APPENDIX 10
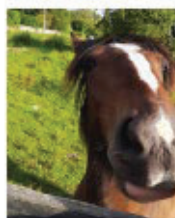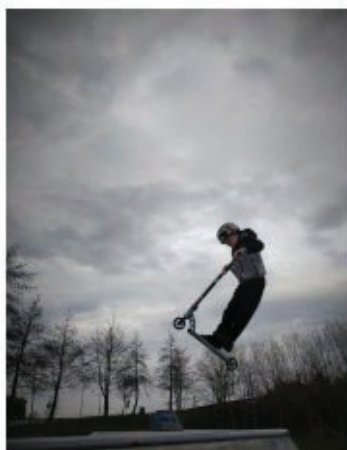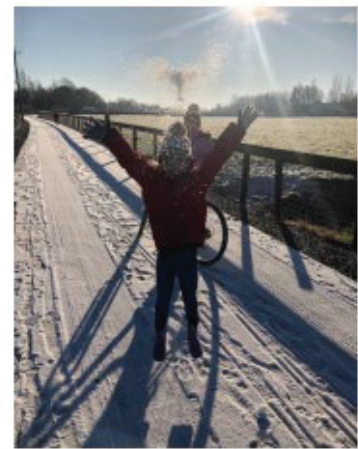
RURAL HOUSING POLICY REPORT - AIRO

Development of Areas Under Strong Urban Influence Map, 2021
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<u>**Background:**</u>

The National Planning Framework **(NPF)** sets out clear guidance and policy objectives (Objective 19) relating to the future growth and development of rural areas across Ireland. It is recognised within **NPF** that there is a continuing need for housing provision for people to live and work in Ireland's countryside. Careful planning is required to manage demand in our most accessible countryside around cities and towns, focusing on the elements required to support the sustainable growth of rural economies and rural communities.

Further guidance on rural housing policy is also available through the Eastern and Midland's *Regional, Spatial and* Economic *Strategy* (RSES) (RPO 4.80).

Based on this guidance (NPF and RSES) and as a means of informing the updated rural housing policy within the County Development Plan (CDP) review, Kildare County Council have engaged the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) at Maynooth University to delineate areas within Kildare that ae classified as Rural *Areas Under Strong Urban Influence (Rural Category 1)* and *Stronger Rural Areas (Rural Category 2).* The following section outlines the methodology used to create the Areas Under Strong Urban Influence Map, 2021.

<u>**Methodology:**</u>

This methodology is primarily driven by the NPF/RSES definition for the identification of Areas Under Strong Urban Influence. For guidance, NPF describes large towns and employment centres as towns with a population of more than 10,000 people or more than 2,500 jobs. NPF also suggests the use of a standard EU/OECD definition to map the commuter catchments where 15% of the local workforce is employed in the selected towns and centres of employment (at Electoral Division (ED) level).

For Kildare, this means a commuting analysis of flows to the Dublin Metropolitan Area (DMA) and then individual the settlements of Naas, Newbridge, Maynooth, Celbridge, Leixlip, Kildare Town, Athy, Kilcock, Sallins, Portlaoise, Portarlington, Edenderry, Carlow Town and Blessington. As with all previous functional area mapping carried out by AIRO for the National Planning Framework and the EMRA RSES the selected settlements are based on the National Transport Authority 'Urban Core' boundaries which are based on amalgamations of CSO Settlement boundaries that also include key employment locations

on the outskirts of settlements (i.e., M7 Nass Business Park included as part of Naas CSO settlement).

While commuting levels are the primary evidence-based factor in the delineation of areas under urban influence, the project team have also consulted recent documentation published by the OPR *(Rural Settlement and Local Authority Plan-Making: Practical* Advice[1]) that suggests an evidence-based approach should be based on both data analysis and local knowledge within local authorities. In particular, the development of an Areas Under Strong Urban Influence Map should take account of the following:

- High levels of commuting pattern (as per NPF/RSES guidance above)
- Proximity to cities/towns or to major transport corridors with ready access to urban areas
- Ready access to a good road network with ready access to the larger urban areas
- Avoid a 'patchwork approach' with multiple categories/ lots of small rural area designations.
- Option to 'layer' planning and environmental constraints

