plan 2017-2023 has been prepared in accordance with the requirements and provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). It sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the functional area of County Kildare, over the period 2017-2023 and beyond.

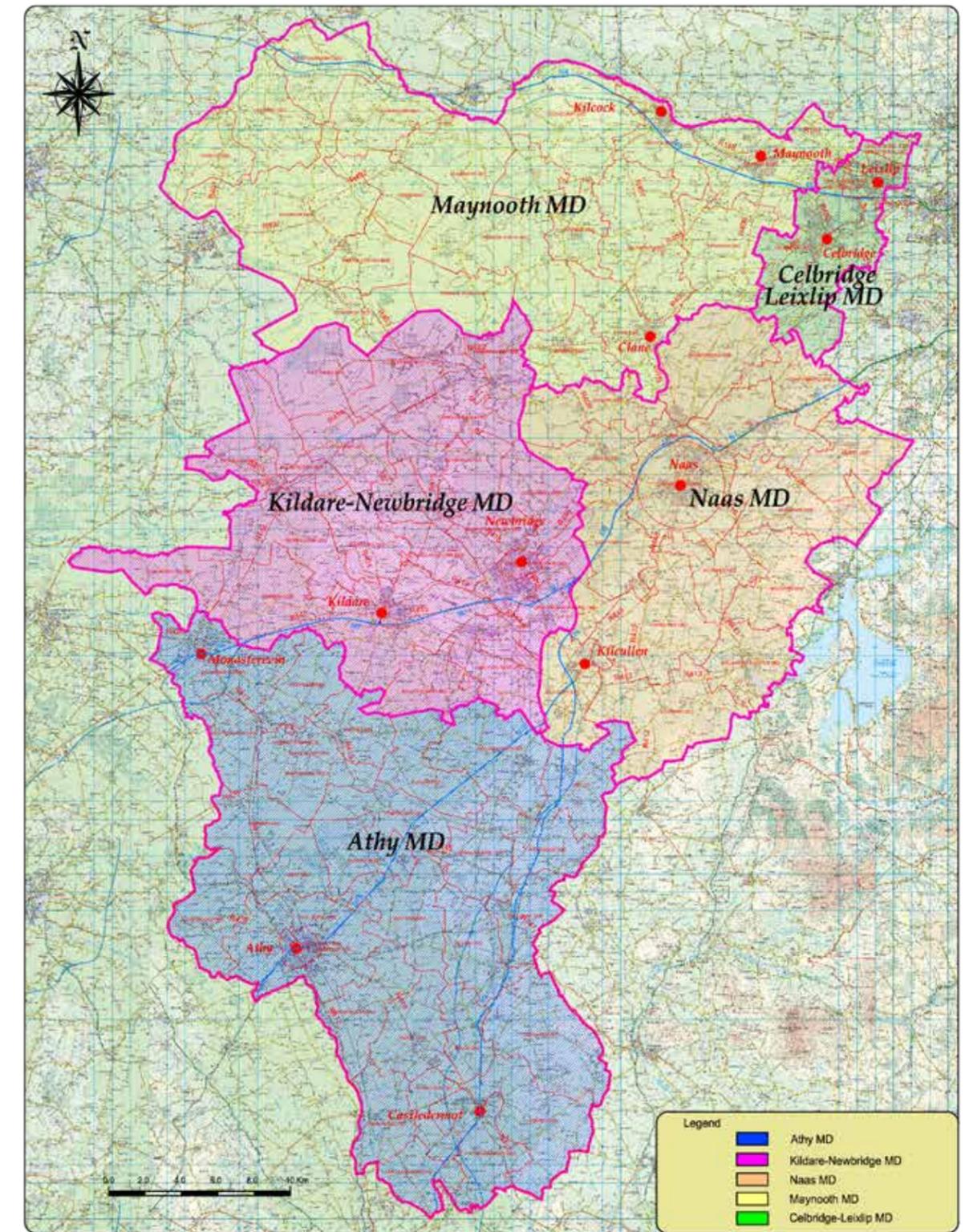
Following the implementation of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, this development plan incorporates the areas formerly within the administrative areas of Naas Town Council and Athy Town Council. The County Development Plan will replace the Naas and Athy Town Development Plans when adopted and Local Area Plans will be prepared for Naas and Athy.