It is also important to consider, in parallel with the NPF definition, the existing CDP delineation of Rural Area Zones in Kildare and finally recent demographic trends on population loss and stagnation over the last twenty-year period (1996 to 2016).
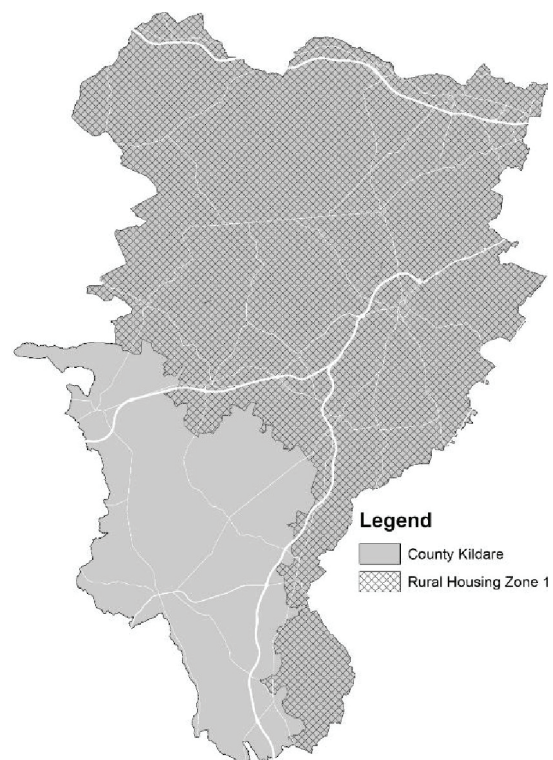
The following section, primarily driven by the NPF/RSES definition, sets out the steps undertaken to develop the Kildare Areas Under Strong Urban Influence Map.

Step 1: Mapping of Existing Rural Housing Zone 1 (2017)

Map 1 details the existing Rural Housing Zone 1 (areas under Urban Influence) in the Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023.

This Zone is primarily in northern, central and eastern areas of the county (along the border with Wicklow) - more populated areas with higher levels of environmental sensitivity and significant development pressure.

In total, 61of the 89 Kildare EDs included.

Map 1: Existing Rural Housing Zone 1

[1] https://www.opr.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/May-2021-Councillor-Training-Webinar-Anne-Marie-OConnors-Presentation-1.pdf

Step 2: Mapping of NPF/RSES Definition (2021)

The new evidence-based methodology used for Kildare County Council is primarily driven by the NPF/RSES definition for the identification of Areas Under Strong Urban Influence. Map 2a below details the commuter catchments where 15% of the local workforce, at ED level, is employed in the OMA As per the NPF/RSES definition, the addition of commuting flows for all other relevant settlements (as listed above) results in an expansion of the existing Rural Housing Zone 1 by an additional 22 EDs.

Based on the strict NPF/RSES definition only 6 EDs would now fall outside Areas Under Strong Urban Influence - Kilkea, Kilberry, Grangemellon, Churchtown, Harristown and Bert.
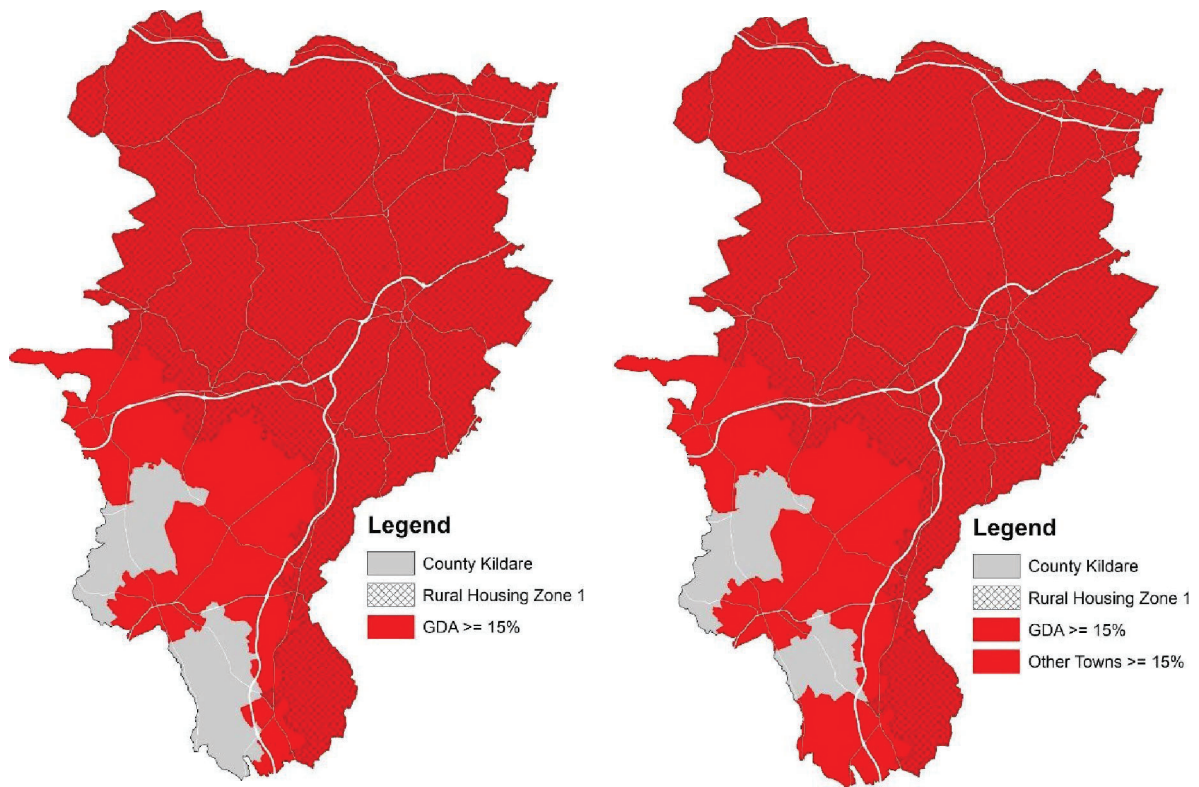
Map 2a - Commuter Flows to DMA and Map 2b - Commuter Flows to DMA and other Key Settlements >=10,000 and/or>= 2,500 jobs

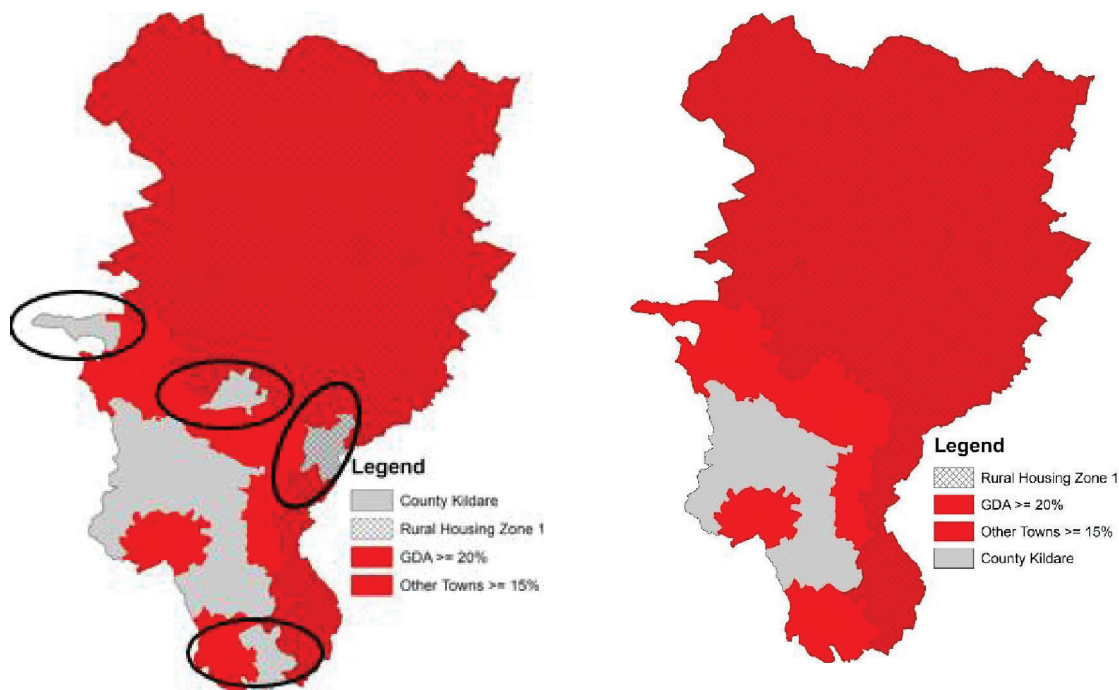**Step 3: Local Refinement of NPF/RSES Definition (2021)**

While the NPF definition is useful in determining Areas Under Strong Urban Pressure it does however require further refinement depending on the specific geographical and economic alignment of local authorities.

Following a review of the potential extension of the existing Rural Housing Zone 1 (see Map 2a above}, based on the NPF/RSES definition (>=15%), it is recommended that a marginal reduction in the commuting flow metric is applied to the DMA (to >=20%) and the existing NPF/RSES metric (>=15%) is maintained for commuting flows to all other settlements. This reduction is primarily due to the very strong economic pull factor of the DMA alone within an across all areas of Kildare.