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 also established a Municipal District system of local administration. There are five Municipal Districts in County Kildare, namely:

- Naas Municipal District;
- Athy Municipal District;
- Maynooth Municipal District;
- Celbridge-Leixlip Municipal District; and
- Kildare-Newbridge Municipal District



Map 1.1
Municipal District Areas in County Kildare



 Kildare County Council Planning Department Aras Chill Dara Naas, Co Kildare	Municipal Districts Map County Development Plan 2017 - 2023	Scale: N.T.S.	Map Ref.: Map V1-1.1
		Date: February 2017	Drawing No: 200/16/700-B
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This drawing is to be read in conjunction with the written statement

The Plan sets out an overall vision, with strategies, policies and objectives for the county as a whole. Its successful implementation will have a positive impact on all areas within the county, including the former Town Council areas. It builds on the *Two Year Progress Report of the Kildare County Development Plan 2011-2017*, taking into account recent development trends, national, regional and local policy developments and the EU requirement to carry out Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment.

This Plan is set out in a written statement with accompanying maps as follows:

1.1.1 Volume 1 Written Statement

Chapter 1 sets out the introduction and strategic context for the Plan.

Chapters 2 and 3 set out the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy for County Kildare.

Chapters 4 to 14 set out detailed policies and objectives under a range of specific topic headings which the County Council seeks to achieve over the six-year life of this Plan e.g. housing, economic development, enterprise, tourism, retail, transport, infrastructure, energy, rural development, social and community development, heritage and landscape.

Chapters 15 and 16 outline urban and rural design guidance to promote quality developments.

Chapter 17 sets out development management standards to be applied to future development proposals in the county. The purpose of these standards is to guide and assist the formulation of development proposals and to regulate the impact of development on the environment.

1.1.2 Volume 2 Land Use Plans

Volume Two consists of the land use plans for the small towns, environs areas, villages and rural settlements in Kildare.

1.1.3 Appendices

The Appendices incorporate the Housing Strategy, Record of Monuments and Places, Record of Protected Structures, Scenic Routes and Statement Pursuant to Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

1.1.4 Policies and Objectives

The Plan includes specific policies and objectives in each chapter. These are specific approaches or actions that the Council will endeavor to realise to ensure that policies are implemented, and that all development proposals are consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the county. In the interest of clarity, any reference to a policy and objective in the text of this Plan shall be construed as an “objective” of this Plan for the purposes of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

1.2 CONTENT

This Plan sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Kildare. It has been prepared having regard to those matters that must be included in a County Development Plan (i.e. mandatory objectives) as well as those matters that may be included (discretionary objectives) as required by the Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended).

The main mandatory objectives of the Planning Acts that are relevant to this Plan are as follows:

- Zoning of land for residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational, open space or otherwise, or a mixture of those uses;¹
- The provision of infrastructure including transport, energy and communication facilities, water supplies, waste recovery and disposal facilities, waste water facilities and ancillary facilities;
- The conservation and protection of the environment, including, in particular, the archaeological and natural heritage and protection of European sites and any other sites which may be prescribed;
- The encouragement, pursuant to Article 10 of the Habitats Directive, of the management of features of the landscape, such as traditional field boundaries, important for the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species;

¹ It should be noted that there shall be no presumption in law that any land zoned in a particular development plan (including a development plan that has been varied) shall remain so zoned in any subsequent development plan (Section 10(8) Planning and Development Acts 2000-2015).

- The promotion of compliance with environmental standards and objectives established:
 - (i) for bodies of surface water, by the European Communities (Surface Waters) Regulations (2009);
 - (ii) for groundwater, by the European Communities (Groundwater) Regulations 2010; which standards and objectives are included in river basin management plans (within the meaning of Regulation 13 of the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations, 2003);
- The integration of the planning and sustainable development of County Kildare with the social, community and cultural requirements of the county and its population;
- The preservation of the character of the landscape, including the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest;
- The protection of structures, or part of structures, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest;
- The preservation of the character of architectural conservation areas;
- The development and renewal of areas identified having regard to the core strategy, that are in need of regeneration, in order to prevent -
 - (i) adverse effects on existing amenities in such areas, in particular as a result of the ruinous or neglected condition of any land,
 - (ii) urban blight and decay,
 - (iii) anti-social behaviour, or
 - (iv) a shortage of habitable houses or of land suitable for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses;
- The provision of accommodation for travellers, and the use of particular areas for that purpose;
- The preservation, improvement and extension of amenities and recreational amenities;
- Reducing the risk of a major accident having regard to the Major Accidents Directive;
- The provision of services for the community including schools, crèches and other educational and childcare facilities;
- The promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas including the promotion of measures to:
 - (i) reduce energy demand in response to the likelihood of increases in energy and other costs due to long-term decline in non-renewable resources;
 - (ii) reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions; and
 - (iii) address the necessity of adaptation to climate change, in particular, having regard to location, layout and design of new development.
- The preservation of public rights of way which give access to mountains, lakeshores, riverbanks or other places of natural beauty or recreational utilities;
- Providing a framework for the identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes, having regard to the European Landscape Convention.

In accordance with Section 15(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), there is a duty on the planning authority to take such steps within its powers as may be necessary for securing the objectives of this Plan.

The Council recognises the role and importance of infrastructure providers, semi-state bodies and landowners/stakeholders in Kildare in realising the objectives of this Development Plan.

1.3 KEY CHALLENGES

With a population of 210,312 in 2011, Kildare has the 5th highest population of all local authority areas in Ireland. The population living within Kildare is now equivalent to 4.58% of the State total (of 4.58 million).

In the 5 years between Census 2006 and Census 2011, Kildare experienced the 6th highest rate of population growth with an increase of 13% (23,977 persons) on the 2006 population (186,335 persons). Nationally, there was an increase of 8.2% over the same period.

Given that the largest town in Kildare (Newbridge) had a recorded population of 21,561 in 2011, the population increase is equivalent to an additional town in just 5 years.

Much of this population growth has occurred in the main commuter areas of the county where there have been high levels of new residential developments (Naas, Clane, Sallins, Kilcock, Maynooth and Celbridge). However some of the larger towns such as Newbridge experienced lower levels of population growth due to infrastructural constraints. Overall, the population structure in Kildare is now one of the youngest in the State. With 28.3% of its population in the 0-18 age cohort, Kildare has the 3rd youngest population of all council areas in Ireland.

While there was a significant upward trend in population between 2001 and 2011, the economic downturn has reduced the level of growth in more recent years. The full effects of the economic downturn on population and housing in Kildare will become evident in the 2016 Census.

Kildare remains a key growth area in the Greater Dublin Area.

The key challenges facing Kildare for the Plan period include the following:

- (i) Directing population growth to the main urban centres with maximum growth focused on the Metropolitan towns of Maynooth, Celbridge, Leixlip and Kilcock;
- (ii) Promoting sustainable economic and community development and the delivery of the objectives contained in the Local Economic and Community Plan;

- (iii) Promoting a balance between jobs and settlement centres and facilitating employment growth in the Hinterland towns of Naas, Newbridge, Kildare, Monasterevin, Athy and Kilcullen at a scale appropriate to the level of population and housing growth;
- (iv) Facilitating the provision of housing in accordance with the Core Strategy and the Housing Strategy of this Plan;
- (v) Unlocking infrastructural constraints and ensuring adequate investment in infrastructure, to maintain and facilitate economic development;
- (vi) Delivering community and recreational facilities in tandem with significant population change throughout the settlement centres in the county;
- (vii) Ensuring that new public and private development is sustainable and of a high quality;
- (viii) Protecting the built heritage, unique landscape, natural heritage and biodiversity of the county for their intrinsic value and as a resource for the tourist economy of the future;
- (ix) Regenerating urban and rural areas, including tackling urban blight and dereliction;
- (x) Integrating climate change considerations into the strategic approach and objectives;
- (xi) Integrating the implementation of the Habitats Directive, which seeks to prevent any plans or projects which would be likely, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, to give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 site and to recognise that such projects will not be permitted unless for imperative reasons of overriding public interest; and
- (xii) Seeking to ensure the integration of the recommendations of Appropriate Assessment (at all levels of the planning hierarchy) as relevant and appropriate.