Map 3a below details the refined NPF/RSES commuting flow map of >=20% to the DMA and >=15% to all other relevant settlements. The main reduction is in areas to the north-east of Athy. However, this refinement does also create a number of gaps in potential new areas under urban influence (identified by black circles). By incorporating advice from recent **OPR** publication on avoiding 'a patchwork approach' a number of these areas are reassigned as areas under urban influence.

Map 3b provides an illustration of the final Areas Under Urban Influence Map. Using this modified approach to the NPF/RSES guidance the existing Rural Housing Zone 1 would **extend by an additional 17 EDs**

Using this approach only 11EDs would now fall outside Areas Under Strong Urban Influence - Kilkea, Skerries, Burtown, Ballybracken, Kilberry, Grangemellon, Fontstown, Churchtown, Harristown, Belan and Bert


Map 3a - Refined Commuting Flow Metrics and Map 3b - Refined Commuting Flow Metrics - Excluding Patchwork Approach

Step 4: Validation of Areas Under Urban Pressure Map for Demographic and Environmental Factors

An analysis of the demographic change within Kildare over the last two decades (1996 to 2016) reveals that the population of Kildare has increased by a total of +65% during that period. In contrast, the demographic growth within the proposed Areas Under Urban Influence (Zone 1) has increased by +66% over the same period whereas the demographic growth in Zone 2 areas has only increased by a far more modest +25%.

Using the EPA Environmental Sensitivity Mapping Toolkit, an analysis of the environmental sensitivities in Zone 2 has been undertaken. This analysis reveals (as per Map 4 below) that some areas in the proposed Zone 2 contain 'High' sensitivities whereas majority of the area is classed as 'Moderate' or below.
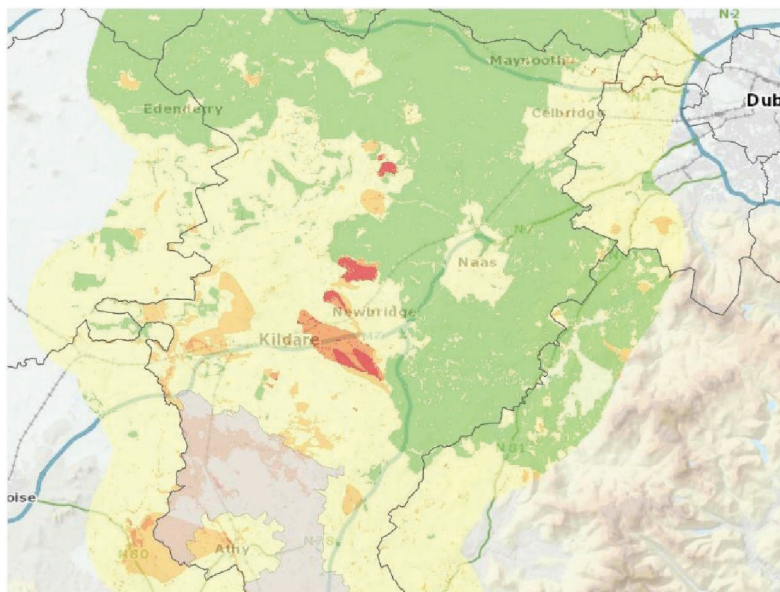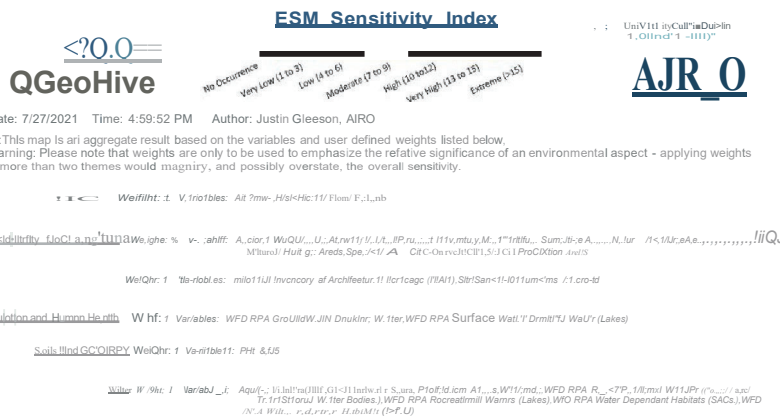
Map 4: Environmental Sensitivity Mapping of Proposed Zone 2 (July 2021)