The chapters that follow in this Plan set out the planning policy response of the County Council to these challenges.

1.4 MAIN POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) require that a development plan shall, so far as is practicable, be consistent with national plans, policies and strategies, which relate to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area covered by the plan. The most central Government plans, guidelines, policies and strategies influencing the preparation of this Plan are noted below. Other relevant documents include various Guidelines for Planning Authorities issued by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government and include:

- Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines;
- Childcare Facilities Guidelines;
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets;
- Development Contributions Schemes Guidelines;
- Development Plan Guidelines;
- Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC): Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment;
- Landscape and Landscape Assessment;
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management;
- Provision of Schools and the Planning System;
- Quarries and Ancillary Activities;
- Retail Planning Guidelines and accompanying Retail Design Manual;
- Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines;
- Sustainable Rural Housing;
- Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas and accompanying Urban Design Manual;
- Sustainable Urban Housing - Design Standards for New Apartments;
- Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures;
- Tree Preservation Guidelines;
- Wind Energy Development; and
- Any updated or superseding versions of the documents that may be published during the lifetime of this Plan.

1.4.1 National Policies and Strategies

The following paragraphs set out a brief summary of the main provisions of national plans, policies and strategies, which relate to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area covered by this Plan.

(i) National Spatial Strategy for Ireland (NSS) 2002-2020

The NSS provides a framework to promote and direct balanced regional development and sustainable growth. It also guides policies, programmes and investment. The strategy emphasises continued strong growth in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) but with significant improvement in the regions outside the capital and more particularly in the nine gateway cities and nine hub towns. Kildare has neither a gateway nor hub town and as such will have to compete with higher order cities and towns to secure funding for strategic investment opportunities. Notwithstanding this, the GDA is identified for consolidation and in strategic terms the following issues are of particular importance for Kildare:

- Effective integration of land use and transportation;
- Supporting the region's capacity for innovation;
- Facilitating ease of movement of people and goods; and
- Maintaining a high quality environment.

The review of the National Spatial Strategy commenced in December 2015 and is due to be updated and replaced by the National Planning Framework (NPF). A Roadmap for the delivery of the National Planning Framework 2016, published in December 2015, outlined the process and timeline for the delivery of the NPF. The NPF will be structured around the following four potential themes:

- Maximising the potential of our cities, town and rural areas to be successful, sustainable places;
- Identifying infrastructure priorities
- Transitioning to a low carbon economy
- Ensuring the resilience of our natural resources and cultural assets.

It is expected that a Draft National Planning Framework will be published in 2017. In the interim the County Development Plan has to have regard to the provisions of the existing National Spatial Strategy.

(ii) **Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016–2021**

Succeeding the National Development Plan and Transport 21, the Government's capital investment plans set out the framework for infrastructure investment in Ireland. *Building on Recovery* is primarily targeted at addressing priority needs in transport, education, health, housing and environment, through Exchequer investment, PPP projects and capital projects undertaken by State-owned companies. Funding for specific infrastructural projects will benefit County Kildare and, along with national priorities such as social housing provision, enterprise supports, smarter travel and carbon reduction measures, are reflected in the policies and objectives of this Plan.

(iii) **Our Sustainable Future: A Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland (2012)**

The national strategy for sustainable development sets out a medium to long-term framework for advancing sustainable development and the green economy in Ireland. *Our Sustainable Future* identifies the area of spatial planning as a key challenge for sustainable development and, while acknowledging significant recent progress in this area, sets out a series of measures to address these challenges, e.g. zoning on a quantifiable consistent needs-based approach, fiscal and taxation measures to ensure the timely release of development lands, implementation of national and regional monitoring systems and the development of an integrated approach to green infrastructure.

It acknowledges that the principles of sustainable development are supported by development planning and the cross-links between policy areas.

(iv) **Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future 2009–2020**

Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future is the transport policy for Ireland for the period 2009–2020. The policy recognises the vital importance of continued investment in transport to ensure an efficient economy and continued social development,

but it also sets out the necessary steps to ensure that people choose more sustainable transport modes such as walking, cycling and public transport.

Actions are proposed:

- To reduce distance travelled by car and encourage smarter travel;
- To ensure alternatives to the car are more widely available;
- To strengthen institutional arrangements to deliver the targets set out in Smarter Travel.

(v) **National Cycle Policy Framework 2009–2020**

This document, building on Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future 2009–2020, sets a target of 10% of journeys to be by bicycle by 2020. Interventions to the physical environment that need to be made to encourage cycling are outlined and the role of local authorities in implementing this framework is set out.

(vi) **National Climate Change Adaptation Framework; Building Resilience to Climate Change (2012)**

The National Climate Change Adaptation Framework provides the policy context for a strategic national adaptation response to climate change in Ireland. Adaptation refers to the adjustment or preparation of natural or human systems to a new or changing environment, with the aim of moderating harm or exploiting beneficial opportunities.

The second phase of the framework involves the development and implementation of sectoral and local adaptation action plans which will form part of the comprehensive national response to the impacts of climate change.

The framework requires local authorities to integrate climate change adaptation into development planning, and to have a clearer process to 'climate change-proof' objectives and also to embrace both mitigation and adaptation measures across the major elements of such plans.

(vii) **Government White Paper 'Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future' 2015–2030**

The White Paper 'Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future' 2015–2030, is an update of national energy policy. The White Paper sets out a framework to guide policy and the actions of Government up to 2030.

The paper takes into account European and International climate change objectives and agreements, as well as Irish social, economic and employment priorities. As Ireland progresses towards a low carbon energy system, this policy update will support secure supplies of competitive and affordable energy to citizens and businesses in Ireland.

(viii) **National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2009–2020**

The National Energy Efficiency Action Plan outlines Government actions to achieve its target of 20% energy savings across the economy by 2020. A strategy is outlined to reduce the country's dependency on imported fossil fuels, improve energy efficiency across a number of sectors and ensure a sustainable energy future. The Government's energy policy framework *Delivering a Sustainable Future for Ireland – The Energy Policy Framework for 2009–2020* is designed to steer Ireland towards a new and sustainable energy future, one that helps increase security of supply, makes energy more affordable, improves national competitiveness and reduces our green house gas emissions

(ix) **National Renewable Energy Action Plan (2010)**

The National Renewable Energy Action Plan sets out Ireland's national targets for the share of energy to come from renewable sources in 2020, in the areas of transport, electricity and heating. A target of 40% electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2020 is set. The Plan also outlines interactions between the planning system and renewable energy policy and infrastructure, and the need for an integrated approach at national, regional and local level to ensure that this target is met.

(x) **Actions for Biodiversity–Ireland's National Biodiversity Plan 2011–2016**

Ireland's second National Biodiversity Plan builds upon the achievements of the first plan and focuses on actions that were not fully completed and addresses emerging issues. The measures Ireland will take are presented as 102 actions under a series of seven strategic objectives.

The objectives include the conservation of biodiversity in the wider countryside, within and outside protected areas; the mainstreaming of biodiversity across the decision making process in the State and the strengthening of the knowledge base on biodiversity.

(xi) **National Broadband Plan (2012)**

The National Broadband Plan, updated in 2015, aims to ensure that all citizens and businesses have access to high speed broadband. It is planned that by the end of 2016, 70% of premises – 1.6 million properties – will have access to quality high speed broadband, with an intervention strategy focusing on the remaining 30% of the country. Effective broadband connectivity is vital to social inclusion and economic growth at local and national levels.

(xii) **Water Services Strategic Plan, A Plan for the Future of Water Services (2015)**

On January 1st 2014, Irish Water replaced local authorities as the provider of public water and wastewater services in the country. Irish Water is now responsible for the operation of public water and wastewater services, including the management of national water assets, maintenance of the system, investment and planning and management of capital projects. The operation of those water assets is done through Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with all 31 local authorities, who continue to provide day to day operations.

In 2015, Irish Water published *Water Services Strategic Plan, A Plan for the Future of Water Services*. This document provides for the first time an opportunity to consider at a national level the way that water services are delivered in Ireland. The Water Services Strategic Plan sets out strategic objectives for the delivery of water services up to 2040. The Plan

- details current and future challenges which affect the provision of water services;
- identifies the priorities to be tackled in the short and medium term; and
- sets out 6 key objectives (as per Ministerial Directive).

1.4.2 Regional Policies and Strategies

Regional policies and strategies provide the policy link between national policies and guidance documents and local authority planning policies and decision. The most relevant are outlined in the following sections.

(i) Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area (RPGs) 2010-2022

The Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) is a policy document which aims to direct the future growth of the GDA and works to implement the strategic planning framework set out in the NSS. The Guidelines provide an overall strategic context for the Development Plans of each local authority in the GDA including population and housing targets, and also provide a framework for future investment in environmental services, transportation and other infrastructure. The core principles of the RPGs are as follows;

- Dublin as the capital will serve a wide range of international, national, regional and local needs.
- The Dublin and Mid-East Regions will be attractive, vibrant locations for industry, commerce, recreation and tourism and will be a major focus for economic growth within the State. In this regard, Maynooth, Leixlip and Naas have been identified as primary economic growth towns and as part of economic clusters with adjoining designated towns. Kildare town and Athy in south Kildare are designated as secondary economic growth centres serving south Kildare.

- Development in the GDA shall be directly related to investment in integrated high quality public transport services and focused on compact urban form. The key growth centres in the county are located on or in close proximity to quality public transport services, comprising Naas, Newbridge, Maynooth, Leixlip, Celbridge, Kilcock, Kildare, Monasterevin, Kilcullen and Athy.
- Development within the Metropolitan Area which includes the north east Kildare towns of Maynooth, Leixlip, Celbridge and Kilcock, will be consolidated to achieve a more compact urban form, allowing for the accommodation of a greater population than at present, with a much-enhanced public transport system, with the expansion of the built up areas providing for well designed urban environments linked to high quality public transport networks, enhancing the quality of life for residents and workers alike.
- Development in the Hinterland Area will be focused on the high quality integrated growth and consolidation of development in key identified towns to include Kildare, Monasterevin, Kilcullen and Athy, separated from each other by extensive areas of strategic green belt land devoted to agriculture and similar uses. These towns will have high levels of employment activity, higher order shopping and a full range of social services, with good road and bus linkages to other towns and by high quality public transport to Dublin City. They will play a key role in serving the surrounding rural communities and smaller towns and villages.

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) places an obligation on the planning authority to prepare a 'core strategy' which shows that the development objectives in the plan are consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines. Chapters 2 and 3 set out the Core Strategy.

(ii) Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2008-2016

This Strategy aims to set out a co-ordinated and sustainable approach to the assessment and provision of retail within the GDA so that:

- Adequate and suitable provision is made to meet the needs of changing population patterns, both overall and locally, and provide for healthy competition and consumer choice.
- Retail is provided in suitable locations, integrated within existing growth areas and public transport investments.
- Significant overprovision is avoided, which would place more marginal locations under severe pressure and undermine sustainability driven policies aimed at revitalising town centres.

A series of policy recommendations draws on quantitative analysis undertaken as part of the review, examining market patterns, expenditure and future growth projections. By setting out a strategic framework for retail, the strategy seeks to give guidance on where future retail should be provided and what issues need to be addressed.

To this end, the strategy proposes a retail hierarchy as a core spatial policy around which future growth, rejuvenation and expansion in the retail sector needs to be focused. The retail planning strategy and policies for County Kildare are framed within the context of the Retail Strategy for the GDA.

(iii) Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035

The NTA Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035 was formally approved by the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in April 2016. This updates the Draft Transport Strategy for the GDA 2011- 2030 and aims to contribute to the economic, social and cultural progress of the Greater Dublin Area by providing for the efficient, effective and sustainable movement of people and goods.



The strategy sets out a cohesive and integrated transport framework to support and sustain the region's development. Key priorities are:

- To address urban congestion;
- To protect the capacity of the strategic road network;
- To reduce the share of trips undertaken by car and increase walking, cycling and public transport;
- To provide a safe cycling network;
- To enhance the pedestrian environment, in particular to overcome severance and increase permeability; and
- To consider all-day travel demand from all societal groups.

(iv) Eastern and South Eastern River Basin Management Plans (2009 - 2015)

The Water Framework Directive was adopted in 2000 and requires the preparation of a management plan for all waters in an area called a River Basin District. The main aim of the Directive is to maintain all water bodies, rivers, lakes, groundwater and estuaries at high status, to prevent deterioration in the existing status of water and to achieve at least "good status" in relation to all waters by 2015.

Parts of Kildare are located in the Eastern River Basin District and the remainder in the South Eastern River Basin District. The River Basin Management Plans describe in detail the status of all waters and protected areas and put in place Programmes of Measures to provide the works necessary to bring water bodies to good quality status. These measures have informed the preparation of this Plan.

Preparation for the second cycle of River Basin Management Plans 2015-2021 is now underway.

(v) Water Supply Project Eastern and Midlands Region

On 1st January 2014, Irish Water also took over the management of the Water Supply Project Eastern and Midlands Region (WSP). The project is an intensive research and assessment process to identify a new major source of water for the Eastern and Midlands Region of the country, including

County Kildare. In November 2015 Irish Water published a report that identifies abstraction from the Parteen Basin in Tipperary as the emerging preferred option for the new source of water supply. A third phase of public consultation following this report's publication concluded in February 2016. In November 2016, Irish Water published the Final Options Appraisal Report (FOAR) which identified abstraction from the Parteen Basin in Tipperary as the preferred scheme. The public consultation for this phase of the project concluded in February 2017.

1.4.3 County Kildare Plans, Strategies and Studies

Kildare County Council policy documents are also relevant to this Plan. These include the Corporate Plan, the Local Economic and Community Plan and Local Area Plans.

(i) Kildare County Council Corporate Plan 2015 - 2019

Kildare County Council's Corporate Plan 2015-2019 serves as a strategic framework for action during the lifetime of the Council, and is one of a number of documents setting out the aims and principles that will inform and guide the activities of the Council over the period 2015-2019. The Plan outlines that the introduction of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 and the roll out of the Government's reform agenda "Putting People First" has introduced an important new dynamic to local government, through organisational changes and new functions and roles.

The core values of the County Council and the key strategic objectives to be pursued are set out in the Plan. These are to

- Support and enhance local democracy.
- Facilitate and encourage sustainable economic growth and employment.
- Develop and grow Kildare's social and physical infrastructure.
- Improve efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services.
- Promote and develop Kildare as a place to live, learn, work, visit and do business.

(ii) Kildare Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016-2021

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 seeks to create a stronger and clearer role for local government in economic development and community development and introduced Local Economic and Community Plans.

The LECP sets out, for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of the county, both by the Council itself directly and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders.

(iii) Local Area Plans

In accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), Local Area Plans (LAPs) are required to be prepared for designated Census towns within the county with a population over 5,000. Towns with a population of 1,500 also require LAPs to be prepared, unless objectives for the area of the town are included within the County Development Plan.

LAPs set out in greater detail the Council's requirements for new development, including such factors as density, layout and design requirements, community facilities, transportation, open space and recreational facilities. These plans must be consistent with the County Development Plan.

Local Area Plans were adopted for Kilcock, Kilcullen, Kildare, Newbridge, Maynooth, Monasterevin and Sallins during the course of the 2011-2017 County Development Plan.

A number of small towns which previously had LAPs were incorporated into the County Development Plan in 2012, by way of a variation. These are Kill, Prosperous, Rathangan, Athgarvan, Derrinturn and Castledermot.

This Plan will replace the Naas Town Development Plan 2011 - 2017 and the Athy Town Development Plan 2012 - 2018 when adopted. Kildare County Council will prepare Local Area Plans for Naas and Athy to provide more detailed planning policies for these areas.

The local area plans will be set within the overall framework of the County Development Plan including the Core Strategy and other overarching policies and development management objectives and standards.

(iv) Other Plans and Strategies

A number of other plans and strategies have been carried out which inform the preparation of this Plan and include:

- a) The County Heritage Plan 2005-2009 which outlined an action plan for the conservation, preservation and enhancement of Kildare's heritage including natural heritage. This Plan is being reviewed and a new Heritage Plan will be published in 2017.
- b) The County Biodiversity Plan 2009-2014 provides a framework for conserving biodiversity and natural heritage at a local level. It consists of a number of practical actions which serve to raise awareness of and enhance the protection, conservation and management of our natural heritage.
- c) The Kildare Age Friendly Strategy 2016-2018 aims to make Kildare a great place to grow old. The strategy highlights that this can only be achieved through maximum collaboration, cohesion and cooperation across groups and agencies. Age friendly indicators developed by The World Health Organisation relate to the health, care, transport, housing, labour, social protection, information and communication sectors.

The policies and objectives of this plan promote an age friendly county that enables people of all ages to actively participate.

1.5 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The County Development Plan is also required to be in compliance with other legislation and guidance, in particular the requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment.

1.5.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the term which has been given to the environmental assessment of plans, a statutory requirement pursuant to the requirements of the EU SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) and the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations 2004 (as amended). It is a systematic process of predicting and evaluating the likely environmental effects of implementing a plan, in order to ensure that these effects are appropriately addressed at the earliest appropriate stage of decision-making on a par with economic and social considerations.

The environmental issues considered by the SEA are as follows:

- Biodiversity (flora, fauna)
- Landscape/Geology
- Agriculture and Forestry
- Population
- Water Quality
- Air Quality
- Waste Management
- Cultural and Material Assets
- Climate

A formal process of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was carried out as an integral part of the preparation of this Plan. The Development Plan has been systematically assessed and where necessary, amended or environmental mitigation measures are included to prevent or reduce significant adverse effects posed by the Plan are identified and have been integrated into the Plan. The SEA Environmental Report provides a clear understanding

of the likely environmental consequences of decisions regarding the future accommodation of development in County Kildare, and has guided the preparation of objectives, policies and development alternatives for the Development Plan, with the aim of achieving sustainable development in the county without causing adverse harm to the environment. The Environmental Report is a separate document, to be read in parallel with this plan.

An SEA Statement is also included summarising how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan, how the Environmental Report and the outcome of consultations were taken into account, the reasons for choosing the plan as adopted in the light of other reasonable alternatives considered and monitoring measures.

1.5.2 Appropriate Assessment (AA)

Article 6(3) of Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment (AA) of plans and projects likely to affect European (Natura 2000) sites. Natura 2000 sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs).

In any case where, following screening, it is found that the proposed plan or project may have an impact on the objectives of a Natura site, or such an impact cannot be ruled out, an Appropriate Assessment must be undertaken.

This process comprises the assessment, based on scientific knowledge, of the potential impacts of the plan on the conservation objectives of any Natura site and the development, where necessary, of mitigation or avoidance measures to preclude negative effects.

The impacts assessed must include the indirect and cumulative impacts of the plan, considered with any current or proposed activities, developments or policies impacting on the site.

The AA process informs plans of the environmental impacts of alternative actions and contributes to the integration of environmental considerations into plan making.

A formal process of Appropriate Assessment was carried out as part of the preparation of this County Development Plan. On the basis of the screening for Appropriate Assessment, it was concluded that the Plan could, in the absence of mitigation, result in adverse impacts on the Natura 2000 network.

Applying the Precautionary Principle and in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment was carried out.

This stage concluded that the risks to the qualifying interests and conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 network have been addressed by the inclusion of mitigation measures that will prioritise the avoidance of impacts in the first place and mitigate impacts where these cannot be avoided. In addition, all lower level plans and projects arising through the implementation of the Plan will themselves be subject to Appropriate Assessment.

Having incorporated mitigation measures, it is considered that the Plan will not have a significant adverse effect on the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.

The Natura Impact Report is a separate document, to be read in parallel with this plan.

